

IP121-30 Truth and Misinformation

26/27

Department

Liberal Arts

Level

Undergraduate Level 1

Module leader

Lauren Bird

Credit value

30

Module duration

22 weeks

Assessment

100% coursework

Study location

University of Warwick main campus, Coventry

Description

Introductory description

This is a core first-year module on the BA in Liberal Arts course. The module engages students with key theories and contemporary questions around the issues of truth and misinformation from multiple perspectives, including within a variety of disciplines and contexts.

Topics covered may include concepts of scientific objectivity and universality; socially-constructed models of truth; the individual, social, and political consequences of various models of truth; the communication of risk and risk perception, political and social constructions of misinformation, the key role played by news media in society in spreading both information and disinformation, propaganda, conspiracy theories, fake news, memes, social media, and the changing role of expertise in a fragmented public sphere.

[Module web page](#)

Module aims

This module aims to develop your critical thinking skills; your ability to assimilate, apply, and critique complex theoretical frameworks; and your skills of expressing an original evidence-based argument that is the fruit of an interdisciplinary research process.

This module will provide students with theoretical tools and content knowledge that you can apply

to future interdisciplinary study in Liberal Arts and Liberal Arts and Sciences and in modules across the university.

Outline syllabus

This is an indicative module outline only to give an indication of the sort of topics that may be covered. Actual sessions held may differ.

The syllabus for this module is flexible as it will depend on the expertise of the module convenor and student interests. The module will always be interdisciplinary in nature, but will feature a wide variety of case studies around the broad nexus of truth as a critical issue.

Because this topic is dynamic and characterised by ongoing debate, the syllabus may change from year to year to reflect active debates and contemporary challenges. An indicative syllabus may include case studies such as:

Introduction: Truth and Belief

How do we approach the Truth?

- On Liberty and Tolerance, Plato's Cave, and truth in debate

Academic Disciplines and the study of the Truth:

- Science, Disciplines and the Liberal Arts tradition

The psychology of misinformation:

- Lying, bullshit, belief, and perceived risk.

The social life of misinformation:

- Public sphere, spectacle, and the myth of rebellion in free-market culture

Truth under pressure:

- Loss of trust, AI disruption and Looking to the future

Learning outcomes

By the end of the module, students should be able to:

- Articulate their own understanding of "truth" and "misinformation" along with related critical issues.
- Critically examine case studies related to the issue of truth and misinformation from interdisciplinary perspectives
- Demonstrate an improvement in their ability to express and structure an evidence-based argument
- Explain the complex relationship between academic disciplines such as science and critical theory

- Express their own perspective of how truth is constructed and the contexts of its production
- Critically analyse misinformation, emerging media, and media literacy across cultures, disciplines, and time periods
- Apply compassion and curiosity to gain a greater understanding of misinformation campaigns and their popularity among certain groups
- Demonstrate an understanding of the threat that misinformation poses within the contemporary information ecology

Indicative reading list

[Reading lists can be found in Talis](#)

Research element

Students will conduct independent secondary (and possibly primary) research both for their assessments and for weekly group tasks.

Interdisciplinary

All modules in Liberal Arts are interdisciplinary/transdisciplinary by definition. This module is no exception. It features theories and ideas from a wide range of disciplines.

International

The module will employ case studies from around the world. As students will have input into which case studies they would like to explore, the module will embody the best principles of representative curriculum design. Moreover, depending on the students and module convenor, multilingual approaches to the case studies, to groupwork, and to research elements will be strongly encouraged.

Subject specific skills

As a first-year core module, students who take this module will gain skills such as critical thinking, writing skills such as argument structure, learn to navigate interdisciplinary approaches, hone their reading skills (with regard to complex theory), gain independent research skills, etc...

These skills will be foundational for their future modules in Liberal Arts which will build on them.

Transferable skills

All skills gained in a Liberal Arts module are transferrable by definition.

Like all Liberal Arts modules, students on this module will learn time management, project management (by working in weekly groups), critical thinking, and gain greater confidence in their own ability to express and structure evidence-based arguments.

In terms of personal development, this module will encourage students to think critically about their own preconceptions and to consider both truth and misinformation from a complex and multifaceted perspective.

Study

Study time

Type	Required
Seminars	20 sessions of 2 hours (15%)
Private study	75 hours (29%)
Assessment	145 hours (56%)
Total	260 hours

Private study description

Approximately three-four hours per week (on average) will be dedicated to readings, tasks between seminars, groupwork, and preparation.

Costs

No further costs have been identified for this module.

Assessment

You do not need to pass all assessment components to pass the module.

Assessment group A2

	Weighting	Study time	Eligible for self-certification
Assessment component			
Student Led Discussion	15%	20 hours	No
Students will be randomly assigned to a weekly topic and will be tasked with leading a portion of the week's seminar. Students will have a variety of options to approach the class.			

Reassessment component is the same

	Weighting	Study time	Eligible for self-certification
Assessment component			
Annotated Bibliography	20%	30 hours	Yes (extension)
Students will be required to conduct research on a topic of their choice (either from the module or based on their own interests and can include themes shared within their in-class groups) with regard to the question of truth or misinformation from an interdisciplinary perspective.			
Students will prepare an annotated bibliography, the requirements of which will be discussed in-class and available in assessment guidance.			

Reassessment component is the same

Assessment component

Media Production (Investigative or Creative)	30%	40 hours	No
This assessment involves a group project where the students collaborate to create a 20 minute video that will either be: a) An "investigative deep dive" on one focussed case study (from any culture or time period). Students selecting this option will use the final third of the video to analyse the choices they made in their investigative exposé, demonstrating links to other case studies and theoretical frameworks seen in class. or b) A creative disinformation documentary that attempts to convince the viewer of a particular disinformation campaign. Students selecting this option will use the final third of the video to analyse the choices they made in creating the video and their links to other case studies and theoretical frameworks seen in class.			
Students will also complete a group log and team evaluation.			
Individual assessment equivalent is possible upon request and discussion with the instructor.			

Reassessment component

Media Presentation (Reassessment)	No
Same as above but individual rather than with a group.	

Assessment component

Research Project	30%	60 hours	Yes (extension)
This assessment requires students to develop an original evidence-based argument that			

	Weighting	Study time	Eligible for self-certification
demonstrates their learning from class. It can be linked to the annotated bibliography and respond to the feedback they received on the earlier assessment, but it may also be on a new topic.			
Students can choose to study a topic of their own choice/interest from the module, but this project should demonstrate a unique and original argument that is well-situated within the secondary literature. Students may choose to write this project on a different topic than the annotated bibliography but they would be advised to discuss with the instructor.			
Students will submit a 2500-word essay to present their findings. The assessment will be marked as a critical research essay and according to the same criteria on the 20-point Liberal Arts marking scale.			

Reassessment component is the same

Assessment component

Peer feedback	5%	5 hours	Yes (extension)
In class peer feedback discussion on final project outlines with a feedback form to submit.			

Reassessment component

Outline discussion	No
A conversation between student and module convenor on their project outline.	

Feedback on assessment

Feedback will be provided on Tabula for all assessments, some in class feedback will also be given where appropriate.

Availability

Courses

This module is Core for:

- Year 1 of UVCA-LA99 Undergraduate Liberal Arts