

STUDY GUIDE

INFORMATION AND FAKE NEWS
2026-2027 S1

Université Polytechnique
Hauts-de-France

1. IDENTIFYING DATA.		
• Course Name.	Information & Fake News 2026-2027 S1	
• Coordinating University.	Université Polytechnique Hauts-de-France	
• Partner Universities Involved.	None	
• Course Field(s).	Communication/journalism	
• Related Study Programme.	Can apply to all programme	
• ISCED Code.		
• SDG.	4-5-10-16-12	
• Study Level.	All (B , M , PhD)	
• EUNICE Key Competencies	• Green – strongly • Orange - moderately • Red – partially • Blank cell - not at all	
	Problem solving	
	Teamworking	
	Communication	
	Self-management	
	Cognitive flexibility	
	Digital competence	
	Technical competence	

	Global intercultural competence	
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• Number of ECTS credits allocated.	4
• Mode of Delivery.	The course is can be given online live, online self-study and onsite if needed
• Language of Instruction.	English
• Course Dates.	1 October - 31 January
• Precise Schedule of the Lectures.	36h , Lecture of 2 hours every 1.5 week
• Key Words.	• Media Literacy • Misinformation & Disinformation • Fake News • Critical Thinking • Cognitive Biases • Information Ecosystems • Journalism & News Production • Fact-checking • Digital Information Literacy • Conspiracy Theories • AI & Deepfakes • News Verification • Editorial Analysis • Democratic Resilience • Digital Citizenship • Informed Citizenship • Media Pluralism • Freedom of Information • Ethics in Media • Responsible Information Consumption • Information Disorder • Trust in Media • Public Debate & Democracy • Sustainable Information Practices Cognitive Bias Awareness

	Confirmation Bias Heuristics & Decision-making Psychology of Belief Viral Content Mechanisms Persuasion Techniques Information Manipulation Attention Economy
· Catchy Phrase.	This course focuses on media literacy, critical thinking and cognitive bias awareness to strengthen democratic resilience and responsible digital citizenship in the age of AI and information disorder.

· Prerequisites and co-requisites.	This course is open to students from all academic backgrounds and disciplines. No prior knowledge is required. However, participants are expected to demonstrate sufficient English proficiency (reading, listening, and speaking) to engage critically with course materials, participate in discussions, and collaborate effectively in group activities.
· Number of EUNICE students that can attend the Course.	Max 150
Number of EUNICE students that can attend the course per institution	5 per university
· Course inscription procedure(s).	EUNICE Web Site

2. CONTACT DETAILS.

· Department.	DNUM
· Name of Lecturer.	LEBRUN IRIS
· E-mail.	Iris.lebrun@uphf.fr
· Other Lecturers.	-

3. COURSE CONTENT.

The course is structured around the following key themes:

- **History of journalism and mass media:**
Understanding how technological innovations have shaped the evolution of media systems and contemporary information ecosystems.

- **Misinformation and disinformation:**
Exploring how “fake news” is produced, disseminated and amplified; analysing its impact on public opinion, political processes, and democratic debate.
- **Journalistic practices and verification tools:**
Introduction to the journalist’s toolbox, including fact-checking methods, source verification techniques, and reliability assessment.
- **Conspiracy cultures and belief systems:**
Analysing the emergence and spread of conspiracy theories (from historical cases such as JFK to contemporary movements such as QAnon) and their influence on societies and elections.
- **Critical media consumption:**
Developing strategies to identify reliable sources, build a healthy information environment, and adopt informed media consumption habits.
- **Case studies and applied analysis:**
Examination of real and ambiguous cases (e.g. Flat Earth theory, “Birds Aren’t Real”) to understand how misinformation, satire, and manipulation interact.
- **AI and the future of information:**
Understanding the impact of generative AI and deepfakes on information ecosystems, and developing the ability to use these tools critically rather than passively.

4. LEARNING OUTCOMES.

After completing this course, participants will be able to:

Knowledge-based outcomes

- **L01:** Explain the news production process, from raw information to published content, and identify reliable sources to build a trustworthy information environment.
- **L02:** Describe and apply key journalistic and narrative tools (formats, structure of articles, framing, points of view), and analyse the mechanisms and implications of misinformation and disinformation.

