

Digital Disinformation in Europe (6 ECTS)

Name: Miglė Bareikytė

Office: CP 140

E-Mail: bareikyte@europa-uni.de

Office Hours: on appointment

One of the problematic aspects of digitalization is disinformation. Of course, disinformation and related propaganda practices are not new—they have been used and developed throughout the 20th century. However, contemporary digitalization, which has increased the speed and variety of communication practices, has facilitated the development of data driven digital disinformation. This seminar asks: What is digital disinformation? How does it relate to historical practices of propaganda and disinformation in the 20th century? What empirical examples of disinformation and its contestation have been practiced in Europe? During the seminar, we will explore the conceptual and historical foundations of disinformation. We will also examine contemporary forms of disinformation with a focus on Europe, including examples from Russia's war against Ukraine, the use of artificial intelligence for disinformation, and critical practices in countering disinformation through digital means. In order to achieve the main goal of the seminar—a conceptual, historically grounded understanding of disinformation and its actualization through empirical case studies—we will read and discuss texts, conduct classroom research, watch film(s), and interact with practitioners from the field of disinformation research.

GRADING (see example below):

Home essay (6 pp.): 40 %

1 presentation (20 minutes): 30 %

Participation/Engagement: 30 %

TERMS

Presence

Students are requested to attend to classes in order to get graded. More than one absence will automatically lower your final grade after your point total is calculated, unless you can document that all the absences are related to an illness and/or official university event. For each additional absence your final grade will be lowered by 1/3 (a B becomes a B-, etc.). Late arrival and early departure will not be tolerated.

Policy on Academic Integrity. Students who violate University rules on scholastic dishonesty are subject to disciplinary penalties, including failure in the course and/or dismissal from the University. Since such dishonesty harms the individual, all students, and the integrity of the University, policies on scholastic dishonesty will be strictly enforced. Your writing must be your

own work. If you plagiarize egregiously on an assignment, you will fail the course. Simple rule of thumb: “If you use words or ideas that are not your own you must cite your sources. Otherwise you will be guilty of plagiarism.”

	Topic	Readings
1	Disinformation, Misinformation and Propaganda: Conceptual Foundations	Edward Bernays. 1928. Propaganda. New York: Horace Liveright. Chapters 2, 4, 11. Rachel Armitage and Cristian Vaccari. Misinformation and Disinformation. 2021. In: The Routledge Companion to Media Disinformation and Populism. Editors Howard Tumber and Silvio Waisbord. pp. 38-48.
2	Digital Disinformation	Franziska Martini, Paul Samula, Tobias R Keller, and Ulrike Klinger. 2021. Bot, or not? Comparing three methods for detecting social bots in five political discourses. Big Data & Society. Online: https://doi.org/10.1177/20539517211033566 Carlos Diaz Ruiz. 2023. Disinformation on digital media platforms: A market-shaping approach. New Media & Society. Online: https://doi.org/10.1177/14614448231207644
3	Disinformation in Europe 1: State-Sponsored Disinformation	Peter Pomerantsev and Michael Weiss. 2014. The Menace of Unreality: How the Kremlin Weaponizes Information, Culture and Money. Institute of Modern Russia. Online: https://imrussia.org/media/pdf/Research/Michael_Weiss_and_Peter_Pomerantsev__The_Menace_of_Unreality.pdf Susanne Spahn. 2020. Russian Media in Germany. Friedrich-Naumann-Stiftung für die Freiheit.
4	Disinformation in Europe 2: Civil Society strikes back	Yevgeniy Golovchenko, Mareike Hartmann, Rebecca Adler-Nissen. 2018. State, media and civil society in the information warfare over Ukraine: citizen curators of

		digital disinformation. <i>International Affairs</i> , Vol. 94 (5), pp. 975-994. https://doi.org.10.1093/ia/iyy148
5	Disinformation in Europa 3: Current research	(Online) lectures by disinformation researchers and activists from Europe
6	Contemporary examples of disinformation: Bottom-up Research	Classroom-based collaborative group research

COURSE READINGS

Armitage, Rachel and Cristian Vaccari. 2021. "Misinformation and Disinformation." In: Howard Tumber and Silvio Waisbord eds. *The Routledge Companion to Media Disinformation and Populism*. London: Routledge, pp. 38-48.

Bernays, Edward. 1928. *Propaganda*. New York: Horace Liveright.

Golovchenko, Yevgeniy, Mareike Hartmann, and Rebecca Adler-Nissen. 2018. State, media and civil society in the information warfare over Ukraine: citizen curators of digital disinformation. *International Affairs*, Vol. 94 (5), pp. 975-994.
<https://doi.org/10.1093/ia/iyy148>

Martini, Franziska, Paul Samula, Tobias R Keller, and Ulrike Klinger. 2021. Bot, or not? Comparing three methods for detecting social bots in five political discourses. *Big Data & Society*. Online: <https://doi.org/10.1177/20539517211033566>

Pomerantsev, Peter and Michael Weiss. 2014. *The Menace of Unreality: How the Kremlin Weaponizes Information, Culture and Money*. Institute of Modern Russia. Online: https://imrussia.org/media/pdf/Research/Michael_Weiss_and_Peter_Pomerantsev__The_Menace_of_Unreality.pdf

Ruiz, Carlos Diaz. 2023. Disinformation on digital media platforms: A market-shaping approach. *New Media & Society*. Online: <https://doi.org/10.1177/14614448231207644>

Spahn, Susanne. 2020. *Russian Media in Germany*. Friedrich-Naumann-Stiftung für die Freiheit.