



MEDIA LITERACY MATTERS

C O N F E R E N C E

CURRENT LANDSCAPE, STUDENT ACTIONS,
AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

Thursday, March 21, 2024

Media Literacy Matters: Current Landscape, Student Actions, and Future Directions is a half-day conference that brings faculty, students, and researchers across campus together to discuss issues related to media literacy. Media literacy is the ability to use critical thinking and rhetorical reasoning to find, evaluate, and create information in online environments. Media literacy guides people toward consuming digital media in a critical manner as engaged, well-informed citizens.

CHARLOTTE
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NINERTIMES

MEDIA LITERACY MATTERS CONFERENCE SCHEDULE

8:30 - 9:00 am

Breakfast
Halton Room

9:00 - 9:45 am

Keynote Speaker, Ryan Pitkin, *Queen City Nerve*
Halton Room

10:00 - 11:00 am

Student Showcase
Atkins 123 and Atkins 125

11:15 - 11:45 am

Panel, Managerial Board of *Niner Times*
Halton Room

12:00 - 12:45 pm

Faculty Lightning Talks
Halton Room

KEYNOTE SPEAKER

9:00 - 9:45 am, Halton Room

Ryan Pitkin, Queen City Nerve

Ryan Pitkin is a graduate of UNC Charlotte, where he served as Arts & Entertainment editor of the *Niner Times* and was recognized as Outstanding Journalism Student by the Communications Department in 2012. After graduation he went on to work as a local journalist in Charlotte and Union County before co-founding Nerve Media Productions. He currently serves as editor in chief of *Queen City Nerve*. With a focus on local news in Charlotte, Ryan covers a range of topics including politics, community issues, and cultural events.

Ryan will discuss his experience in journalism in Charlotte over the past 15 years from the *Niner Times* at UNC Charlotte to *Creative Loafing* to *Queen City Nerve*. He will offer his take on the importance of student journalism and local journalism as well as its status in Charlotte. The topic of media literacy and the dangers posed by mis- and dis-information in the current media landscape as well as strategies for media creators and consumers for how to best deal with it will also be covered. There will be time at the end for Ryan to answer questions from the audience.

STUDENT SHOWCASE: POSTERS

10:00 - 11:00 am, Atkins 123

NOT CREDIBLE UNTIL PROVEN CREDIBLE

Mariah Manley, College of Health and Human Services

My presentation is an overview of what makes a source credible and what causes it to lose its purpose or credibility. It addresses Authority, Purpose, and Currency while also explaining how this helps individuals find credibility. My poster also tackles Artificial Intelligence, Fake News, and Bias and how we need to be careful of those aspects.

NATURAL PHENOMENON EDITION

Suzanne Voigt, Department of Art & Art History

Dominique Rodrigez, Department of Art & Art History

Zoe Turner, Department of Art & Art History

In the 21st century, it has become increasingly challenging to recognize which images are “real” vs. those that have been created using AI. Experts have estimated that by 2025, over 90% of online content will be created by AI, leading Congress to discuss regulations around image-making and protections for creators. Due to this tremendous increase, media literacy is more essential than ever as we continue to consume massive amounts of visual content on a daily basis. This poster will focus on three fauxtograph images showcasing natural phenomena in a realistic way.

THE ENDLESS FIGHT

Jazmine Chance, College of Arts + Architecture

With the work's false doings, media literacy has changed the concept of what is visually shown as what is real or fake. This composited piece uses the figurehead of Rosa Parks within a situation of an encounter with the same bus driver she faced before her first popular instance with the bus. It challenges the viewer against the ways media is visually spread to its consumers and how they react to the small visual context.

EMPOWERED INSIGHT: NAVIGATING AN INFORMED APPROACH TO NEWS AND INFORMATION CONSUMPTION

Meenu Murugan, Department of Biological Sciences

Jana Obied, Department of Public Health Sciences

Providing an overview of six fundamental subsections of media literacy, this poster offers a thorough introduction to media literacy. It highlights how crucial it is to consume news and information with discernment by encouraging critical thought and analysis. The poster serves a valuable resource and guide that equips people with the knowledge and skills necessary to make wise decisions as they traverse the complicated and complex landscape of news media. By addressing specific components of media analysis, the poster aims to enhance overall media literacy skills and encourage a more discerning and thoughtful engagement with information sources.

