UF Honors Signature Seminar

Truth in Numbers: The Science of Spotting Misinformation
IDH3931 Class# 26707 (1 credit hour – Honors course)
Spring Semester 2026
Face-to-face class meetings: Wednesdays 10:40 – 11:30 AM in Little Hall, Room 117

Instructors
Dr. Ryan Good
Office Location: 2049 McCarty Hall D
Office Hours: Wednesdays 9:00 – 10:00 am, Thursdays 1:00 – 2:30 pm, or by appointment
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Course Description, Overview and Purpose
Can you spot the real story behind viral headlines, convincing statistics, and polished presentations? In this course, we'll explore the art and science of detecting and debunking BS in our information-saturated world. Using the thought-provoking book 'Calling Bullsh*t' as our guide, we'll develop critical thinking tools to navigate everything from scientific claims to social media trends. You'll learn to identify misleading statistics, question persuasive graphics, and understand how data can be manipulated to tell different stories. This course isn't just about skepticism – it's about becoming a more informed, discerning citizen in an age where distinguishing truth from fiction is more crucial than ever. The course will include short reflections, discussion posts, and a final project. Perfect for students interested in STEM, business, journalism, politics, or anyone who wants to sharpen their critical thinking skills.

Course Objectives
By the end of this course, students will be able to
- Analyze and discuss real-world examples of misinformation across various domains (science, media, politics).
- Critically evaluate claims and arguments by identifying common patterns of misleading information, including statistical manipulation, logical fallacies, and misrepresented data.
- Demonstrate how misinformation impact public understanding and decision-making.

Required Learning Materials
All required materials will be provided via Canvas, or accessed through the UF Libraries.
- Lumet, S. (Director). (1957). *12 angry men.* Orion-Nova Productions.
- Guggenheim, D. (Director). (2006). *An Inconvenient Truth*. Paramount Vantage.
- US HHS Press Office Release Sept 22, 2025: https://www.hhs.gov/press-room/hhs-trump-kennedy-autism-initiatives-leucovorin-tylenol-research-2025.html

Recommended Text
Bergstrom, C. T., & West, J. D. (2021). Calling bullsh*t: The art of skepticism in a data-driven world. Random House Trade Paperbacks.

Required Technology
Students need to have access to a personal computer or laptop with a working webcam and microphone in order to access all features of the course Canvas site, and to participate in online office hours. Broadband internet access is required.

Grading Policies
Information on current UF grading policies for assigning grade points can be found at
https://catalog.ufl.edu/UGRD/academic-regulations/grades-grading-policies/.

A minimum grade of B is required to earn Academic points towards your Honors Completion Requirements. (Exception: Honors Quest I and II sections require a C). Once you have earned your final grade in this course, please upload the course information and final grade from your Unofficial Transcript into your Honors Canvas Cohort: Honors Completion module to earn Honors Milestone / Completion credit.

Grading scale
The final grade for this course is based on a 1000-point scale and will be weighted as follows:

Grade	Points	Percent	Grade	Points	Percent
A:	> 930.0	> 93.0%	C:	730.0 to < 770.0	73.0 to < 77.0%
A-	900.0 to < 930.0	90.0 to < 93.0%	C-	700.0 to < 730.0	70.0 to < 73.0%
B+:	870.0 to < 900.0	87.0 to < 90.0%	D+:	670.0 to < 700.0	67.0 to < 70.0%
B:	830.0 to < 870.0	83.0 to < 87.0%	D:	630.0 to < 670.0	63.0 to < 67.0%
B-	800.0 to < 830.0	80.0 to < 83.0%	D-	600.0 to < 630.0	60.0 to < 63.0%
C+:	770.0 to < 800.0	77.0 to < 80.0%	E:	< 600.0	< 60.0%

The final grade for this course is based on a 1000-point scale and will be weighted as follows:

Grade Component	Points	Percentage
Class Attendance and Engagement	150	15.0%
Reflection Essays (5 x 100 points)	500	50.0%
Discussion leader	250	25.0%
Final Project	100	10.0%
Total	**1000**	**100%**

Grade cutoffs are exact; you should not expect any rounding of scores at the end of the semester.

