

HS Intro to Social and Online Media

Lesson: Media Literacy Pt. 3

**Learning Target: Identifying fake news,
understanding its danger, and critically
thinking about a solution.**

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Video Option for today's lesson

Link: <https://youtu.be/lbqLedh00j8>

Bell Ringer

1. Find three news stories about the mask shortage here in the United States. For each story think about our media literacy lessons so far and determine whether or not any of the stories can be trusted.

Fake News



The Menace of Unreality

The Conspiracy Theory

Alternative Narratives or “fake news”

Throughout history alternative narratives have always existed. They are often what we consider conspiracy theories. There's the people that believe a second shooter existed during the assassination of JFK or the people that don't believe we actually landed on the moon. Or more recently the theory that 9/11 was done by our own government.

Often alternative narratives are created by people who simply can't handle the reality of a situation. Their way of coping with the reality is to believe that the reality simply can't exist and there has to be another explanation.

Throughout most of history these theories have existed on the fringe. They are often joked about and anyone who truly believed in them was considered an outlier or crazy.

The Internet's Role in Alternative Narratives

- The internet's existence allowed these alternative views to spread to a much wider audience. You don't need to be counter-culture or a member of a subversive group to search the web and find alternative information.
- Due to the ease of access, alternative narratives became wider spread. They gained more traction than they ever had before.
- This led us to a situation where the population is ripe for fake news. They are already programmed to consume alternative information.

Social Bubbles

- Due to the ease of which we can all obtain any information we want we no longer have to go to standardized sources. In some instances this is great. It allows the user to customize their information solutions. It allows them to streamline their approach to accessing information they deem critical.
- An unfortunate side-effect is that often times individuals will create a social bubble. They access information that is specifically tailored to their viewpoint. They cultivate an information feed that conforms to their existing worldview. In this situation the internet does more harm than good.
- Information from all angles needs to be considered for that information to be considered valid. Any information that completely ignores or worse attempts to discredit another side of the information becomes propaganda.

The Filter Bubble

How alternative narratives play out on social media

Creation of the narrative



Witnesses Describe Multiple Gunmen in Orlando Shooting False Flag worldtruth.tv/witnesses-desc...

11:37 AM - 14 Jun 2016



Witnesses Describe Multiple Gunmen in Orlando Shooting F...

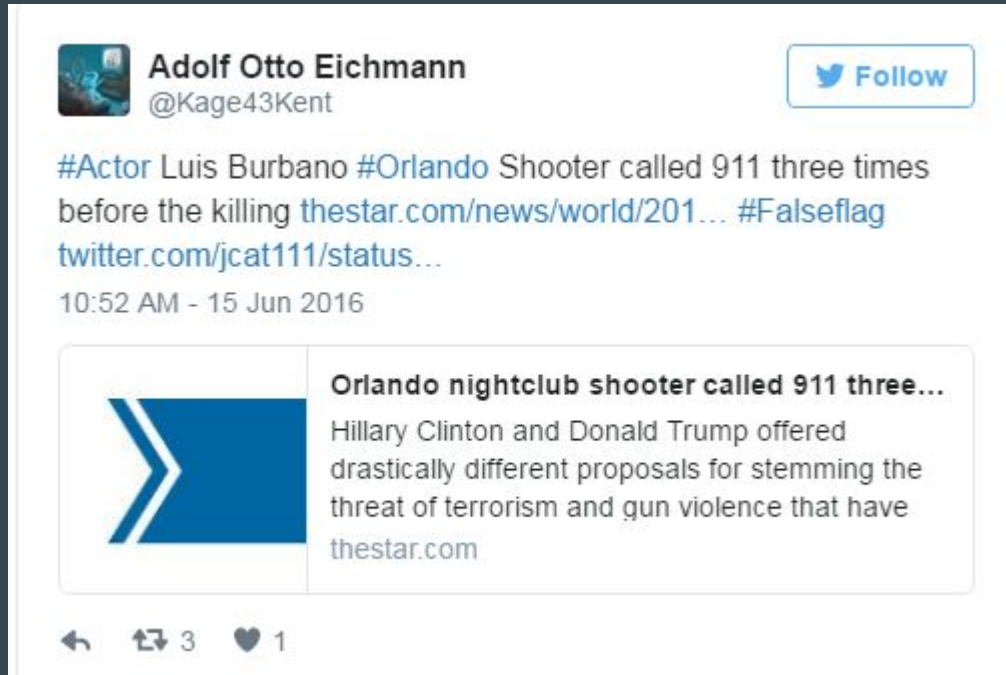
The dust has barely settled on the Orlando shooting but already it is clear there is a mainstream media cover up to deny the fact there worldtruth.tv