STUDENT SHOWCASE: VIDEOS & LIGHTNING TALKS

10:00 - 11:00 am, Atkins 125

“DON’T SAY GAY”: HOW QUEER ERASURE IN EDUCATION AND MEDIA WEAKENS MEDIA LITERACY

Leila Hobbs, Department of Political Science and Public Administration

The misinformation and disinformation surrounding the queer community within today's media landscape has the power to negatively impact both politicians and legislation, while also fueling hate crimes towards queer individuals. Additionally, a lack of education about the LGBTQ+ community fuels biases among the United States population, which further decreases peoples' ability to be media literate. In order to make overall media literacy both comprehensive and intersectional, LGBTQ+ education needs to be implemented in schools across the country.

3 COMMON TACTICS USED TO SPREAD MISINFORMATION ON SOCIAL MEDIA

Brianne Schriever, Department of Art & Art History

Christi Montes Castro, Department of Art & Art History

Over the years, misinformation in media has become more widespread and easily accessible to the public through social media platforms. Common tactics created through graphic design to push false stories and narratives include deceptive graphics, clickbait headlines, and misleading imagery. Awareness of these tactics is essential to avoid consuming and continuing the spread of misinformation.

MUSLIM-AMERICAN REPRESENTATION IN MEDIA

Nila Hines, Liberal Studies

Muslim Americans are among minority groups that are negatively portrayed in today's media. Stereotypes and generalizations have both played a role in the misrepresentation of this group. The impact media has can create a much-needed change, but that is only if it is used to close the knowledge gap. This presentation will cover a few ways misinformation spreads in the media when it comes to cultural groups. Misrepresentation and misinformation have harmful impacts on the Muslim-American population. It is important to understand the current issues so that we can learn how to become news literate in hopes of understanding those around us.

LIFE VS. ART

Ashleigh Pisczek, Department of Communication Studies

Blair Roberts, Department of Communication Studies

How people communicate breaking news, emotions, or observations is done through art. Figurative art plays a role in this and is an overlooked form of art. Learn more about the potential effects that AI could have on the art industry in the future through this video that explores the experience of comparing AI art to human life modelling art creation.

THE SIKHISM RELIGION PORTRAYAL IN THE MEDIA

Jadyn Malawski, Belk College of Business

This video contains a mock interview show displaying students Jaiden Ramseur and Jadyn Malawski discussing some of the issues that people who follow the Sikhism religion face. The video begins by describing an overview of the religion, and follows with how many of them are portrayed poorly in the media. It concludes with the importance of media literacy with regards to various demographics.

THE IMPORTANCE OF MEDIA LITERACY - MEDIA MANIPULATION

Jadyn Malawski, Belk College of Business

This presentation features two videos of high school students speaking out about how COVID affected their lives. One of the videos has been edited to alter the message and one is the original (from PBS Learning Media)—demonstrating how easy it is to change the contents of certain media by changing the tone of the original.

ON-CAMPUS INFORMATION LITERACY: HOW STUDENT JOURNALISM EXPANDS UNC CHARLOTTE LITERACY PRACTICES

11:15 - 11:45 am, Halton Room

Panel featuring the managerial board of *Niner Times*

Sunnya Hadavi
Editor-In-Chief

Bryson Foster
Outreach Coordinator

AJ Siegel
Copy Editor

Clare Grealey
Assistant Copy Editor

The *Niner Times* managerial board discusses the importance of student journalism in campus media literacy, particularly with on-campus breaking news. Over the past year, the *Niner Times* has made a conscious effort to improve its credibility, ethical practices, and investigative journalism so that UNC Charlotte students have access to accurate and trustworthy news on campus. Especially after the Feb. 1 false active shooter threat, it is more important now than ever for student journalists to prioritize timely and accurate coverage.

FACULTY LIGHTNING TALKS

12:00 - 12:45 pm, Halton Room

TEACHING CRITICAL ALGORITHMIC EVALUATION: SOCIAL MEDIA AND THE DATAFIED SELF

Justin Grandinetti, Department of Communication Studies and School of Data Science

This presentation focuses on a pedagogical approach and subsequent assignment for critically evaluating the algorithms we interact with in everyday life. While the underlying data driven processes structuring social media are often referred to as a “black box”, recent scholarship on the ethnography of algorithms offers an approach to demystifying these opaque processes. In this assignment, students created targeted social media accounts across platforms and followed the connections, suggestions, and advertisements they encountered over the course of a month. This data served as the basis for a critical reflection that unpacked how platform algorithms both shaped and are shaped by everyday interactions.

STUDENT TRENDS IN NEWS CONSUMPTION

Wolfgang John Schacht, American Studies Program

It's often said that the crisis in modern journalism—and for democracy—comes down to a single question: Who's going to pay for the news? The digital era has upended a century-old business model in which advertising and subscriptions paid for the average journalist's (very average) salary. But with aggregators and digital platforms siphoning off what's left of the advertising dollar, it's going to require greater financial commitment from those who recognize the importance of reliable news outlets to a democracy. But what if you can't afford to jump the paywall? Or, worse yet, what if new generations simply don't care about the news? A semester-by-semester survey of student news habits doesn't look promising...

