RĪGAS STRADIŅA UNIVERSITĀTE

Study Course Description

Confronting Fake News and Misinformation

About Study Course

Course Code:	KF_044	**LQF Level:**	Level 6
Credit Points:	2.00	**ECTS:**	3.00
Branch of Science:	Communication Sciences: Communication Theory		
Target Audience:	Information and Communication Science		

Study Course Supervisor

Course Supervisor:	Lāsma Šķestere

Study Course Implementer

Structural Unit:	Faculty of Communication
The Head of Structural Unit:	Dite Liepa
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Study Course Planning

Full-Time

Part No	Implementation form	Number	Length (ac.h.)	Contact hours	Contact hours total	Final Examination
1	**Lectures**	6	2	12	20	Exam (Written)
	Classes	4	2	8		

Study Course Description

Preliminary Knowledge:

Communication and public relations or journalism.

Objective:

Society in general and each individual depends on information to make their political and economic de[cisions], but can all information be trusted? Someone may feel that mass manipulation and disinformation are th[...] of ancient history, but they are becoming more prominent part of our daily lives because of increasing [...] depdence on technology. This course addresses the renewed phenomemon of fake news, misinformation/disinformation and its related concepts; then focuses more explicitly on psychological fa[ctors] that make people vulnerable to misperceptions and conspiracy theories. Students will develop sustanti[...] expertise in how to measure, diagnose and repond to false believes in digitial environment. This cours[e] includes practical learning excercices and special simulation game to strenghten crital thinking skills.

Topic Layout (Full-Time)

No.	Topic	Part	Type of Implementation	Number	Venue

CP
2

1	Introduction to the course. What is truth; fake news; factcheking; cognitive bias; logical fallacies and truth sorting?	Semester 1	Lectures	1	auditorium	
2	The psychology of false beliefs. Bias in information exposure, processing and interpretation.	Semester 1	Lectures	1	auditorium	
3	Media coverage and fact cheking. Individual assignement: Where do I get my news from?	Semester 1	Classes	1	auditorium	
4	Conspirarcy theories: causes and consequences	Semester 1	Lectures	1	auditorium	
5	Applications of misinformation.Group assignement. Case study analysis (group work 3-4 studens). Students will be asked to write a case study decription and to prepare presentation about it.	Semester 1	Classes	1	auditorium	
6	Rumors, social media and online misinformation Adressing the challenge of fake news, disinformation in digital era	Semester 1	Lectures	1	auditorium	
7	Responses to disinformation: goes and no-goes	Semester 1	Lectures	1	auditorium	
8	The practical seminar in disinformation detection (visual evidence verification, geolocation, advanced search tehniques)	Semester 1	Classes	1	auditorium	
9	Simulation game I part	Semester 1	Lectures	1	auditorium	
10	Simulation game II part	Semester 1	Classes	1	auditorium	

Total Number of Lectures	6
Total Number of Classes	4
Total	10.00

Assessment

Unaided Work:

Use of knowledge obtained at lectures and seminars in detection misinformation and choosing the possible strategy to counter it.

Assessment Criteria:

The final mark depends on the invididual assignements, group assignements, practical tasks and performance in simulation game.
 2 individual analytical papers: "Where do I get my news?" (20%); "The development of a myth" (40%); 1 group analysis: "Application of misinformation" (20%); performance in simulation game (20%) = 100% in total.

Final Examination (Full-Time):	Exam (Written)

Learning Outcomes

Knowledge:

Students will learn to:
- Understand the use of key concepts misinformation/disinformation, fakes news;
- Understand the power of news media and information;
- Identify key characteristics of real news: verification, accountability, indepence and multiple perspectives;
- Evaluate the reability and accuracy of sources in news stories and other information;
- Deconstruct news stories;
- Use news and other information to counter disinformation/misinformation.

Skills:

- Multidisciplinary teambuilding and collaboration;
- Solving complex problems;
- The ability to communicate in order to generate path-breaking solutions to complex problems.

Competencies:

- Ability to screen and critically review media, especially digitial media content;
- individually and in groups summarize, discuss and present topic-relevant problems
- apply theoretical knowledge into practice.

Bibliography

Required Reading:

1		Vraga, Emily K., Bode, Leticia (2020). "Defining Misinformation and Understanding its Bounded Nature: Using Expertise and Evidence for Describing Misinformation." Political Communication 37(1): 136–144.
2		Li, Jianing, Wagner Michael (2020). "The Value of Not Knowing: Partisan Cue-Taking and Belief Updating of the Uninformed, the Ambiguous, and the Misinformed." Journal of Communication 70(5): 646–669.
3		Gillian Murphy, Elizabeth F. Loftus, Rebecca Hofstein Grady, Linda J. Levine, and Ciara M. Greene (2019). "False Memories for Fake News During Ireland's Abortion Referendum." Psychological Science
4		Cass R. Sunstein and Adrian Vermeule (2009). "Conspiracy Theories: Causes and Cures." Journal of Political Philosophy 17(2): 202–227.
5		J. Eric Oliver and Thomas J. Wood (2014). "Conspiracy Theories and the Paranoid Style (s) of Mass Opinion." American Journal of Political Science 58(4): 952–966.
6		Oscar Barrera, Sergei Guriev, Emeric Henry, and Ekaterina Zhuravskaya (2020). "Facts, alternative facts, and fact checking in times of post-truth politics." Journal of Public Economics 182: 104123.
7	🔗	Marwick, Alice, and Rebecca Lewis. (2017). "Media manipulation and disinformation online." Pages 1-56
8	🔗	C. Thi Nguyen. (2018). "Escape the echo chamber." Aeon, newsletter, April, 2018.
9	🔗	Tim Boucher. 2018. "Adversarial Social Media Tactics Exposing Red Team Tricks To Empower Blue Team Defenders." Medium.

Additional Reading:

1		Deibert, Ronald J. (2019) "Three Painful Truths About Social Media." Journal of Democracy 30, no. 1: 25–39.
2	🔗	Read, Max. (2020) "5 Theories About Conspiracy Theories." New York Magazine, February 6.
3		Stephan Lewandowsky, John Cook, Ullrich Ecker, and Sander van der Linden (2020). "How to Spot COVID-19 Conspiracy Theories." George Mason University Center for Climate Change Communication.

Other Information Sources:

| 1 | 🔗 | A Neuroscientist Explains What Conspiracy Theories Do To Your Brain (Inverse, 2019). |