SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK
UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

Course title:	Social Work Practice in the Era of Fake News
Course #/term:	796 – 001, Spring/Summer 2022
Time and place:	Thursdays, 6 – 9 p.m. room
Credit hours:	1
Prerequisites:	none
Instructor:	Darlene Nichols
Pronouns:	She, her, hers
Contact info:	**Email:** dpn@umich.edu **Phone:** 734-663-3018
	You may expect a response within a day or less
Office:	
Office hours:	By appointment

1. Course Statement

a. Course description

This course presents advanced topics in both micro and macro social work practice. The topics may include emerging cross-cutting 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 Dictionaries 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's 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 information landscape
- Building strategies for spotting fake news
- Addressing best approaches to locate "real" news
- Learning how to fact-check data and statistics

- 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 will be encouraged to bring their own 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

I will link readings, video links, and other course material in Canvas at least one week 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

Date/Time	Agenda	Readings & Assignments
Week 1 May 12	Introductions Course plan Using dialogue Course Guidelines	Read Lexicon of Lies in advance of our first clas

	What is Fake News? Where does it come from? • Media and Information Institutions • Information marketing • Privilege and access to information • Bias and belief	
Week 2 May 19	How do we spot fake news? Developing strategies for finding credible evidence	Read: http://fair.org/take-action-now/media-activism-kit/how-to-detect-bias-in-news-media/ https://www.propublica.org/article/im-an-investigative-journalist-these-are-the-questions-i-asked-about-the-viral-plandemic-video
Week 3 May 26	What are ways fake news shows up beyond the written word? Data & statistical literacy Information literacy Algorithmic literacy Deep fakes	
Week 4 June 2	Why do people believe fake news? How fake news can sustain dominant social narratives & myths	View video: "Framing an Execution" https://umich.kanopy.com/video/framing-execution-media-mumia-abu-jamal Think about the questions listed on Canvas for this video as you watch it; be prepared for discussion Complete assigned

		readings for discussion
Week 5 June 9	How can we counteract fake news? Guest: Marna Clowney-Robinson, MSW, MLIS	Complete assigned readings for discussion

c. Assignments

Assignment	Due date
In the last two weeks of class, everyone will read and summarize one article for their classmates. (Half of the class will read for week 4 and the other half for week 4). Everyone else is to read the summaries and prepare for discussion.	

d. 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

e. 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](#)