

Call for Applications: Teaching Disinfo Studies in Higher Ed Workshop

By MediaWell Staff

January 27, 2021

Facilitators: Joan Donovan and Kate Starbird

Date and Time of Workshop: Friday, March 19, 2021, 2 p.m. to 5 p.m. eastern time (hosted via Zoom)

Applications Due: February 15, 2021, 5 p.m. eastern time

Overview

Propaganda, influence, and political communication have long featured in curricula across the social science disciplines. Recent events, growing polarization, and new technological affordances have forced changes in the way we study dis- and misinformation, and communicate the results of our research. We are forced to grapple with the increasingly interdisciplinary nature of dis- and misinformation studies, and incorporate new and evolving methodologies into our research and teaching.

This workshop, a joint effort by the Social Science Research Council's [MediaWell](#) initiative, the [Shorenstein Center](#), and the [Center for an Informed Public](#), asks how we can most effectively communicate the findings, nuances, and uncertainties of disinformation studies to undergraduate audiences.

Themes include:

- How do we incorporate hands-on exercises?
- What is the most effective way to convey that “research” is different from “search,” and the importance of research methodologies?
- How do we demonstrate to students and administrations that disinformation researchers do not study “fake news,” but the ways in which socio-technological processes can be manipulated to undermine democracy?
- How should we discuss and grapple with the trauma of studying online hatred and the

disorientation of studying conspiracy theories?

We welcome applications to “Teaching Disinfo Studies in Higher Ed,” a workshop for educators in any related discipline. The goal of this workshop is to create a short, accessible guide for instructors who are teaching courses or course modules about dis- and misinformation, or who want suggestions for handling these topics in class as they arise organically. (We hope to convene future gatherings of instructors in secondary education and other constituencies to generate similar resources.) We hope this output will demystify the field for instructors encountering disinformation research for the first time, as well as inspire new strategies and exercises for more experienced instructors.

The output from this workshop will be hosted on the MediaWell, Shorenstein Center, and Center for an Informed Public websites, and will be distributed through a variety of channels. Workshop participants will be listed as co-creators.

The workshop will take place via Zoom on March 19 from 2 p.m. to 5 p.m. eastern time. Discussion will be facilitated by Joan Donovan and Kate Starbird.

On March 11, before the workshop, each participant will prepare a 500-word submission that describes a challenge or opportunity they have encountered in teaching disinformation, together with the solution(s) they have implemented, as well as a brief discussion point for a potential breakout room. These submissions will be circulated to participants in advance of the discussion, and will be adapted for the workshop’s public output.

Eligibility and Criteria:

Applications are open to PhDs, holders of relevant terminal degrees, and advanced graduate students. Applicants to the workshop will be asked to submit their CV and discuss their prior experience teaching undergraduate modules about topics such as dis- and misinformation, affective polarization, media manipulation, social media dysfunction, and online hatred and extremism. This list is not exhaustive—we aim to convene an interdisciplinary group united by its commitment to innovative and effective teaching methods. Practical media literacy instruction lies outside the scope of this workshop, though pedagogy and research that address the effectiveness and underlying ideologies of media literacy education are relevant to our efforts.

Applications are due on February 15. Applications must be in English, though international applicants are encouraged to apply. Early-career instructors and adjunct faculty are also encouraged to apply.

We recognize that disinformation and hate speech compound other inequalities, and disproportionately affect women, racial and ethnic minorities, LGBTQ individuals, and other marginalized groups. We encourage applications from individuals whose work addresses these disparities.

Applications will be reviewed by SSRC staff and workshop facilitators.

Applications must include the following material:

- Two-page CV
- Related teaching experience (up to 300 words)
- Why do you want to participate in this workshop, and how does it align with your teaching philosophy? (up to 300 words)
- A recent related syllabus (optional)

To Apply:

To apply, go to <http://apply.ssrc.org>.

[MediaWell](#) is the Social Science Research Council's public scholarship project on dis- and misinformation, political communication, hate speech, and related topics. It features accessible research reviews, expert commentary, a large curated citation library, and teaching resources that include syllabi and course modules.

[The Shorenstein Center](#) on Media, Politics and Public Policy is a Harvard Kennedy School research center dedicated to exploring and illuminating the intersection of press, politics, and public policy in theory and practice. The Center strives to bridge the gap between journalists and scholars, and between them and the public.

[The Center for an Informed Public](#) at the University of Washington is an interdisciplinary center whose mission is to resist strategic misinformation, promote an informed society, and strengthen democratic discourse. The Center works to translate research about misinformation and disinformation into policy, technology design, curriculum development, and public engagement.



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