# Hello!

I'm Jenny Dale (she/her)!

I'm the Information Literacy Coordinator at UNCG University Libraries and the liaison to: Classical Studies; Communication Studies; English; Media Studies; and Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies.

# Land acknowledgement

I acknowledge that the land on which I live and work has long served as the site of meeting and exchange amongst a number of Indigenous peoples, specifically the Keyauwee and Saura. I also acknowledge the long history and lasting legacies of slavery on these lands.



Boston Public Library, CC BY 2.0, via <u>Wikimedia Commons</u>

# Agenda

1. **What** are some of the concepts I typically cover when teaching about misinformation?
2. **Why** do I think teaching about misinformation is important?
3. **How** do I teach library users to detect and avoid misinformation?
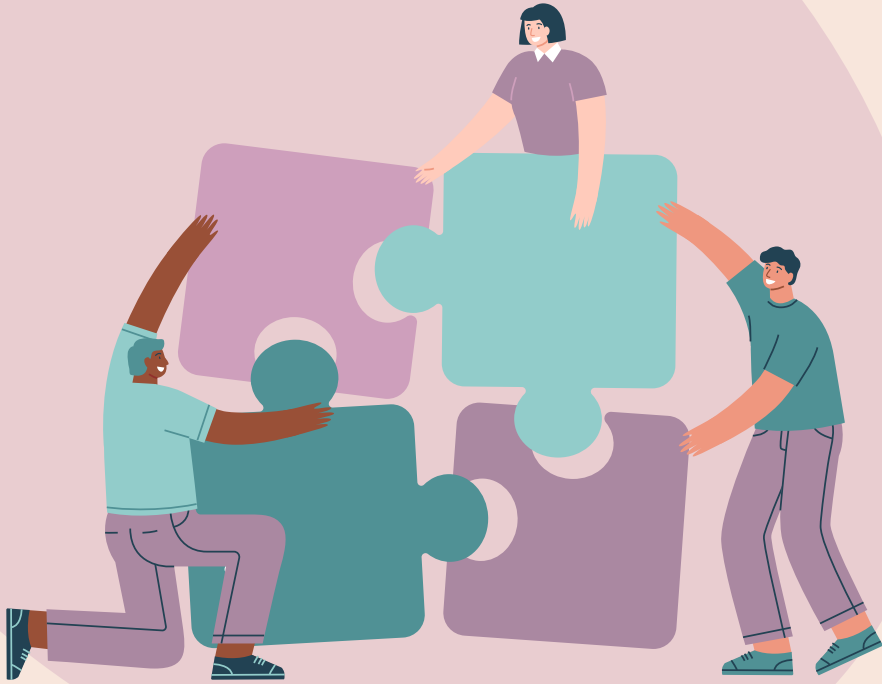
# The What

Important concepts &
terms defined

# Misinformation

According to the Oxford English Dictionary, misinformation is:
1. "The action of misinforming someone; the condition of being misinformed."
2. "Wrong or misleading information."

(The first use of this word recorded by the OED was in 1587, so misinformation is nothing new!)

# Disinformation

According to the Oxford English Dictionary, disinformation is:
"The dissemination of deliberately false information, esp. when supplied by a government or its agent to a foreign power or to the media, with the intention of influencing the policies or opinions of those who receive it; false information so supplied."

(The first use of this word recorded by the OED was in 1955. Does this same definition apply in 2021?)

# Fake news

"**Fake news.** *n.* originally U.S. news that conveys or incorporates false, fabricated, or deliberately misleading information, or that is characterized as or accused of doing so." (from the *OED*)

The concept has a <u>long</u> and <u>interesting</u> history, but rose to the level of national attention during and after the 2016 presidential election. The first recorded mention of this term in the OED is from February 7, 1890 in the *Milwaukee Daily Journal.*

# Deepfakes (and cheap fakes)

Deepfakes "are just one component of a larger field of audiovisual (AV) manipulation. AV manipulation includes any sociotechnical means for influencing the interpretation of media. AV manipulation includes both the cutting edge, AI-reliant techniques of deepfakes, as well as 'cheap fakes' that use conventional techniques like speeding, slowing, cutting, re-staging, or re-contextualizing footage" (Paris and Donovan, 2019, pp. 5-6).

# Algorithms

- "**Mathematics and Computing**. A procedure or set of rules used in calculation and problem-solving; (in later use *spec.*) a precisely defined set of mathematical or logical operations for the performance of a particular task." (OED)
- Or, more simply, automated decision-making systems.
- In a mis/disinformation context, algorithms are often discussed as mechanisms by which mis/disinformation are shared through search engines and social media.

