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MCO 427: Misinformation and Society

### Course and Faculty Information

Credits: 3

Prerequisites: N/A

Instructor: Dr. Kristy Roschke (she/her)

Contact Info: kristy.roschke@asu.edu

Office Hours: Zoom, by appointment only

Course Overview: This course is designed to investigate the underlying sociocultural, historical and technological causes of misinformation and to help students develop strategies and tactics to recognize misinformation, develop resiliency, and work to minimize its impact. Though misinformation is not a new phenomenon, it runs rampant in today's digital information ecosystem, and is becoming more sophisticated and difficult to spot. Bad actors are using powerful tools and techniques to infect our information supply, sowing confusion and discord.

We will examine the evolution of misinformation, its key characteristics and the range of content types that fall under its umbrella. It will also explore misinformation's impact on important societal issues, as well as current content moderation and policy approaches to eradicating misinformation.

ACEJMC Values and Competencies: As a member of the Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communication (http://www.acejmc.org/), the Cronkite School is committed to classroom learning that achieves ACEJMC professional values and competencies. This course emphasizes learning in the following (bolded) values and competencies:

- Apply the principles and laws of freedom of speech and press in a global context and for the country in which the institution that invites ACEJMC is located;
- Demonstrate an understanding of the multicultural history and role of professionals and institutions in shaping communications;
- Demonstrate culturally proficient communication that empowers those traditionally disenfranchised in society, especially as grounded in race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation and ability, domestically and globally, across communication and media contexts;
- · Present images and information effectively and creatively, using appropriate tools and technologies;
- · Write correctly and clearly in forms and styles appropriate for the communications professions, audiences and purposes they serve;
- Demonstrate an understanding of professional ethical principles and work ethically in pursuit of truth, accuracy, fairness and diversity;
- Apply critical thinking skills in conducting research and evaluating information by methods appropriate to the communications professions in which they
  work:
- · Effectively and correctly apply basic numerical and statistical concepts;
- Critically evaluate their own work and that of others for accuracy and fairness, clarity, appropriate style and grammatical correctness;
- · Apply tools and technologies appropriate for the communications professions in which they work.

### Learning Outcomes

By the end of this course students will be able to:

- Describe the evolution of misinformation, including historical propaganda efforts, key perpetrators, targets and goals.
- · Define key characteristics of misinformation, including what attributes make misinformation campaigns successful.
- Evaluate strategies and experiment with tools for critically evaluating the accuracy and credibility of digital media sources and information, including advanced search techniques, reverse image and database search, fact-checking and misinformation tracking tools, and open-source intelligence resources.
- Examine underlying causes of misinformation and the populations most adversely impacted by it.

 Assess the strengths and weaknesses of platform content moderation policies and discuss pros and cons of government or other forms of misinformation interventions and mitigation strategies.

### Course Access

Course Access: Your ASU courses can be accessed by both my.asu.edu (https://my.asu.edu/) and myasucourses.asu.edu (http://myasucourses.asu.edu/); bookmark both in the event that one site is down.

Students must agree to the Cronkite School Academic Integrity Agreement on the contents of this syllabus with 100% to continue on in the course. The integrity agreement does not count for course points.

Computer Requirements: This is a fully online course; therefore, it requires a computer with internet access and the following technologies:

- Web browsers (<u>Chrome (https://www.google.com/chrome)</u> or <u>Mozilla Firefox (http://www.mozilla.org/en-US/firefox/new/)</u>). In this course, <u>Chrome is the preferred browser</u>
- Adobe Acrobat Reader (http://get.adobe.com/reader/) (free)
- · Webcam, microphone, headset or earbuds, and speaker
- Microsoft Office (Microsoft 365 is free for all currently-enrolled ASU students)
- · Reliable broadband internet connection (DSL or cable) to stream videos.
- A web hosting platform and domain, preferably from Reclaim Hosting (see description under textbook information below).

**Note:** A smartphone, iPad, Chromebook, etc. will not be sufficient for completing your work in ASU Online courses. While you will be able to access course content with mobile devices, you must use a computer for all assignments, quizzes and virtual labs.

