

## **INLS 690: Misinformation and Society**

Tuesdays 2:00pm – 4:45pm

Manning 208

Professor: Francesca Tripodi, PhD (she/her/hers)

Office: Manning 202 (and on Zoom as needed)

Office Hours: Fridays from 8:30am – 11:30am

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If you are having trouble learning for any reason, please come and see me or the Dean of Students.

### **Course Description**

How do we know what we think we know? This course will examine the concept of mis-dis-mal-information over time - what it is, when it occurs, and how ideas of "truth" and "facts" are connected to the social construction of knowledge more generally. Readings and assignments will consider the sociotechnical dimensions of misinformation, examining how/why false narratives are created, believed, shared, and used for political gain. Finally, we will study the democratic implications of problematic content with an emphasis on understanding the ideological nature of falsehoods. Through a contextualization of misinformation, we will work toward proposing possible solutions for how we might fix or combat an ever-present and evolving problem.

**Course Objectives** - By the end of this course you will be able to:

1. Understanding existing academic contributions in the field of misinformation – key authors, central arguments, gaps in the literature.
2. Interpret, analyze, and critique academic and journalistic arguments related to misinformation.
3. Identify and differentiate between misinformation, disinformation, and malinformation.
4. Contextualize historic events as current-day understandings of misinformation.
5. Design and present a comprehensive misinformation campaign.
6. Design and present a comprehensive counter-campaign.

### **Class engagement & expectations**

This semester we are using Canvas. I do not assign a text to help with costs and all materials are organized for you in Canvas – in turn, **I expect you to do the reading, complete all assignments, and come prepared for class.**

Establishing clear expectations for assignments and class work and receiving constructive criticism in return. Listen to what other have to say, even if it is not something that you necessarily agree with. Strive for clear communication that is respectful. Let us assume good faith the first time. Share the space and the stage – try not to dominate discussion. Create an inclusive space for discussion – where opinions are respected and heard even in disagreement. Avoid judgmental questions – make is safe to ask questions – it’s ok to repeat yourself and ask others to repeat. If things are getting spicy let’s take a breath break.

**If you are sick, stay home.**

### **Evaluation**

The most frequent grade for graduate classes is P (Pass). P represents work and effort that meets all stated requirements. “H” grades are reserved for exceptional work and are very rare. There are 180 total points available across all course assignments. Course grade ranges are as follows based on UNC Registrar policy for graduate-level courses:

- H (Exceptional work that goes beyond the expectations for the course): 171-180points
- P (Work that meets all expectations of the course at an acceptable level): 144-170points
- L (Work that represents substandard performance in significant ways): 126-143points
- F (Deficient performance unworthy of graduate credit): <126 points

At the graduate level, grades are superfluous. The point of coursework is to learn and cultivate professional relationships. I do not “round up,” change, or justify final grades – please don’t ask.

## Student Support

Please utilize me as a resource if you are having difficulty with the material or there are outside circumstances impeding your ability to learn. **You should also know that I am a mandatory reporter if you choose to confide in me.**

**Mental Health:** CAPS is strongly committed to addressing the mental health needs of a diverse student body through timely access to consultation and connection to clinically appropriate services, whether for short or long-term needs. Go to their website: <https://caps.unc.edu/> or visit their facilities on the third floor of the Campus Health Services building for a walk-in evaluation to learn more. (source: *Student Safety and Wellness Proposal for EPC, Sep 2018*)

**Accommodations:** The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill facilitates the implementation of reasonable accommodations, including resources and services, for students with disabilities, chronic medical conditions, a temporary disability, or pregnancy complications resulting in barriers to fully accessing University courses, programs, and activities. Accommodations are determined through the Office of Accessibility Resources and Service (ARS) for individuals with documented qualifying disabilities in accordance with applicable state and federal laws. See the ARS Website for contact information: <https://ars.unc.edu> or email [ars@unc.edu](mailto:ars@unc.edu).

**Title IX:** Any student who is impacted by discrimination, harassment, interpersonal (relationship) violence, sexual violence, sexual exploitation, or stalking is encouraged to seek resources on campus or in the community. Please contact the Director of Title IX Compliance (Adrienne Allison – [Adrienne.allison@unc.edu](mailto:Adrienne.allison@unc.edu)), Report and Response Coordinators in the Equal Opportunity and Compliance Office ([reportandresponse@unc.edu](mailto:reportandresponse@unc.edu)), Counseling and Psychological Services (confidential), or the Gender Violence Services Coordinators ([gvsc@unc.edu](mailto:gvsc@unc.edu); confidential) to discuss your specific needs. Additional resources are available at [safe.unc.edu](http://safe.unc.edu).