# Algorithmic oppression

"Part of the challenge of understanding algorithmic oppression is to understand that mathematical formulations to drive automated decisions are made by human beings. While we often think of terms such as 'big data' and 'algorithms' as being benign, neutral, or objective, they are anything but." (Noble, 2018, p. 1)

# The Why

Why I think this work is important
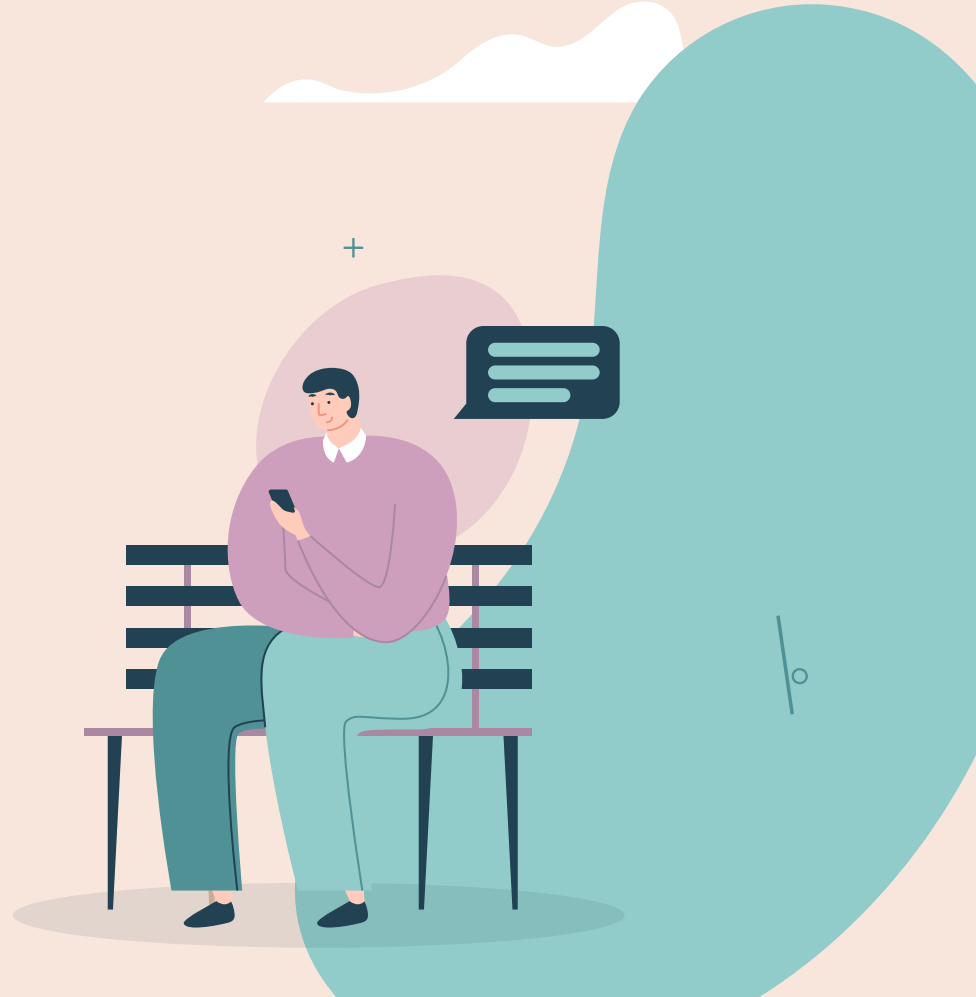
# The Life Cycle Of A COVID-19 Vaccine Lie

GEOFF BRUMFIEL

# The Life Cycle Of A COVID-19 Vaccine Lie

July 20, 2021 · 5:04 AM ET

Technology

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August 18, 2021, 1:00 PM EDT

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# Facebook Removed 20 Million Pieces of

SCIENCE \ HEALTH \ CORONAVIRUS \

# COVID-19 misinformation is increasing amid US virus surge

*The falsehood that vaccines don't work is up 437 percent*

By Nicole Wetsman | Aug 10, 2021, 11:16am EDT

vaccine was most popular on the platform from January through March

## The Life Cycle Of A COVID-19 Vaccine Lie

July 20, 2021 · 5:04 AM ET

# The social network for doctors is full of vaccine disinformation

PUBLISHED FRI, AUG 6 2021·10:45 AM EDT | UPDATED FRI, AUG 6 2021·11:52 AM EDT

**Ari Levy**
@LEVYNEWS

SHARE f y in ✉

By Nicole Wetsman | Aug 10, 2021, 11:16am EDT

# vaccine was most popular on the platform from January through March

# From a recent Pew Research Center report

"Roughly half of U.S. adults (48%) now say the government should take steps to restrict false information, even if it means losing some freedom to access and publish content, according to the survey of 11,178 adults conducted July 26–Aug. 8, 2021. That is up from 39% in 2018... A majority of adults (59%) continue to say technology companies should take steps to restrict misinformation online, even if it puts some restrictions on Americans' ability to access and publish content." (Mitchell & Walker, 2021)

# Why do I think this work is important?

Because people are worried, and we can help.

