ALA Course Proposal - 1 Credit Library Mini-course Fall 2017

Course Title:

Fake News, Lies, and Propaganda: How to Sort Fact from Fiction

Course Description

What is "fake news" anyway? Are we living in a post-truth world? This course will provide opportunities to discuss and analyze news production, consumption and evaluation. Students will develop the critical thinking skills necessary to be an informed citizen; understand how their worldview affects their interpretation of the news; and create a personal strategy for fact-checking and evaluating the news. Topics include types of "fake news" such as misinformation and disinformation; economic and technological contexts of the news media; psychological and social factors of media consumption; and the impact of news on our society.

Learning Outcomes

After participating in this course, students will be able to:
1. Critically evaluate news sources in order to determine content credibility.
2. Develop and implement a strategy to make an informed opinion about current topics and issues in order to become a better informed citizen
3. Identify types of "fake news" including misinformation, disinformation, biased information, propaganda, and satire in order to determine the credibility of news content
4. Describe the news production process and information landscape in order to recognize the impact of the economic and technological context
5. Analyze the impact of psychological and social factors on media consumption in order to reflect on their own personal media consumption behaviors and practices
6. Discuss the individual and societal impacts of news literacy in order to understand its importance to public policy and democracy.

Structure and Administration

Potential Instructors

Instructors will apply through the LSA application process. It is anticipated that instructors will most likely be librarians with substantial instruction experience from the U-M University Library.

Course Structure

This is a one-credit lab course. It would be taught as a mini-course (2 hours per week, 7 weeks). Students will be required to read and discuss theoretical texts, actively participate in workshops and group activities, and will produce a research project over the course of the semester.

Enrollment

Sophomore or above standing. Enrollment is limited to 21 students.

Grading

Letter grades (A-E)

Weekly Course Content

1. **Course Overview. What is News? What is "Fake News?" What is Opinion?**
Students are introduced to definitions, history, current events, and various examples of news, fake news, propaganda, and opinion.

2. **Strategies for identifying "real" news: Evaluating sources and determination of source credibility.** Students begin to demonstrate strategies for evaluating news sources and learn to successfully apply these questions to real world situations.

3. **Journalistic Integrity and News Production:** Examine journalistic codes of ethics; Evaluate case studies on Impact of "fake news" on our everyday lives and society. Students will identify how and why propaganda is generated.

4. **The Information Landscape: Media Fragmentation and Social Media.** Where do you get news? How does the immediacy of social media influence our response? What is the impact of the "publication" cycle of social media? Students will trace events using multiple media sources.

5. **Fact-checking Statistics and Data.** Students will explore the following questions: What should you look for in data visualizations? How are statistics and data used to influence the public? Students will also explore trusted sources of data and information.

6. **Is Reality Subjective?:** Investigation of psychological and social factors on determinations of truth and interpretations of the news. Explore how opinions are formed and the relationship between personal worldviews and "facts."

7. **Project Presentations & Evaluations**

Potential Readings

Best, J. (2013) Getting started: Background. In J. Best, Stat-Spotting: A Field Guide to Identifying Dubious Data (pp.7-13). Berkeley: University of California Press.

Choi, W., & Stvilia, B. (2015). Web credibility assessment: Conceptualization, operationalization, variability, and models. Journal of the Association for Information Science and Technology, 66(12), 2399–2414.

Manjoo, F. (2008). True enough: learning to live in a post-fact society. Hoboken, N.J.: Wiley. (Select chapters)