For security reasons, accessing ASU services requires two-factor authentication using Duo (https://getprotected.asu.edu/services/identity-and-access-management/duo-two-factor). In order to log in to MyASU and Canvas, you are required to have a mobile device (mobile phone or tablet); a phone with active service to receive authentication calls and/or SMS-delivered passcodes; or a key-fob hardware token, YubiKey Security key or smartphone with a recent operating system compatible with the Duo Mobile app. For questions about Duo, please contact ASU Technical Support (https://uto.asu.edu/contact). Make sure to allow sufficient time to authenticate to ASU systems to submit your assignments by the deadline.

#### Student Success

This is an online course. To be successful:

- · check the course daily
- · read announcements
- · read and respond to course email messages as needed
- · complete assignments by the due dates specified
- · communicate regularly with your instructor and peers
- create a study and/or assignment schedule to stay on track
- access <u>ASU Online Student Resources (http://goto.asuonline.asu.edu/success/online-resources.html)</u>

#### Required Course Materials

No formal textbook purchase is required. However, you will be blogging throughout the class, which can be handled in one of several ways:

- 1. Digital Media Literacy degree students are required to set up a blog and domain through Reclaim Hosting at a total cost of \$45 per calendar year. There are directions in Module 1 to walk you through that process.
- 2. For students who have taken Digital Media Literacy I or II and have already set up a blog through Reclaim Hosting, you will continue to use that site.
- 3. For all other majors, we prefer that you set up a blog using Reclaim, but you do have other options:
  - You can also choose to set up a free blog using Wordpress or a similar service (Wix, Weebly, etc.).
  - If you already have your own domain name and hosting service, you can use that to produce original work for this course. But please note that I will not be able to
    help you with tech support if you are not working with the suggested set of tools.

I ask that you decide which route you're going to go in the first week of the course, and stick with it. I strongly encourage you to consider establishing your own presence online, for this work and other work you wish to showcase. It's a great tool when you're on the job market.

## **Grading Structure**

Activities used for instruction and assessment of learning include readings, blog posts, quizzes, course discussion, and a final exam. Deadlines for each are posted within Canvas. The course comprises 1,000 total points. Points are earned through the following:

- Discussion: There are 8 discussion assignments for a total of 200 course points.
- Quizzes: Students will take four 25-point guizzes over the course of the semester.
- Blog posts: You will produce a number of written assignments that will be posted to the blog you create in this class. Most will be writing, but you can incorporate other content elements where appropriate. The blog assignments are worth a total of 500 points.
- Misinformation education activity: You will create a media message to educate people about misinformation. This assignment is worth 150 points.
- Final exam: A comprehensive final exam is worth 50 points.

### **Grading Scale**

This class uses the standard Cronkite Grading Scale for final course grades.

#### Cronkite Grading Scale

Cronkite Grading Scale				
Grade	Percentage	Points		
A+	97.00 - 100.00%	970.0 - 1,000.0		
A	94.00 - 96.99%	940.0 - 969.9		
A-	90.00 - 93.99%	900.0 - 939.9		
B+	87.00 - 89.99%	870.0 - 899.9		
В	84.00 - 86.99%	840.0 - 869.9		
B-	80.00 - 83.99%	800.0 - 839.9		
C+	76.00 - 79.99%	760.0 - 799.9		
С	70.00 - 75.99%	700.0 - 759.9		
D	60.00 - 69.99%	600.0 - 699.9		
E	Below 60.00%	0.0 - 599.9		

Rounding Up Grades: Final grades will not be rounded up.

Grading Procedure: Grades reflect your performance on assignments and adherence to deadlines. Grades on assignments will be available for review in the "Grades" page within 72 hours.

Extra Credit: There are two opportunities for extra credit; you may earn up to 30 points. The total extra credit available may not exceed 3% of this course's total points. Extra credit opportunities are offered to the class as a whole and not to individual students.

