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**Fake News: The Classroom Struggle Between Facts & Opinion**

**Number of Credits:** 1*

**Course Instructor:** Jordan Mix

**Course Description:** As educators, it is a core responsibility that students are provided the skills necessary to formulate perspectives based on valid and reliable information. The values and underlying messages conveyed via news media, social media, and informational resources can shape the political and cultural views of our students. As political interest groups, 24-hour news cycles, and the "social media universe" push and promote specific information and messages, it is imperative that educators help our students understand the difference between facts and opinions and learn how to find credible sources of information.

In this class, participants will understand the difference between facts and opinions and the ways our students struggle to differentiate between the two. We will analyze how we learn information from media and other resources and how that can shape conceptual understanding for our students. Participants will also learn about the ways to identify bias and evaluate sources, with attention focused on the ways we can ensure the perspectives from marginalized populations are heard. The course ends with an analysis of media and information literacy and strategies for engaging students in civil discourse in the classroom. The culminating assignment for the course is the development of an implementation plan for participants to take new learning back to their schools and classrooms.

**Learning Objectives:** Upon completion of this course, students will be able to:

- Differentiate between facts, opinions, and well-informed arguments
- Communicate the various ways students find information (news, textbooks, internet, social media, etc.) and how that impacts classroom conversations and comprehension
- Identify best practices for identifying bias, evaluating credible sources, and utilize sources from various perspectives
- Analyze strategies for engaging students in civil discourse and information literacy skills.
- Develop an implementation plan to take new learning back to the classroom.

**Resources:** <u>No texts are required to purchase to complete this course. All required reading will be provided in the course modules.</u>

- Agarwal-Rangnath, R. (2013). Social Studies, Literacy, and Social Justice in the Common Core Classroom: A Guide for Teachers**.** ISBN: 9780807754085.
     *This book provides a framework (grades 3-8) to help educators literacy and social students for social studies. This text frames the lessons with the Language Arts Common Core Standards while also making it applicable for the daily realities of the classroom. Each chapter explains how teachers can restructure, reshape, and work with mandated curriculum materials to teach from a critical perspective. The book also discusses how to meet Common Core Standards by teaching language arts and social studies as complementary subjects.*

- Baker, Frank W. *Media Literacy in the K-12 Classroom*, Second Edition. International Society for Tech in Ed, 2016.
     *This book lays the framework for helping participants to understand the importance of media literacy in their classrooms. From understanding advertising, to evaluating bias, this book guides participants' understanding of media literacy.*
- Journell, Wayne, editor. Unpacking Fake News: An Educator's Guide to Navigating the Media with Students. Teachers College Press, 2019.

*This book addresses the implications of fake news for the K-12 classroom. It explores what fake news is, why students are susceptible to believing it, and how they can learn to identify it. It discusses why fake news is effective and shows participants how they can teach their students to be critical consumers of the political media they encounter.*

**\*Course Requirements:** To receive full credit for the course, participants must complete ALL assignments and respond to specific questions outlined in each assignment. Failure to complete all assignments will result in a disqualification in the course and a failing grade.

**Other Course Information:**

**Getting Started**

- After registering for the course, you will be sent a confirmation email with your course dates. A few days before your course is scheduled to begin, you will receive an invitation from *Canvas Instructure* to join your course. Please follow the prompts in that email to log in and access your course.
- Access each assignment through the course home page or the "modules" tab in the left-hand navigation menu. All assignments will be submitted through the Canvas platform on each respective assignment page.
- Please save a backup copy of all course assignments and completed work.
- For all discussions you will be asked to respond to your classmates' posts. If you are the first poster for an assignment, or if there are not yet enough posts for you to respond to the minimum number of posts, <u>you are responsible for returning to lessons you've already completed to ensure you are participating in class discussions</u>. Not doing so may result in losing participation points. If you are in a course with three or fewer students, your instructor will reach out with further instruction on meeting participation requirements.
- You may work collaboratively and submit similar responses on all assignments except for quizzes which must be done individually. <u>Under no circumstances may you copy/paste the same response as a classmate</u>, even if you collaborate on the assignment. Copying and pasting your classmates' or colleagues' responses will be treated as plagiarism and may be grounds for failing the course. Please contact your course instructor with any questions.

