



**USC Viterbi School of Engineering - Engineering in Society Program
USC Libraries**

EIS 103g: Information Literacy: Navigating Digital Misinformation

Units: 4

Summer 2025

T/Th 12:00pm - 2:05 pm

Location: SSL 210

Co-Instructors:

Jane Lah, USC Libraries

Office: SSL 309

Office Hours: by appointment

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Office Hours: by appointment

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Catalogue Description

Analyzing misinformation and disinformation on digital platforms using library research methodologies and applying information literacy principles; examining how technology creates and disseminates information in society.

Satisfies General Education in Category C: Social Analysis for Viterbi students (majors and minors) only.

Instruction Mode: Lecture

Grading Option: Letter

Course Description

The rise of social media and other digital technologies in the past two decades has been accompanied by an unprecedented increase in the proliferation and dissemination of misinformation and disinformation. The implications of the spread of false information extend far beyond the digital space to include significant social, political, and economic upheavals throughout the world. For today's students, these technologically complex digital landscapes are their primary sources of information, making digital and informational literacy a critical and necessary life skill. This course on information literacy on digital platforms will familiarize students



with the technological designs and operations of digital tools that shape the content they see in their daily lives. It also aims to bolster their critical thinking, information literacy, and library research skills so that students can identify and analyze false information and recognize when reliable information is needed and where reliable information can be found. These skills are directly transferable to students' academic, professional, and personal online lives.

Faculty in technical communication from the Engineering in Society (EiS) Program at USC Viterbi and faculty from the USC Libraries will guide engineering students in an examination of how social media and other digital technologies shape our understanding of, access to, and use of information. As students need reliable tools to parse truths from false information, they will learn about, examine, and apply academic research methods and information literacy principles from the USC Libraries. Students will then investigate digital technologies like Tiktok and ChatGPT and analyze the impact of these user experience designs and systems on the creation and dissemination of misinformation and disinformation in society. They will also explore how principles of engineering ethics relate to design choices and social implications of these technologies. And finally, students will explore how a widely-used yet often-denigrated digital resource in academia, Wikipedia, integrates academic sources on its pages. They will examine the technologies and community values embedded in Wikipedia and how the human contributors to this collective enterprise attempt to discern and verify information and combat misinformation. As a summative assessment, students will use their library research skills, information literacy skills, and understanding of social media systems and other digital tools to devise a communications project aimed at enhancing the informational literacy of the general public.

Prerequisite(s): none

Co-Requisite(s): none

Concurrent Enrollment: none

Recommended Preparation: none

Learning Objectives

By the end of the course, students should be able to

- understand that scholarship is a conversation
- recognize that research is an iterative process
- formulate research questions appropriate for assignments
- develop effective search strategies
- critically examine information from various sources
- distinguish among types of sources
- use sources to support an argument or claim with evidence
- apply research methods to examine information on digital platforms
- identify how digital platforms disseminate information
- analyze the ethical implications of engineering design decisions on digital platforms
- explain the social implications of the dissemination of misinformation on digital platforms

Assessment of the degree to which learning objectives have been achieved will be conducted using students' coursework.



Course Notes

This is an in-person course and uses standard letter grading.

Required Technology, Materials and Subscriptions

All students must bring a Windows/Mac laptop to every class.

All required readings, videos, and training modules are posted on Brightspace (BS) under Content → Weekly Content. All readings should be completed prior to the start of each week.

Students must obtain a subscription to the *New York Times* and the *Wall Street Journal*. Free subscriptions can be accessed [here through the USC Libraries](#).

Assignments

The assignments for this course are varied so that students can employ multi-modal communication skills, demonstrating critical thinking, writing, speaking, and collaboration.

They include in-class assignments, a library research project, a mid-term exam, and a group project on digital literacy.

