**MS-241**

***Misinformation, Fake News and Fact-Checking***



**Department of Media and Communication**

**Semester 1, 2124-25**

**Module coordinator: Dr Ceri Hughes, ceri.hughes****@swansea.ac.uk** **Office: Digital Technium, room 102**

**Office hours (TB1):** [**Monday 9-10;**](https://swanseauniversity.zoom.us/j/95161171993?pwd=b3JuCrnyvb3qM5zA6d1Deo9T7xy6Dt.1)[**Friday 12-1**](https://swanseauniversity.zoom.us/j/99355700112?pwd=Pkv8flf64c2aAc0i8NABqSkbQ3fGOu.1) **(Digital Technium 102, or Zoom on the links above)**



# Module Coordinator Availability

My office hours (when I will be available in one form or another) are **Mondays 9pm-10pm and Fridays 12pm-1pm.**

You’re welcome to send me an email at ceri.hughes@swansea.ac.uk. I try to answer all emails as soon as possible. University guidelines state that you should expect a reply to an email within two to three working days (my working day generally runs from 8:30am-4:30pm, Monday to Friday. I do not work weekends. I do fun stuff. That fun stuff does not usually include checking work emails.

**Contact Information**

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Module Code/Name | MS-241Misinformation, Fake Views and Fact-Checking | YearCredits | 220 |
| Coordinator | Dr Ceri Hughes  | Room Number | Digital Technium 102 |
| Lecturers | Dr Ceri Hughes |  | Ceri.Hughes@swansea.ac.uk  |
| Teaching |  | Assessment | News Analysis (50%)Fact-checking article and reflection (50%) |
|  |  |  |  |

**Teaching schedule for this module**

The face-to-face teaching for this module will be combined lecterns and seminars on Fridays 9-12 in Keir Hardie 021.

**Learning and teaching information**

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| --- | --- |
| **Course description and aims** | To properly function, democratic societies require an uninformed public. A public able to make information-based decisions. And the estate of journalism has traditionally been the source of much of this information. However, evidence suggests that the public are not being informed, people cannot agree on facts and the current time has been called the “area of misinformation”. How did this happen? This is a module that enables students to engage with one of the most pressing concerns within communication – what is misinformation? How do you spot it? How and why does it spread? Why do so many people believe conspiracy theories? And what tools do we have to try and combat the problems of misinformation?Students will understand the theoretical underpinnings of the communication processes which lead to misinformation, the psychological reasons why we live in this era of misinformation and have an opportunity to understand and practice fact-checking journalism.This module aims to:• Critically engage with academic thought on misinformation.• Critically assess normative models of journalism previously encountered in relation to the current debates around misinformation• Assess media practices which currently exacerbate or try to ameliorate misinformation.• Provide practical experience of undertaking fact-checking journalism. |
| **Learning outcomes** | On completion of this module students should be able to:* Understand and analyse the role misinformation is playing in contemporary society
* Evaluate the application of academic theories in relation to misinformation
* Apply practical skills around fact-checking journalism such as finding and evaluating information sources and journalistic writing.
* Apply theory to understand the processes by which misinformation may spread.
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**Teaching**

The teaching for this module during the first semester consists of the lectures noted below, supplemented by seminars where we will eat that week’s topic.

**Lecture Timetable (semester 1)**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Wk** | **Date** | **Subject** |
| 1 | October 4 | **A History of Fake News –** how misinformation has always been an issue for newsmakers and society in general. |
| 2 | October 11 | **The Psychology of Believing** **–** a discussion of why people are prone to believing misinformation |
| 3 | October 18 | **Lies, Damned Lies and Statistics –** how numbers are used in spreading, and fighting against, misinformation. |
| 4 | October 25 | **Politics and Truthiness –** the grey areas between truth and lie; “truthiness.” |
| 55 | November 1 | **The Denial Industry –** how “facts” are disputed and denied and why. |
| 6 | **No lecture** | **Stipend Week** |
| 7 | November 15 | **Conspiracy Theories –** what are they, why do they spread and why do so many people believe them? |
| 8 | November 22 | **When news is actually fake –** when and why journalists do lie? |
| 9 | November 29 | **Fact-Checking –** how this is used to try to combat misinformation and how to do a fact-check. |
| 10 | December 6 | **Fact-checking assignment workshop** |
| 11 | December 13 | **Fact-checking assignment workshop** |

**Introduction**

“And that’s the way it is” – that was legendary US anchor Water Cronkite’s nightly sign off when presenting the news on CBS.

In today’s information ecology everybody has the option to decide on “and that’s the way it is for me”. Increasingly, for many people the way it is for them does not agree with an objective evaluation of a situation. They believe falsehoods. They read sources which affirm existing beliefs, they are told falsehoods by those in power, lies which can last for decades. Why is this? What has gone wrong?

