

Syllabus

Department: Division of Library and Information Science

Course Number and Title: LIS 271 Fake News and Misinformation

Bulletin Description:

To empower students with the necessary skills, strategies, and resources to address fake news and misinformation, and their implications for public health, civic engagement, and people's overall well-being.

Credit: 3 semester hours.

Course Description

This course emphasizes access to the authoritative information as a social justice issue and utilizes a social justice perspective to explore the evolution of fake news, misinformation, and conspiracy theories and their implications in contemporary society. Students will examine cognitive factors and emotional filters through which people process information. The course equips students with the necessary skills, strategies, and resources to address fake news, misinformation, and conspiracy theories, and their implications for public health, civic engagement, and overall well-being in an information society.

Prerequisite(s): None

Co-requisite(s): None

Course Objectives:

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

- Discuss, define, and explore concepts, ideas, and issues surrounding misinformation, fake news, and conspiracy theories and their implications for public health, civic engagement, and overall well-being in an information society;
- Examine cognitive factors, emotional filters, and other psychological phenomena through which people process information;
- Make informed decisions while exercising critical thinking skills to evaluate information people encounter every day;
- Explore and analyze the dangers of infodemics – i.e. the staggering quantity of information, both accurate and inaccurate, that circulates during public health crises (e.g., SARS, Ebola, COVID-19 epidemics)
- Understand the role of “infodemiology” in measuring, managing, and controlling infodemics;
- Examine information professionals' unique role in addressing misinformation, fake news, conspiracy theories, and the challenges associated with them;

- Explore strategies for empowering library patrons and communities in combating the issues of misinformation, fake news, and conspiracy theories; and
- Develop plans and approaches for addressing the phenomenon of misinformation, fake news, and conspiracy theories in their professional work.

Program Goals and Outcomes:

5B) Understand and demonstrate ability to interact successfully with individuals of all ages and groups to provide consultation, mediation, and guidance in their use of recorded knowledge and information, including information literacy techniques and methods.

7A) Continue professional development by maintaining and practicing the purpose and role of providing quality service for the lifelong learning of patrons and the promotion of library services.

Units of Instruction:

Unit	Topic
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information in the post-truth era <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Misinformation as social problem ○ Information access, human rights, and social justice
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information belief systems <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Psychology behind information processing ○ Cognitive and emotional biases
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Libraries, media & information literacy
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Misinformation during public health crisis <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Infodemics, infodemic management & infodemiology
5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategies and approaches to tackling misinformation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Everyday life information literacy ○ Interdisciplinary approaches for addressing misinformation

Learning Activities

Through various assignments grounded in interdisciplinary theory, practice, and approaches, this course will equip students with the necessary skills, strategies, and resources to address fake news, misinformation, and conspiracy theories, and their implications for public health, civic engagement, and overall well-being in an information society.

There will be ongoing online discussions and individual exercises to facilitate learning key concepts and practices. Through several individual exercises, students will demonstrate their critical thinking skills in analyzing media and information landscape, informational belief systems, and infodemic management approaches and their implications in addressing the phenomenon of misinformation. In the capstone individual project, students will demonstrate their skills in designing a misinformation awareness program to empower library patrons and communities in combating the issues of misinformation, fake news, and conspiracy theories.

Assessment

1. Course-Level Assessment
 - a) The discussions and individual exercises are designed to reinforce one or more of the course objectives.
 - b) The final individual project is designed to apply to all course objectives, although some objectives may have a greater emphasis depending on the feedback from the earlier assignments.
2. Program-Level Assessment. The MS LIS program is reviewed every seven years for continued accreditation by the American Library Association's (ALA) Committee on Accreditation. The program's most recent accreditation was in the Fall 2018 term. As part of this accreditation process, all students, faculty, alumni, and employers participate in periodic assessments, providing feedback for improving the MS LIS program. The two assessments below apply to every course in the program.
 - a) Faculty-Selected Assessment. Over a four year period each course in the MS LIS program is assessed by the instructor to determine how well students are learning the program goal/s related to the course. For each course, faculty select one or more artifacts (e.g. assignment, exam, or semester project) as a representative measure of student learning of the related program goal/s. At the end of the course, the faculty member completes a course artifact assessment form describing the class' performance on the artifact, and any course revisions prescribed as a result. Sample artifacts with their respective reviews are included as well. In LIS 271 Fake News and Misinformation, the misinformation awareness program is used as a representative measure of student learning of the related program goal.
 - b) Student-Selected Assessment. The end-of-program assessment is an e-portfolio consisting of student-selected artifacts (assignments, discussion posts, projects, etc.) from their courses as evidence of satisfying each of the eight program goals. For each program goal, students write a reflection which describes the relationship of the artifact to the respective goal and their learning from the artifact. In LIS 271 Fake News and Misinformation, the misinformation awareness program is suggested as the course artifact should students decide to use their work in this course as evidence of satisfying the related program goal/s. This is because of the comprehensive nature of the project.

Grading Scheme

The course grade will be determined from the following activities. The percent in parentheses is that of the overall course grade.

- a) Discussion (30%)
- b) Individual exercises (40%)
- c) Final project (30%)

Bibliography

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Instructional Time Requirements: 150 hours for 3 credits (10 hours per week for our 15 week semester)

Asynchronous or synchronous Lecture

Assigned weekly reading

Weekly assignments (individual and group)

Active participation in online discussions

Research for semester-long projects (term papers, projects)

Presentations (online or face to face)

Academic Service-Learning projects (where appropriate)