# The state of fake news in the US in 2020

A 2020 study published in *Science Advances* found that: "fake news consumption is a negligible fraction of Americans' daily information diet. We emphasize here that both our definition of news and fake news are extremely broad. In the case of news, we include, for example, morning shows and portals, while our definition of fake news includes highly biased and hyperpartisan news sites... and outright fraudulent sites" (Allen et al., 2020, p. 6).

# Where and how much were people encountering fake news?

+ "Referring first to online consumption, Fig. 4A shows that fake news stories were more likely to be encountered on social media… and that older viewers were heavier consumers than younger ones, consistent with previous findings (6, 8, 9). No age group, however, spent more than an average of a minute per day engaging with fake news, nor did it occupy more than 1% of their overall news consumption (i.e., including TV) or more than 0.2% of their overall media consumption" (Allen et al., 2020, p. 6).

# And yet...

When a sample of U.S. adults were asked in late May and early June 2020: "Do you think outside groups or agents are actively trying to plant fake news stories on social media sites like Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube, or is this not happening? Is this a serious or not too serious problem?"
1. 68% responded "Yes, serious problem"
2. 16% responded "Yes, not too serious"
3. 10% responded "No, not happening"
4. 6% responded "Don't know"

Monmouth University Polling Institute. Monmouth University National Poll: June 2020 Coronavirus. (Dataset, Version 2). Cornell University, Ithaca, NY: Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, Jun–29–2020. Web. Nov–02–2020. doi:10.25940/ROPER–31117426

# And the worries continued...

A summer 2020 Gallup/Knight Foundation study (part of the Trust, Media and Democracy Series) found that "Four in five Americans are concerned — either very (48%) or somewhat (33%) — that misinformation on social media will sway the outcome of the 2020 presidential election" (Brenan, 2020).

# The How

How I've taught
different user groups
about misinformation

# My overall philosophy

1. Acknowledge that conversations around misinformation can be very fraught
2. Activate learners' prior knowledge about information evaluation to build their confidence and/or course correct as needed
3. Focus on evaluation techniques and strategies that can be applied to many information formats
4. For course-integrated library instruction, connect instruction to relevant course concepts

# 1. Acknowledge that conversations around misinformation can be very fraught.

*Example activity from Media Studies 204: Media Writing*

**Small group activity:**
- Students work in groups of 3-4 (face-to-face or in breakout rooms) to complete these tasks:
  - Come up with a basic definition of fake news
  - Decide whether or not your breakout room thinks fake news is a real concern
  - Discuss what might motivate someone to share a fake news story
- In the debrief, address and discuss differing opinions

## 2. Activate learners' prior knowledge about information evaluation to build their confidence and/or course correct as needed.

*Example activity used with many classes, especially at the 100-level.*

**Individual activity**

- Students respond to an open-ended question (in Mentimeter, Socrative, Google forms, etc.): "What's one thing you've been taught in the past about evaluating sources you find online?"
- Frequent misconception to correct: .org = good

## 2. Activate learners' prior knowledge about information evaluation to build their confidence and/or course correct as needed.

*Example activity used with many classes, especially at the 100-level.*

**Whole class activity**
- Brainstorm useful evaluation criteria as a large group, either sharing aloud in a face-to-face session or adding to an editable Google doc (example)

3. **Focus on evaluation techniques and strategies that can be applied to many information formats**

- Evaluation frameworks based on acronyms (ABC, ABCD, CRAAP, etc.) can be helpful, particularly if students are encouraged to get in the habit of using those acronyms to generate critical questions to ask about sources.
- I teach Mike Caulfield's SIFT approach to fact-checking/source evaluation in a wide variety of instructional settings.
- Lateral reading is a powerful tool for understanding sources and their contexts.

# 3. Focus on evaluation techniques and strategies that can be applied to many information formats: SIFT (or Four moves & a habit)

**Mike Caulfield's SIFT approach:**

- Stop
- Investigate the source
- Find trusted coverage
- Trace claims, quotes, and media back to their original context

*See more at go.uncg.edu/sift*

**SIFT activity examples:**

- English 101: SIFTing for truth in political ads
- Media Studies 325 (Gender and Media Culture): SIFTing through social media group activity

3. **Focus on evaluation techniques and strategies that can be applied to many information formats: Lateral reading**

- Lateral reading is a particularly powerful tool for evaluating and fact-checking sources
- Term comes from Sam Wineburg of the Stanford History Education Group
- Wineburg and colleagues have done research about how fact-checkers check claims and evaluate information sources

