

COLL-X 101 Experimental Topics

Fake News & Misinformation

Instructor:

Dr. Andrew Asher
Indiana University Libraries & Department of Anthropology
asherand@indiana.edu

Course Schedule

Spring 2017 (Second 8 weeks)
Tues./Thurs. 4:00-5:15 pm

Course Overview:

The 2016 US presidential election highlighted the problem of fake and misleading news sources, especially within the context of online social networks. While using misinformation strategically is not new to social and political discourse, the complexity of the Internet media environment has increased the difficulty of evaluating information quality. This course will examine the phenomenon of “fake news” from sociological and historical perspectives, and will explore analytical strategies for evaluating and verifying media sources.

Course Goals:

Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

- Identify sources of false or misleading information on a variety of media platforms
- Evaluate news and other information outlets for bias
- Verify information claims using online tools
- Describe how news items are created and disseminated across different types of media and social networks

Code of Conduct:

This class, as all classes at Indiana University, requires that students abide by the “Code of Student Rights, Responsibilities and Conduct.” Please familiarize yourself with this document:

<http://www.iu.edu/~code/>

Students found to be engaging in plagiarism, cheating, or other types of dishonesty may receive a grade of an F on the assignment in question and may be reported to the Dean's Office for appropriate action. In particular, please understand the various nuances of plagiarism and avoid engaging in this type of behavior. If you have any questions, it is your responsibility to address them with me in advance of submitting an assignment.

Grades:

Assignments and percentage of final grade:

- Weekly Reflective Writing Assignments: 40%
- Attendance & Participation: 25%
- Final paper: 35%

Grades will be assigned on an A, B, C, D, F scale using the following grading standards as a guide.

However, I reserve the right to adjust these percentages based on the overall performance of the class.

Grade	GPA	%	MEANING
A	4.0	94-100	Outstanding achievement. Student performance demonstrates full command of the course materials and evinces a high level of originality and/or creativity that far surpasses course expectations.
A-	3.7	90-93	Excellent achievement. Student performance demonstrates thorough knowledge of the course materials and exceeds course expectations by completing all requirements in a superior manner.
B+	3.3	87-89	Very good work. Student performance demonstrates above-average comprehension of the course materials and exceeds course expectations on all tasks as defined in the course syllabus.
B	3.0	84-86	Good work. Student performance meets designated course expectations, demonstrates understanding of the course materials and is at an acceptable level.
B-	2.7	80-83	Marginal work. Student performance demonstrates incomplete understanding of course materials.
C+	2.3	77-79	Unsatisfactory work. Student performance demonstrates incomplete and inadequate understanding of course materials.
C	2.0	74-76	
C-	1.7	70-73	Unacceptable work.
D+	1.3	67-70	
D	1.0	64-66	
D-	.07	60-63	
F	0.0	<60	Failing.

Reflective Writing Assignments

Each week, the instructor will pose a question related to the course materials assigned. Students will prepare a short response (about 500 words), which will be used to help direct and focus the course discussions. Students should also include any questions they have about the week's reading in these responses. **Responses will usually be due on Canvas by 5 pm every Monday** in order to give the instructor time to read them before Tuesday's class. However, the due dates may be adjusted to fit the course schedule. Please refer to the Canvas sight to double check dates.

Attendance

This class is conducted in a seminar format and contains a large discussion component. Attendance and participation is therefore critical to success in the course. Attendance will be taken at each class; please note that I do not track excused absences except as required by IU policies.

Final Paper

The final paper will ask you to identify a potentially false news story, attempt to verify or disprove its content, and to trace its publication history. The final paper will be approximately 3000-4000 words and is due on the last day of the course. Full details will be posted on Canvas around week 4.

Course Outline:

All course readings and materials are posted on Canvas. Please see the weekly modules for required readings and assignments.

The general course outline is as follows. However, this schedule may be modified to fit changing needs of the class or to address other topics of interest. Please refer to Canvas for the up-to-date schedule.

Week 1: Definitions, History, & Ethics

Week 2: Information Evaluation Skills & Practices

Week 3: Active Media Use

Week 4: Misinformation Outlets and the “Fake News Cycle”

Week 5: Social Media & the Misinformation Ecosystem

Week 6: & 7 Information Verification Strategies

Week 8: Engaged Digital Citizenship & Final Projects