Class Attendance and Engagement: Students significantly contribute to creating a comfortable and productive learning environment by attending and participating productively in class. We encourage questions and sharing of relevant experiences! Grades are based on attendance and frequency and quality of student contributions to the class. You are allowed one unexcused absence from class; this absence will not impact your attendance and engagement grade. Excused absences do not count against your grade.

Reflection Essays: On days where you are not a discussion leader, you will submit responses based on the module theme (e.g. advertising). These short, informal essays will have you responding to prompts that engage with and reinforce the module's material. These assignments' free response questions are intended to help you organize your thoughts and reflect on our in-class discussions. These assignments are due on Sundays @ 11:59pm on weeks they are assigned.

Discussion Leader: During one module theme, you will collaborate with 1-2 classmates to lead discussion for the class. This will include preparing a brief real-world example of potential misinformation, writing a

short analysis describing the example and proposing questions for class discussion, and leading an in-class discussion about the chosen example.

Final Project: Following the last module, you will create a visualization related to misinformation, focused on the module topic of your choice. More details and specific instructions will be provided in class near the end of the semester.

Specific grading criteria for each assignment will be provided on Canvas. You are responsible for maintaining duplicate copies of all work submitted in this course until the end of the semester. In case of a grading dispute, you must notify the instructor via email within one week of the date the grade is posted. It is your responsibility to ensure that all assignments are successfully uploaded to Canvas. Missing, corrupt, or incompatible files may result in grade penalties up to a score of zero for the assignment.

Honors Program Information
Honors Program, Honors Village building 4, 352-392-1519
Quick questions for an Honors advisor? Email advisor@honors.ufl.edu
Need an Honors advising appointment? Schedule via Microsoft Bookings: https://bit.ly/ufhonorsadvising
Honors program event calendar: https://www.honors.ufl.edu/news--events/calendar-of-events/

Course Policies

Attendance Policy
Requirements for class attendance and make-up exams, assignments, and other work in this course are consistent with university policies that can be found at: https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/attendance.aspx .

Excusable reasons:
- In case of illness, upon receipt of a doctor's note or equivalent, or by following the procedure outlined here: https://care.dso.ufl.edu/instructor-notifications.
- In case of religious holidays, by informing your instructor via email at least one week ahead of time.
- In case of military duty, jury duty, participation in academic conferences, or participation in official university or UAA events, by providing appropriate evidence at least one week ahead of time.
- In case of family emergencies or other extenuating circumstances, by following the procedure outlined here: https://care.dso.ufl.edu/instructor-notifications.
- In all other cases, or if you are unsure, please email your instructor as soon as feasible. Absences are generally not excused for non-emergency travel and vehicle problems.

You are still responsible for turning assignments in on time unless an extension has been requested via email and approved by your instructor prior to the deadline. In case of true documented emergencies, the instructor may waive this requirement.

Late Work
You are responsible for turning assignments in on time unless an extension has been requested via email prior to the deadline. In case of true documented emergencies, I may waive this requirement. Technical difficulties are not generally an excuse for missing an assessment or assignment; you should have contingency plans in case any such issues arise. Try not to wait until the last minute to submit assignments!

Late submissions will incur a penalty of 20% per day. A day is defined as 24 hours from the due date and time. Submissions more than three days late will receive a grade of zero.

I highly recommend starting work on assignments early to preclude unexpected emergencies or late-semester stress from compromising your grade. Deadline extensions may be available on certain assignments if requested ahead of time via email, but must be justified. If extended deadlines are not met, late penalties will be assessed based on the original, not the revised due date!