The normative model of democracy presupposes an informed electorate. Much of the electorate is now under-informed, ill-informed or misinformed. This is a problem.

In this module, we will examine what are the factors which have caused such a level of misinformation that it has been said that we have now moved from the information age to the misinformation age.

We will start with an historical context, understanding that fake news did not start with a certain orange-hued politician, but that it has been around for the same length of time as news.

We then turned to look at psychology, looking at what are the processes which occur in the brain which make misinformation travels so quickly and be so tempting.

There is a famous saying, attributed to Benjamin Disraeli (though that might be fake news), “there are lies, damned lies and statistics.” Statistics and data generally are used extensively in news reporting. Why? Because people believe them. Why? We’ll have a look into that.

Politicians are known for at times being economical with the truth, for presenting particular interpretations of a situation you might say. Some we can just call liars. Donald Trump lied a lot as president. Boris Johnson lied a lot as PM. Many of those lies are relatively easy to deal with. But what about the grey area of “truthiness”? How do media navigate that area?

We were told for decades that smoking was good for you, then that smoking wasn’t bad for you, then that smoking wasn’t bad for people around you. All lies. We are still told by some people that climate change isn’t happening. Another lie. These lies, and many more, were begun and propagated by a well-funded denial industry – an industry where the same few faces seem to turn up all the time. This week we examine the denial industry.

We will be joined by Dr Jeff Tischauser of the Southern Poverty Law Center to examine conspiracy theories and specifically one conspiracy which is close to the work Dr Tischauser does – white replacement theory. Is there a global conspiracy to replace good Christian white folks with people of colour? No, obviously, but Dr Tischauser will explain to us who believes this and why.

Sometimes news is actually fake. There have been (very rare) instances of journalists who have lied in their reporting – we’ll have a look at some high-profile examples of these. We’ll also look at how other factors such as unreliable sources can result in fake news.

We’ll end the semester looking at fact-checking. The lecture on the role and practice of fact-checking will be followed by a couple of workshops to help with the second assignment which will be to write a fact-check and a reflective essay on writing the assignment.

Hopefully along the way we’ll have some fun, learn some things from each other. Questions and comments are always always welcome in lectures and required in seminars (otherwise they are really boring and just don’t work very well). If you have a question, need some clarification or don’t understand something, it is very likely that somebody else also has a similar question. So please ask it. And if you think you know the answer – please answer it.

**The Module Week by Week**

**Week 1: A History of Fake Pews**

**“Why is this lying bastard lying to me” Louis Heren**

**Key reading**

Winston, B., & Winston, M. (2020). Foreword: Roots, fakery and objectivity. *The roots of fake news: Objecting to objective journalism*. Routledge. pp. 3-13.

**Background reading**

Winston, B., & Winston, M. (2020). “‘Strange newes’ – printed news”. *The roots of fake news: Objecting to objective journalism*. Routledge. pp. 17-32

Winston, B., & Winston, M. (2020). “Newes’ – the coming of newspapers” *The roots of fake news: Objecting to objective journalism*. Routledge. pp. 33-49.

**Week 2: The Psychology of Believing**

**“A lie that is half-truth is the darkest of all lies.” Alfred Tennyson**

**Key reading**

Greifeneder, R., Jaffe, M., Newman, E., & Schwarz, N. (2021). What is new and true about fake news? In, Greifeneder, R., Jaffe, M., Newman, E., & Schwarz, N. (eds) *The psychology of fake news: Accepting, sharing, and correcting misinformation.* Routledge. pp. 1-8.

Oyserman, D. & Dawson, A. (2021). Your fake news, our facts: Identity-based motivation shapes what we believe, share, and accept. In, Greifeneder, R., Jaffe, M., Newman, E., & Schwarz, N. (eds) *The psychology of fake news: Accepting, sharing, and correcting misinformation.* Routledge. pp. 171-195

**Background reading**

Cohen, G. L. (2003). Party over policy: The dominating impact of group influence on political beliefs. Journal of personality and social psychology, 85(5), 808.

 Gunther, A. C., & Schmitt, K. (2004). Mapping boundaries of the hostile media effect. *Journal of Communication, 54*(1), 55-70.

