

Navigating the News

What does it mean?

- Critically assessing news content from all sources
- Differentiating real, reported news from speculation, opinion, misinformation, stereotypes, fabricated material

What does it involve?

- Approaching news actively, not passively
- Questioning your initial reactions
- Looking at many sources w/different audiences, contexts
- Getting out of your comfort zone

Why does it matter?

- Being misinformed leads to making faulty choices
- Being informed – positive impact on others, society
- ‘Garbage in, garbage out’

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Why is this such a concern in the digital age?

Data Smog – David Shenk, 1997

- Definition: The overwhelming amount of online information whose volume serves more to confuse the user than illuminate a topic.
- Written when most Americans didn't yet have Internet access
- 'Information, once rare and cherished like caviar, is now plentiful and taken for granted like potatoes'
- Predicted that too much information could lead to anxiety
- Foresaw echo chamber effect, 'virtual anarchy'
- Warned against 'stories that dissolve all complexity'
- Said news consumers would need to be their own editors

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Why is this such a concern in the digital age?

- Lack of news hierarchy
- Everything on social media treated as news
- Suspicion of traditional sources
- Information overload exhausts our brains
- Desire for lack of dissonance
- Familiar vs. unfamiliar
- Confirmation bias
- Ease of distribution
- Ease of alteration of info, images
- New ability for fringe groups to affect society

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Critical Thinking

- Actively analyzing facts, evidence, observations, and arguments to form conclusions about a topic or event
- Get fullest possible understanding from considering multiple perspectives

Media Literacy

- Understanding how different types of media work and being able to intelligently analyze their content
- Can apply to all media content, not just journalism

News Literacy

- A set of critical thinking skills used to analyze the credibility and reliability of news
- Requires adapting to different types of news stories from different places, cultures, contexts

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Misinformation vs. Disinformation

Misinformation

- False, misleading or inaccurate info presented as fact
- People pass on bad information all the time
- Not created or shared with intent to deceive
- Can spread incredibly rapidly in digital age

Disinformation

- False or misleading information deliberately spread with intent to deceive, misguide or manipulate
- Takes advantage of information overload
- Usually done to push a political or social agenda
- Can spread incredibly rapidly in digital age

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Types of misinformation & disinformation

Satire/Parody

- No intention to cause harm, but potential to fool

Misleading Content

- Deceptive use of info to frame an issue or individual

Imposter Content

- Impersonating genuine sources

Fabricated Content

- Content is 100% false; created to deceive & do harm

False Connection

- Headlines, visuals etc. don't support story details

False Context

- Genuine content shared with false contextual info

Manipulated Content

- Genuine info or images altered to deceive

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Why is misleading/deceptive content created?

- Poor journalism
- To parody
- To provoke or 'punk'
- Passion
- Partisanship
- For profit
- For political influence
- Propaganda

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MISINFORMATION MATRIX

	 SATIRE OR PARODY	 FALSE CONNECTION	 MISLEADING CONTENT	 FALSE CONTEXT	 IMPOSTER CONTENT	 MANIPULATED CONTENT	 FABRICATED CONTENT
POOR JOURNALISM		✓	✓	✓			
TO PARODY	✓				✓		✓
TO PROVOKE OR TO 'PUNK'					✓	✓	✓
PASSION				✓			
PARTISANSHIP			✓	✓			
PROFIT		✓			✓		✓
POLITICAL INFLUENCE			✓	✓		✓	✓
PROPAGANDA			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

From Claire Wardle, [“Fake News. It’s Complicated,” Medium, Feb 16, 2017.](#)

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Ongoing Public Discourse: Digital Age Issues

- Citizens' discussion of social and political topics
 - Online 'echo chambers' limit discussion to one point of view, shout down all who disagree
 - Anonymity can remove accountability
- Best ideas evolve into consensus
 - Consensus within groups can become intolerance for other opinions, disbelief that anyone rational could disagree
- Discourse both fuels democracy & responds to it
 - Single-mindedness can question democracy
- Makes ordinary people feel involved
 - Most powerful element of echo chambers
- Considered a vital element of democracy
 - Believed by many to be threat to democracy

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Discerning News Consumer

- Discerning: Perceptive; having or showing keen insight; makes intelligent judgments
- Views news stories critically
- Can identify various types of news & opinion content
- Can identify most misinformation, disinformation, stereotypes, fabricated material, etc.
- Is wary of stories that aim to drive fear or anger
- Is willing to listen to different points of view
- Is willing to learn about unfamiliar things, places