Finally, please do not wait until the end of the semester to discuss problems with the course material or performance in class. Your performance and success are important to the instructor, the Honors Program, the College of Agricultural and Life Sciences, and University of Florida, so please contact the instructor to discuss your concerns as soon as they arise.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) Statement

AI applications including natural language chatbots like ChatGPT are an amazing new technology that is revolutionizing the way we access information, just like computers, the internet, and mobile phones did in prior decades. AI can be a useful tool for tasks such as editing, spellchecking, organizing, and brainstorming. **Other uses, including copying & pasting ChatGPT output and representing as your own work, are not appropriate in college courses; doing so constitutes academic dishonesty**. **All work submitted for credit in this class must be your own.** If you use any AI application for any part of an assignment (including brainstorming ideas or editing), you must state so as part of your submission. AI-generated images may not be used unless expressly approved by your instructor for a specific assignment.

Course Communications and Technology

The preferred way to get ahold of me of class and office hours is via Canvas message or UF email. Emails from outside providers, like Gmail, are not considered secure and will be ignored to protect student privacy. University policy dictates that grades cannot be discussed via email, so if you have a grade-specific question, you should ask it in person or via Canvas message. For all communications, you can expect a response within 24 hours on weekdays. All students are expected to check the course web site on Canvas (http://elearning.ufl.edu) on a daily basis. In addition, I may send specific communications directly to your UF, which you should check daily as well. You should enable Canvas notifications for this class, so that you are notified immediately about grading, assignment feedback, due date changes, announcements, etc.

Canvas Display Name Change

Canvas uses the "Display Name" as set in myUFL. The Display Name is what you want people to see in the UF Directory, such as "Ally" instead of "Allison." To update your display name, go to one.ufl.edu, click on the dropdown at the top right, and select "Directory Profile." Click "Edit" on the right of the name panel, uncheck "Use my legal name" under "Display Name," update how you wish your name to be displayed, and click "Submit" at the bottom. This change may take up to 24 hours to appear in Canvas. This does not change your legal name for official UF records.

University of Florida Policies

NOTE: This course complies with all UF academic policies. For information on those policies and for resources for students, please see UF's "**Academic Policies and Resources**" web page.

Procedure for Conflict Resolution

Any classroom issues, disagreements or grade disputes should be discussed first between the instructor and the student. If the problem cannot be resolved, please contact Dr. Melissa Johnson (mjohnson@honors.ufl.edu). Be prepared to provide documentation of the problem, as well as all graded materials for the semester. Issues that cannot be resolved departmentally will be referred to the University Ombuds Office (http://www.ombuds.ufl.edu; 352-392-1308) or the Dean of Students Office (http://www.dso.ufl.edu; 352-392-1261).

Course Outline

Date	Chapter/Topic & Reading Assignment
January 14	Course intro Course contract
January 21	Module 1 – Ethics Required learning materials: 12 Angry Men (accessed through UF Libraries)
January 28	**Instructor led discussion**
February 4	Module 2 – Shouting into the void (confirmation bias) Required learning materials: none for this week
February 11	**Student led discussion**
February 18	Module 3 – Health and medicine Required learning materials: United States Department of Health and Human Services press office release
February 25	**Student led discussion**
March 4	Module 4 – Climate Change Required learning materials: An Inconvenient Truth (accessed through UF Libraries)
March 11	**Student led discussion**
March 18	Spring break
March 25	Module 5 – AI in the digital world (guest speaker from AI2 center) Required learning materials: current events-related news pieces (TBD)
April 1	**Student led discussion**
April 8	Module 6 – Advertising Required learning materials: current events-related news pieces (TBD)
April 15	**Student led discussion**
April 22	End of class day

Course Alterations

It is your responsibility to ensure that you fully understand the policies outlined in this syllabus as well as the policies of the university as they relate to this course. By remaining enrolled in this course, you agree that you have read and understood all of these policies and that you will be held accountable to them.

At their discretion, the instructors may change aspects of the course during the semester to accommodate new opportunities, unforeseen disruptions, or other circumstances. These changes will be communicated clearly in class and through Canvas. The current version of the syllabus will always be available on our course's Canvas website. It is your responsibility to ensure that you are following the most recent version of the syllabus.

If you have any questions, please contact the instructors as soon as possible (preferably at the beginning of the course)!