**Week 3: Lies, Damned Lies and Statistics1**

**“Numbers don't lie. Women lie, men lie, but numbers don't lie.” Max Holloway**

**Key Reading**

Best, J. (2001). The Importance of Social Statistics. (Chapter 1: pp. 9-29) *Damned Lies and Statistics. Untangling numbers from the media, politicians and activists.*

Best, J. (2001). Mutant Statistics. (Chapter 3: pp.62-95) *Damned Lies and Statistics. Untangling numbers from the media, politicians and activists.*

**Background Reading**

 Porter, T. M. (1996). *Trust in numbers*. Princeton University Press. (Just read part of Chapter one, pp. 11-17)

 Kuhn, T.S. (2012) *The structure of scientific revolutions.* University of Chicago Press. (just skim if you are interested in this area)

**Week 4: Politics and Truthiness**

**“A lie told often enough becomes the truth.” Lenin.**

**Key reading:**

Wahl-Jorgensen, K., M. Berry, I. Garcia-Blanco, L. Bennett, and J. Cable. (2017). “Rethinking Balance and Impartiality in Journalism? How the BBC Attempted and Failed to Change the Paradigm.” *Journalism 18* (7): 781–800. doi:10.1177/1464884916648094

Hughes, C., Morani, M., Cushion, S. & Kyriakidou, M. (2023). Does the political context shape how “due impartiality” is interpreted? An analysis of BBC reporting of the 2019 UK and 2020 US election campaigns. *Journalism Studies*. doi: 10.1080/1461670X.2023.2173956

**Background Reading**

Cooke, N. A. (2017). Posttruth, truthiness, and alternative facts: Information behavior and critical information consumption for a new age. *The library quarterly*, *87*(3), 211-221.

 Birks, J. (Fact-checking false claims and propaganda in the age of post-truth politics: the Brexit referendum

**Week 5: The Denial Industry**

**“These aren’t the droids you’re looking for.” Obi Wan Kenobi**

**Key reading**

 Oreskes, N. & Conway, E.M. (2015) Doubt is our Product (Chapter 1). *Merchants of Doubt. How a Handful of Scientists Obscured the Truth on Issues from Tobacco Smoke to Global Warming*. Bloomsbury.

 Oreskes, N. & Conway, E.M. (2015) The Denial of Global Warming (Chapter 6). *Merchants of Doubt. How a Handful of Scientists Obscured the Truth on Issues from Tobacco Smoke to Global Warming*. Bloomsbury.

**Background reading**

 Oreskes, N., & Conway, E. M. (2022). From Anti-Government to Anti-Science: Why Conservatives Have Turned Against Science. Dædalus, 151(4), 98-123.

 Ecker, U. K., Lewandowsky, S., Cook, J., Schmid, P., Fazio, L. K., Brashier, N., ... & Amazeen, M. A. (2022). The psychological drivers of misinformation belief and its resistance to correction. Nature Reviews Psychology, 1(1), 13-29.

**Week 6: No lecture - student week**

Instead of a lecture this week, let’s have a 1-2-1 chat. Details of how to sign up for a slot to chat with me will be given in class.

**Week 7: Conspiracy Theories**

**“Figures may not lie, but liars figure.” Anon**

**Key Reading**

Albarracín, D. (2021). Conspiracy beliefs: Knowledge, ego defense, and social integration in the processing of fake news. In, Greifeneder, R., Jaffe, M., Newman, E., & Schwarz, N. (eds) *The psychology of fake news: Accepting, sharing, and correcting misinformation.* Routledge. pp. 196-219

Tischauser, J. (2023) Patriot Front timeline. April 11, 2023. *SPLC.* <https://www.splcenter.org/patriot-front-timeline>

Wilson, J. & Flanagan, A. (2022). The racist 'great replacement' conspiracy theory explained. May 17, 2022. *SPLC.* <https://www.splcenter.org/hatewatch/2022/05/17/racist-great-replacement-conspiracy-theory-explained>

Listen to Why Do You Hate Me? USA – episode 1 - [Marianna in Conspiracyland - Why Do You Hate Me? USA - 1. Wild Thoughts: 'I hate Trump, she likes him – we both think he staged assassination attempts' - BBC Sounds](https://www.bbc.co.uk/sounds/play/m00237hg)

**Background Reading**

 Southern Poverty Law Center. (n.d.) Identity Evropa/American identity movement. <https://www.splcenter.org/fighting-hate/extremist-files/group/identity-evropaamerican-identity-movement>

 Blow, C.M. (2018). White Extinction Anxiety. *New York Times.* June 24, 2018. <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/06/24/opinion/america-white-extinction.html>

Ptacin, M. Crash of the Hammer: How concerned citizens ran a Neo-Nazi out of rural Maine. *The Atavist.* [The Crash of the Hammer - The Atavist Magazine](https://magazine.atavist.com/the-crash-of-the-hammer-maine-neo-nazis-blood-tribe/)

**Week 8: When news is actually fake**

**“I think people can learn from my experience - you know, any young people who are under pressure, whether you work on Wall Street or you work in a factory in Alabama, and young journalists.” Jayson Blair**

**Key reading**

Jones Patterson, M., & Urbanski, S. (2006). What Jayson Blair and Janet Cooke say about the press and the erosion of public trust. *Journalism studies, 7(6),* 828-850*.*

Shapiro, I. (2006). Why they lie: Probing the explanations for journalistic cheating. [review essay] *Canadian Journal of Communication, 31* (1).

http://www.cjc-online.ca/index.php/journal/article/view/1595/1748

**Background reading**

Dowd, A. (1998) The Great Pretender. How a Writer Fooled His Readers. *Columbia Journalism Review.* *Jul/Aug* 1998; 37, 2; Business Premium Collection.

