

MEDIA IN THE AGE OF FAKE NEWS

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Enormous leaps in technology have altered the media landscape, and the current state of American politics has changed it again. How are reasonable people with an interest in public affairs supposed to sort through the onslaught of information, misinformation and outright lies coming at them at warp speed in 2017? What exactly is “fake news,” and how can you identify it?

Session 1, Jan. 16: Introduction

Where do you get your news in tribal America? What does that say about you? What news sources can you trust? And what do we mean when we talk about “standards”?

Session 2, Jan. 23: Is it a story?

You make the call about when a story becomes a story. Then we’ll talk about what really happened.

Session 3: Lying in politics and media.

How do you tell an incontrovertible fact from something asserted by a politician? We’ll apply the psychology of lying to media. Guest speaker: Lisa Fazio, assistant professor of psychology at Vanderbilt’s Peabody College of education and human development.

Session 4: The presidential election and the Trump presidency.

How is Trump’s presidency different from those of his predecessors? How is it the same? How has it changed how reporters who cover him do their jobs?

Session 5: Metrics, technology and the new media paradigm.

How have the tools available to us changed what we do? What does it mean to say a story went viral? Do journalists, their editors and professional news organizations make decisions based on the attention it gets on the Internet? How do we balance those decisions with news standards and with our civic duty to report the news responsibly? Guest speaker: Tony Gonzalez, WPLN radio.

Session 6: The future.

Where is journalism heading? What do we know and what do we have to wait to find out? Are there things to feel good about? From a journalist’s perspective and from that of you, the news consumer, what do we think should happen to keep a free press vital and intact?

Readings:

https://www.nytimes.com/2017/09/26/magazine/how-fake-news-turned-a-small-town-upside-down.html?_r=0

<https://www.nytimes.com/2017/09/07/us/politics/russia-facebook-twitter-election.html>

https://www.washingtonpost.com/lifestyle/style/after-a-cnn-interviewee-erupts-in-anger-disaster-reporting-standards-come-into-focus/2017/08/30/0d82be88-8cea-11e7-84c0-02cc069f2c37_story.html?utm_term=.c0447dc0d8ea

<https://www.apnews.com/tag/APFactCheck>

<https://www.factcheck.org/2016/11/how-to-spot-fake-news/>