

WRITING 39C: FREE SPEECH ABUSES - Fake News and Propaganda

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Course meetings and locations: Zoom

Office hours: by appointment via Zoom. There will also be different occasions during the quarter where I will meet in small groups with students to discuss research, and other occasions where I will hold "open door" office hours for anyone to stop by and ask questions, discuss concerns, or chat.

Writing 39C: Writing 39C, Argument and Research, is the second of UCI's two required writing courses that together fulfill the Lower Division Writing Requirement. Like WR 39B, 39C focuses on critical reading and rhetoric and teaches you intellectual strategies for identifying, understanding, and then using various genres and rhetorical situations for important communicative purposes. 39C deepens your understanding of rhetoric and communication by teaching you how to conduct research and to evaluate and use various types of evidence. The reading, composing, and researching practices you will learn in this course and the various intellectual strategies you develop will help you to succeed in your other courses, prepare you to engage in the university community and in your chosen discipline, and deepen your perspective on current issues and problems and the idea of social justice itself.

Course Description: Free Speech Abuses - Fake News and Propaganda

We all have some vague sense that the information that is shared across social media is dubious and relatively untrustworthy. But, this hasn't stopped us from relying more and more on social media for news and information. We scroll past clickbait article titles, screenshotted tweets, unsourced infographics, video essays, and other new media fodder that might come to us from family or friends, those we follow, or sponsored advertisements. The issue of how information spreads online, the rise of "fake news", and purposefully misleading propaganda, all ties back to the issue of free speech and the First Amendment. Should we have the freedom to mislead others for political purposes? Should the government, or companies like Facebook, determine what kind of speech is permitted online? What kind of threat does fake news and propaganda pose for democracy? Should we curb or limit speech we deem harmful, and does that include fake news and propaganda? Or is free speech a kind of absolute right, no matter how detrimental the consequences? Is there a way to curb the spread of fake news without treading on fundamental rights like freedom of speech?

This course will focus on a number of points of contact between free speech and social media, including the issues of echo chambers, fake news, and propaganda. These issues also connect

to problems of expert skepticism and conspiracy theories, as well as deeper questions about the nature of truth, knowledge, and trust.

The topic of free speech abuses and your research on this subject may not be as interesting to you as it is to me, but ultimately that's okay - the point of this course is to develop your research and writing skills, to engage in the process of writing, and to think about your own writing in a critical and active way. You'll be completing three research projects this quarter:

(1) The Contexts Project (CP): This project is a research paper aimed at describing and detailing a contemporary social problem related to free speech abuses. Much like the goals of a history paper, the CP is meant to gather together all the key elements of the problem you've chosen and provide a careful and well-structured account of the problem.

(2) The Advocacy Project (AP): This project is a research paper aimed at evaluating possible solutions to the problem you've researched in your CP. The AP serves as an opportunity to critique, argue, and advocate with regard to a solution or solutions to the social problem you have chosen.

(3) The ePortfolio: This project is a research paper, but the subject matter is your own writing process throughout the quarter. Throughout the quarter you'll compile evidence of your writing process, the feedback you'll receive from myself and from your peers, and your development and create an archive of your struggles and successes. You'll reflect on your archive and use the evidence you've collected to evaluate your own writing experience in this course.

Required Textbooks:

- All readings will be provided via link or PDF (in Canvas/Files)

Grading

- Participation (5%)
- Research Project Part One: Contexts (30%)
- Research Project Part Two: Advocacy (40%)
- Oral & Visual Presentation (5%)
- Final ePortfolio (20%)

Participation is determined by the completion of the reading journals that will be assigned throughout the quarter. Each research project will be graded not merely on the final draft; the total grade for parts 1 and 2 will be determined by every phase of development including drafts and peer reviews. Your presentations take place in Week 4 - you will give a short, informal presentation to a small group of your peers and myself in an effort to summarize your research in a digestible format, as well as to receive feedback and comments from me and your peers. Your ePortfolio is evaluated primarily by its reflective introduction, and the inclusion of all the requisite materials.

Note: 39C is an intensive course that involves a lot of reading and writing each week. Be sure you have a schedule that prepares you for this course. You are required to turn in drafts of both your CP and your AP through turnitin in order to receive a passing grade. I do not accept late work unless we have made arrangements **PRIOR** to the due date. If you think you will need additional time, simply ask. If you struggle with reading comprehension, grammar, organization and/or critical development, I strongly urge you to make The Center for Writing Excellence a part of your drafting process in this course. There is a very good chance you will need additional help in order to pass this course. To schedule appointments for the quarter (do it early), go to: <http://www.writingcenter.uci.edu/>

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Weekly Schedule

	READINGS	ASSIGNMENTS	META
Week 0	Syllabus, Course introduction	Self Assessment	
Week 1	Reading Journal #1 Hundley, "Fake news and the first amendment: How false political speech kills the marketplace of ideas"	Phase 1: Topic Development	
Week 2	Reading Journal #2 Schetzer, "Governments are making fake news a crime - but it could stifle free speech"	Phase 2: Source Analysis	Peer Feedback
Week 3	Reading Journal #3 Dutilh Novaes & de Ridder, "Is fake news old news?"	Phase 3: Research Abstract, Peer Review	
Week 4		Phase 4: CP Workshop Draft, Peer Review	

Week 5		Phase 5: CP Final Draft	
Week 6	Reading Journal #4 Nguyen, "Escape the echo chamber"	Phase 6: Advocacy R&D, CP Reflection	Using the CP in your AP
Week 7	Reading Journal #5 Student sample analysis	Phase 7: AP Argumentative Outline	Reverse Engineering Outlines
Week 8		Phase 8: AP Workshop Draft, Peer Review	
Week 9		Phase 9: AP Final Draft	Writing about your writing
Week 10		ePortfolio Draft, Peer Review	
Finals Week		ePortfolio Final Draft	