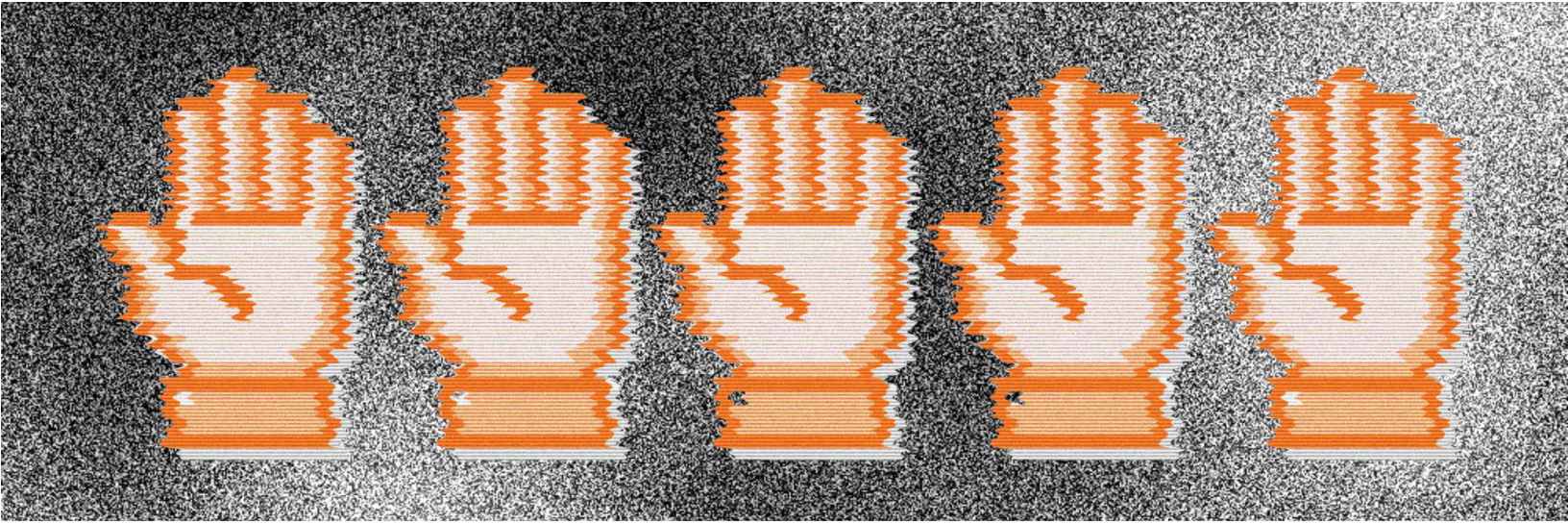


**DEFINE
AMERICAN**

What We're Up Against:

A Syllabus for
Understanding the
Forces that Create
the Anti-Immigrant
Digital Landscape.

Developed by Cristina López G.
in collaboration with Define American




What We're up Against

Through readings and case studies, this curriculum provides an introductory view of the **history of political disinformation, media manipulation, and the influence of extremist ideologies on immigrant portrayals in digital and social media.** Readers will learn to identify strategies used in influence operations, and to access


fact-checking and media literacy tools, as well as applicable open source intelligence frameworks that can better prepare them to combat misinformation and disinformation.

Note: References are listed in intended reading order.