Y Grades: Students have the option of a Y grade in determining their final course grade. The Y grade signifies "satisfactory" completion of the course and is considered to be the equivalent of a C or above. Y grades allow students to earn course credit but do not affect your GPA. Students opting for the Y grade who do not achieve a "satisfactory" level (70% or above) will receive a D or an E depending on their assessment grades throughout the class. Students must notify the instructor of a decision to select the Y grade option before the close of the drop/add period and cannot change their selection after the drop/add period. You can find the drop/add date on the ASU Academic Calendar (https://students.asu.edu/academic-calendar).

Withdrawals and Incompletes: Consult the <u>ASU Academic Calendar (https://students.asu.edu/academic-calendar)</u> for individual course and full session withdrawal deadlines. For questions regarding incomplete grades and <u>medical or compassionate withdrawals (https://students.asu.edu/forms/medical-compassionate-withdrawal-request)</u>, please contact Student Success Director Mary Cook: <u>mary.cook@asu.edu (mailto:mary.cook@asu.edu)</u>.

Grades and Grading Policies: For more information on ASU grades and grading policies, visit https://students.asu.edu/grades (https://students.asu.edu/grades).

# Submitting Assignments

Submitting Assignments: All assignments, unless otherwise announced, must be submitted to the designated area of Canvas. Do not submit assignments via email.

Submission Times: Assignment due dates follow Arizona time. Click the following link to access the Time Converter (http://www.thetimezoneconverter.com/) to ensure you account for the difference in time zones. Arizona does not observe daylight saving time. Note: The Canvas mobile app sometimes converts deadlines to your time zone rather than the correct deadline in Arizona time, which can lead to confusion for students in other time zones. Please do not rely on the deadline (time and date) as it appears in the mobile app; instead, log in to Canvas using a computer to view the correct deadlines.

Submission Verification: Double-check your Canvas submission after you submit each assignment. If you upload a file or include a link in your submission, open the file/click the link in Canvas after submission to verify that it uploaded completely. It is your responsibility to make sure your work is submitted correctly. You will not receive credit for work that does not upload correctly or work that does not upload correctly or work that does not upload before the deadline.

Revision Policy: Your instructor will not review drafts of assignments prior to your final submission. Revision of final drafts (i.e. after a grade has been recorded) is not allowed for a new grade.

#### Deadlines

Meeting deadlines is crucial to success in any Cronkite course. Your instructor will hold you to the same standards as professional communicators. We expect you to meet all deadlines, including testing technology and equipment well ahead of those deadlines.

Assignments submitted even one minute past the deadline will not be accepted; they will receive a zero. There are no exceptions, including for technical difficulties. For example, students with unreliable internet connections have been unable to submit their assignments on time and thus earned no points for those assignments.

If you begin an assignment but run out of time to complete it, remember that submitting a partially completed assignment is better than not submitting anything at all (as long as your work meets all expectations for academic integrity and does not compromise the work of other students).

Makeup Work: Other than for religious accommodations or university-sanctioned events, the Cronkite School does not give makeup work. If you're absent and miss an inclass assignment, quiz or test, you will not earn credit for it.

Extreme Personal Circumstances: If students experience events or extreme circumstances (e.g. natural disasters, regional emergencies, or extenuating personal circumstances such as the death of an immediate family member, emergent or chronic health issues), they must notify their instructor immediately. Instructors are obligated to report extreme or extenuating circumstances to the Dean's Office for coordination of student support.

Active Duty Military: If you are a student on active duty with the military and, because of deployment or service responsibilities, experience Internet connectivity issues that prevent you from participating in course activities or meeting assignment deadlines, you must notify the instructor as soon as possible to discuss appropriate accommodations.

**Religious Accommodations**: If you need to be absent from class due to religious observance, notify your instructor at the beginning of the semester.

### Student Expectations

Expectations of Professionalism: Students must exhibit professionalism in all course-related activities, assessments and communications. It is vital to the learning process that each student respects their instructor, classmates, clients, partners, sources, technology, equipment, and course content. Students who engage in damaging or abusive behavior — and those who consistently make disruptive, rude or intimidating comments in person or online — will be referred to <a href="ASU's Student Rights and Responsibilities">ASU's Student Rights and Responsibilities (https://eoss.asu.edu/dos/srr)</a> for investigation and possible consideration for dismissal from the program.

