Information Literacy – INF 315E

**Accuracy in the Age of Deception**

**NOTE: THIS IS THE SYLLABUS FOR THE FALL COURSE. THE SPRING 2020 SYLLABUS WILL BE SUBSTANTIALLY THE SAME.**

**Course # 27040**

**Fall 2019 Benedict MW 10:30 - 12:00**

**Instructor: James (Red) Wassenich**

**Rationale:** The power and complexity of information in society, the economy, and our personal lives grows constantly, primarily due to the digital world. This course will explore information from multiple angles, with an emphasis on exploring the role of deception in a variety of areas--politics, international relations, business, advertising, interpersonal relations, and more. Increasing info skills and critical thinking related to education and the world at large will be featured. This is **not** a how-to-use-the-library or computer science course, although both of those areas will be addressed. Efficient research, evaluation of information, and critical analysis are the primary goals.

**Contact Information:** Office hour following Wednesday class in our classroom. Or by appointment. Many questions can probably be answered informally following either class period.  
Email: redwassenich@utexas.edu

**Learning Objectives:** The student will be able to identify the need for information and efficiently find and evaluate a variety of sources. Students will gain a deeper understanding of the ways information affects almost all aspects of their lives. Class discussion of topics and readings will be stressed.

**Course Materials:** There is no textbook. Readings, videos, podcasts will all come from either UT Library databases or public online sources. These will be listed and linked to in the online Canvas course management system.

**Course Schedule:** (Note: schedule is subject to change as topics develop and as field trips and guest lectures may have availability changes.)

**Wed., Aug. 28 - Course Introduction and Explanation of Goals and Major Projects**For next class:  
- Read: [“Evaluating Information: The Cornerstone of Civic Online Reasoning”](https://stacks.stanford.edu/file/druid:fv751yt5934/SHEG%20Evaluating%20Information%20Online.pdf)

- Read: ["How Plato Foresaw Facebook’s Folly"](http://go.galegroup.com.ezproxy.lib.utexas.edu/ps/i.do?p=OVIC&sw=w&u=txshracd2598&v=2.1&it=r&id=GALE%7CA562466960&sid=classroomWidget&asid=87207d61#.XD9zW1fGSio.gmail)

- Read: ["Why humans evolved into such good bullshitters"](https://www.vox.com/2018/12/6/18115586/evolution-psychology-william-von-hippel-social-leap)

**Mon., Sept. 2 - History of Info Deception and of Expertise. Evolution of Information Technology.**

- View: "[Stuart Hall - Race, Gender, Class in Media"](https://youtu.be/FWP_N_FoW-I) (3 minute video)

- View: [“Why No One Trusts the Mainstream Media”](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4pzZvMzotMc) (5 minute video)

**Wed. Sept. 4 - Who Produces Information: Media Ownership. Role of Government. Alternate Sources, Including Social Media.**

**Mon., Sept. 9 - How to Analyze Information: Logic and Argument. "Classic" Elements of Rhetoric and Argument. The Scientific Method. Visual and Math Aspects.**

- Listen: ["Our Mental Space Under Attack"](https://www.npr.org/2018/01/01/574073721/our-mental-space-under-attack) (38 minute podcast)

- Read: ["Why Moral Emotions Go Viral Online"](https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/why-moral-emotions-go-viral-online/)

**Wed., Sept. 11 - Psychology of Information Consumption, I.**

- Read["Don't Blame Dark Voting Trends on Online Thought Bubbles](https://www.theglobeandmail.com/opinion/bursting-the-bubble-of-online-filter-bubbles/article32172155/)"

- Fill out Digital Diary

**Mon., Sept. 16 - Psychology of Information Consumption, II. Role of Bias and Unreliability of Perception**

**Wed., Sept. 18 - Guest Lecture: Information from a Legal Standpoint.**

- Read: [“What Today’s College Students Say About Conducting Research in the Digital Age”](http://www.projectinfolit.org/uploads/2/7/5/4/27541717/2009_final_report.pdf)

- Write out topic(s) for Annotated Bibliography assignment to be discussed in class

**Mon., Sept. 23 - Effective Research. The Variety of Sources. Developing Research Topics**

**Wed., Sept. 25 - Effective Research. Understanding and Using Sources. Evaluating Sources. Plagiarism and Documenting Sources**