Skills and competency-based outcomes

- **L03:** Analyse the cognitive biases that underpin the spread of fake news and conspiracy theories, and critically reflect on their own biases, including confirmation bias.
- **L04:** Critically evaluate news content and discuss its editorial positioning and reliability.
- **L05:** Apply systems thinking to understand the complexity of information ecosystems and the circulation of information.

- **LO6:** Propose strategies or solutions to improve information practices within organisations or society, in line with responsible and sustainable futures.

5. OBJECTIVES.

This course aims to equip students with the knowledge, skills and critical mindset necessary to navigate contemporary information environments shaped by misinformation, digital media and artificial intelligence.

More specifically, the course pursues the following objectives:

- **Develop media literacy and critical thinking skills** in order to analyse, interpret and evaluate information in a complex and fast-paced digital environment.
- **Understand the production and circulation of information**, including how news is created, framed and disseminated within modern media ecosystems.
- **Analyse the mechanisms of misinformation and disinformation**, including their impact on public opinion, democratic processes and political debates in Europe and beyond.
- **Identify and critically reflect on cognitive biases** that influence perception, judgement and the spread of false or misleading information.
- **Strengthen students' ability to assess the reliability of sources**, and to adopt responsible and informed information consumption practices.
- **Develop awareness of emerging challenges**, such as generative AI and deepfakes, and their impact on information integrity.
- **Promote active and responsible digital citizenship**, enabling students to contribute to more resilient, informed and democratic societies.

6. COURSE ORGANISATION.

UNITS

1.	HISTORY OF MEDIA AND INFORMATION ECOSYSTEMS • Evolution of journalism and mass media (from Gutenberg to digital era) • Technological revolutions and their impact on news production • From broadcast media to participatory digital platforms • Transformation of information flows, attention and trust
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2.	MISINFORMATION, DISINFORMATION AND COGNITIVE BIASES • Definitions and typologies of misinformation and disinformation • Psychological mechanisms and cognitive biases (confirmation bias, availability heuristic, etc.) • Emotional triggers and viral dynamics • Political, economic and ideological drivers of fake news • Countermeasures: debunking strategies and institutional responses
3.	JOURNALISTIC PRACTICES AND INFORMATION VERIFICATION • Fundamentals of journalism and source reliability • Fact-checking methodologies and verification tools • Introduction to OSINT techniques (image verification, geolocation, cross-referencing) • Analysis of source credibility and information hierarchies
4.	CONSPIRACY THEORIES AND INFORMATION MANIPULATION • Origins and evolution of conspiracy theories (historical and contemporary cases) • Psychological and social factors behind belief systems • Impact on public opinion, political radicalisation and democratic processes • Case studies: Flat Earth, QAnon, “Birds Aren’t Real”
5	ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE AND THE FUTURE OF INFORMATION • Generative AI and its impact on information ecosystems • Deepfakes, synthetic media and AI-generated misinformation • Risks for journalism, elections and public trust • Critical use of AI tools and ethical considerations • AI as a tool for verification and content production
LEARNING RESOURCES AND TOOLS.	
Academic and professional resources	

- Articles on media literacy, misinformation and cognitive biases
- Case studies on recent political and media events
- Reports from organisations such as First Draft, AFP Factuel, Bellingcat

Digital tools and platforms

- Fact-checking tools (reverse image search, Google Fact Check Tools)
- OSINT tools (geolocation, metadata analysis, cross-referencing techniques)
- AI tools (text and image generation, verification support tools)

Pedagogical methods and activities

- Case-based learning and real-world scenarios
- Group discussions and debates
- Debunking workshops and verification exercises
- Simulation activities (AI detection, conspiracy creation and analysis)

PLANNED LEARNING ACTIVITIES AND TEACHING METHODS.

The course is based on an active and participatory learning approach, combining theoretical input with practical application and critical reflection.