The American Spectator (2003) The Liar’s Club.

**Week 9: Fact-Checking**

**“Many a good newspaper story has been ruined by over-verification.” James Gordon Bennett Jr.**

**Key reading:**

Schulman, M. (2018). Daniel Radcliffe and the art of the fact-check*. The New Yorker* (October 8, 2018).

Graves, L. (2017). Anatomy of a Fact Check: Objective Practice and the Contested Epistemology of Fact Checking. *Communication, Culture & Critique 10I, 518-537.*

**Background reading**

Graves, L. (2016). Deciding what’s true. The rise of political fact-checking in American journalism. (Chapters 3 and 4 – pp. 81-142)

**Week 10: Fact-checking workshop**

**“Facts are like cows. If you look them in the face long enough, they generally run away.” Dorothy L. Sayers**

**Key Reading: Have a look through a few of these fact-checking sites.** [BBC Reality Check](https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/reality_check), [Channel 4 FactCheck](https://www.channel4.com/news/factcheck)[, Full Fact](https://fullfact.org/latest/), [Washington Post Fact Checker](https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/fact-checker/), [FactCheck.org](https://www.factcheck.org/), [Reuters Fact Check](https://www.reuters.com/fact-check), [Politifact.com](https://www.politifact.com/)

We will spend some time looking through some of these sites together and discussing the content.

Read this fact-check from Graves: [PolitiFact | Glenn Beck says Muslim Brotherhood wants to declare war on Israel](https://www.politifact.com/factchecks/2011/feb/15/glenn-beck/glenn-beck-says-muslim-brotherhood-wants-declare-w/) (consider this with reference to the Graves reading from last week)

**Week 11: Fact-checking workshop**

**“The world, we are told, was made especially for man — a presumption not supported by all the facts.” John Muir**

Drop-in session. Individual one-to-one help available for fact-checking assignment.

# Reading List

Read widely, read deeply in certain areas. The resources below are pointers for some places to start your reading exploration. Many of the books are available through the library in hard copy and/or e-version. Journals are available online through the library using your student login.

And read/watch/listen to some news! This is a course about news, so it makes sense to consume it.

**Recommended resources for wider reading:**

Allan, S (Ed) (2005) Journalism: Critical Issues. London: Open University Press

Allan, S. (2006), *Online News*. Maidenhead: OUP.

Baleria, G. (2021) *The Journalism Behind Journalism: Going Beyond the Basic to Train Effective Journalists in a Shifting Landscape*. London: Routledge.

Beaman, J. (2011) *Interviewing for Radio (Media Skills),* Oxford: Routledge.

Blaine, M. (2014), *The digital reporter’s notebook.* London: Routledge

Bradshaw, P. (2015) ‘Data Journalism and the 2015 UK General Election’. In *UK Election Analysis 2015: Media, Voters and the Campaign. https://www.psa.ac.uk/sites/default/files/pagefiles/UK%20Election%20Analysis%202015%20-%20Jackson%20and%20Thorsen%20v1.pdf*

Bradshaw, P. and Rohumaa, L. (2013 & 2011) *The Online Journalism Handbook: Skills to Survive in the Digital Age.* Harlow: Pearson.

Briggs, M. (2015) *Journalism next : a practical guide to digital reporting and publishing* (3rd edn). Thousand Oaks, CA: CQ Press

Bull, A. (2010) *Multimedia journalism: a practical guide* London: Routledge

Burns, L.S. (2002) *Understanding journalism*. London: Sage

Burum, I. Quinn, S. (2015) *MOJO: the mobile journalism handbook: how to make broadcast videos with an iPhone or Ipad.* London: Taylor & Francis.

Calver, B. Kemp, D. Ryder, M. (2017) *Everybody In: A Journalist’s Guide to Inclusive Reporting for Journalism Students*. <https://www.media-diversity.org/additional-files/Everybody_In_Book.pdf>

Carter, C. Steiner, L. Allan, S. (2019) Journalism, gender and power. Oxon: Routledge.

Carlson, M. Franklin, B. (2011) Journalists, Sources & Credibility: New Perspectives. New York: Routledge.

Conboy, M. (2013) Journalism Studies: the basics. London: Taylor & Francis.

