

Beyond the checklist: strengthening student's critical thinking muscles in assessing information

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Butler University

- ◇ Private, Liberal Arts Institution of 4,000 students, primarily undergrad
- ◇ Traditional student profile: academically prepared, 18-22 year olds



SW266 – Media Literacy Course

- ◇ Fulfills both a major requirement for the College of Communication curriculum and a Core Curriculum (general education) requirement
 - So, have mix of CCOM majors and students from other colleges
- ◇ 7 sections per semester; reached 5 each semester
- ◇ My stretch:
 - Make a push with this course
 - Interface with Moodle
 - Direct Assessment





Learning Outcomes & Outline for Instruction

Students will be able to:

- ◇ Apply critical thinking strategies to assess information value.
- ◇ Identify key terminology centering around misinformation and “fake news”.
- ◇ Interpret the ways information literacy and media literacy interrelate.





Outline



- ◇ Pre-class reading & Quiz: [How to Teach Information Literacy in an Era of Lies.](#)
 - Ask Experts
 - Focus more on the claims, less on the source
 - Lateral searching
 - Upstreaming
 - Confirmation bias, selective attention
- ◇ information literacy and media literacy [relationships](#) overview slides

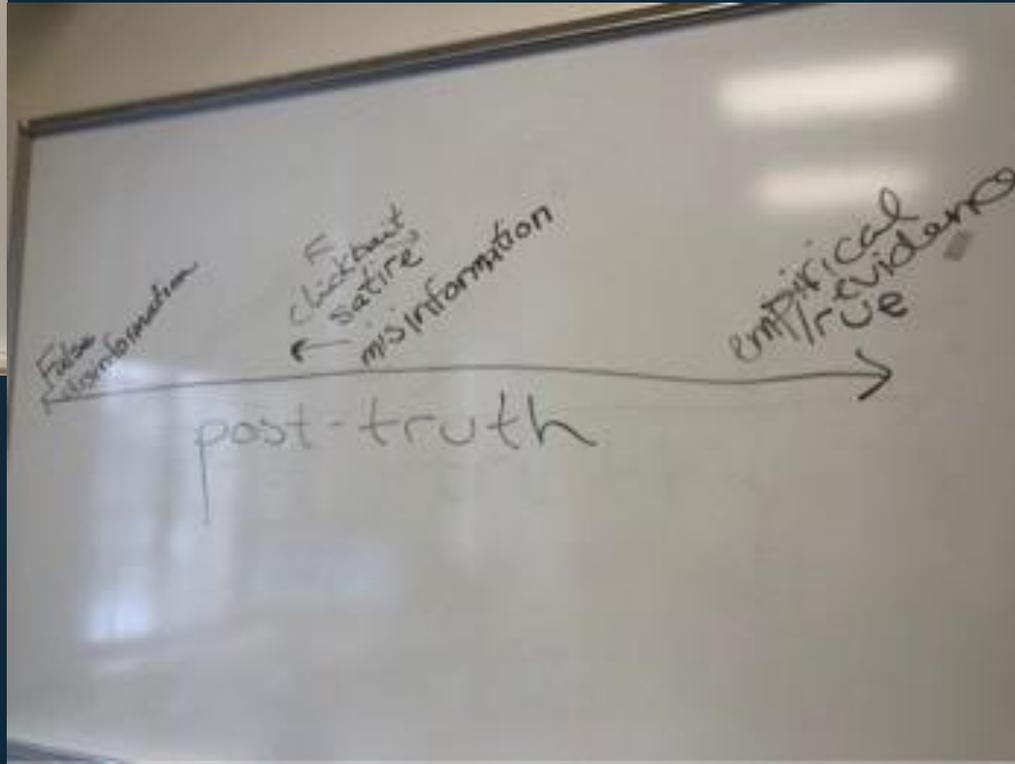




Outline Cont'd.

- ◇ Explore the concepts of the [Fake News Glossary](#) tab of the Fake News LibGuide.
 - Let's try it! - In class discussion
- ◇ Group Learning Activity - divide students into groups to analyze a pre-selected site to determine whether the information is fake (disinformation), has false information mixed in with the real, is advocating a certain viewpoint, etc.
 - Turn in for credit in Moodle.
- ◇ Revisit class a second time to discuss the strategies they used to evaluate their information.







Articles students reviewed:

Adams, M. (2017, September 25). Fields of pigs to be bred in Matrix-like bio-factories, then murdered for organ transplants into humans. Retrieved April 1, 2019, from <https://www.naturalnews.com/2017-09-25-fields-of-pigs-to-be-bred-in-matrix-like-bio-factories-then-murdered-for-organ-transplants-into-humans.html>

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Sheaks, S. (2018, August 30). Sarah Palin Not Invited To John McCain's Funeral - Conservative Daily Post. Retrieved April 1, 2019, from <https://conservativedaily.com/sarah-palin-not-invited-to-john-mccains-funeral/>

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Worksheet Questions: Authority is Constructed & Contextual

List the author(s) and their background.