After the Orlando nightclub shooting an alternative news source or what is often referred to as “fake news” tweets out this article on their site claiming the shooting is actually a “false flag” operation.

They use typical fog of war reporting tactics citing witnesses contradicting each other as “evidence” that supports their narrative. It’s important to remember witness statements are not evidence. And eye-witnesses in crisis situations can be unreliable.


Creating Evidence






 **Adolf Otto Eichmann**
@Kage43Kent [Follow](#)

[#Actor](#) Luis Burbano [#Orlando](#) Shooter called 911 three times before the killing thestar.com/news/world/201... [#Falseflag](#)
twitter.com/jcat111/status...

10:52 AM - 15 Jun 2016

 **Orlando nightclub shooter called 911 three...**
Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump offered drastically different proposals for stemming the threat of terrorism and gun violence that have thestar.com

  3  1

In this case a social media poster uses the fact that one of the victims was an actor to link it to false flag. This is often a common theme with fake news that crisis actors stage these events.

They also link to a neutral, fact-based article from the Toronto Star which provided the account. This makes it seem at first glance that the Star is reporting it's a false flag operation.

De-legitimizing mainstream reports



Total Information

@total411info



.@NYTimes damage control for #CrisisActors at #OrlandoHoax #FalseFlag.

Hits @RealAlexJones, cites shill Chip

Berlet.nytimes.com/2016/06/29/us/...

9:17 PM - 28 Jun 2016



After Orlando Shooting, 'False Flag' and 'Crisis Actor' Consp...

These themes often show up on social media after widely publicized acts of violence.

nytimes.com



Due to the amount of fake news in existence mainstream media often times will print stories that refute the fake news. In this case the New York Times debunks several different false narratives.

The response is often to then lump the mainstream media into a group with the conspirators. This tweet claims that the NY Times is in “damage control” or attempting to help cover up the operation.

A Vexing Problem

The way false narratives respond to corrections is especially troubling and creates a difficult situation for journalists. The corrections either get called into question for the legitimacy or sometimes those articles get twisted into supporting evidence by those promoting a theory or alternative narrative.

This is why the graph we showed earlier in the lecture has such large connections to mainstream media. The fake news sites intertwine the mainstream narrative with their own.

This creates a big problem. The rumor-correcting backfires and often helps the narrative gain steam rather than slowing it down.

The Menace of Unreality

- A paper written in 2014 titled the “Menace of Unreality” explains how Russia has used fake news since the Lenin era to help keep their populous confused.
- The argument is that fake news does not exist to convince it exists to confuse and muddle the facts.
- The strategic argument is that a society that can't trust information is much easier to control.
- More research needs to be done on the fake news problem that exists within American society to see if it is being controlled at a high political level, but there's already plenty of evidence that even if it's being done independently it is creating a confusion in the public and a distrust of information.

Assignment

Answer the following questions...

1. How do you believe the American public should deal with fake news and alternative media sites?
2. Should social media sites do more to combat this problem? Why do you feel this way?

Play Republica Times

After finishing it a few times write a brief summary of the different endings you received