ANIMAL ACTIVISM IN THE MEDIA: STUDENT RHETORICAL ANALYSES

Suzanne Halaburda, Department of Writing, Rhetoric & Digital Studies

In my Critical Thinking and Communication class—*The Rhetoric of Farm Animal Activism*—students inquire into conversations happening around the topic of animal agriculture: farm animal welfare, ethics, food safety, and nutrition. Many such conversations are brought to the public eye by animal activists through social media. Last semester, my students explored activism happening on TikTok, YouTube, Instagram, TV commercials, and podcasts. In my lightning talk, I will briefly introduce my CTCM inquiry project, which asks students to use their developing rhetorical awareness to conduct primary and secondary research on their chosen text (media). I will use student example papers and slideshows to showcase the rhetorical analysis that leads students to interesting questions about the media's role in activism and its influence on consumers. Paired with their growing understanding of animal agriculture, students come to thoughtful conclusions about how our attitudes toward, perceived knowledge of, and daily eating habits regarding the animals we raise for food are shaped by the media we consume.

FAKE IT: PHOTOGRAPHIC MISINFORMATION FROM HISTORY TO TEXT PROMPT

Jeff Murphy, Department of Art & Art History

Fake or staged photographs have been a part of photographic history since 1840—one year after the daguerreotype photographic process was announced. In the beginning, photographic imagery was thought to show “objective reality” and proof that something happened. Today with the use of generative AI to create deepfakes and disinformation, can we still believe the photograph at all? This talk will touch on a student assignment from the course Digital Compositing called Fake It: Fauxtography and Media Literacy and discuss some of the images and techniques that have been utilized to create fake images. Can we believe anything we see in pictures anymore?

HYPER-THEATRICALITY: MELODRAMATIC POLARITIES OR TRAGICOMIC AWARENESS

Mark Pizzato, Department of Theatre

Melodrama became the dominant mode in movies, with spectacular conflicts of good versus evil focusing on clear-cut heroes fighting monstrous villains. Such melodramatic framing continues to be the dominant mode in our mass/social/gaming media. But more complex, tragic alternatives to melodrama have also emerged. This presentation explores melodramatic and tragicomic modes of today’s media through various mimetic theories: from ancient Greece (katharsis) and India (rasa effects) to current neuroscience. Which networks of the brain’s “inner theatre” are evoked and potentially altered within the spectators/performers of theatre, cinema, or personal screens?

INFORMATION LITERACY & DIGITAL COMPOSING: TEACHING STUDENTS TO BECOME TEACHERS

Wilfredo Flores, Department of Writing, Rhetoric & Digital Studies

The information that we put out into the world—including our identities, our habits, and our bodies—flow alongside mis/disinformation, targeted harassment, spam bots, and algorithms that reinforce social inequities. Over the course of a semester, I introduced students to key issues that impact our information-driven and platform-based world, tasking them with the goal of turning their own education into education materials for a public audience to learn about these topics. In this lightning talk, I reflect on key takeaways and points of inquiry for other scholars to think about when asking students to think of themselves as public educators and not just students.

ADDRESSING MEDIA LITERACY IN K-12 CLASSROOMS

L. Heather Ramsey, Department of Educational Leadership

A study of K-12 core content area teachers’ experiences teaching digital citizenship found that 80% (n=9) addressed topics of media literacy in their classrooms. The study looked at how teachers integrated media literacy topics into instruction, and how they learned about this and other topics related to digital citizenship themselves. Findings are relevant to classroom instruction and teacher professional development.

SPONSORS

This conference is co-sponsored by the Critical Media Literacy Collaborative, Atkins Library, and *Niner Times*.

CONFERENCE ORGANIZERS

Special thanks to the following for assisting with this year's conference:

Marc Bess, *Atkins Library*

Ryan Harris, *Atkins Library*

Savannah Lake, *Atkins Library*

Olivia Patterson, *Atkins Library*

Mark Sanders, *Department of Philosophy*

AJ Siegel, *Niner Times*

Catherine Tingelstad, *Atkins Library*

CODE OF CONDUCT

This conference is dedicated to the creation of a safe, respectful, and collegial conference experience for all attendees. All attendees must agree to follow this Code of Conduct.

CONTACT

For questions about the conference or to request an accessibility accommodation, contact Catherine Tingelstad at ctingels@charlotte.edu.

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