Class: Contemporary Issues Lesson #3: April 8, 2020

Learning Target: The student will be able to disseminate reliable sources from fake news/information.

Warm Up

For this lesson you will be playing an online game. In this game it will be your objective to identify if a new article is real or fake. Remember, some sources are more trustworthy than others. Some sources are even intentionally created to fool you or get you to believe something that is false.

Directions: For your warm up, you will play three rounds of this game. On your screen you will see six difficulty bubbles, please just select "Easy 1" for now. From there, follow the onscreen instructions. You will swipe the story right if you think it's real and you will swipe the story left if you think it is a fake story. After you complete three rounds it will give you a score. Don't worry about how good your score is, rather try to answer the following questions on a seperate sheet of paper:

What elements or patterns did you notice about the fake news articles? How were they different than the real articles?

Lesson Activity

Fake news websites often use a variety of tricks, tools, and ideas to get you to believe them. Some sites even create false information just to joke around or to make a point (called **satire**; *The Onion* is a famous satire site for example).

Some sites will blatantly tell you they are fake, while others are hard to notice. Here are **five indicators** (to the right) to look for that may help you better identify fake news:

* *A good rule of thumb: If a news article's headline aims to make you feel scared, angry, or upset it has a higher chance of being a fake new article.*

1. **Impersonation**- Sites will pretend to be something they're not; for example a fake site might pretend to be a major news site like NBC, CNN, or Fox.
2. **Emotion**- Fake news often uses headlines or strong language to play into peoples' basic emotions of fear, anxiety, empathy, or paranoia.*
3. **Polarization**- Fake news will also try to pit people against each other; it may try to make people of different political opinions seem bad or incompetent
4. **Conspiracy**- This is when fake news sources will state that an event was orchestrated by a secret agency or group; this can be done to cause fear or distrust
5. **Trolling**- This is a term that refers to when fake news sites intentionally try to upset people by posting controversial and false information

Lesson Activity

Directions: Using the five indicators as a guide, try to play the next three difficulties of the Factitious game (**Easy 2, Medium 1, and Medium 2**).

Link to game: http://factitious.augamestudio.com/#/

Hint: You may also want to check the source for each article; you can scroll down to check the name of the source. It it's a big name that you recognize, chances are that it is a legitimate news article.

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2. **Emotion**- Fake news often uses headlines or strong language to play into peoples' basic emotions of fear, anxiety, empathy, or paranoia.*
3. **Polarization**- Fake news will also try to pit people against each other; it may try to make people of different political opinions seem bad or incompetent
4. **Conspiracy**- This is when fake news sources will state that an event was orchestrated by a covert agency or group; this can be done to cause fear or distrust
5. **Trolling**- This is a term that refers to when fake news sites intentionally try to upset people by posting controversial and false information

Practice

Once you have gotten a score you're satisfied with in the Medium level, please give yourself some further practice by completing both the **Hard** levels. Keep in mind, the site says that this is "college level difficulty," so don't fret over your score. Once you've finished move on to answering the questions in the reflection section.

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Reflection

Please answer these questions on your seperate sheet of paper:

1. Why do you think, in your opinion, fake news sites want to spread false information? (Think back to our five indicators.)
2. What was the easiest way to tell if an article was fake in the Factitious game?
3. Why do you think it is important to be able to distinguish between fake and real news in today's society?

Also, if you liked that game you may also enjoy this one: https://www.getbadnews.com/#intro

It's kind of like a "choose-your-own adventure," but with fake news. It also teaches you more about our five indicators.