WEEK ONE

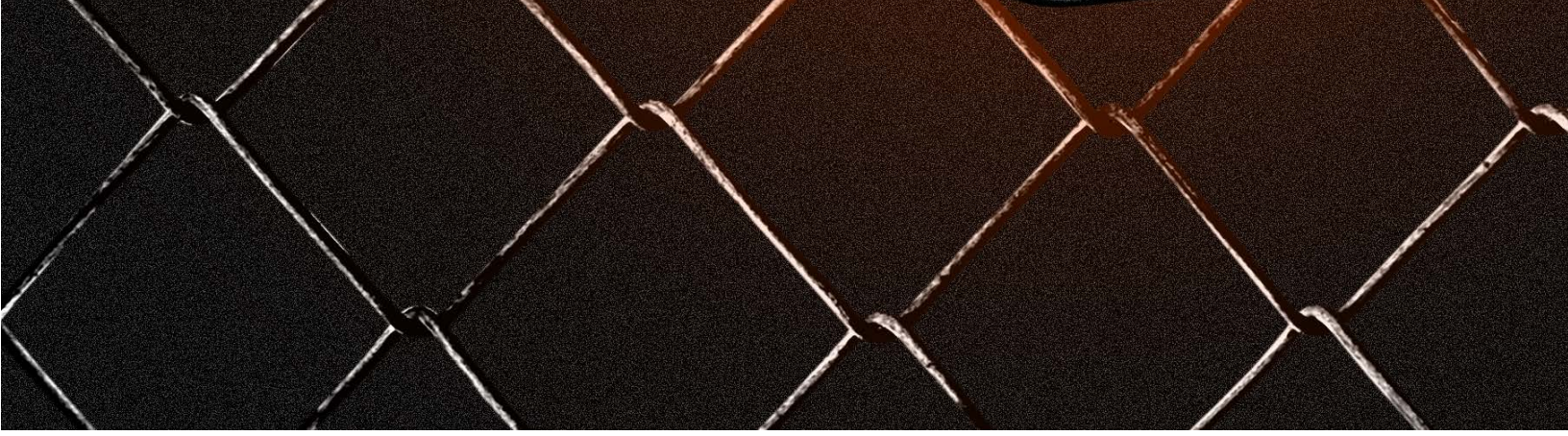


**How did we get here?
An Introduction to Media Manipulation
and Online Mis/Disinformation**



Learning Outcomes:





- ➔ Describe what it means to manipulate information.
- ➔ Identify how mis/disinformation has existed throughout media history for the purposes of political communication.



For every fact that seems key to discussing important issues such as immigration or climate change, opponents are ready with alternative facts that distort perceptions of problems and solutions.” Institutional arenas designed to articulate and resolve political differences through reasoned debate based on evidence are disrupted and fail to provide the gatekeeping roles that once kept politics bounded by a more or less shared set of institutional norms and processes. How did this happen?

- From A brief history of the disinformation age

Readings:

-  Bennett, W. L. & Livingston, S. (2020). **A brief history of the disinformation age: Information wars and the decline of institutional authority** (S. Livingston & W. L. Bennett, Eds.). Cambridge University Press.
<https://www.cambridge.org/core/books/disinformation-age/brief-history-of-the-disinformation-age/7F0A2F8BABA0B5CA802EC3AB4F76B818>
-  Lewis, B. & Marwick, A. E. (2017, May 15). **Media manipulation and disinformation online**. Data & Society.
<https://datasociety.net/library/media-manipulation-and-disinfo-online/>
-  Freelon, D. & Wells, C. (2020). Disinformation as political communication. *Political Communication*, 37(2), 145–156. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10584609.2020.1723755>
-  PBS Frontline. (2021, January 8). A Thousand Cuts.
<https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/frontline/documentary/a-thousand-cuts/>
(Optional)

WEEK TWO



Getting on the same page: Key Terms and Concepts To Identifying Mis/Disinformation

Learning Outcomes:




- Define key terms and topics around mis/disinformation.
- Identify mis/disinformation current popular discourse.

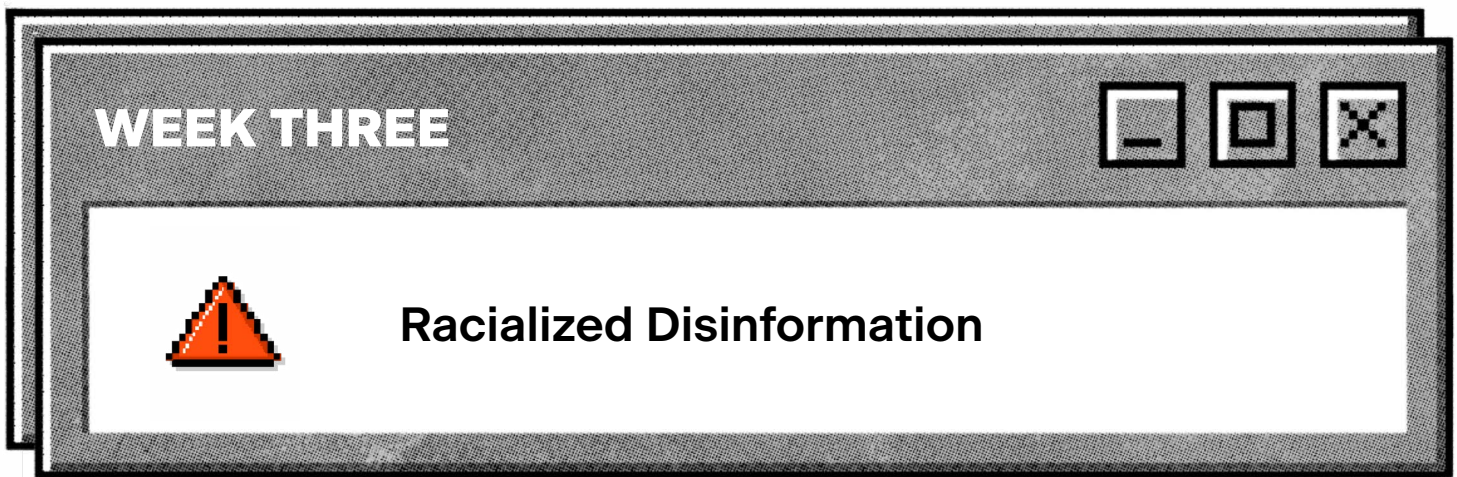
“Some information is problematic: it is inaccurate, misleading, inappropriately attributed, or altogether fabricated. This guide examines terms and concepts for problematic information.”