Define the purpose of the site; is it trying to promote (sell) you something, educate you, inform you?

What is left out of the argument or information that may be important to the issue?

Personal Experience - How do your personal experiences impact your interpretation of the information

Identify the source (is it a website, blog post, article?) and its background

List at least one source pointed to in the article - do they verify the points in the article?

Who benefits and who is harmed by the information?

Emotional Reaction - did the information elicit a strong emotional response from you? What was it?

List at least one, reputable site that verifies the claim:

Do you think the authors / source bring biases, misleading, or disinformation to their assertions?

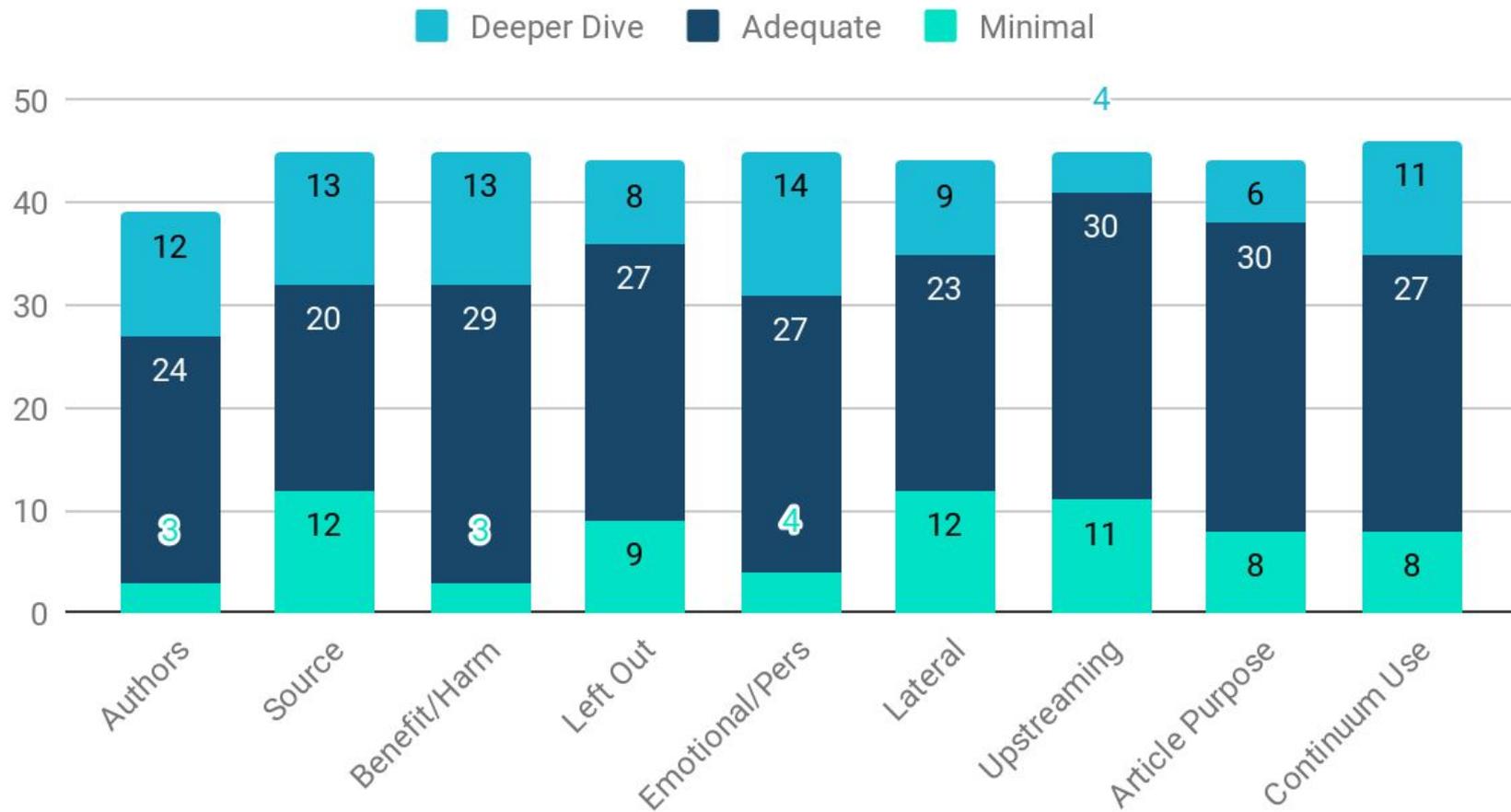




What we found



Student Competencies in Assessing Information



Worksheet statements



Authority is Constructed/Contextual...(Personal/Emotion)

“Pigs were my favorite animal growing up and I love any Animal for that matter. My bias of viewing animal rights just as Equally important as human rights impacted my interpretation Of the information. It made me want to agree with him more And not really care about if he was presenting a decent Argument with supportable facts.” (Pigs for Organ Transplants)

Authority is Contextual/Constructed...(Continuum reflection)