# 3. Focus on evaluation techniques and strategies that can be applied to many information formats: Lateral reading
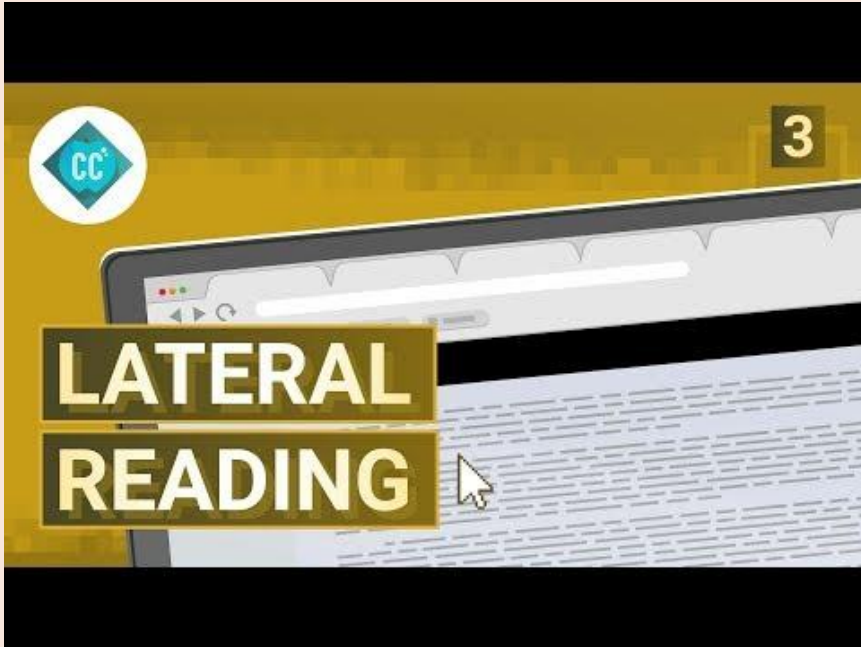


**Lateral reading activity examples:**
- [Quick, anonymous large-group activity](#)
- [Civic Engagement Academy small group activity comparing lateral and vertical reading](#)

# 4. For course-integrated library instruction, connect instruction to relevant course concepts.

**Deepfakes and cheap fakes for Media Studies 205: Media Literacy**

- End of the semester session, after students have discussed media techniques like editing, lighting, and audio, in addition to concepts like auteur theory and propaganda
- Discussion of deepfake and cheap fake methods from Paris and Donovan (2019), followed by class discussion of *Guardian* headline: <u>In the age of deepfakes, could virtual actors put humans out of business?</u>

# 4. For course-integrated library instruction, connect instruction to relevant course concepts.

## Media Studies 205: Media Literacy, continued

- Small group activity with two discussion questions:
  - Based on what we've covered today and what you learned in your last class unit, are deepfakes, cheap fakes, and other ~~AV~~ manipulations a form of propaganda? Why or why not?
  - What tools or strategies can you use to avoid manipulated media?
- Debrief with share outs

# 4. For course-integrated library instruction, connect instruction to relevant course concepts.

## Media Studies 205: Media Literacy, continued

- Specific strategies:
  - <u>Tips for spotting deepfakes</u> (Craig Silverman, Buzzfeed News)
  - <u>Tips from Above the Noise</u> (Jabril Ashe and Myles Bess)
    - Look for deepfake signposts: framing and composition are simple; eyes and teeth don't "converge"; weird blending on or around the face
    - Dig deeper: find another version of the video online; check the video's metadata to get information about when it was uploaded and to get thumbnails for a reverse image search; slow down your impulse to share

# A few things I've learned while teaching about misinformation

- The more examples and formats of sources you can use (for discussion, as case studies, for activities, etc.), the better
- There's a lot of great content out there already – I have some videos and articles that I rely on consistently to help me
- Active learning gives students the opportunity to practice applying concepts and techniques immediately

# A word on empowering learners

Remind learners that they can play an important role in slowing down the spread of mis/disinformation. They can:

- Practice lateral reading and other techniques before they share.
- Protect their own data, especially on social media.
  - As Paris and Donovan (2019) write: "At present, anyone with a social media profile is fair game to be faked. Social media relies on forms of soft consent, buried in the terms of service that users habitually click through... It involves data that captures our faces and bodies – a condition that demands greater transparency and true consent" (pp. 40–41).
- Educate themselves about algorithms and how those tools impact the information they consume.

# How do you teach about misinformation?

Please share your strategies, ideas, questions, links, etc., at go.uncg.edu/misinfoshare

# Thanks!

Let's chat about teaching!

Please email me at [jedale2@uncg.edu](mailto:jedale2@uncg.edu).

# References

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# Teaching resources

Check out https://go.uncg.edu/misinforesources!