Cushion, S. (2015) *News and politics: the rise of live and interpretive journalism*. Abingdon: Routledge.

Cushion, S. Thomas, R. (2018) Reporting Elections: rethinking the logic of campaign coverage. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Davies, N (2008) Flat Earth News London. Chatto and Windus.

Dick, M. (2013) *Search: Theory and Practice in Journalism Online*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Emm, A. (2014) *Researching for the media: television, radio and journalism,* London: New York: Routledge

Eastwood, L. (2017) chapter 8, ‘Your Smartphone as your best reporting tool’ in *Entrepreneurial journalism: how to go it alone and launch your dream digital project*, Abingdon, Oxon: RouEllis,

Fenton, N. (2009) New Media, Old News: Journalism and democracy in the digital age. London: Sage

Filak, V. (ed) (2015), *Convergent Journalism: An Introduction* (2nd edn). Oxford: Focal Press.

Franklin, B et al (2005) Key Concepts in Journalism Studies. London: Sage

Franklin, B. (2016) *The Routledge Companion on Digital Journalism Studies*. London: Routledge.

Frost, C. (2002) *Reporting for Journalists.* Sage

Gardner, S. & Birley, S. (2008), *Blogging for Dummies*. Hoboken: Wiley Publishing.

Gray, J. et al. (2012) *The Data Journalism Handbook.* O’Reilly Media.

Harcup, T. (2007) *The ethical journalist*, Sage

Harcup, T. (2009) *Journalism: principles and practice* (2nd edition). Thousand Oaks, CA.: Sage

Harcup, T. and Cole, P. (2009) *Newspaper journalism*. London: Sage

Hemmingway, E., et al. (2007) *Introduction to Journalism*. Sage

Hennessy, B. (2006) *Writing feature articles* (4th Edition). Oxford: Focal Press

Hicks, W. & Holmes T. (2002), *Subediting for Journalists*. London: Routledge.

Hill, S. Bradshaw, P. (2019) *Mobile-First Journalism: producing news for social and interactive media.* London: Taylor & Francis.

Hill, J.E. and Schwartz, V. (2015) *Getting the picture: the visual culture of the news*. London: Bloomsbury Academic.

Hill, S. and Lashmar, P. (2014) *Online Journalism: The Essential Guide*. London: Sage.

Holmes, T., Hadwin, S. and Mottershead, G. (2013) *The 21st Century Journalism Handbook: Essential Skills for the Modern Journalist.* Harlow: Pearson.

Itule, B. and Anderson, A. (1999) *Newswriting and Reporting for Today’s Media*. McGraw Hill

Jenkins, H. (2008), *Convergence Culture*. New York: New York University Press. (2006 edition available as an e-book on campus).

Keeble, R. (2001) *Ethics for Journalists.* London: Routledge

Keeble, R. (2005) *Print journalism: a critical introduction*. London, New York: Routledge

Keeble, R. (2006) *The newspapers handbook* (4th Edition). Routledge

Keeble, R. (ed.) (2005), *Print Journalism: A Critical Introduction*. London: Routledge.

Kobre, K. (2012) *Video journalism: multimedia storytelling*, Waltham, Mass: Focal Press.

Lancaster, K. (2013) *Video journalism for the web: a practical introduction to documentary storytelling*, New York: Routledge.

Lasky, M.J. (2000) *The language of journalism*. New Brunswick, N.J., London: Transaction

Llinares, D. et al. (ed.) (2018) *Podcasting: New Aural Cultures and Digital Media,* Palgrave Macmillan.

Marsden, P. (2017) *Entrepreneurial journalism: how to go it alone and launch your dream digital project*. Oxon: Routledge.

McChesney, R. 2000. Rich Media, Poor Democracy. Chicago, University of Illinois, Press.

McKay, J. (2006) *The magazines handbook* (2nd Edition). Routledge

McNair, B. (2012) Journalism and Democracy: An Evaluation of the Political Public Sphere. London: Taylor and Francis.

Mencher, M. (2003) *News reporting and writing* (9th ed.) Boston: McGraw-Hill

Nieman Foundation. (2001) Essays about ‘The Elements of Journalism’. [WWW]

https://niemanreports.org/issues/special-issue-2001/

Perruchet, M. (2016) *One Perfect Pitch: How to Sell Your Idea, Your Product, Your Business—or Yourself* (2016). McGraw-Hill.

Pape, S. and Featherstone, S. (2005) *Newspaper journalism: a practical introduction*. London: Sage

Pape, S. and Featherstone, S. (2006) *Feature writing: a practical introduction*. London: Sage

Phillips, A. (2015) *Journalism in Context: Practice and Theory for the Digital Age.* Abingdon: Routledge.

Quinn, S. & Lamble, S. (2008), *Online Newsgathering*. Oxford: Focal Press.