I think the way they present the information and the way that the articles are written can be misleading. This is because I felt like I was confused about what was going on within the article. It didn't make sense to me until I looked at another source. On the other hand, I did not feel like it was biased. (yournewswire.com)

Authority is

Constructed/Contextual...(benefit/harmed)

The general public is being benefited so they can be informed about information they may not have known before. People who are waiting for transplants, hospitals, and the people who have jobs in this field of work are being harmed. (Pigs for Organ Transplants)

Authority is

Constructed/Contextual...(Personal/Emotional)



I think the fact that I barely watch or even look at the news really impacted my emotion and interpretation. This because I'm sure lots of articles like the ones I read are written every day. I also think the vision article was so amazing to me because I don't have 20/20 vision. (yournewswire.com)



Worksheet statements

Authority is Constructed/Contextual...(Identifying Source)

Mike Adams (self-labeled "The Health Ranger") which promotes alternative medicine and related conspiracy theories . [2] Even other quacks think it's a quack site . [3] The site particularly specializes in vaccine denialism and the alleged vaccines-autism link , [4] AIDS/HIV denialism , [5] quack cancer treatments , [6] and conspiracy theories about " Big Pharma " . [7] If there's an alternative medicine or alternative medical treatment out there, you can guarantee that NaturalNews has one article singing its praises to the sky and one more bashing the stupid "skeptics" . (Pigs for Organ Transplant, *Natural News*) (Evidence found at: RationalWiki)

Authority is Constructed/Contextual...(Upstreaming)

New York Times was referenced, and some of the reaction found in the Natural News article is fair. New York Times says “ The idea of using pigs as organ factories has tantalized investigators for decades.” It is promptly followed by “ the prospect also raises thorny questions about animal exploitation and Welfare.” However the first quote is definitely an increasing word for the Situation...tantalizing. The title: Gene Editing Spurs Hope for Transplanting Pig Organs Into Humans. Also creates a vastly more pro-pig organ transplant tone The points in the New York Times paint a extremely less dramatic picture, but technically the facts hold. (Pigs for Organ Transplants, *Natural News*.)





Worksheet statements

Authority is Constructed/Contextual...(Emotional/Personal Response)

While reading this blog, I actually sent the article to my little sister, who uses lush products, because it scared me. I was scared that if this were true, my little sister could be in danger and she should stop using the products. (Lush Bath Bombs, Food Babe)

Authority is Constructed/Contextual... (Emotional/Personal Response)

Response 1: I am an animal lover, so I don't like seeing or hearing about them injured, that's why this article made me sad.

R2: I have family that has abused drugs and alcohol and had to get a transplant in the past, so I feel that I would rather have my family here, despite their past, instead of a random pig.

R3: My dad is currently waiting for a lung transplant, so this makes me lean more towards the side of continuing the experiment, so he has a better chance. (Pigs for Organ Transplant, Natural News)

Authority is Constructed/Contextual...(Purpose of Article)

I think it's very important for readers to understand that "Pure", the company that is being advertised at the end, is a very big competitor with Lush. So not only could Pure be paying Vani to say these things and promote Pure's products, but it could also be completely falsified. (Lush Bath Bombs, Food Babe)



Worksheet statements

Authority is Constructed/Contextual...(Identifying Sources)

BuzzFeed website, news article. BuzzFeed is an American internet media and news/entertainment company with a key focus on digital media....In the 2017 year it was confirmed that Buzzfeed News largely follows the established rules of journalism; “Being honest, courageous, ethical and fair...”.

BuzzFeed was founded as a side project by Jonah Peretti in 2006. In the beginning BuzzFeed did not employ any writers or editors; just an "algorithm to cull stories from around the web that were showing stirrings of virality."

(Fakes News, *Buzzfeed*)

Authority is Constructed/Contextual...

The claim in the article about a violent protest and UC Berkeley were verified by Time and discuss into further detail what happened at the Protest. (*Permeation of Propaganda in the College Student Brain, American Thinker*)





Student Reflections





Student Reflections

What did you learn?

Being more thoughtful in what links/sources I'm reading

Lateral reading and critically thinking if I read any articles online or what-not

Honestly, I felt like I learned this before since I'm an upperclassmen. However, I believe that if I was a freshman I would have thought it was useful and new.

I now understand the scale of truth when it comes to news reporting and things such as disinformation, misinformation, and bias.

I learned how discern misinformed/disinformed new articles from actual news articles .

There is a difference between disinformation and misinformation, and sometimes sources are innocently misleading you. It is not ALWAYS the goal of media to get you to think a certain way.





Student Reflections

What do you still need help with?

knowing what sites are good for certain things

More efficient ways to verify sources

I still need help with understanding whether the source is biased or not.

Just knowing which are the most trustworthy websites to use.

How to know when too much bias makes a news site completely unreliable.

I still need help finding valid resources that I could use in papers.

I will still need help finding articles for specific classes.



Questions?

Presentation URL:

<http://bit.ly/fakenewsbutler>





Bibliography

Fake News Worksheet Rubric

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