**Participation**

- You are not required to be present (i.e., online) on specific days or times. You will work at your own pace. The course is structured in 3 Weekly Units, and has a definitive course end date; however, you may work at your own pace within the three-week timeframe.
- All responses will be posted online. Large documents, files, photographs, or PowerPoint presentations may be attached as part of your response by using the "Submit A File" option.
- You may work collaboratively and submit similar responses on all assignments except for quizzes which must be done individually.

**INTASC Standards that are addressed in this course:**

- 2. The teacher understands how children learn and develop, and can provide learning opportunities that support their intellectual, social and personal development.
- 3. The teacher understands how students differ in their approaches to learning and creates instructional opportunities that are adapted to diverse learners.
- 4. The teacher understands and uses a variety of instructional strategies to encourage students' development of critical thinking, problem solving and performance skills.

- 5. The teacher uses an understanding of individual and group motivation and behavior to create a learning environment that encourages positive social interaction, active engagement in learning, and self-motivation.
- 6. The teacher uses knowledge of effective verbal, nonverbal, and media communication techniques to foster active inquiry, collaboration, and supportive interaction in the classroom.
- 7. The teacher plans instruction based upon knowledge of subject matter, students, the community, and curriculum goals.
- 9. The teacher is a reflective practitioner who continually evaluates the effects of his/her choices and actions on others (students, parents, and other professionals in the learning community) and who actively seeks out opportunities to grow professionally.
- 10. The teacher fosters relationships with school colleagues, parents, and agencies in the larger community to support students' learning and well-being.

**Check the Iowa Teaching Standards that are addressed in this course:**

| X | 1. Enhance Student Achievement | X | 5. Monitoring Student Learning |
|---|---|---|---|
|   | 2. Content Knowledge | | 6. Classroom Management |
| X | 3. Planning and Preparation | X | 7. Professional Growth |
| X | 4. Instructional Strategies | X | 8. Professional Responsibilities |


**Assignment Checklist**

| Topic/Activity | In Class | Out of Class |
|---|---|---|
| **Getting Started:** Take some time to work through the "getting started" module; watch the welcome video from the instructor, review the Canvas 101 instructions, and peruse the readings for the course under the "files" tab. Before beginning the course participants are required to score 100% on a quiz on the transcript request procedure. | | 3 hrs |
| **Week 1 - Getting Started** | | |
| **Introductions:** Participants will review the week 1 introduction from the course instructor and read the introduction to *Unpacking Fake News* "Fake News and the Imperative of Civic Education" before introducing themselves to their classmates in a discussion post. Participants will need to respond to a minimum of two classmates to fulfill all requirements for this assignment. | 1 hr | 1 hr |
| **Discussion: Facts, Opinions, and Why They Matter:** In this lesson, participants will analyze the difference between facts and opinions using resources designed for elementary age students from BrainPOP as well as a (dense) essay written by philosopher John Corvino, "The Fact/Opinion Distinction" that offers a much more nuanced understanding of fact and opinion. In a discussion post, participants will answer questions about how well they think their students currently differentiate between fact and opinion, compare, and contrast the two definitions they've been presented in this lesson, and defend which approach makes the most sense for the grade level they teach. | 1 hr | 3 hrs |
| **Discussion: What is Media and Information Literacy (MIL)?** – In this lesson, participants will read an article Commonsense Media as well as Chapter 2 of *Media Literacy in the K-12 Classroom*, "Teaching Media Literacy" about the pressing nature of ensuring our students are engaging in media and information literacy lessons, in this time of rapid globalization. Participants will reflect on students' constant access to information, and their own perspectives on some of the biggest challenges they face helping students to understand MIL. | 1.5 hrs | 3 hrs |
| **Discussion: How Do We Know What We Know?** – This lesson requires participants to answer some discussion questions before reading the assigned materials. To begin, | 1.5 hrs | 3 hrs |