- Bring printouts (at least first page) of three sources for your Annotated Bibliography assignment

**Mon. Sept. 30 - Advanced Search Techniques. Individual consultations on Annotated Bibliography.**

**Wed., Oct. 2 - Work session on Annotated Bibliography in PCL.**

- Read ["The Urgent Quest for Slower, Better News:"](https://www.newyorker.com/culture/annals-of-inquiry/the-urgent-quest-for-slower-better-news)

- Read ["I Was a Macedonian Fake News Writer"](http://www.bbc.com/future/story/20190528-i-was-a-macedonian-fake-news-writer?ocid=global_future_rss&ct=t(EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_10_1_2018_17_21_COPY_01))

**Mon., Oct. 7 - Journalism: Power and Standards. Fake News.**- Listen to at least one, preferably more, episode of *The Texas Standard* radio show. Broadcast on KUT (90.5 FM) M-F at 10am and 8pm or archived at [texasstandard.org](http://texasstandard.org/) under "Find a Show."

- Write down at least 2 questions you might want to ask.

**Wed., Oct. 9 - Field Trip to *The Texas Standard* Radio Show***Promptly at 10:30*, 26th St. (Dean Keeton) at Guadalupe. Assemble in the lobby.

- View: 3-part video "[Infektion](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tR_6dibpDfo)" (47 minutes)

- Annotated Bibliography due next class. Must be printed out.

**Mon., Oct. 14 - Government Role in Information Production and Access I. Free Speech, Censorship, Regulation, Net Neutrality**

Turn in Annotated Bibliography

- Read: ["Less than you think: Prevalence and predictors of fake news dissemination on Facebook"](http://advances.sciencemag.org/content/5/1/eaau4586)

**Wed., Oct. 16 - Guest speaker from UT Center for Media Engagement**

**Mon., Oct. 21 - Government Role in Information Production and Access II. Surveillance, Patriot Act, WikiLeaks, Edward Snowden**

- Read/Listen: [“How Democrats Used Dirty Tricks in the 2017 Alabama Senate Race”](https://www.wnycstudios.org/story/democrats-dirty-tricks-alabama-senate-race) (11 minutes)

- Watch: ["Google's Bias Against the Right"](https://video.foxnews.com/v/5977571522001/#sp=show-clips)  (1.5 minutes)

- Read: ["The Stories That Divide Us"](https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/A594710799/OVIC?u=txshracd2598&sid=OVIC&xid=6e5c0f8b)

**Wed., Oct. 23 - Politics and Information. Voter Targeting. Use of Social Media (Black Lives Matter, #MeToo, Arab Spring, ISIS, etc.). Hacktivism, Slacktivism. Course Review, part 1.  
  
-** Read: ["Propaganda in the 21st Century"](https://qz.com/978548/introducing-our-obsession-with-propaganda/)

**Mon., Oct. 28 - History and Techniques of Propaganda**

- Listen: ["Redirecting Googlers To Sites They're Not Searching For Can Have Benefits — And A Dark Side"](https://www.wbur.org/hereandnow/2019/07/31/google-search-redirect) (12 minute audio)  
- Read: ["Repeated Mistakes in Phone Record Collection Led NSA to Shutter Controversial Program"](https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/A590862441/OVIC?u=txshracd2598&sid=OVIC&xid=0dc5cc7b)- Read: [“Google Data Collection”](https://digitalcontentnext.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/DCN-Google-Data-Collection-Paper.pdf) read pages 1-9, skim rest of document.

**Wed., Oct. 30 - Data Mining and Tracking**

**Mon., Nov. 4 - Guest Speaker: Cybercrime and Digital Security.**

-  [Read/Listen: “More States Opting To 'Robo-Grade' Student Essays By Computer"](https://www.npr.org/2018/06/30/624373367/more-states-opting-to-robo-grade-student-essays-by-computer)  
- Read: "[2025: Imaging the Future of Mobile Apps in Higher Ed](https://www.emergingedtech.com/2018/02/imagining-future-of-mobile-apps-higher-education/)"

**Wed., Nov. 6 - Information in Education. Distance Ed., MOOCs, Digital Divide, Print vs. Digital**

- Remember next class meets in lobby of Humanities Research Center  
- Think of questions relevant to field trip

