Just the Facts

**COURSE:** MDJ-41192: PR and AD Practicum Bateman Case Study Competition

**TERM:** January 17 - May 2, 2023

**INSTRUCTOR:** Stefanie Moore, professor in the School of Media and Journalism

**DESCRIPTION:** This course focuses on participation in the 2023 Public Relations Student Society of America’s (PRSSA) National Bateman Case Study Competition. Each year the client changes.

**OBJECTIVE:** This course gives students the opportunity to develop and implement a real public relations campaign while working with a team.

**ASSIGNMENT:** According to the client brief on the competition’s web page, “The News Literacy Project is a nonprofit education nonprofit building a national movement to advance the practice of news literacy throughout American society to create better informed, more engaged and more empowered individuals—and ultimately a stronger democracy.” The client desires a comprehensive campaign that:

- Builds greater awareness about the News Literacy Project and its mission.
- Drives people to learn skills that will help them become news literate.
- Empowers people to help stop the spread of misinformation.

**CAMPAIGNS:** Two Kent State teams (Blue and Gold) were tasked with creating and implementing a public relations campaign that would achieve the News Literacy Project’s goals.

Both teams used social media platforms such as Instagram to reach their target audiences. They emphasized the importance of news literacy in stopping the spread of misinformation (defined as misleading or false information that can help protect them and their communities from the spread of misinformation.

Through research, the Gold team found that many rural Americans feel forgotten or powerless regarding media coverage. The key message “You Have the Power to Defeat the Deception” was born. The team earned an honorable mention in the competition.

The Bateman Blue team targeted college students, ages 18-25, and Kent State students who identify as Latine (a gender-neutral form of the word Latinx, created by communities in Spanish-speaking countries).

The Blue team’s campaign was “Truth Is Trending.” The goal was to insprire its target audiences to stop the spread of misinformation and to empower young people in the Latine community to use their voices against media discrimination.

**KEY TAKEAWAY:** To stop the spread of misinformation, it is important to evaluate and verify information before sharing or reposting it on social media. Both teams encouraged their audiences to use News Literacy Project resources such as RumorGuard and Checkology to help identify misinformation, including RumorGuard’s five factors to evaluate credibility (see below).

—Cassidy Grentz, junior public relations major from Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

**FIVE FACTORS TO EVALUATE CREDIBILITY**

1. **Authenticity**
   - Social media posts, photos, videos and screenshots can easily be manipulated or fabricated. It is important to determine whether what you see online is genuine.

2. **Source**
   - News organizations have guidelines to ensure accuracy, fairness, transparency and accountability. If no credible and reliable source of information has posted or confirmed a given claim it’s best to stay skeptical.

3. **Evidence**
   - Many false claims are sheer assertions and either lack evidence or present fake and out-of-context elements. Evaluating a claim’s strength of evidence is a key fact-checking skill.

4. **Context**
   - A common tactic used to spread misinformation online is to use authentic content (such as quotes, videos, data and even news reports) but change its context. For example, an old parade photo can easily be copied and reposted with a claim that it depicts a current political protest. Easy-to-use tools such as those found on RumorGuard can verify the original context of most digital content.

5. **Reasoning**
   - Misinformation relies on flawed reasoning and typically targets our beliefs, attitudes and values to override rational thinking. Consider cognitive biases and logical fallacies and question whether claims are based on solid reasoning.