## Diversity & Inclusion

My intention as an educator is to provide a safe and inclusive environment for all learners. I work hard to include course materials and activities that promote diversity but SILS (and most disciplines in the academy) were founded by those from a privileged background. As a cisgender, straight, white, able-bodied woman, my standpoint may exclude important points of view. It is also possible that I will make unintentional mistakes. If this happens, please speak to me directly. I promise to acknowledge your concerns as valid and learn from critiques. Likewise, I'm always looking for new scholarship by women, BIPOC, LGBTQ+, and non-Western thinkers – please share resources you think would be useful. Suggestions and improvements are encouraged and appreciated.

## Email Policy

It's very difficult to explain course material via email. If you need help with course content or assignments, the first step is office hours (Fridays from 8:30 – 11:30). If you have an emergency that requires immediate assistance, please reach out. If you can't make office hours but have concerns/questions, I request that students only e-mail me to set up 1:1 meetings with an alternative date/time (via Zoom). I love emails that share interesting information (videos, news as it relates to class/memes) or other fun things that you I should know about. Masks are requested for in-person meetings. If you are not comfortable meeting in person, I'm available to meet via Zoom.

## Academic Honesty

Academic honesty and trustworthiness are important to all of us as individuals and are encouraged and promoted by the honor system. More information is available at <http://www.unc.edu/depts/honor/honor.html>. The web site identified above contains all policies and procedures pertaining to the student honor system. We encourage your full participation and observance of this important aspect of the University.

## COURSE ASSIGNMENTS

- **Participation and Attendance** (20 points) - The structure of this course is meant to engage and stimulate you. We will have no formal lectures, so the success of the class depends on active engagement. I expect everyone to come to class ready to discuss the assigned readings. At one point in the semester, you and group of your peers will *lead* the discussion. This simply means prepared with questions or an activity to drive the second half of the

class period. I recognize that participation comes in many forms so active listening, talking, sharing posts before class are all welcome. *Missing more than two classes (unexcused) will result in a failing grade.*

- **Midterm Paper – Misinformation then and now** (50 points) – Select a controversy, phenomenon, or issue of interest that has been influenced by mis/dis/malinformation. Identify the problematic content that circulated, how the messaging was conveyed, who were the populations affected, and how information was evaluated during the time. Draw from three outside sources and at least ten readings from class to make your argument.
- **Misinformation Campaign** (50 points) – At the end of the semester a group of your choosing will present a misinformation campaign to the class. Groups should be five people and will be assigned randomly if there are no working preferences. Details posted in Canvas.
- **Counter Project** (20 points) – Your same group will try to “thwart” the misinformation campaign by another group. Details posted in Sakai. These presentations will take place during finals week.

Week	Focus + Readings	Assignments Due
Week 1 8/16	<b>Welcome to Class</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create classroom norms and expectations</li> <li>• Get to know one another</li> <li>• What does it mean to “socially construct reality”?</li> </ul>	
Week 2 8/23	<b>Defining Misinformation</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Jack, C. (2017). Lexicon of lies: Terms for problematic information. Data &amp; Society Research Institute.</li> <li>2. Marwick, A., &amp; Lewis, R. (2017). Media manipulation and disinformation online. Data &amp; Society Research Institute</li> <li>3. Claire Wardle and Hossein Derakhshan. (2018). Thinking about “Information Disorder”: formats for misinformation, disinformation, and malinformation. <i>Journalism, “Fake News,” &amp; Disinformation. UNESCO</i></li> <li>4. DuBois, WEB. 1935. The Propaganda of History. <i>Black Reconstruction in America.</i></li> </ol>	
Week 3 8/30	<b>Misinformation – It’s complicated</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Anderson, CW.(2021) Fake News is not a Virus: On Platforms and Their Effects. <i>Communication Theory</i> 31(1): 42-61</li> <li>2. Rojecki, A., &amp; Meraz, S. (2016). Rumors and factitious informational blends: The role of the web in speculative politics. <i>New Media &amp; Society</i>, 18(1), 25-43.</li> <li>3. Bednar, P. p., &amp; Welch, C. c. (2008). Bias, misinformation and the Paradox of Neutrality. <i>Informing Science</i>, 1185-106.</li> <li>4. Giglietto, F. L. Iannelli, A. Valeriani. L. Rossi. (2019). Fake news is the invention of a liar: How false information circulates within the hybrid news system. <i>Current Sociology Monograph</i> 67(4): 625-642</li> </ol>	
Week 4 9/6	<i>Well-Being Day – No Class</i>	
Week 5 9/13	<b>The historical (racist/sexist/homophobic) legacy of misinformation</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Mejia, R., Beckermann, K., &amp; Sullivan, C. (2018). White lies: A racial history of the (post)truth. <i>Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies</i>, 15(2), 109–126.</li> <li>2. Almeida, S. (2015). Race-based epistemologies: The role of race and dominance in knowledge production. <i>Wagadu: A Journal of Transnational Women’s &amp; Gender Studies</i>, 13, 79-105.</li> <li>3. Cheng, J.F. (2020). AIDS, women of color feminisms, queer and trans of color critiques, and the crises of knowledge production. In Cheng, J.F,</li> </ol>	