- From *Lexicon of Lies: Terms for Problematic Information*



Readings:

- 📖 Wardle, C. (2017, February 16). **Fake news. It's complicated.** First Draft. <https://firstdraftnews.org/articles/fake-news-complicated/>
- 📖 Wanless, A. & Pamment, J. (2019). **How do you define a problem like influence?** *Journal of Information Warfare* 18(3). 1-14. https://carnegieendowment.org/files/2020-How_do_you_define_a_problem_like_influence.pdf
- 📖 First Draft.. (2018, July 9). **Information disorder, part 1: The essential glossary.** Medium. <https://medium.com/1st-draft/information-disorder-part-1-the-essential-glossary-19953c544fe3>

-  Jack, C. (2017). **Lexicon of lies: Terms for problematic information.** Data & Society. https://datasociety.net/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/DataAndSociety_LexiconofLies.pdf
-  Donovan, J. & Friedberg, B. (2019). **Source hacking media manipulation in practice.** Data & Society. https://datasociety.net/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/Source-Hacking_Hi-res.pdf
-  Data & Society. (2019, August 5). **Disinformation techniques.** Google Docs. https://docs.google.com/document/d/1S_vMZjSPjCji8HH01Y8KL_A-rFebS5g0/edit#heading=h.gjdgxs









Learning Outcomes:

-  Examine disinformation from a critical framework that recognizes the influence of white supremacy. Identify mis/disinformation current popular discourse.
-  Assess the role of media in erasing the concerns of marginalized groups from public priorities.

“As a tool of disinformation, “racialization” typically refers to the assignment of an issue, narrative, movement, or belief to a specific racial or ethnic group, by operators who do not identify with that group.”

- From the Media Manipulation Casebook

Readings:

-  Media manipulation casebook. (n.d.) **Racialized disinformation.** <https://mediamanipulation.org/definitions/racialized-disinformation>
-  Almeida, S. (2015). **Race-based epistemologies: the role of race and dominance in knowledge production.** Wagadu. <http://sites.cortland.edu/wagadu/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/2015/07/4-FOUR-Almeida.pdf>
-  Mejia, R., Beckermann, K., & Sullivan, C. (2018): **White lies: A racial history of the (post)truth.** Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies 15(2). <https://doi.org/10.1080/14791420.2018.1456668>
-  Alabama Public Radio. (2013, December 11). **How the media covered the civil rights movement: Black newspapers.** <https://www.apr.org/arts-life/2013-12-11/how-the-media-covered-the-civil-rights-movement-black-newspapers>
-  Grambo, K. Fake news and racial ethnic and religious minorities: **A precarious quest for truth.** (2019). Journal of Constitutional Law, 21(5). Google Docs. https://drive.google.com/file/d/1Fkr_F1Ng98XWyOybMtlGNV16GB0RQzyW/view?usp=share_link
-  Define American. (2022). **Immigration will destroy us and other talking points.** <https://defineamerican.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/Great-Replacement-Network-Report-2022.pdf>
-  CASE STUDY: Nilsen, J. (2021, November 29). **Ebola and the us border: spreading virus rumors to build the wall.** Media Manipulation Casebook. <https://mediamanipulation.org/case-studies/ebola-and-us-border-spreading-virus-rumors-build-wall>

WEEK FOUR



A Brief History of Right-Wing Media's Anti-Immigrant Propaganda Machine

Learning Outcomes:

- Critique how the U.S. media covers immigrants.
- Identify the influence of extremist ideologies in media coverage of immigrants.
- Evaluate case studies.