Randall, D. (2007) *The universal journalist* (3rd Edition). Pluto Press

Rettberger, J. Walker, (2008), *Blogging*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Rich, C. (2010) *Writing and reporting news: a coaching method*. Boston, Mass.: Wadsworth

Sanders, K. (2002) *Ethics & journalism*. London: Sage

Sissons, H. (2006), *Practical Journalism: How to Write News.* London: Sage

Ward, M. (2002), *Journalism Online*. Oxford: Focal Press.

Wahl Jorgensen, K. and Hanitzsch, T. (2008) Handbook of Journalism Studies. ICA Handbook Series

Wheeler, S. (2009) *Feature writing for journalists.* London: Routledge

Whittaker, J. (2002), *Web Production for Writers and Journalists*. London: Routledge.

Williams, K (2009) Get Me A Murder A Day: A history of media and communication in Britain. London: Bloomsbury.

Williams, K (2009) *Read All About it: A history of the British Newspaper*. London: Routledge

Wulfemeyer, K. (2006), *Online Newswriting*. Oxford: Blackwell.

**Academic Journal Reading**

These journals are really useful if you want to explore the academic debates within journalism.

*Digital Journalism*

*Journalism Studies*

*Journalism Practice*

*Journalism*

*Mass Communication and Society*

*International Journal of Communication*

*European Journal of Communication*

*Political Communication*

**Online Resources**

http://www.guardian.co.uk/media For media related news

http://onlinejournalismblog.com/ Publishes comment and analysis on covering online

journalism

https://theconversation.com/uk You can find academic analysis of contemporary journalism stories and practice here

https://www.nuj.org.uk/ You can find news, advice and guidance on carrying out practical journalism work.

http://www.ojr.org/ Online resource that focuses on the future of digital journalism

https://www.journalism.co.uk/ Journalism tools and resources, plus jobs and links to courses

https://www.thenewsmanual.net/ A professional resource for journalism and guidance on skills and technique

https://www.media-diversity.org/additional-files/Everybody\_In\_Book.pdf - Important resource on inclusivity when producing journalistic work

https://firstdraftnews.org/ Offers a wide range of resources and training focused on disinformation

https://www.apple.com/uk/iphone/photography-how-to/: Useful guidelines on taking photographs and videos on i-phone

<https://informationlaundromat.com/> : interesting tool for checking on dodgy websites

**ASSESSMENT**

**Please note:** You must use academic referencing and a bibliography in all assignments. You are expected to use the APA style of referencing. Ensure that you structure your essays to make an effective argument and include a critical analysis. Careful attention to layout (double/1½ spacing) and using an appropriate, legible, font are both important parts of the academic requirements.

**Assignments for MS-241 2023/24**

**Assignment 1: DUE NOVEMBER 20th 2PM**

Produce an analytical report of coverage of the Grand National protests.

**Assignment 2: DUE DECEMBER 13th 2PM.**

**There are two parts to this assignment:**

1. **Write a 500–750-word fact-check article**
2. **Write a 1,000 reflective response on the writing of the article.**

**Disclaimer**

This Handbook should be read in conjunction with the definitive information about your programme available online. Information regarding assessment and other formal course requirements is published in the ***Student Handbook*** and available online.

Only this information is authoritative. Do not rely solely on tutors’ information about assessment modes and timing or other formal course requirements as such information is not authoritative and occasionally may be mistaken.

This wider Swansea University handbook is a comprehensive and detailed one-stop-shop for everything you will need to know as an undergraduate student at Swansea:

<https://myuni.swansea.ac.uk/media/Academic_Handbook_Undergraduate_UG.pdf>

Finally, despite the challenges of the last year or two for all students and staff in Higher Education, as you can see from the infographic below, Media in Swansea remains among the leaders in the sector.

Please take confidence from this and be assured that teaching and professional services staff will continue to work really hard to ensure that your learning experience is as good as we can possibly make it.



**Academic Good Practice and Avoiding Academic Misconduct**

Every piece of work submitted to the Department is examined for evidence of “unfair practice”, both

electronically, and by the marker. Some students will be unfamiliar with an educational system that assesses you via coursework. Many of you will be more familiar with the final exam system, but you will by now know that we do not hold exams in Media at Swansea.

Students are expected to have familiarized themselves with the definition of “unfair practice” given in the University Regulations. Plagiarism is an example of unfair practice and is defined in the Regulations as “using without acknowledgement another person’s work and submitting it for assessment, as though it were one’s own work, for instance, through copying or unacknowledged phrasing”.

