Teaching How to Find Facts in a Post-Truth World

Holly Middleton
High Point University

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How To Teach Facts in a Post-Truth World

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Holly Middleton, High Point University
hsmiddleton@gmail.com; hmiddelet@highpoint.edu
Information Paradox

- While we have access to more information than ever before, it’s never been more difficult to evaluate or understand it.
- This is a shared problem of our historical moment, NOT a student deficit.
Who are our students?
In a survey of 397 adults, greater knowledge of news media predicted a lower level of conspiracy theory endorsement.


Students who believe knowledge is inherently subjective benefitted less from information search instruction.

Assignment #1: How Do You Get Informed?
Web Literacy for Student Fact-Checkers

...and other people who care about facts.

Mike Caulfield

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READ BOOK
Student Survey Results

15/17 students “somewhat” or “completely agreed” with the statement:

In this course I learned how to evaluate information for **personal** use.

15/17 students “somewhat” or “completely agreed” with the statement:

In this course I learned how to evaluate information for **academic** use.
Student Survey: Highest rated assignment

Read How to Use Google to Search Within a Single Website and (13-20) and (25-27) in Web Literacy. Try both of the strategies below:

1. Start with your news feeds and social media for items/claims to fact check. Test different items via a site search or go upstream until you find a claim that is inaccurate.
2. Browse two or more of the fact-checking sites on page 19 of Web Literacy. Look for items that surprise you, whether because you expected the item to be true and it’s not, or you expected it to be false and it’s true.

Write a healthy paragraph describing several examples you find, in general terms. Then choose the most interesting example (and one that is less than two years old) and write a second paragraph explaining the item in detail and its degree of accuracy. Be sure to clarify the context of the item (how and where you found it, where it was originally published, its claim, etc.) and reflect on what surprises you most about its accuracy, and why. Write as much as you can.
Survey: Highest rated strategy is “going upstream”

“Going upstream” is finding the original source (Caulfield).

Most online news content is “reporting on reporting.” To evaluate accuracy, you need to evaluate the original source, not the site that is reporting on it.
Reading and Writing “Upstream”: Snopes.com

“Did CNN Stage a Rescue Video?” because:

- Traces circulation so highly intertextual
- Students gain practice in precision and synthesis (reading and writing)
- Provided examples from our readings, including Kathryn Schulz’s “On Evidence”
A video showing CNN reporter Drew Griffin and his news crew rushing to the rescue of a man who accidentally drove his truck into a small ravine flooded by Hurricane Harvey went viral on 30 August 2017:
Strategies in Context: Sample Assignment

Students submitted articles from snopes.com they found interesting, and I selected one for the following activity:

1. Read the Snopes article
2. Evaluate summaries of the article
3. Identify qualities (strengths and weaknesses) of each summary
4. Do steps 1-3 individually and in groups
5. Connect to writing assignment
Quiz Time!

Instructions: Imagine you are a student in my class who has already read the snopes.com article and taken this quiz for homework.

You have brought your quiz to class but now your job is to retake the quiz in a small group. Share quiz answers with your team and then select the best answers to 1-3. (Review the other items).
Affective Takeaways

1. Learning how to verify content made students feel empowered (Fact-checking websites and finding the original source)
2. They were relieved of the radical skepticism that ascertaining truth is possible
Thank you!

hsmiddleton@gmail.com;
hmiddlet@highpoint.edu