

# Syllabus of Record



**Program:** CET Prague

**Course Code / Title:** (PR/COMM 370) From Propaganda to Post-Truth: A History of Fake News

**Total Hours:** 45

**Recommended Credits:** 3

**Primary Discipline / Suggested Cross Listings:** Communications / Political Science, History, Media Studies

**Language of Instruction:** English

**Prerequisites/Requirements:** None

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## Description

What is news? What is fake news? And what can these concepts tell us about the societies that employ them? The course focuses on propaganda, disinformation and other tools of information manipulation. Participants will be introduced to a theoretical discussion about propaganda and its impacts on various audiences. The overview of historical examples allows them to understand how this instrument evolved, and the attention to the current situation will provide them with insight about thinking and research of this issue. The special attention will be dedicated to practical examples of how to counter this phenomenon on a personal, state, and societal level.

## Objectives

In this course students:

- Gain familiarity with various aspects of propaganda
- Learn key concepts, historical development and present situations related to “fake news”
- Examine methods and techniques to counter propaganda and disinformation
- gain insight into current debates led by experts and researchers in this field.

## Course Requirements

### Class structure:

- Lecture
- Debate on selected topic relevant to the current discussion about propaganda

### Graded assignments:

*In class presentation on the week's topic*

Short presentation (10 – 15 minutes) summarizing key arguments of the selected article and commentary of the students. Students select their preferred topic during the first lecture.

### *Midterm exam*

The midterm written exam focused on topics discussed in lectures in the first part of the semester with emphasis on terminology.

### *Final project*

## Syllabus of Record

The final project is an essay plus an in-class presentation on the topic of the essay. Each student chooses an individual topic on which he/she would like to write the essay in advance consultation with the professor.

\*Attendance requirements are outlined in the CET Attendance Policy.

### Grading

The final grade is determined as follows:

Class participation	15%
In-class presentation on the week's topic	15%
Midterm exam	20%
Final project – Essay	40%
In-class presentation of the essay project	10%

### Readings

WARDLE, CLAIRE (2018) *Information Disorder: The Essential Glossary*. Harvard Kennedy School. Available from [https://firstdraftnews.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/infoDisorder\\_glossary.pdf](https://firstdraftnews.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/infoDisorder_glossary.pdf)

DAMSTRA, ALYT et al. (2020) *What Does Fake Look Like? A Review of the Literature on Intentional Deception in the News and on Social Media*. *Journalism Studies*. Available from <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/1461670X.2021.1979423>

DERAKHSHAN, HOSSEIN AND WARDLE, CLAIRE (2017) *Ban the term 'fake news'*. CNN. Available from <https://edition.cnn>

BERENSTEIN, JOSEPH (2021) *Bad News: Selling the story of disinformation*. *Harpers Magazine*. Available from <https://harpers.org/archive/2021/09/bad-news-selling-the-story-of-disinformation/>

COVID-19 and Conspiracy Spreaders. *STEM* 2021. Available from <https://en.stem.cz/covid-19-and-conspiracy-spreaders/>

ROOZENBEEK, JON et al. (2020) *Susceptibility to misinformation about COVID-19 around the world*. *Royal Society Open Science*. Available from <https://royalsocietypublishing.org/doi/10.1098/rsos.201199#d1e788>

TANDOC JR., EDSON C. et al. (2019) *Fake News as a Critical Incident in Journalism*. *Journalism Practice*. Available in Canvas

*The Lawfare Podcast: Brendan Nyhan on the Empirical Effects of Disinformation* (2020). Available at <https://www.lawfareblog.com/lawfare-podcast-brendan-nyhan-empirical-effects-disinformation>

NARAYANASWAMI, KARTHIK (2011) *Analysis of Nazi Propaganda: A Behavioral Study*. *Harvard Blogs*. Available at [https://archive.amir.cloud/projects/moral\\_identity-converted/research/nazi-visual/hist-1572-analysis-of-nazi-propaganda-knarayanaswami.pdf](https://archive.amir.cloud/projects/moral_identity-converted/research/nazi-visual/hist-1572-analysis-of-nazi-propaganda-knarayanaswami.pdf)

