# Course Information

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course title:</th>
<th>Social Work Practice in the Era of Fake News</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Course #/term:</td>
<td>740 – 001, summer 2021</td>
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<tr>
<td>Time and place:</td>
<td>July 14, 2021 &amp; July 17, 2021 from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Credit hours:</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Prerequisites:</td>
<td>none</td>
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<tr>
<td>Instructor:</td>
<td>Darlene Nichols</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pronouns:</td>
<td>She, her, hers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contact info:</td>
<td>Email: <a href="mailto:dpn@umich.edu">dpn@umich.edu</a> Phone: 734-678-6106</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Office:</td>
<td>Via Zoom</td>
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<tr>
<td>Office hours:</td>
<td>By appointment</td>
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## 1. Course Statement

### a. Course description
This course presents topics in both micro and macro social work practice. The topics may include emerging practice methods, advanced application of methods covered in other required methods courses, and applications of methods in specific populations.

### b. Course content
The term "post-truth," the Oxford Dictionary’s 2016 Word of the Year, reflects an era where everyone is a few clicks away from information that supports any goal, belief, or outcome desired whether or not that information is factual. Evaluating information and recognizing “fake news” is a critical skill for everyone. For social workers, advocates, policy makers, and others responsible for human well-being, it is essential to find reliable data and other evidence to promote best practice and avoid the dangers of inaccurate information. Skill in locating and evaluating information can also help a practitioner work with clients and others who bring incorrect information into an interaction. This mini-course will address the following:

- Understanding the phenomenon of fake news in the current information landscape
- Building strategies for spotting fake news
- Addressing best approaches to locate “real” news
- Learning how to fact-check data and statistics
• Identifying ways in which information is organized, structured, and delivered to support the dominant social narratives in the U.S.

c. Course objectives and competencies
• Critically evaluate information sources, focusing on currency, relevance, replicability, accuracy, authority, and purpose. 4.2
• Identify the social impact of “fake news” and other fabricated or grossly biased information on decision-making and help-seeking behavior. 4.1, 6.2
• Understand how one’s own biases, media consumption practices, and worldviews can alter how one searches for and selects information for personal and professional use. 1.2, 1.5, 4.2, 4.4
• Assess how the dominant social narrative shapes what we hear and see through news media. 4.1

d. Course design
This course is designed to continue the development of critical thinking skills about information, how it is retrieved, utilized, and understood by ourselves and those with whom we work. While there will be some short lectures, we will engage with the material primarily through guided discussion and engagement with the materials. Students are encouraged to bring their own examples and observations about “fake news” and its manifestations online and elsewhere to enhance all of our understanding of fake news in today’s world.

2. Class Requirements

a. Text and class materials
Readings, video links, and other course material will be linked in Canvas prior to the class for which it will be assigned. Reading or viewing materials before class will be essential in order to best engage with class discussions.

b. Class schedule: below is a broad overview of topics we will cover each day.

Agenda

July 14
Morning

Introductions
• Course plan
• Classroom norms
Defining Fake News
- We will take time each writing up how we personally define "fake news" and then discuss
- Ways researchers and media professionals have defined this phenomenon [presentation]

Finding Fake News
- We will spend time looking for fake news on popular topics

July 14
Afternoon
Examples of fake news: discussion
- How do you know it's fake?

Other places misinformation shows up [presentation]

Privilege & misinformation: discussion

July 17
Morning
Media and Information Institutions [presentation]
How these sustain dominant social narratives & myths
- News outlets
- Publishers
- Journal editors

Fact-finding and finding balance

Who believes fake news & why

July 17
Afternoon
Working with those who are attached to fake news ideas

Role of social workers
Attendance and class participation
To get the most out of this class, attendance and participation is essential. If you will need to miss a class, please let the instructor know as soon as possible.

Policy on Class Attendance

Grading

This class is graded Pass/Fail
Late assignments will be permitted under special circumstances and in consultation with the instructor

School of Social Work Policies

Grades in Academic Courses and in Field Instruction
Policy for grading in special circumstances
Student Grievance procedures

Students with disabilities
The University of Michigan complies with federal and state laws which affect qualified persons with disabilities. It is the policy and practice of the School of Social Work to provide equitable educational opportunities for students with documented disabilities in all programs and activities, including internships or field placements. Students with disabilities who require academic accommodations are encouraged to register with the University of Michigan Office of Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD).

SSD provides assistance regarding academic, economic, social, and recreational activities to students who have documented disabilities. Supportive services available through SSD include assistance with classroom accommodations, volunteer readers and note takers, sign language and oral interpreters, accessible transportation, orientation and registration assistance, special scholarships, and aids for reading and studying, such as Braille and large print materials, assistive technology, and telecommunication devices for the deaf and hard of hearing. SSD coordinators also serve as intermediaries and advocates for students with disabilities.

To register or find out more about services, contact Services for Students with Disabilities, G664 Haven Hall, Ann Arbor, MI 48109-1045, (734) 763-3000 or visit http://ssd.umich.edu

Students with disabilities may also contact Health and Wellness Coordinator Nyshourn Price in the Office of Student Services at (734) 936-0961 / ndp@umich.edu. Students may contact Mary Eldredge in the Office of Field Education at (734) 647-9433 / hedgem@umich.edu for field-related questions.
Health-Related Class Absences
Please evaluate your own health status regularly and refrain from attending class and coming to campus if you are ill. You are encouraged to seek appropriate medical attention for treatment. School of Social Work students who miss class due to illness of any kind will be given opportunities to access course materials online or provided with alternative learning opportunities. Please notify me by email about your absence as soon as practical, so that I can make accommodations. Please note that documentation (a doctor’s note) for medical excuses is not required.