“Immigration emerged as the leading substantive issue of the campaign. Initially, the Trump campaign used a hard-line anti-immigration stance to distinguish Trump from the field of GOP contenders. Later, immigration was a wedge issue between the left and the right. Pro-Trump media sources supported this with sensationalistic, race-centric coverage of immigration focused on crime, terrorism, fear of Muslims, and disease.”

- From **Partisanship, propaganda, and disinformation: Online media and the 2016 U.S. presidential election.**

Readings:


- 📖 Faris, R. Roberts, H., Etling, B., Bourassa, N., Zuckerman, E., Benkler, Y. (2017, August 16). **Partisanship, propaganda, and disinformation: Online media and the 2016 U.S. presidential election.** Berkman Klein Center.
<https://cyber.harvard.edu/publications/2017/08/mediacloud>

 Beirich, H. (2009). **The nativist lobby: Three faces of intolerance.** Southern Poverty Law Center. <https://www.splcenter.org/20090131/nativist-lobby-three-faces-intolerance>


 Southern Poverty Law Center. (2015) John Tanton's Network. <https://www.splcenter.org/fighting-hate/intelligence-report/2015/john-tantons-network>

Munoz, S. & Wexler, C. (2021, July 13). Major newspapers and wire services repeatedly use anti-immigrant groups with deep ties to white nationalism as sources in reporting. Media Matters for America. <https://www.mediamatters.org/federation-american-immigration-reform/major-newspapers-and-wire-services-repeatedly-use-anti>

 Define American. (2018, September 28). The truth about hate groups. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Bs6klFcrk4>

 López G., C. (2016, April 25). Right-wing media keep rehashing the xenophobic smear that immigrants bring diseases. Media Matters for America. <https://www.mediamatters.org/laura-ingraham/right-wing-media-keep-rehashing-xenophobic-smear-immigrants-bring-diseases>

 Data & Society. (n.d.). Disinformation techniques. Google Docs. <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1pHX0HBYMdEUChd80N18f9vIDEtKmZ6/edit#>

 López G., C. (2018, December 10). Fox News talked more about migrant “invasion” just before election than in past 3 years combined. HuffPost. https://www.huffpost.com/entry/fox-news-migrant-invasion_n_5c0abb34e4b035a7bf5af1b5

WEEK FIVE



State Actors and Media

Learning Outcomes:


- Critically assess the US government as a legitimate, objective source of information.
- Identify historical, racialized dis-misinformation from the US government.

“In writing favorably about dominant groups, journalists tend to “concentrate on individuals while accepting the structure,” a tendency seen clearly (...) in reporting on the alleged Japanese-American threat to national security.”

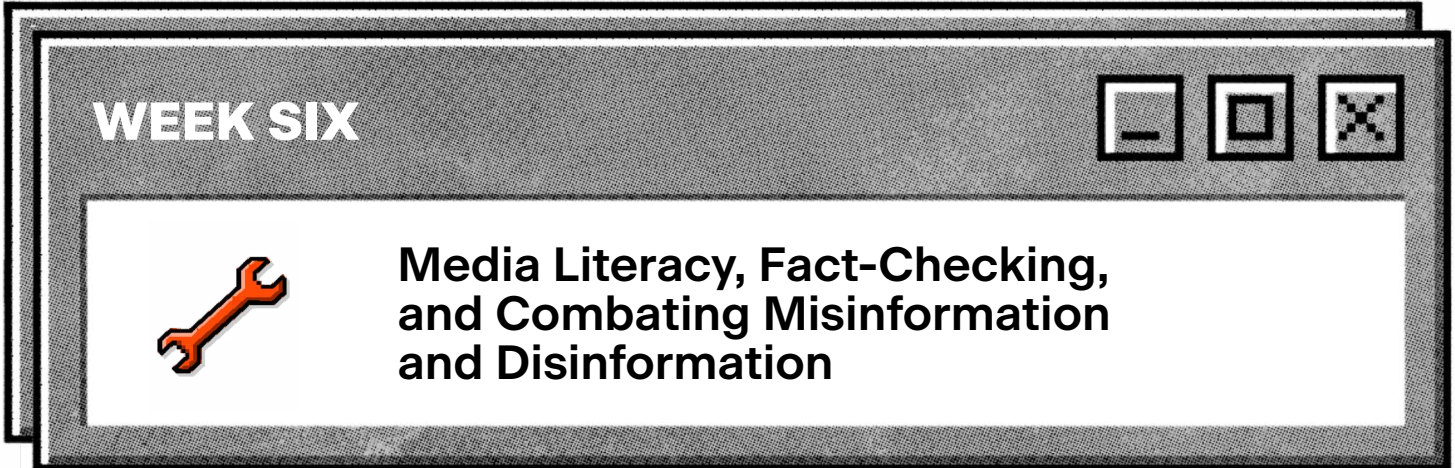
- From To protect and serve- the guard dog function of journalism in coverage of Japanese-American internment

