

# Fake News

---

Week 7: Calling Bullshit

# Thoughts on Last Week's Reading?

---

- Kevin Carey, [A Peek Inside the Strange World of Fake Academia](#), *New York Times*, Dec. 29, 2016
- Lee Rainie and Janna Anderson, [Code-Dependent: Pros and Cons of the Algorithm Age](#), Pew Research Center Report, February 8, 2017

# Social Media

---

Then:

Fifteen years ago, nascent social media platforms offered the promise of a more democratic press through decentralized broadcasting and a decoupling of publishing from advertising revenue.

Now:

Sectarian echo chambers and an assault on the very notion of fact. There is growing evidence that fake news has the power to shape public opinion. Recently a fake news story actually provoked nuclear threats issued by twitter.

# Popular Fake Election News Stories

## Top 5 Fake Election Stories by Facebook Engagement (three months before election)

“Pope Francis Shocks World, Endorses Donald Trump for President, Releases Statement”  
(960,000, *Ending the Fed*)

“WikiLeaks CONFIRMS Hillary Sold Weapons to ISIS... Then Drops Another BOMBSHELL! Breaking News”  
(789,000, *The Political Insider*)

“IT’S OVER: Hillary’s ISIS Email Just Leaked & It’s Worse Than Anyone Could Have Imagined”  
(754,000, *Ending the Fed*)

“Just Read the Law: Hillary Is Disqualified From Holding Any Federal Office”  
(701,000, *Ending the Fed*)

“FBI Agent Suspected in Hillary Email Leaks Found Dead in Apparent Murder-Suicide” (567,000, *Denver Guardian*)

ENGAGEMENT REFERS TO THE TOTAL NUMBER OF SHARES, REACTIONS, AND COMMENTS FOR A PIECE OF CONTENT ON FACEBOOK SOURCE: FACEBOOK DATA VIA BUZZSUMO

Using the News Literacy Project checklist—just based on the headline alone—how can you detect the likelihood of the stories being fake?

Choose two stories from the chart and look at the fact checking sites [Snopes.com](http://Snopes.com), [Politicfact.com](http://Politicfact.com), or [Factcheck.org](http://Factcheck.org).

# Key to Media Literacy

Even typically reliable sources, whether mainstream or alternative, corporate or nonprofit, rely on particular media frames to report stories and select stories based on different notions of newsworthiness.

The best thing to do in the contemporary media environment is to read/watch/listen widely and often, and to be critical of the sources we share and engage with on social media.

## Focus on Media Literacy Attributes of the Constructed Message



# Assigned Reading

---

- Eric Weiskott. [Before 'Fake News' Came False Prophecy](#) *The Atlantic Monthly*, Dec. 27, 2016
- Adrian Chen. [The Agency](#). *New York Times Magazine*, June 2, 2015
- [Inside a fake news sausage-factory: 'This is all about income'](#) *New York Times* Nov. 25, 2016
- [Believe](#), *The Oatmeal*, published week of May 8, 2017 (regular version and classroom-friendly option)

# Next Week: Refuting Bullshit

---

Different Approaches for Different Audiences