This definition applies to intentional or unintentional plagiarism. Examples of plagiarism, as per the regulations include:

* **Use of any quotation(s) from the work of others which have not been clearly identified as such by being placed in quotation marks and acknowledged**
* **Summarising another person’s ideas, judgments, figures, software or diagrams without reference to that person in the text and the source in the bibliography**
* **Misrepresenting any data in order to mislead**
* **Use of unacknowledged material downloaded from the internet**
* **Submission of another student’s work as your own**

Other forms of misconduct include:

### **Unfairly colluding with another student in the completion of an assignment**

### **Using the services (paid or unpaid) of ‘ghost-writing’ agencies or so-called “essay mills” in the preparation of assessed work**

### **Using translation software to convert your work into English or Welsh from a different language**.

* **Unauthorized use of Artificial Intelligence (see later section)**

Please note that some modules incorporate practical assignments. These might involve writing news stories, developing portfolios, building websites, creating PR campaigns and so on. It is important to remember therefore, that offences that might be considered as academic misconduct will also include fabrication, misquoting and misrepresenting in a journalistic sense. This means that when asked to write a news story for example, you must not make the story up, or pretend that an event, incident or interviewee are real when they are not. What you write and report about should always be real. Similarly, you should not falsify any element of your work experience or internship.

Please note that while self-plagiarism is not deemed misconduct, nonetheless, is bad practice that must be avoided. If you recycle work previously submitted, it is fully possible – and perhaps even likely – that your mark will suffer as a consequence.

The prescribed penalties for proven cases of unfair practice can be severe. These range from reduced marks, marks being cancelled for an assessment, a whole module or even a whole level of study. In extreme cases, students are sometimes withdrawn from the university. Students worried about any aspect of this warning are advised to discuss their work with their lecturers and mentors. See the Student handbook for more information.

**The GOLDEN RULES are to write your work in English or Welsh, not to use translation software, and to ensure that everything is your own work, and that you reference and acknowledge accurately, and that you take an honest and responsible approach to your studies and assessments.**

**Academic culture in the UK**

### In the UK, there is a well-established process for marking student work. Those marking your work will be experienced experts who have done so many times before. They will work to specified and transparent marking criteria.

### Once work has been marked, it is moderated by a colleague from outside of the module who will scrutinize it for fairness, accuracy and consistency. At this stage, the mark is still provisional and is not final.

### Prior to the exam board sitting, an external examiner from a different university will further scrutinize the work to again check for fairness, accuracy and consistency. Once this process has been completed, **MARKS ARE FINAL AND WILL NOT CHANGE.**

### So the only possible adjustments to marks will be made during this process as described above, and by experts who are qualified to do so. Students lobbying their lecturers or the subject lead **WILL NOT RESULT IN ANY MARKS BEING CHANGED**. Your final mark is the considered opinion of a respected academic expert and has been checked by other respected academic experts. Your mark is not the opening bid in some process of negotiation. This does not happen in the UK, and we suggest that reading the feedback you have received and responding positively to it is a much better approach to take.

**Artificial Intelligence**

Artificial Intelligence – in the form of generative large language models such as ChatGPT or Claude - is changing the way we operate as scholars. We are living through a revolution in the way university academics and students work. This is having profound effects on how we learn about our world. There is no doubt then when you graduate you will use artificial intelligence in your work – so from this point we are going to explore with you and develop ways it can be used skilfully and ethically. In the meantime, it is important that we recognize the short-term future as a period of learning and transition for everyone as we adapt to these new programmes.

AI cannot teach you critical thinking or show you how to add the more human, intuitive and creative elements to your work and, sometimes Ai is just plain wrong. Moreover, the standard of analysis offered by AI is often simply not good enough for university-level scholarship; it is too superficial and lacking in nuance. While AI models are improving, they are imperfect. If you put garbage into AI, you get garbage out – that is why having subject-specific knowledge and critical knowledge of AI itself is essential to using them properly.

At various times, and where appropriate to do so, your lecturers might incorporate AI into your studies. However, you should not assume that you can use it for everything. Using AI too prominently within your work and without the express permission of your tutors represents poor academic practice and will be dealt with according to University guidance. So, please don't use AI in anything beyond an approved manner.

Your Tutors will work with you on how to avoid problems, and it’s important you listen to them, and accept their guidance. The golden rule is – if in doubt, then ask. If you talk openly about AI to your Module leaders and lecturers, then this should enable grown up and transparent discussions about AI that will help you stay very much on the safe, ethical side of things.

**Writing emails**

The lines between professional emails and more informal modes of writing have become blurred, and many students find the conventions of professional emails murky. In the age of social media, many students approach emailing similar to texting and other forms of digital communication, where the crucial conventions are brevity and informality. **However, most lecturers consider emails closer to letters than to social media messages**. This style of writing therefore calls for more formality.