**Mon., Nov. 11 - Information in the Humanities. Field Trip Humanities Research Center.**

*Promptly at 10:30*, meet in the lobby of the HRC

- Read: [“The Scientific Method”](https://www.khanacademy.org/science/high-school-biology/hs-biology-foundations/hs-biology-and-the-scientific-method/a/the-science-of-biology)  
- Read: ["Using Story to Change Systems"](https://ssir.org/articles/entry/using_story_to_change_systems)

- Read: ["Electronic Medical Records Increase Medical Error"](http://go.galegroup.com.ezproxy.lib.utexas.edu/ps/retrieve.do?tabID=Viewpoints&resultListType=RESULT_LIST&searchResultsType=SingleTab&searchType=BasicSearchForm&currentPosition=3&docId=GALE%7CEJ3010864221&docType=Viewpoint+essay&sort=Relevance&contentSegment=&prodId=OVIC&contentSet=GALE%7CEJ3010864221&searchId=R1&userGroupName=txshracd2598&inPS=true) and ["Electronic Medical Records Reduce Medical Error"](http://go.galegroup.com.ezproxy.lib.utexas.edu/ps/retrieve.do?tabID=Viewpoints&resultListType=RESULT_LIST&searchResultsType=SingleTab&searchType=BasicSearchForm&currentPosition=4&docId=GALE%7CEJ3010864220&docType=Viewpoint+essay&sort=Relevance&contentSegment=&prodId=OVIC&contentSet=GALE%7CEJ3010864220&searchId=R1&userGroupName=txshracd2598&inPS=true)

**Wed., Nov. 13 - Information Social Sciences and Sciences and Medicine**

- Write at least two possible questions for the class final

- Read: [“Definition of Business Research Methods”](https://bizfluent.com/info-8032498-definition-business-research-methods.html)

**Mon., Nov. 18 - Information in Business and Economics. Course Review, part 2**

- Read: [“’I Was Devastated’…”](https://www.vanityfair.com/news/2018/07/the-man-who-created-the-world-wide-web-has-some-regrets)

- Read: [“He Predicted the 2016 Fake News Crisis…”](https://www.buzzfeednews.com/article/charliewarzel/the-terrifying-future-of-fake-news)

**Wed., Nov. 20 - Information in Personal Life and Leisure. Future Developments.**

**Mon., Nov. 25 - Optional Attendance. Help with and Rehearsal for Project Presentations**

**Mon., Dec. 2 - Presentation of projects.**

**Wed., Dec. 4 - Presentation of projects.**

**Mon., Dec. 9 - Final Exam**

**Class Processes:** Attendance counts for 10% of grade and is required unless otherwise stated for specific classes. Up to two unexcused absences are permitted. More that will mean a reduction of 1-5 points unless an official justification is presented. Let the instructor know if you know you will miss a class. However there will be pop quizzes and in-class writing assignments. Students without an excused absence will not receive credit for these and there will not be make-ups for the unexcused. Students are responsible for getting any material or notes from missed classes.

Class discussion is a primary mode of learning. I realize that may be difficult for some, but I will make every effort to promote a welcoming environment that promotes critical thinking without contentiousness. Verbal communication is a fundamental aspect of education and almost all careers, so developing these skills will make your future sunny and bright.

Laptops and tablet computers are allowed, but smart phones may only be used for the occasional searching as part of in-class activities. Students may **only** use permissible devices for class-related activities. Use for personal activities such as email, social media, games may result in prohibition of device.

**Religious Holy Days:** By UT Austin policy, you must notify me of your pending absence at least fourteen days prior to the date of observance of a religious holy day. If you must miss a class, an examination, a work assignment, or a project in order to observe a religious holy day, I will give you an opportunity to complete the missed work within a reasonable time after the absence.

**Use of *Canvas* for class:** In this class I use Canvas—a Web-based course management system with password-protected access at http://canvas.utexas.edu —to provide the syllabus with links to homework and to post grades. You can find support in using Canvas at the ITS Help Desk at 512 475-9400, Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 6 p.m., so plan accordingly.