## Syllabus of Record

KOHL, DANIEL (2011) *The Presentation of “Self” and “Other” in Nazi Propaganda. Psychology and Society.* Available at

[http://www.psychologyandsociety.org/\\_\\_assets/\\_\\_original/2011/04/2Kohl\\_2011\\_.pdf](http://www.psychologyandsociety.org/__assets/__original/2011/04/2Kohl_2011_.pdf)

RIEFENSTAHL, LENI (dir.) *Triumph of the Will. 1935 (excerpt).* Available at

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Hu-CK47NM8E>

BICKEL, CRAIG (2000) *Operation FORTITUDE SOUTH: An Analysis of its Influence upon German Dispositions and Conduct of Operations in 1944. War & Society.* Available at Canvas

HWANG, TIM (2020) *Deconstructing the Disinformation War. Mediawell.* Available at

<https://mediawell.ssrc.org/expert-reflections/deconstructing-the-disinformation-war/>

NEWMAN, NIC et al. (2021) *Reuters Institute Digital News Report 2021. Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism. Executive Summary and Key Findings (9 - 33).* Available at

<https://www.rte.ie/documents/news/2021/06/digital-news-report-2021-final.pdf>

DEUTCH, GABBY (2018) *Social Media Has Become a Global Battlefield. The Atlantic.* Available at

<https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2018/10/social-media-battlefield-internet/571960/>

MEYER, WILL (2017) *How to Reverse Journalism’s Decline. Jacobin.* Available at

<https://www.jacobinmag.com/2017/01/journalism-newspapers-layoffs-advertising-crisis/>

KIELY, EUGEN AND ROBERTSON, LORI (2016) *How to Spot Fake News. FactCheck.org.*

Available at <https://www.factcheck.org/2016/11/how-to-spot-fake-news/>

BASU, TANYA (2020) *How to talk to conspiracy theorists—and still be kind. MIT Technology Review.* Available at

<https://www.technologyreview.com/2020/07/15/1004950/how-to-talk-to-conspiracy-theorists-and-still-be-kind/>

LAFORGE, GORDEN (2020) *Sweden Defends its Elections Against Disinformation, 2016 – 2018. Princeton University.* Available at

<https://successfulties.princeton.edu/publications/sweden-defends-its-elections-against-disinformation-2016-%E2%80%93-2018>

### Additional readings

ALBIG, William. 1939. *Public opinion.* New York: McGraw-Hill.

CUNNINGHAM, Stanley B. 2002. *The Idea of Propaganda: A Reconstruction.* USA: Praeger Publishers.

ELLUL, Jacques. 1973. *Propaganda: The Formation of Men’s Attitudes.* New York: Random House.

HELMUS, Tod, C. E. Bodine-Baron, A. Radin, M. Magnuson, J. Mendelsohn, W. Marcellino, A. Bega, Z. Winkelman. 2018. *Russian Social Media Influence: Understanding Russian Propaganda in Eastern Europe.* Santa Monica: RAND Corporation.

JOWETT, Garth. S. Victoria J. O’Donnell. 2014. *Propaganda & Persuasion.* USA: SAGE Publications, Inc.

## Syllabus of Record

LASSWELL, Harold, D. 1951. „The Strategy of Soviet Propaganda“ *Academy of Political Science*, 24(2), 66-78.

ROMERSTEIN, H. 2001. „Disinformation as a KGB Weapon in the Cold War“ *Journal of Intelligence History*, 1(1): 54–67.

### Outline of Course Content

*Topic 1* – Introduction: Terminology and key concepts

*Topic 2* – Manipulation techniques

*Topic 3* - Propaganda in history I. - from early ages to World War I.

*Topic 4* - Propaganda in history II. - Totalitarian regimes and World War II.

*Topic 5* - Propaganda in history III. - Cold War

*Topic 6* - How to fight propaganda on a state and societal level?

*Topic 7* – Propaganda in 21st century

*Topic 8* – Conspiracies and disinformation

*Topic 9* – Presentations and discussion of final project topics