We strive to create a respectful, civil learning environment for everyone; however, some course content and discussions may evoke emotional responses based on personal experiences and backgrounds. Please bring any concerns to the attention of your instructor — or, alternatively, to <a href="Cronkite School leadership">Cronkite School leadership</a>

(https://cronkite.asu.edu/people/leadership/) .

According to ASU policy (https://www.asu.edu/aad/manuals/ssm/ssm104-02.html), "Students, faculty, staff, and other individuals do not have an unqualified right of access to university grounds, property, or services. Interfering with the peaceful conduct of university-related business or activities or remaining on campus grounds after a request to leave may be considered a crime."

Original Work: All work submitted for this class must be your original work, created by you, solely for the current session of this class. This includes photos, text, video, and images. You may not submit assignments or evaluations done for any other class, for any other organization, or for a previous session of this class. ASU offers resources (<a href="https://provost.asu.edu/academic-integrity/resources/students#avoiding-plagiarism">https://provost.asu.edu/academic-integrity/resources/students#avoiding-plagiarism</a>) to learn more about plagiarism and self-plagiarism. Students who violate this clause will be referred to an academic integrity officer (<a href="https://provost.asu.edu/academic-integrity/officers">https://provost.asu.edu/academic-integrity/officers</a>).

Collaborations: All assignments must be your own work — from concept to execution — unless the instructor specifies some type of collaboration. Even when you are part of a team, not all elements of the assignment may be team-based. For example, the assignment may call for a team discussion of a topic, but a writing assignment based on that discussion must be your individual work. Violating this policy may qualify as academic dishonesty. You are responsible for understanding what elements of an assignment or task (if any) require peer collaboration or individual completion.

Official Photo: According to ASU policy, all students must have an official photo on file with the university. If you do not have an official photo on file, please visit this link to upload a photo: <a href="https://webapp4.asu.edu/cardservices">https://webapp4.asu.edu/cardservices</a> (<a href="https://webapp4.asu.edu/cardservices">https://webapp4.asu.

### Cronkite School Policies

Academic Integrity: The school has zero tolerance for academic dishonesty; instructors enforce academic integrity in every course and educational activity offered or sanctioned by the school. Any allegation of academic dishonesty will be referred to an appointed academic integrity officer (https://provost.asu.edu/academic-integrity/officers) for investigation. They elevate cases to the school's standards committee for review and recommendation to the dean of the school. If the committee finds that a student has engaged in academic dishonesty in any form — including but not limited to cheating, plagiarizing, and fabricating (see examples here (https://cronkite.asu.edu/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/Cronkite-Resources-on-Plagiarism-Fabrication-and-Sourcing-1.pdf) — that student shall receive a grade of XE for the class and may face suspension or expulsion from ASU.

At the beginning of every Cronkite class, every student must digitally agree to uphold Cronkite's Commitment to Academic Integrity, as well as the ASU Academic Integrity Policy and the Student Honor Code. This agreement indicates that each student has read and understood the terms of academic integrity violations and all potential sanctions. Students can find comprehensive information about academic integrity policies and procedures on the ASU Provost's site (https://provost.asu.edu/academic-integrity).

Student Accessibility and Inclusive Learning Services (SAILS): Student Accessibility and Inclusive Learning Services (https://eoss.asu.edu/accessibility) facilitates accommodations for students who have registered with that office. Accommodations are determined on a case-by-case, course-by-course basis through an interactive process with people who can best support student success. Prior to receiving accommodations from their instructor, students must receive verification of eligibility by registering with SAILS. Student SAILS information is confidential.

Course Content: Course content, including lectures, are copyrighted materials. Students may not share outside the class, upload, sell, or distribute course content, assessments, access codes, or notes. Students must refrain from uploading to any course shell, discussion board, or website used by the instructor or other course forum any material that is not the student's original work unless the student first complies with all applicable copyright laws; faculty members reserve the right to delete materials on the grounds of suspected copyright infringement.