**Basis of Grades:**

Final project 20  
Annotated bibliography 15

Final exam 10

Class and homework writings 15

Pop quizzes on assigned readings/videos 10

Attendance 10  
Class participation 20

**Grading Scale:**

A 100 to 94

A- 93 to 90

B+ 89 to 87

B 86 to 84

B- 83 to 80

C+ 79 to 77

C 76 to 74

C- 73 to 70

D 69 to 60

**Academic Integrity**

**University of Texas Honor Code:** The core values of The University of Texas at Austin are learning, discovery, freedom, leadership, individual opportunity, and responsibility. Each member of the university is expected to uphold these values through integrity, honesty, trust, fairness, and respect toward peers and community. Each student in this course is expected to abide by the University of Texas Honor Code. Any work submitted by a student in this course for academic credit will be the student's own work. For this course, collaboration is allowed in the following instances: You are encouraged to study together and to discuss information and concepts covered in lecture and the sections with other students. You can give "consulting" help to or receive "consulting" help from such students. However, this permissible cooperation should never involve one student having possession of a copy of all or part of work done by someone else, in the form of an e-mail, an e-mail attachment file, a USB drive. Should copying occur, both the student who copied work from another student and the student who gave material to be copied will both automatically receive a zero for the assignment. Penalty for violation of this Code can also be extended to include failure of the course and University disciplinary action.

During examinations, you must do your own work. Talking or discussion is not permitted during

the examinations, nor may you compare papers, copy from others, or collaborate in any way.

Any collaborative behavior during the examinations will result in failure of the exam, and may

lead to failure of the course and University disciplinary action.

**Other University Notices and Policies**

**Use of E-mail for Official Correspondence to Students:** All students should become familiar with the University's official e-mail student notification policy. It is the student's responsibility to keep the University informed as to changes in his or her e-mail address. Students are expected to check e-mail on a frequent and regular basis in order to stay current with University-related communications, recognizing that certain communications may be time-critical. It is recommended that e-mail be checked daily, but at a minimum, twice per week. The complete text of this policy and instructions for updating your e-mail address are available at

[**https://it.utexas.edu/services/email-calendar-collaboration**](https://it.utexas.edu/services/email-calendar-collaboration)

**Documented Disability Statement**

Any student with a documented disability who requires academic accommodations should

contact Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) at 512 471-6259 (voice) or

1-866-329-3986 (video phone). Faculty are not required to provide accommodations without an

official accommodation letter from SSD. *All such information will be strictly confidential.*

▪ Please notify me as quickly as possible if the material being presented in class is not

accessible (e.g., instructional videos need captioning, course packets are not readable for

proper alternative text conversion, etc.).

▪ Please notify me as early in the semester as possible if disability-related accommodations

for field trips are required. Advanced notice will permit the arrangement of

accommodations on the given day (e.g., transportation, site accessibility, etc.).

▪ Contact Services for Students with Disabilities at 512 471-6259 (voice) or 1-866-329-3986

(video phone) or reference SSD’s website for more disability-related information:

http://www.utexas.edu/diversity/ddce/ssd/for\_cstudents.php

**Behavior Concerns Advice Line (BCAL)**

If you are worried about someone who is acting differently, you may use the Behavior Concerns

Advice Line to discuss by phone your concerns about another individual’s behavior. This

service is provided through a partnership among the Office of the Dean of Students, the

Counseling and Mental Health Center (CMHC), the Employee Assistance Program (EAP), and

The University of Texas Police Department (UTPD). Call 512-232-5050 or visit

http://www.utexas.edu/safety/bcal

**Q drop Policy**

The State of Texas has enacted a law that limits the number of course drops for academic reasons

to six (6). As stated in Senate Bill 1231:

“Beginning with the fall 2007 academic term, an institution of higher education may not

permit an undergraduate student a total of more than six dropped courses, including any course

a transfer student has dropped at another institution of higher education, unless the student

shows good cause for dropping more than that number.”

**Emergency Evacuation Policy**

Occupants of buildings on the UT Austin campus are required to evacuate and assemble outside

when a fire alarm is activated or an announcement is made. Please be aware of the following

policies regarding evacuation:

▪ Familiarize yourself with all exit doors of the classroom and the building. Remember

that the nearest exit door may not be the one you used when you entered the building.

▪ If you require assistance to evacuate, inform me in writing during the first week of

class.

▪ In the event of an evacuation, follow my instructions or those of class instructors.

Do not re-enter a building unless you’re given instructions by the Austin Fire Department, the

UT Austin Police Department, or the Fire Prevention Services office.

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Aug. 27, 2019