

## Media literacy

Media literacy is the ability to critically analyze for accuracy the content created in various media, including radio and television, the internet, and social media.

Misinformation is false or inaccurate information (ex: rumors, insults and pranks). Disinformation is deliberate and includes malicious content (ex: hoaxes, spear phishing and propaganda). It spreads fear and suspicion among the population. Conspiracy theories, deepfakes, fake news, scams – in the digital age, misinformation and disinformation are rampant.

## Manipulation in social media

Here are ways in which social media can be used to manipulate conversations:

- A Sockpuppet is an online identity used to deceive by misleading uses of online identities to support a person or organization; to manipulate public opinion...;
- Sealioning is a type of trolling or harassment where people are pursued with persistent requests for evidence. A pretense of civility and sincerity is maintained with these incessant, bad-faith invitations to debate;
- Astroturfing masks the sponsors of a message (e.g. political, religious, advertising or PR organizations) to make it appear as though it comes from grassroots participants. The practice aims to give organizations credibility by withholding information about their motives or financial connections.

## Fake news

In the 1890s, rival American newspaper publishers Joseph Pulitzer and William Hearst competed over the audience through sensationalism and reporting rumors as though they were facts, a practice that became known at the time as “*yellow journalism*.” Their incredulous news played a role in leading the US into the Spanish-American War of 1898. Eventually there was a backlash against the lack of journalistic integrity: the public demanded more objective and reliable news sources, which created a niche that the The New York Times was established to fill at the turn of the 20th century. Yellow journalism became less common. That is, until the rise of web-based news brought it all back in full force.

Take a moment to think before you click - and share



**Consider the source:** Strange domain names or web sites that end in “lo” (like “Newslo”) are signs you should be wary.

**Check the URL:** Fake news sites will often use a web address designed to make it look like real site, ending in “.com.co”



**Look for visual clues:** Fake news websites may use sloppy or unprofessional design and overuse ALL CAPS.

**Get a second opinion:** If a story makes you very angry, dig deeper; consult other news sources or use debunking sites



Fake news in its modern form is different from the historical forms of journalistic nonsense in traditional media outlets. The speed at which it is spread and the magnitude of its influence places it in a different category from its historical cousins.

Fake news is created and spread by either those with ideological interests, such as Russian agents, or computer-savvy individuals looking to make some money.

According to Bloomberg and several other news organizations, on August 18th, 2021, “Facebook Inc. said it has removed more than 20 million posts on its main social network and photo-sharing app Instagram for violating rules on Covid-19 misinformation since the beginning of the pandemic.”



## Pizzagate

In one infamous case, a fake news story moved one man to shoot up a pizzeria that was linked by bogus statements to human trafficking. In the incident nicknamed “Pizzagate,” a man with a semi-automatic rifle walked into a regular Washington, DC pizza joint and fired shots. Why? He was convinced that the pizzeria contained a hidden pedophilia trafficking ring led by Hillary Clinton and her presidential campaign. Where did he come up with this notion? Alt-right communities first created this piece of fiction, and fake news websites promoted the lie. The spread of information that was knowingly false had potentially deadly consequences.

## Vocabulary

Bias: a particular tendency, trend, inclination, feeling, or opinion, especially one that is preconceived or unreasoned; prejudice.

Clickbait: Internet content whose main purpose is to encourage users to follow a link to a web page considered to be of low quality.

Post-truth: an adjective defined as 'relating to circumstances in which objective facts are less influential in shaping public opinion than appeals to emotion and personal belief.

Prank: a trick of an amusing, playful, or sometimes malicious nature.

Hearsay: Information that you have heard but do not know to be true. A rumour.

Troll: To post inflammatory comments for the purpose of upsetting other users and provoking a response.

## Cambridge Analytica

This was a company that specialized in using data from social media to build psychological profiles about social media users in various countries. It acquired data for 87 million Facebook users without the users’ knowledge or consent. With these data—specifically a person’s “Likes”—they were able to predict people’s political preferences and issue interests. Political campaign operatives coordinated by Donald Trump’s chief strategist, Steve Bannon, used this information to target political advertisements and memes on Facebook that mainly focused on discrediting Hillary Clinton’s presidential campaign and influencing Americans on a number of pro-Trump issues. These messages were often inflammatory, sensationalistic, sometimes violent, and false. They exploited data that many Americans never agreed to share with advertisers.

## Trump and fake news

Donald Trump used the term to discredit news stories that he didn’t like, and suggested that they were made up or that they blew out of proportion something that should have been trivial. In a conversation with Fox Business in October, 2017, Donald Trump claimed that he had "really started this whole 'fake news' thing." (Ironically, Hillary Clinton used the term in a speech two days before Trump’s first use of the phrase). He was banned from Twitter after having suggested that the elections results were rigged and inciting “American Patriots” to reinstate the truth at the Capitol...

“Our press secretary, Sean Spicer, gave alternative facts to that.”

(Kellyanne Conway)

Trump's campaign strategist and counselor, Kellyanne Conway, defended Spicer's statements in an interview, in response to a question from the anchorman Chuck Todd about Trump's false claims regarding the inauguration crowd and the loss of credibility.

## QAnon

QAnon is an American political conspiracy theory and political movement. It originated in the American far-right political sphere in 2017. QAnon centers on fabricated claims made by an anonymous individual or individuals known as "Q". Those claims have been relayed and developed by online communities and influencers. Their core belief is that a cabal of Satanic, cannibalistic child molesters are operating a global child sex trafficking ring which conspired against Donald Trump. QAnon has direct roots in Pizzagate, an Internet conspiracy theory that appeared one year earlier, but also incorporates elements of many other theories. QAnon has been described as a cult.

Dark blue segment followed by yellow and orange segments.

Dark blue segment followed by yellow and orange segments.

Dark blue segment followed by yellow and orange segments.