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| participants will answer a series of questions on their media consumption habits (news sources they gravitate towards, preferred medium, etc.). They will then examine a PEW Research publication, "Key findings about the online news landscape in America," an American Press Institute article, "How Americans Describe Their News Consumption Behaviors," and watch a TEDx Talk called "Food for thought: Our minds on new models of media consumption" to promote further reflection on their news consumption habits and how those habits might influence MIL in their classrooms. | | |
| **Week 2 - Diving Deeper** | | |
| **Discussion: Discussion: Identifying Bias in Media** – This lesson makes use of the infamous AllSides Media chart by asking participants to identify where their preferred media source falls in relationship to liberal and conservative perspectives and reliable vs. unreliable information (they do not have to share where on the chart their sources fall if they do not wish). They will then read Chapter 6 of *Media Literacy in the K-12 Classroom*, "Representation, Bias, and Stereotypes" and watch a CrashCourse video, "The Dark Side of Media" on how bias sneaks up, even in major news sources such as CNN, Fox, and ABC. They'll reflect in a discussion post. | 1.5 hrs | 3 hrs |
| **Discussion: Evaluating the Reliability of Information** – Participants will use the CrashCourse Video from the previous module, and the Corvino article from the first lesson to begin to articulate how to evaluate reliability in news media. They'll read Chapter 6 of *Unpacking Fake News*, "Judging Credibility in Un-Credible Times". In a discussion post, participants will answer questions on why it's important to differentiate between biased and untrue information, and how they might begin to teach their students about evaluating credibility and reliability. | 1.5 hrs | 3 hrs |
| **Discussion: Understanding the Human Experience** – In this lesson participants will dig into the inequities that exist in who is in the newsrooms. They'll read chapter 2 of Unpacking Fake News, "Real Recognize Real: Thoughts on Race, Fake News, and Recognizing our Truths" and examine a PEW Research article on the disparity of racial diversity in news media compared to other jobs. In a discussion post, they'll reflect on the importance of diversity in who publicly communicates news. | 1 hr | 2 hrs |
| **Week 3 - Putting it to Work** | | |
| **Discussion: Facts, Opinions, and Civil Dialogue** – In this lesson, participants will read chapter 3 of Social Studies, Literacy, and Social Justice in the Common Core Classroom, "Painting the Picture" which includes sections on exploring multiple perspectives, building critical thinking skills, and simulation and reflection exercises for educators to use in their classrooms. Participants will reflect on some of the barriers to approaching these lessons in a discussion post. | 1 hr | 2 hrs |
| **Discussion: Fighting Fake News in the Classroom** – In this lesson participants will explore what media and information literacy and the benchmarks students should be able to reach at each grade level pertaining to evaluating media and information. They'll read Chapter 5 of Unpacking Fake News, "Teaching in the Twilight Zone of misinformation, disinformation, alternative facts, and fake news." In a discussion post, they'll evaluate strategies to combat fake news and incomplete information in the classroom, while still valuing student opinion and voice. | 1 hr | 2 hrs |
| **Discussion: Preparing Students to Consume News Outside the Classroom** – In the final lesson of the course, participants will discuss how to prepare their students to continue investigating news when they go out into the world. They'll read Chapter 4 of *Social Studies, Literacy and Social Justice*, "Applications" and Chapter 7 of Unpacking Fake News | 2 hrs | 2 hrs |