The main learning activities include:

- **Interactive lectures**
Providing key theoretical concepts on media systems, misinformation, cognitive biases and AI, combined with real-time questions and discussions.
- **Case-based learning**
Analysis of real-world examples (e.g. political campaigns, conspiracy movements, viral content) to connect theory with current events.
- **Group work and collaborative activities**
Students work in teams to analyse media content, identify misinformation mechanisms and develop critical perspectives.
- **Debates and guided discussions**
Structured debates on controversial topics (e.g. impact of conspiracy theories, role of satire, AI and truth) to foster argumentation skills and critical thinking.
- **Hands-on workshops**
Practical sessions where students:
 - debunk misleading information
 - verify sources using fact-checking tools
 - apply OSINT techniques

- experiment with AI-generated content
- **Problem-based learning activities**
Students are confronted with complex information scenarios requiring analysis, verification and decision-making.
- **Simulation exercises**
Activities such as identifying AI-generated content or creating and analysing conspiracy narratives to understand persuasive mechanisms.
- **Reflective learning**
Students are encouraged to reflect on their own cognitive biases, media consumption habits and role as digital citizens.

7. ASSESSMENT METHODS, CRITERIA AND PERIOD.

Students are assessed through a combination of continuous assessment and final evaluation, designed to measure both theoretical knowledge and practical skills.

Assessment components

- **Group continuous assessment (30%)**
Students complete a group assignment during the course, based on the analysis of a real-world case related to misinformation, media content or AI.
This assessment evaluates students' ability to apply course concepts, work collaboratively, and develop critical analysis.
Duration: 60 minutes (in-class)
Assessed learning outcomes: LO1, LO2, LO3, LO4, LO5
- **Final exam (50%)**
The final exam assesses students' understanding of key concepts covered in the course, including media systems, misinformation mechanisms, cognitive biases and AI-related challenges.
It includes analytical questions and case-based exercises.
Duration: 60 minutes
Format: Written exam (organised via institutional platform)
Assessed learning outcomes: LO1, LO2, LO3, LO4, LO5, LO6
- **Online quiz (20%)**
A multiple-choice quiz (MCQ) is conducted to evaluate students' knowledge of key concepts and definitions introduced throughout the course.

Duration: 20 minutes

Assessed learning outcomes: LO1, LO2

Assessment criteria

Students are evaluated based on:

- Understanding of key concepts (media systems, misinformation, AI)
- Ability to analyse and critically evaluate information
- Application of verification methods and tools
- Identification of cognitive biases and manipulation techniques
- Clarity and relevance of arguments
- Ability to work collaboratively (for group assessment)

Assessment period

- Continuous assessment takes place during the course sessions
- The online quiz is conducted during the semester
- The final exam is organised at the end of the course (Graded)

OBSERVATIONS.

8. BIBLIOGRAPHY AND TEACHING MATERIALS.

The course relies on a combination of key academic references and up-to-date open-access resources to ensure both academic rigor and accessibility for all partner universities.

Core readings (recommended)

- Kahneman, D. (2011).
Thinking, Fast and Slow.
Farrar, Straus and Giroux.
- Wardle, C. & Derakhshan, H. (2017).
Information Disorder: Toward an interdisciplinary framework for research and policymaking.
Council of Europe. (Open access)
- Pariser, E. (2011).
The Filter Bubble: What the Internet Is Hiding from You.
Penguin Press.

Open-access and professional resources

- First Draft News
<https://firstdraftnews.org>
- AFP Factuel
<https://factuel.afp.com>
- Bellingcat (OSINT investigations)
<https://www.bellingcat.com>
- Le Monde – Les Décodeurs
<https://www.lemonde.fr/les-decodeurs>
- EUvsDisinfo (European Commission initiative)
<https://euvsdisinfo.eu>
- UNESCO (2023) – *Guidance for Generative AI in Education and Research*
- European Commission – *Tackling online disinformation*

Teaching materials

The course uses a variety of pedagogical materials:

- Lecture slides and instructor-provided notes
- Real-world case studies (media events, political campaigns, viral content)
- Video materials (news reports, documentaries, digital content analysis)
- Fact-checking and OSINT tools (reverse image search, geolocation, cross-referencing)
- AI tools for experimentation and critical analysis

All essential materials are either provided by the instructor or available through open-access platforms to ensure accessibility across partner universities.