	<p>Juhasz, A., &amp; Shahani, N. (Eds.), <i>AIDS and the Distribution of Crises</i> (pp. 76-92). Duke University Press.</p> <p>4. Duru, N. J. (2004). The Central Park Five, The Scottsboro Boys, and the myth of the bestial black man. <i>Cardozo Law Review</i>, 25(4), 1315-1365</p>	
<p>Week 6 9/20</p>	<p><b>The politics of lies</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Freelon, D., &amp; Wells, C. (2020). Disinformation as political communication. <i>Political Communication</i>, 37(2), 145–156.</li> <li>2. Silverman, D., Kaltenhaler, K., &amp; Dagher, M. (2021). Seeing Is Disbelieving: The Depths and Limits of Factual Misinformation in War. <i>International Studies Quarterly</i>: 1-13.</li> <li>3. Kim, J.W. and Eunji Kim (2019), "Identifying the Effect of Political Rumor Diffusion Using Variations in Survey Timing", <i>Quarterly Journal of Political Science</i>: Vol. 14: No. 3, pp 293-311.</li> <li>4. Soto-Vásquez, A. D., &amp; Sánchez-Santos, M. (2022). El Cabal, Vacunas, y Donald Trump: An Analysis of Spanish-Language Disinformation Leading Up to the U.S. Capitol Insurrection.</li> </ol>	
<p>Week 7 9/27</p>	<p><b>Disinformation in Global Context</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Mare, A., Mabweazara, H. M., &amp; Moyo, D. (2019). “Fake news” and cyber-propaganda in sub-Saharan Africa: Recentering the research agenda. <i>African Journalism Studies</i> 40(4), 1-12.</li> <li>2. Masol, S. (2022) Ukraine and the International Criminal Court: Between <i>Realpolitik</i> and Post-truth Politics. <i>Journal of International Criminal Justice</i> 20(1): 167-190</li> <li>3. Haque, M. M., Yousuf, M., Alam, A. S., Saha, P., Ahmed, S. I., &amp; Hassan, N. (2020). Combating misinformation in Bangladesh: Roles and responsibilities as perceived by journalists, fact-checkers, and users. <i>Proceedings of the ACM on Human-Computer Interaction</i>, 4(CSCW2), 1–32.</li> <li>4. Ong, J. C. (2021, January 12). Southeast Asia’s disinformation crisis: Where the state is the biggest bad actor and regulation is a bad word. <i>Items: Insights from the social sciences</i>. Social Science Research Council.</li> <li>5. Bradshaw, S., DiResta, R., Miller, C. (2022) Playing Both Sides: Russian State-Backed Media Coverage of the #BlackLivesMatter Movement. <i>The International Journal of Press/Politics</i>: 1-27</li> </ol> <p>TO LISTEN IN CLASS:  <a href="https://www.wnycstudios.org/podcasts/radiolab/articles/breaking-bongo">https://www.wnycstudios.org/podcasts/radiolab/articles/breaking-bongo</a></p>	
<p>Week 8 10/4</p>	<p><b>Framing and Context</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Tripodi, F. and Ma, Y. (2022) You’ve got mail: how the Trump administration used legislative communication to frame his last year in office. <i>Information, Communication, &amp; Society</i> 25(5): 669-689</li> <li>2. Phillips, W., &amp; Milner, R. (2021). The devil’s in the deep frames. In <i>You are here: A field guide for navigating polarized speech, conspiracy theories and our polluted information landscape</i>. MIT Press, 17-48.</li> <li>3. Flores-Yeffal, N. Y., Vidales, G., &amp; Martinez, G. (2019). #Wakeup America, #Illegalsarecriminals: The role of the cyber public sphere in the perpetuation of the Latino cyber-moral panic in the US. <i>Information, Communication &amp; Society</i>, 22(3), 402–419</li> <li>4. Marwick, A. and Partin, W. (2022). Constructing alternative facts: Populist expertise and the QAnon conspiracy. <i>New Media &amp; Society</i>: 1-21</li> </ol>	