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|---|---|---|---|
| "Political memes and the Limits of Media Literacy". They'll discuss their main goals for the students that they primarily serve, in a discussion post. | | | |
| **Final Assignment:** For their final assignment, participants will use information from this course to design a lesson plan that they can use in their own classroom or learning environment. They'll follow the prompt and the rubric in this syllabus to demonstrate that they understand the course materials, and can apply them to their work. Participants can choose their preferred medium for this project. | 2 hrs | 3 hrs |
| Total Class Time | 15 hours | 30 hours |

**Coursework:** Participants can earn up to 75 points total for the course. The following table depicts the breakdown of points possible for the required coursework

| Activity | Points |
|---|---|
| 10 Discussion Posts (5 Points Each) | 50 |
| Final Implementation Plan/Paper | 25 |
| **Total** | **75** |

**Grading Scale – Graduate Credit**

| 100-90% (75 - 68 points) | A |
|---|---|
| 89-80% (67 – 60 points) | B |
| 79-70%  (59 – 53 points) | C |
| 69-60% (52 - 45 points) | D |
| 59%-Below (<44 points) | F |

**Grading Scale - License Renewal Credit**

| 100-80% (75 - 60 points) | P |
|---|---|
| 79%-Below (<59 points) | NP |

**Student Requirements** Students are required to:
- Participate in **ALL** discussion forums and quizzes
- Complete a final implementation plan

**Americans with Disabilities Act:** If you are a student with a disability and require any auxiliary aids, services, or other accommodations for this class, please see the instructor to discuss your accommodation needs.

**Statement of Plagiarism:** Academic dishonesty results in failure of this course. Give credit where credit is due. Use the MLA or Chicago Publication Manuals found at Purdue OWL to cite references when needed. Not crediting ideas or words of others is unacceptable scholarship, as is submitting work that was done for a previous course or that is not your own origin in design or completion. Submit original assignments. Do not submit work for this course that you have done for other courses.

**Grading Rubrics for Individual Activities**

**10 Discussions (50 points possible)** Discussion Forums are asynchronous ways to engage in class discussions.  They require you to submit an answer to a question and respond to the posts of other peers.  Because they are an integral part of sharing strategies, analyzing research, and sharing ideas, discussion forums in this course comprise a significant percentage of your final grade.  It's highly recommended that you read and respond to more than the required two peer postings because greater participation will facilitate a greater depth of understanding.  Additionally, it's important to make posts in a timely manner to benefit from peer responses.

| Grading Rubric for Discussion Forums | | |
|---|---|---|
| | | **Points** |
| **Critical Thinking** | Makes connections to the other content and real=life that are supported by reference(s) and example(s) | 1 |
| | Offers new ideas, connections, or applications | 1 |
| | Expresses and justifies personal opinion | 1 |
| **Assignment Specific Criteria** | Addresses all parts of the assignment, cites sources | 1 |
| **Participation (Responses to at least 2 peer posts)** | Responds to other posts (when available) | 1 |
| **Total Points Possible** | | 5 |

**Final Assignment (25 points possible)**

The final assignment is a critical part of this course.  Participants must complete a two-page final assignment. The paper is meant to be a reflection as well as a chance to state what you will use going forward.  The rubric below will be used to grade the final assignment, but additional details will be provided within the course.

| Grading Rubric for Implementation Plan | | |
|---|---|---|
| | | **Points** |
| **Critical Thinking** | Highlights any new knowledge gained as a result of course. | 5 |
| | Offers new ideas, connections, or applications | 5 |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | Expresses and justifies personal opinion | 3 |
| | Discusses Overall Implications | 2 |
| **Assignment Specific Criteria** | Addresses all parts of the assignment, cites sources | 2 |
| **Mechanics** | Writing is clear, well developed, and organized, No or few grammar and spelling errors | 2 |
| **Implementation** | Clearly states ideas to use in the future | 2 |
| | States resources to be used | 2 |
| | Is realistic in their approach – understands limitations may exist | 2 |
| **Total Points Possible** | | 25 |