

Chiron Return, Inc.

Planet Waves FM - Pacifica Radio Network

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Busting Disinfo: Digital Literacy Program

The current media environment, dominated as it is by disinformation, comes packed in the false notion that the truth is unknowable. It is, however, usually easy to get to the bottom of any issue: to prove or disprove any reported facts, and to test the validity of any point of view.

Distinguishing belief from knowledge, and fact from opinion, are necessary steps in the process to busting disinfo and getting to the truth of any matter. We are presenting this in a six-part series of classes, presented by video, audio, and teleconference. Classes will be intellectually accessible to individuals as young as 16-years-old up to any age.

WHERE WE ARE TODAY

Canadian philosopher Eric McLuhan said that immersion in the digital environment has caused "deep disorientation of intellect and destabilization of culture throughout the world." He's suggesting that it's the cause of all of our current problems, working on an invisible level. Is this even possible? And what if it is? This introductory class will explore the question, and consider the "medium effect" of the devices and networks we use: how the technology we use affects us, without respect to the content it transmits.

READING THE NEWS

How to read a news article, track the sources, understand the quotations, and spot point of view. Does the narrative stand up to its own claims? Includes understanding the basics of the news "device": news entity, author by-line, wire service, headline, lead and conclusion. The important role of comments in online news. The difference between satire and fake news.

WATCHING THE NEWS

This begins with the power of television as in information and disinformation tool. How to watch and evaluate cable news, understanding the role of live interviews, noticing sponsorship and ownership, and the role of the "news reader." The many roles of advertising. Left- and right- gatekeepers. Comparative sourcing between print-era media and what is broadcast; importance of watching twice or three times.

INTRODUCTION TO THE INTERNET

What is a blog, a website, a webpage, a URL, a social media feed, a print-era source and a new-era source (for example, *The New York Times* versus Newsmax. Understanding the role of ownership, and how to trace it. Understanding the role of robotics in information delivery. YouTube versus television. Cross-referencing and basic tests for veracity.

INVESTIGATIVE REPORTING FROM THE KITCHEN TABLE

This is a basic course in verification of news reporting, and how to do basic research. Includes primary, secondary and tertiary sources; how to factcheck an article; how to create and organize an original research file, and why you want to have one for every subject that impacts your life. How to work in collaboration with others.

DEEP FAKES: PHONY VIDEOS, HOLOGRAPHIC CONCERTS, VIRTUAL REALITY

Why is everything so darned weird? We now live in a fantasy world, where anything can seem real but be nothing of the kind. It's now possible to have computers create a recording artist and their repertoire, and play a virtual concert. While the technology is not widely used (at the moment), most people are responding to physical existence as if it's a virtual reality construction. Have you ever heard of a "Deep Fake"? It's a form of fraudulent audio or video portraying a person, yet where the event never happened; it was synthesized using artificial intelligence. What is the effect of living in a world where anything could be fake, and you cannot trust your senses?