These different ways of writing are just that - different ways of writing. The letter approach to emails is not always and forever better (or worse) than the texting approach. Knowing how and when to use one or the other - based on why you are writing and whom you are writing to - makes all the difference. So, if you use emojis, acronyms, abbreviations, etc., when messaging your friends, you are actually demonstrating legitimate, useful writing skills. However, you *aren’t* if you do the same thing when emailing lecturers who view emails as letters. Effective writing requires shaping your words according to your audience, purpose and genre (or type of writing, e.g., an academic email). Some of the key conventions for the rhetorical situation of emailing academic or professional service staff are as follows:

1. **Use a clear subject line.** The subject “Rhetorical Analysis Essay” would work a bit better than “heeeeelp!” (and much better than the unforgivable blank subject line).
2. **Use a salutation and signature.** Instead of jumping right into your message or saying “hey,” begin with a greeting like “Hello” or “Good afternoon,” and then address your lecturer by first name or by appropriate title and last name, such as “Dr Evans”. Please do not address your lecturer by last name alone i.e. “Dear Evans” – that is just weird. Similarly, to end your email, use “Best wishes” or “Sincerely,” followed by your name.
3. **Use our names** – This is the polite way to do things. “Dear Dr Evans” confirms to Dr Evans that message is for him, and that you know who you want to respond. Emails starting with “Hello” and sent to a group will often be ignored as everyone will assume that someone else will answer it.
4. **Use standard punctuation, capitalization, spelling and grammar.** Instead of writing “idk what 2 rite about in my paper can you help??” try something more like, “I am writing to ask about the topics you suggested in class yesterday.”
5. **Do your part in solving what you need to solve.** If you email to ask something you could look up yourself, you risk presenting yourself as less resourceful than you ought to be. However, if you mention that you’ve already checked the handbook, asked classmates and looked through lecture notes then you present yourself as responsible and taking initiative. So, instead of asking, “What’s our essay?” you might write, “I looked through the syllabus and course website for the assessment title, but unfortunately I am unable to locate it.”
6. **Add a touch of humanity.** Being polite and friendly creates a very positive impression and will get you much further than being rude or aggressive. Sugar works better than salt in this context.

**Don’t forget that your lecturers receive many, many emails. Make yourself stand out by sticking to these rules. In return, you can expect a reply to your email no later than 2-3 working days after your email. Please remember that weekends, bank holidays and periods of annual leave are not working days, and that the working day is from 9am-5pm. Some colleagues may work part time hours.**

**Proofreading policy**

Students are encouraged to always proofread their own work.

**The** [**Centre for Academic Success**](https://www.swansea.ac.uk/academic-success/) **offers help with this and many other aspects of academic work. If English is not your first language, they can offer you lots of assistance across all elements of academic writing and referencing.**

Some students will have completed the assignment to the best of their ability and want another person or a commercial service to proof-read their work, but in such a case, they need to be aware of the correct procedure before asking someone to proof-read their work.

Proof-readers are allowed to identify, **BUT NOT CORRECT** …

* spelling errors
* punctuation and capitalization errors
* grammatical errors (e.g. subject-verb agreement, articles)
* inconsistencies in the formatting, layout, font, etc.
* repetitions or omissions of words or phrases
* format and structure of paragraphs
* errors in the labelling of tables and figures
* inconsistent referencing

Proof-readers **ARE NOT ALLOWED TO** …

* directly correct any errors, incl. inconsistent style
* add content
* rephrase or reorganize sentences or paragraphs
* shorten the text (to come within the word limit)
* translate into English, or edit machine-translated text

There are exceptions to these restrictions on proofreading, i.e. supervision of dissertations, some disabilities, creative writing workshops (where students are expected to comment on and/or proofread each other’s work).

Where writing and grammar are part of the assessment criteria, proofreading may not be allowed at all. (Where applicable, this restriction will be made clear in the assessment description.)

Students who intend to use a proof-reader, including those who undertake this without pay, must ask their proof-reader to comply with the guidelines and sign the declaration (see below) before undertaking this work and agreeing to any proof-reading being done.

Students must keep an electronic copy of the work before proof-reading, including work that was drafted in languages other than English or Welsh. All correspondence with the proof-reader must be kept, including the original request and any evidence of payment. Students must declare the use of proof-readers on the cover sheet that is submitted with their work.

Upon request they must provide the documentation and correspondence concerning the proof-reading work. This request might happen at any stage, especially within any the process that follows any official allegation of Academic Misconduct.

Students must take overall ownership and responsibility for the work submitted by accepting or rejecting suggestions made by the proof-reader. The use of proof-readers will not be accepted in mitigation of any deficiencies in the work.

**ENJOY THE MODULE**

**And for those of you who have actually read this far – spot the ten deliberate errors on the first ten pages of this document and email them to me to win a prize.**