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  
Email: ftripodi@email.unc.edu

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.

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), Report and Response Coordinators in the Equal Opportunity and Compliance Office (reportandresponse@unc.edu), Counseling and Psychological Services (confidential), or the Gender Violence Services Coordinators (gvsc@unc.edu; confidential) to discuss your specific needs. Additional resources are available at 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.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Focus + Readings</th>
<th>Assignments Due</th>
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| Week 1 8/16 | Welcome to Class  
- Create classroom norms and expectations  
- Get to know one another  
- What does it mean to “socially construct reality”? |  |
| Week 2 8/23 | Defining Misinformation  
| Week 3 8/30 | Misinformation – It’s complicated  
| Week 4 9/6 | Well-Being Day – No Class |  |
| Week 5 9/13 | The historical (racist/sexist/homophobic) legacy of misinformation  
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<th>Week 6 9/20</th>
<th><strong>The politics of lies</strong></th>
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<th>Week 7 9/27</th>
<th><strong>Disinformation in Global Context</strong></th>
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**TO LISTEN IN CLASS:**
https://www.wnycstudios.org/podcasts/radiolab/articles/breaking-bongo

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<tr>
<th>Week 8 10/4</th>
<th><strong>Framing and Context</strong></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Tripodi, F. and Ma, Y. (2022) You’ve got mail: how the Trump administration used legislative communication to frame his last year in office. <em>Information, Communication, &amp; Society</em> 25(5): 669-689</td>
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<td>Week 9 10/11</td>
<td>Workshop day – Paper Swap – bring a draft of your paper to class for peer-review</td>
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| Week 10 10/18 | **Why “doing your own research” is complicated**
| Week 11 10/25 | **Using bigdata to capture misinformation cycles**
| Week 12 11/1 | Workshop day – Misinformation Campaigns – Finalize Content/Work with Groups |
| Week 13 11/8 | **Playing Harmony Square**
Read before coming to class:


TO PLAY IN CLASS: https://harmonysquare.game/en/play |
<p>| Week 14 | Misinformation Campaigns Groups 1,2,3 | Midterm Paper Due |</p>
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<tr>
<th>Week 15</th>
<th>Misinformation Campaign Groups 4,5,6</th>
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<td>11/22</td>
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<th>Week 16</th>
<th>What's the solution?</th>
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<td>11/29</td>
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**Final Counter-Campaign Presentations:** Tuesday, Dec 6 from 12-3pm

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**I have read the syllabus**

Name: _______________________________________________________
Signature _____________________________________________________
Date ____________________