Cronkite School Diversity Principles: The Walter Cronkite School of Journalism and Mass Communication embraces inclusivity (https://cronkite.asu.edu/dei/) in student, staff and faculty populations in order to create an academic environment that fosters diversity of thought and acceptance of all people regardless of race, gender, age, sexual orientation, or societal, political, cultural, economic, spiritual, or physical differences. To this end, the school directs efforts to the following four principles:

- Actively seek out and encourage diverse populations to become productive members of the faculty, staff and the student body;
- · Create and maintain a work, learning and social environment that is cognizant and supportive of a diversity of human differences and beliefs;
- Incorporate within the formal content of the curriculum and in each course an affirmation of the core journalistic values of accuracy, fairness, ethical behavior and sensitivity when reflecting an increasingly multicultural world;
- Foster and support a climate in which events and activities of the school reflect diversity of awareness, sensitivity to and support for people of different origins, orientations and abilities.

Additional Cronkite School Policies: Students can find additional Cronkite School policies, including the Academic Integrity Policy, on this page (<a href="https://cronkite.asu.edu/content/cronkite-course-policies">https://cronkite.asu.edu/content/cronkite-course-policies</a>) and in the Canvas navigation menu (see "Cronkite School Policies"). These policies apply to all students in all classes; students must read and acknowledge these policies at the beginning of each class.

### Technical Support

Technical Support: Contact ASU Technical Support by calling 855-278-5080 or visit the online service center (https://uto.asu.edu/contact). Be sure to record your case number and document your issue with screenshots and video. Remember: It is your responsibility to make sure you start assignments early enough to be able to address any technical issues before the deadline. Deadline exceptions are not granted for technical troubles. If a technical problem arises, contact technical support immediately. To monitor the status of campus networks and services, visit the System Health Portal at <a href="http://syshealth.asu.edu/">http://syshealth.asu.edu/</a> (http://syshealth.asu.edu/).

### Communicating with the Instructor

Community Forum: This course uses a discussion topic called "Community Forum" for general questions and comments about the course. Prior to posting a question or comment, check the syllabus, announcements, and existing posts to ensure it's not redundant. You are encouraged to respond to the questions of your classmates.

Email questions of a personal nature to your instructor. You can expect a response within 72 hours.

Email: ASU email is an official means of communication (http://www.asu.edu/aad/manuals/ssm/ssm107-03.html) among students, faculty, and staff. Students are expected to read and act upon email in a timely fashion. Students bear the responsibility of missed messages and should check their ASU-assigned email regularly. All instructor correspondence will be sent to your ASU email account.

#### Resources

News Access: Access the New York Times, the Wall Street Journal and the Arizona Republic using the instructions here: <a href="https://cronkite.asu.edu/about/policies/news-access/">https://cronkite.asu.edu/about/policies/news-access/</a>)

Adobe Access: The Cronkite School provides free access to the Adobe Creative Suite via workstations in the Cronkite building and free Adobe Creative Cloud access for students to use remotely on their own computers. To access Creative Cloud and download Adobe programs, complete these steps:

- 1. Go to (https://urldefense.proofpoint.com/v2/url?u=https-3A creativecloud.adobe.com\_&d=DwMFaQ&c=l45AxH
  - kUV29SRQusp9vYR0n1GycN4\_2jlnuKy6zbqQ&r=IWUcf6F1wHjswOmRWs7512wAlAEipN8GXONxhpllh4c&m=ZYC3lbpb5ojhPFAZUCv8\_l3aFSFeAGWdSA64bsFRrM0&s=DRGZquhttps://creativecloud.adobe.com/ (https://creativecloud.adobe.com/).
- 2. Log in with your [ASUrite]@asu.edu email and follow these instructions
  - $\underline{(https://docs.google.com/document/d/1YrSd0z3BgXUzxlfTRWuiA8LuRMYgWgd8oeyWdm2O4KY/edit?usp=sharing)}.$

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3. You must use your [ASUrite]@asu.edu email for Adobe access; your alternate email address (e.g. [firstname.lastname8]@asu.edu) will not work.