	5. Polletta, F., & Callahan, J. (2017). Deep stories, nostalgia narratives, and fake news: Storytelling in the Trump era. <i>American Journal of Cultural Sociology</i> , 5(3), 392–408.	
Week 9 10/11	Workshop day – Paper Swap – bring a draft of your paper to class for peer-review	
Week 10 10/18	<p><b>Why “doing your own research” is complicated</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Daniels, J. (2009). Cloaked websites: propaganda, cyber-racism and epistemology in the digital era. <i>New Media and Society</i>. 11(5): 659-683</li> <li>2. Boyd, D., &amp; Gołębiewski, M. (2018). Data Voids: Where Missing Data Can Easily Be Exploited</li> <li>3. Hargittai, E. and Young, H. (2012). Searching for a “Plan B”: Young Adults’ Strategies for Finding Information about Emergency Contraception Online. <i>Policy &amp; Internet</i>. 4(2)</li> <li>4. Haider, J. and Sundin, O. 2019. <i>Invisible Search and Online Search Engines: The Ubiquity of Search in Everyday Life</i>. Routledge (Introduction Only)</li> <li>5. Tripodi, F. 2018. Searching for Alternative Facts. Data &amp; Society Research Institute (Googling for Truth section): p. 27-35.</li> </ol>	
Week 11 10/25	<p><b>Using bigdata to capture misinformation cycles</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Lee, C. T. Yang, G. Inchoco, G.M.Jones, A. Satyanarayan. Viral Visualizations: How Coronavirus Skeptics Use Orthodox Data Practices to Promote Unorthodox Science Online. In <i>CHI Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems (CHI '21), May 8-13, 2021</i>.</li> <li>2. Freelon, D., Bossetta, M., Wells, C., Lukito, J., Xia, Y., &amp; Adams, K. (2020). Black trolls matter: Racial and ideological asymmetries in social media disinformation. <i>Social Science Computer Review</i>.</li> <li>3. Tommasel, A.,Rodriguez, J.M. and Menczer, F. (2022). Following the Trail of Fake News Spreaders in Social Media: A Deep Learning Model. In Adjunct Proceedings of the 30th ACM Conference on User Modeling, Adaptation and Personalization (UMAP '22 Adjunct). Association for Computing Machinery, New York, NY, USA, 29–34.</li> <li>4. Uyheng, Joshua, Daniele Bellutta, and Kathleen M Carley. 2022. “Bot Amplify and Redirect Hate Speech in Online Discourse About Racism During the COVID-19 Pandemic.” <i>Social Media + Society</i> July-September 2022: 1–14</li> <li>5. Kennedy, I., Wack, M., Beers, A., Schafer, J. S., Garcia-Camargo, I., Spiro, E. S., &amp; Starbird, K. (2022). Repeat Spreaders and Election Delegitimization: A Comprehensive Dataset of Misinformation Tweets from the 2020 U.S. Election. <i>Journal of Quantitative Description: Digital Media</i>, 2.</li> </ol>	
Week 12 11/1	Workshop day – Misinformation Campaigns – Finalize Content/Work with Groups	<b>Midterm Paper Due</b>
Week 13 11/8	<p><b>Playing Harmony Square</b> Read before coming to class:</p> <p>Roozenbeek, J., &amp; van der Linden, S. (2020). Breaking Harmony Square: A game that “inoculates” against political misinformation. <i>Harvard Kennedy School (HKS) Misinformation Review</i>.</p> <p>TO PLAY IN CLASS: <a href="https://harmonysquare.game/en/play">https://harmonysquare.game/en/play</a></p>	
Week 14	Misinformation Campaigns Groups 1,2,3	

11/5		
Week 15 11/22	Misinformation Campaign Groups 4,5,6	
Week 16 11/29	<p><b>What's the solution?</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. boyd, d. (2018, March 9). <u>You think you want media literacy... do you?</u> <i>SXSW Edu keynote</i>. Points: Data &amp; Society blog.</li> <li>2. Breakstone, J., Smith, M., Connors, P., Ortega, T., Kerr, D., &amp; Wineburg, S. (2021). Lateral reading: College students learn to critically evaluate internet sources in an online course. <i>Harvard Kennedy School (HKS) Misinformation Review</i>.</li> <li>3. Fister, B. (2021, February 18). The librarian war against Qanon. <i>The Atlantic</i>.</li> <li>4. Malhotra, P., &amp; Pearce, K. (2022). Facing Falsehoods: Strategies for Polite Misinformation Correction. <i>International Journal Of Communication, 16, 22</i>.</li> <li>5. Faix, A. and Fyn, A.F., (2022) Framing Fake News: Misinformation and the ACRL Framework. <i>Library Faculty Publications. 7</i>.</li> </ol>	

**Final Counter-Campaign Presentations: Tuesday, Dec 6 from 12-3pm**

**I have read the syllabus**

**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Signature** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date** \_\_\_\_\_