**IDS4930: Trust and Misinformation in the Digital Age**

**Instructor:** Dr. Jacob T. Watson  
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**Zoom Office Hours:** Monday 2-3pm

**OVERVIEW**
Using a variety of primary and secondary sources, we will investigate the growing problem of misinformation in digital spaces and the complex issues surrounding how trust functions in the age of infodemics and deepfakes. The course will teach students interdisciplinary research skills and how to formulate a scholarly argument using evidence. Students will be given the opportunity to collaboratively research and write an original work of scholarship under the guidance of the instructor.

**COLLABORATIVE MODEL**
Our initial goal will be to develop an understanding of how to conduct digital media research and employ textual analysis. We will then collectively formulate a research question, and, as a combined effort, we will try to answer our question through the production of a fully collaborative research paper.

**COURSE OBJECTIVES**
- navigate a digital archive  
- practice research methods from fields including cultural studies and history  
- contextualize and interpret archival materials  
- formulate an original research question  
- research, draft, and complete an original, group research paper
ASSIGNMENTS

Participation
Over the course of the semester, student participation will be observed and qualitatively assessed. Quality of participation includes factors like frequency and value of contributions to class discussions, engagement in group and individual activities, evidence of preparation, and general attitude. To do well in participation, students should always participate to the best of their ability in discussion, and refrain from distracting behavior or inattentiveness whenever someone else is addressing the class. In general, student should ALWAYS avoid doing or saying anything hostile or disrespectful toward any person in the class. Overall quality of weekly participation will be evaluated as one quarter of the course grade.

Work Plan and Status Reports
We all come to this class with different strengths, talents, backgrounds, and perspectives. For this reason—and also due to the multifaceted nature of research—it will be wise to have individual students working on different aspects of the research project at the same time. Within the first quarter of the semester, students will develop a detailed work plan to follow for the collaborative class project. The work plan will help to ensure that each student has an equitable workload, while also serving as a time management and accountability tool. Due to the dynamic nature of research projects and the amount of trial-and-error involved, students will submit a status update at the midpoint and three-quarter mark of the semester. These updates will reflect on the work completed thus far, obstacles and challenges encountered, and anticipated changes to the original work plan.

Project Contribution
Each student's approved work plan and status reports will serve as a rubric of sorts for judging their contributions to the class project. The class project itself won’t be graded, since it will represent the sum total of all of our efforts, but the quality and level of completeness of its individual elements will be used as evidence to determine and evaluate how well you carried out your work plan over the course of the semester.

Final Reflection
The most important thing about any undergraduate research experience is that you take something away from it that you can use in your future studies and career. You will be learning and practicing a wide range of skills over the course of this semester—skills that don’t just pertain to research but transfer into other areas of life as well. It is essential with any experiential learning opportunity to be able articulate the value of what you did and the growth that it fostered. This is the story you will need to tell in interviews, cover letters, and other evaluative situations in which you are called upon to show what you can do. This final reflection paper will be a space to look deeply into your experience over the course of the semester and examine what you’ve gained from it.
GRADING

Grading percentages are as follows:

- Participation: 25%
- Work Plan: 25%
- Project Contribution: 25%
- Final Reflection: 25%

Grading scale:

A=92.5-100; A-=89.5-92.4; B+=86.5-89.4; B=82.5-86.4; B-=79.5-82.4; C+=76.5-79.4; C=72.5-76.4;
C- =69.5-72.4; D+=66.5-69.4; D=62.5-66.4; D-=59.5-62.4; E=<59.5

ATTENDANCE

Students who need to miss class should let me know as far in advance as possible. Absences due to illness and other unavoidable circumstances are usually excused, but still need to be discussed with me on a case-by-case basis. It is the student’s responsibility to make sure any work missed due to an absence gets completed. Unexcused absences will result in the loss of participation points, and more than 7 unexcused absences will result in automatic failure.

LATE WORK

Late work will not be accepted except under extenuating circumstances. Students in need of an extension for medical or other reasons should meet with the instructor prior to the assignment deadline if possible.

EVALUATIONS

Students are expected to provide feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing online evaluations at http://evaluations.ufl.edu. Evaluations are typically open during the last two or three weeks of the semester, but students will be given specific times when they are open. Summary results of these assessments are available to students at https://evaluations.ufl.edu/results/. To help improve the course and maximize the benefit for students, additional, informal evaluations will be assigned at the beginning and midpoint of the semester.

DISABILITY NOTICE

Students with disabilities requesting accommodations should first register with the Disability Resource Center (352-392-8565, www.dso.ufl.edu/drc) by providing appropriate documentation. Once registered, students will receive an accommodation letter which must be presented to the instructor when requesting accommodation. Students with disabilities should follow this procedure as early as possible in the semester.
SCHEDULE

Weeks 1-3: Getting Started

1: syllabus; course overview; research methods; working with primary sources
2/3: research questions; making academic arguments; exploring the archives

Readings: Digital Newspaper Project Blog; selected articles

Weeks 4-5: Preliminary Research Phase

4: establishing a workplan; refining questions; brainstorming sessions
5: collecting and organizing sources; citation management; idea workshops

Readings: selected articles (reading list to be provided)

Weeks 6-7: Constructing an Argument with Research

6: composing a literature review; assembling evidence; establishing context
7: using logic; qualifying claims; addressing limitations; audience awareness

Weeks 8-9: Prewriting

8: starting the class blog; outlining; drafting workshops
9: first status reports; revising the outline; drafting workshops

Weeks 10-11: Creating a Research Article

10: professional scholarly writing tips; drafting workshops
11: structure, style and prose; drafting workshops

Weeks 12-13: Revisions and Copy Edits

12: reverse outlining; draft review; revision workshops
13: final status reports; conforming to a style guide; proofing and editing

Weeks 14-15: Preparing an Article for Submission

14: journal selection; formatting for submission requirements
15: final revisions workshop; final copy editing; reflection papers
In response to COVID-19, the following practices are in place to maintain your learning environment, to enhance the safety of our in-classroom interactions, and to further the health and safety of ourselves, our neighbors, and our loved ones.

• If you are not vaccinated, get vaccinated. Vaccines are readily available at no cost and have been demonstrated to be safe and effective against the COVID-19 virus. Visit this link for details on where to get your shot, including options that do not require an appointment: https://coronavirus.ufhealth.org/vaccinations/vaccine-availability/. Students who receive the first dose of the vaccine somewhere off-campus and/or outside of Gainesville can still receive their second dose on campus.

• You are expected to wear approved face coverings at all times during class and within buildings even if you are vaccinated. Please continue to follow healthy habits, including best practices like frequent hand washing. Following these practices is our responsibility as Gators.

• If you sick, stay home and self-quarantine. Please visit the UF Health Screen, Test & Protect website about next steps, retake the questionnaire and schedule your test for no sooner than 24 hours after your symptoms began. Please call your primary care provider if you are ill and need immediate care or the UF Student Health Care Center at 352-392-1161 (or email covid@shcc.ufl.edu) to be evaluated for testing and to receive further instructions about returning to campus. UF Health Screen, Test & Protect offers guidance when you are sick, have been exposed to someone who has tested positive or have tested positive yourself. Visit the UF Health Screen, Test & Protect website for more information.

• Continue to regularly visit coronavirus.UFHealth.org and coronavirus.ufl.edu for up-to-date information about COVID-19 and vaccination.