Readings:


- 📖 Monaco, N. & Nyst. C. (2018). **IFTF: Government sponsored trolling.** Legacy. iftf.org. <https://www.iftf.org/statesponsoredtrolling>
- 📖 Graphika. (2022). **Unheard voice.** <https://graphika.com/reports/unheard-voice>
- 📖 Bishop, R. (2000). **To protect and serve- the guard dog function of journalism in coverage of Japanese-American internment.** Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication. Google Docs. https://drive.google.com/file/d/1IPmp4NRqHPiE-YOPsZb3cVu3c4RzVb3a/view?usp=share_link

 JACL National. (2021, January 11). Power of words 1 minute promo.
https://youtu.be/jFZ1_my3ThM

 National JACL Power of Words II Committee. (2013, April 17). Power of words handbook understanding euphemisms and preferred terminology.
<https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5e8e0d3e848b7a506128dddf/t/5ffc861741448928cd131066/1610384921163/POW-Handbook-Rev2020-V4.pdf>




WEEK SIX



**Media Literacy, Fact-Checking,
and Combating Misinformation
and Disinformation**


Learning Outcomes:






 Implement strategies and tools from open source intelligence frameworks to objectively interpret information.

“...Examine the instability of our current media ecosystem to then return to the question of: what kind of media literacy should we be working towards?”

- From You Think You Want Media Literacy... Do you?

Readings:

 Bellingcat. (2022, September). **Bellingcat’s online investigation toolkit** [bit.ly/bcattools]. Google Docs.
<https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/18rtqh8EG2q1xBo2cLNyhIDuK9jrPGwYr9DI2UncoqJQ/edit#gid=930747607>

-  Nordine, J. (2019). OSINT framework. <https://osintframework.com/>
-  López G., C. (2020). Threat assessment model for disinformation. Google Docs. https://drive.google.com/file/d/1wefrLjMRrIWsf9MZI6dfFBV-OBnJ2VIX/view?usp=share_link
-  Boyd, D. & Golebiewski, M. (2018, May 11). Data voids: Where missing data can easily be exploited. Data & Society. <https://datasociety.net/library/data-voids-where-missing-data-can-easily-be-exploited/>
-  Data & Society. Don't wait, inoculate. (2019, August 5). Google Docs. Note: This document was prepared for civil rights advocates getting out the count in the context of the 2020 Census but its lessons remain applicable. https://docs.google.com/document/d/1KtsvrAojxCRaJI7kQfVsLVo87IOYBM_/edit#heading=h.gjdgxs
-  boyd, danah. (2018, March 9). You think you want media literacy... Do you? Data & Society: Points. <https://points.datasociety.net/you-think-you-want-media-literacy-do-you-7cad6af18ec2>

About Cristina López G.

Cristina López G. researches social media information operations and networks of online influence and their distinct dynamics at Graphika. Before joining Graphika as a Senior Analyst, Cristina managed Data & Society's Disinformation Action Lab, which focused on networked responses to communications threats specific to the 2020 U.S. Census. Previously, she specialized in the analysis of far-right networks and the spread of extremist narratives online as Deputy Director on Extremism at Media Matters, a political media watchdog based in Washington, DC. She holds an undergraduate law degree from Escuela Superior de Economía y Negocios (ESEN) and a Master in Public Policy from Georgetown University. Born and raised in El Salvador, Cristina is based in Washington, DC.

About Define American

Define American is an award-winning media advocacy organization and go-to resource for storytelling on immigrant experiences across film, TV, theater, publishing, and digital media. Define American engages storytellers and equips them with research and resources to combat harmful narratives and tell nuanced, authentic immigrant stories. Founded in 2011 by Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist and Tony and Emmy-nominated producer Jose Antonio Vargas, Define American continues to redefine the conversation around immigration and identity, fostering a greater sense of belonging for immigrants in the U.S. Learn more at DefineAmerican.com and follow us on social media @DefineAmerican.

A chain-link fence is shown against a dark, textured background. A glowing orange light source is positioned behind the fence, creating a circular glow. The text 'DEFINE AMERICAN' is displayed in white, bold, uppercase letters within a black rectangular box that is partially illuminated by the glow.

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