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Information Literacy and Social Media Assignment

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Introduction to US Politics
Information Literacy and Social Media Assignment

Learning Goals

1.   Identify political misinformation in social media or online.

2.   Improve research skills needed to fact check political information.

3.   Practice analytical skills to become ***critical consumers of political information***.

    a.   Learn to distinguish between authoritative and unreliable information sources.

    b.   Understand the mechanisms and narratives by which social media and online sources might spread political misinformation and conspiracy theories.

    c.   Understand how your own values and identity might shape the way you perceive political information.

Instructions

<u>Part A</u>

1.   Search your social media (or your friends or family members' social media) or online communities for what you suspect are instances of political misinformation. Be very careful that you avoid including:

·   Posts intended to be satirical. This can be difficult because sometimes satire is subtle, but you should check the source of the post before doing a lot of work on the assignment.

·   Posts that are a matter of ideological or faith disagreement rather than deliberate misinformation about facts. A post that argues that a human embryo is a person or one that argues that gay marriage is not valid in the eyes of God is not "political misinformation" because it's based on values—meaning people (including believers in major world religious traditions) might rationally disagree—rather than empirical reality.

·   Post that simply state support for a political party, nation, or side in a war. When Gal Gadot says "Support Israel" that's not political misinformation because it's not an empirical statement.

The post must be related to a current (suspected) political misinformation. Posts about things that happened more than five years ago do not count.

NOTE: It is enough that the posting be <u>suspicious</u> for you to investigate it. If you complete the factcheck and the post turns out to be true, you can still complete the assignment. *Your aim is to be skeptical as to the reliability of the social media platform you are using, but open as to the truth that may not align with your current beliefs.*

2.   Take a screenshot of that posting, TikTok video, Reel, meme, or article and include that screenshot in your Word document.

3.   Write at least three paragraphs describing:

a.   The narrative of the political misinformation– what is that social media post about?

b.   The intended audience of the misinformation. Is this posting targeting a particular demographic? What fears does it encourage? What is it trying to convince the reader to believe or do? Does this post claim some sort of authority?

c.   How credible is the source of the social media post? In what ways does the post reveal itself to be believable or problematic? Why did you identify this post as political misinformation in the first place?

<u>Part B</u>

1.   Use the following to research your suspected political misinformation:

a.   One fact checking website, eg: Politifact, FactCheck.org, or Snopes

b.   At least THREE relevant newspaper (or news magazine) sources such as the *New York Times*, the *Wall Street Journal*, or *The Economist*. It will be helpful to use ProQuest US Newsstream, ProQuest International Newsstream , or other appropriate databases accessed through the library. You should choose your sources based upon

o   Relevance – If you have an international topic, at least one of your sources should be an international newspaper (English-language is fine)

o   Capacity – does this media outlet have its own journalists, or is it just aggregating other news sources (eg: Huffington Post or Drudge)

c.   One non-print media source (such as CNN.com, PBS.org, NPR.org, or Fox.com)

2.   Create a Chicago Author-Date citation for each of your sources (see the Purdue Owl guide or take your paper to the writing center for assistance.) Put these citations in rank order in terms of authoritativeness. Below each citation, provide a summary of what that source says.

   a.   Authority: rate the source in terms of the level and type of authority of that source -- why is it authoritative in this particular context? If you use direct quotes or paraphrases, you should cite using Chicago parenthetical style.

   b.   Information Creation Process: Describe the conclusions of each source and then describe how each source reached that conclusion. Does the media source have journalists on the scene? What evidence did they use and how did they gather their information?

3.   In a summary paragraph, identify what you believe is the most significant refutation of the misinformation. Why do you believe that source more than the original posting?

Part C:

   1.   In at least three paragraphs, reflect upon your search strategy and your findings.

   a.   What source did you turn to first and why?

   b.   What was the most helpful source in terms of finding authoritative information? What made that source helpful?

   c.   What was the most authoritative source you used? What made your different sources more or less authoritative?

   d.   How has doing this research helped you think about the information you find through social media? How might you use what you learned in this assignment to protect yourself from future political misinformation?

Format

   1.   Papers should be typed, spell-checked, and double-spaced with one-inch margins all around and a font size of 12-point Times New Roman or equivalent. The paper should be approximately 750-1000 words.

   2.   All pages should be numbered on the bottom of the page at the center.

   3.   You must cite using Chicago Author-Date Style (see Purdue Owl)

Grading

This assignment is worth 10% of your final grade for the course.

Criteria	Points
Part A: Identification of Political Misinformation	
1. Provided a well-written description of the suspected political information	10
2. Understood audience (identification of interested parties)	10
Part B: Analysis	
3. Used research tools to determine credibility of multiple sources	15
4. Used coherent search strategy to identify relevant sources	10
5. Sought multiple perspectives during information gathering.	15
6. Used proper attribution and citation	10
Part C: The Reflection	
7. Achieved synthesis of ideas gathered from multiple sources	10
8. Reasonable conclusions based on analysis and interpretation of information	20
TOTAL	100