The News: Separating Fact from Fiction
What You Can Do

<u>Learn to recognize fake news sites</u>

- Verify the URL. (e.g., <u>abcnews.com.co/</u> is fake. <u>abcnews.com</u> is legitimate.)
- Distrust any source without an explicit, prominent editorial policy or a statement of ethical standards. Reputable news sources will have a link to their policies in one of their navigation bars – generally on the left or at the bottom of each webpage.
- Read the *About Us* page for evidence of bias.
- Verify the physical address of contact information.
- Google the news source to see what others say about it.
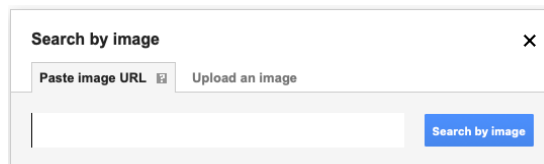
<u>Be curious</u>

- Use fact-checking websites. Some frequently recommended sites are:
    - FactCheck.org (*Annenburg Public Policy Center* of the University of Pennsylvania)
    - PolitiFact.com (*Poynter Institute, 501(c)*(3) school for journalists)
    - Snopes.com (Published by a husband-wife team)
        - *NOTE: A non-biased fact-checking site will debunk articles with both a right-leaning and left-leaning perspective.*
- Use one of the following two sites to determine whether an image was altered by doing a reverse image search.
    - TinEye.com
    - Google.com
        - Go to image.google.com
        - Click **Search by Image** (the camera icon)

        - Select either **Paste Image URL** or **Upload an Image**

            - To get the URL of the image, right-click the image and select *Copy Image Address*
            - If the image is saved to your device, upload it.
        - Click the **Search by Image** box
        - Review the visually similar images that are returned to see if yours is not the original and has been altered.
- Seek multiple perspectives on a story
    - Go to different news sources that range from left-leaning to right-leaning.

- Use AllSides.com that shows you the same story from three different news sources: a centrist, a left-leaning and a right-leaning source.

Use accountable news sources

- Distinguish between
    - <u>News Gathering</u>: investigative work, calling sources, researching documents, checking published facts
    - <u>News Analysis</u>: stringing facts together into a narrative.
- Select news sources known for high-quality, investigative reporting
- Look for lengthy articles that capture the complexity of topics and event. Red Flags that an article is a conspiracy theory, rather than news include:
    - Article explicitly states it is telling the truth, and/or everyone else is lying.
    - It contains short, conclusory opinion statements. (e.g., The media has it all wrong.)
    - It is organized as a list of questions or hypotheses. News provides answers, not questions. (e.g., Why wasn't this . . .)
    - It requires <u>you</u> to answer the questions. (e.g., Do you really know what happened?)
    - It asks you to prove a negative. (e.g., No one has proven the government wasn't involved.)
    - It suggests a plot by someone, but doesn't say what the plot <u>is</u> or provide any evidence.
- Review Media Bias Charts, such as
    - www.adfontesmedia.com
    - www.allsides.com

Recognize your own biases

- If you have an immediate emotional reaction to a news article: pause, reflect and investigate. Eliciting an emotional reaction is the primary goal of fake news producers.
- Ask yourself if you are exhibiting one of these 4 common types of bias:
    - <u>Confirmation Bias:</u> People seek out information that confirms their pre-existing ideas and ignore information that conflicts with it.
    - <u>Narrative Fallacy:</u> People like stories that are easy to understand and relate to. You are more prone to accept lies if they stimulate feelings of surprise or disgust.
    - <u>Repeated Exposure:</u> People tend to believe what they hear repeatedly. Just because you hear the same thing many times doesn't make it true.
    - <u>Affect Heuristic:</u> People make decisions by "gut feeling" rather than analysis of the facts because it's easier.

Use care before your share

- Do not be part of a viral fake news spiral. Go through the previous steps to make sure the article you are about to share is legitimate, unbiased news.