## Syllabus Disclaimer

Statement of Intent: The syllabus is a statement of intent and serves as an implicit agreement between the instructor and the student. Your instructor will make every effort to avoid changing the course schedule; however, it is possible that unforeseen events will necessitate syllabus changes. Remember to check your ASU email and the course site often.

# Course Summary:

Date	Details	Due
Sat Jan 15, 2022	Response due for Discussion #1	to do: 11:59pm
Sun Oct 2, 2022	Extra Credit Option #2  (https://asu.instructure.com/courses/157683/assignments/4249114)	due by 11:59pm
Tue Mar 14, 2023		due by 11:59pm
Wed Mar 15, 2023	Discussion Board #1: Introduce Yourself!	due by 11:59pm

(https://asu.instructure.com/courses/157683/assignments/4249104)

Date	Details	Due
	Discussion Board #2: The State of Misinformation     (https://asu.instructure.com/courses/157683/assignments/4249103)	due by 11:59pm
Sun Mar 19, 2023	Blog assignment: Organizing your blog (https://asu.instructure.com/courses/157683/assignments/4249105)	due by 11:59pm
	Blog post: 24-Hour Media Diet: Spotting Misinformation (https://asu.instructure.com/courses/157683/assignments/4249106)	due by 11:59pm
	pDiscussion Board #3: Reflecting on the Learning  Materials (2 posts)  (https://asu.instructure.com/courses/157683/assignments/4249102)	due by 11:59pm
Sun Mar 26, 2023	Quiz #1 (https://asu.instructure.com/courses/157683/assignments/4249095)	due by 11:59pm
	Blog post: How has misinformation impacted you and people you know? (https://asu.instructure.com/courses/157683/assignments/4249109)	due by 11:59pm
Wed Mar 29, 2023	<b>Discussion Board #4: Using Hypothesis Annotation</b> (https://asu.instructure.com/courses/157683/assignments/4249101)	due by 11:59pm
Sup Apr 2, 2022	Quiz #2     (https://asu.instructure.com/courses/157683/assignments/4249091)	due by 11:59pm
Sun Apr 2, 2023	Blog post: Evaluating misinformation education tools (https://asu.instructure.com/courses/157683/assignments/4249108)	due by 11:59pm
Wed Apr 5, 2023	Discussion Board #5: Using Hypothesis Annotation Again (https://asu.instructure.com/courses/157683/assignments/4249100)	due by 11:59pm
0		due by 11:59pm
Sun Apr 9, 2023	Blog post: Website or claim analysis (https://asu.instructure.com/courses/157683/assignments/4249111)	due by 11:59pm
Wed Apr 12, 2023	Discussion Board #6: Advertising, media literacy and misinformation (https://asu.instructure.com/courses/157683/assignments/4249099)	due by 11:59pm
	Quiz #4 (https://asu.instructure.com/courses/157683/assignments/4249096)	due by 11:59pm
Sun Apr 16, 2023	Blog post: Assessing current platforms' attempts to curb misinformation (https://asu.instructure.com/courses/157683/assignments/4249107)	due by 11:59pm
	Blog post: Using the Trust Indicators (https://asu.instructure.com/courses/157683/assignments/4249110)	due by 11:59pm
Sun Apr 23, 2023	Discussion Board #7: Whose Responsibility is it to Solve the Misinformation Problem? (2 Posts) (https://asu.instructure.com/courses/157683/assignments/4249097)	due by 11:59pm
	Discussion Board #7: Whose Responsibility is it to Solve the Misinformation Problem? (2 Posts) (https://asu.instructure.com/courses/157683/assignments/4249112)	due by 11:59pm
Mon Apr 24, 2023	Extra Credit Opportunity Due April 24 (https://asu.instructure.com/courses/157683/assignments/4249113)	due by 11:59pm
Tue Apr 25, 2023	Discussion Board #8: Using Hypothesis Annotation Again (https://asu.instructure.com/courses/157683/assignments/4249098)	due by 11:59pm

Date	Details	Due
Wed Apr 26, 2023	Misinformation Education Creation Activity (https://asu.instructure.com/courses/157683/assignments/4249115)	due by 11:59pm
Fri Apr 28, 2023		due by 11:59pm