1. In-class assignments will consist of in-class activities related to the class reading and lecture topic. There are five (5) in-class assignments and each is worth 20 points for a total of 100 points. There are no make-ups available for such assignments. At the end of the semester, the lowest in-class assignment score will be dropped. You must be in-class on the day an in-class assignment is due to be eligible for credit for that in-class assignment.
2. The library research project will consist of using the USC Libraries resources to craft an annotated bibliography and a poster. The library research project is worth three hundred (300) points: 150 points for the annotated bibliography and 150 points for the poster. Specific parameters will be provided in class.
3. The midterm exam will consist of questions related to lectures, readings, and class activities. The questions will require short essay responses. The midterm exam will be worth three hundred (300) points.
4. The group project will be completed in groups of 3 to 4 and consist of the following two components:
 - *Digital literacy plan and digital deliverable*: This plan will be a blueprint for a public service announcement or campaign regarding digital literacy that will then be implemented online. The plan will consist of a report outlining the target audience, the objectives and scope of the campaign, strategies and the platform that will be used to reach objectives, a description of the deliverable (for example: a Tiktok, an IG post, or a YouTube video) and its execution plan, and how performance or efficacy of the plan will be measured. The report must utilize and cite at least ten (10) reputable sources in the USC libraries. The digital deliverable will be an execution of a digital literacy plan on the live platform. The digital literacy plan and the execution of the deliverable are each worth 100 points for a



total of 200 points, and all group members will receive the same grade. Specific parameters will be provided in class.

- *Presentation:* The group presentation will follow the execution of the digital literacy plan and deployment of the digital deliverable; it will include the results of the plan, as well as an analysis of its efficacy in reaching goals, overall impact on information literacy, and engineering design ethics. It will be about 10 minutes long and accompanied by no more than 5 presentation slides (including transitions). Each slide should have fewer than 25 words. All members of the group should speak for at least 2 minutes. The group presentation is worth 100 points and all group members will receive the same grade for this assignment. Specific parameters will be provided in class.

Attendance and In-Class Assignments

Attendance does not count towards your grade. However, if you do not attend a class during which there is an in-class assignment, you will receive a zero for that assignment. There will be five in-class assignments, and they are designed to be useful building blocks for the library research project, mid-term exam, and group project. They cannot be made-up. The lowest in-class assignment score will be dropped from your course grade at the end of the semester.

Grading Breakdown

Assessment Tool (assignments)	% of Grade
In-class assignments	10
Library research project: annotated bib and poster	30
Mid-term exam	30
Group project: digital literacy plan and digital deliverable	20
Group project: presentation	10
TOTAL	100

Grading Scale

All assignments are assigned point values according to the following ranges:

- 90-100% (A)
- 80- 89.99% (B)
- 70- 79.99% (C)
- 60- 69.99% (D)
- 0- 59.99% (F)

Pluses and minuses equal the top and bottom 2.9 points of each grade category (i.e., 87.0 to 89.999 = B+ and 80.0 to 82.999% = B-). This course is not curved.



Assignment Submission and Late Work Policies

All assignments must be submitted and/or delivered in-person or as otherwise designated by the instructors. Assignments turned in within the next 24-hour period after the deadline will be eligible to receive 90% of the number of points available for that assignment; within the next 24-hour period, 80%; and so on. For example, if a 100-point assignment is due at 11:00 PM, and it is submitted at 11:00:01 PM, it will be considered late and a 10-point deduction (10%) will be applied. If it is submitted between 24-48 hours late, a 20-point deduction (20%) will be applied. Please plan accordingly and do not wait until the last minute.

You must be in-class on the day an in-class assignment is due to be eligible for credit for that in-class assignment. In-class assignments cannot be made-up.

Academic Integrity

Unless otherwise noted, this course will follow the expectations for academic integrity as stated in the [USC Student Handbook](#). The general USC guidelines on Academic Integrity and Course Content Distribution are provided in the subsequent “Statement on Academic Conduct and Support Systems” section.

If found responsible for an academic violation, students may be assigned university outcomes, such as suspension or expulsion from the university, and grade penalties, such as an “F” grade on the assignment, exam, and/or in the course.

Please ask the instructors if you are unsure about what constitutes unauthorized assistance on an exam or assignment, or what information requires citation and/or attribution.

You may not record this class without the express permission of the instructor and all other students in the class. Distribution of any notes, recordings, exams, or other materials from a university class or lectures — other than for individual or class group study — is prohibited without the express permission of the instructor.

Use of Generative AI in this Course

Generative AI is not permitted: There are currently many social, legal and ethical concerns regarding the training, use, and deployment of generative AI tools. Since creating, analytical, and critical thinking skills are part of the learning outcomes of this course, all assignments should be prepared by the student working individually or in groups as described on each assignment. Students may not have another person or entity or tool or service complete any portion of the assignment. Developing strong competencies in these areas will prepare you for a competitive workplace. Therefore, using AI-generated tools is prohibited in this course, will be identified as plagiarism, and will be reported to the Office of Academic Integrity.



Course Evaluations

Course evaluation occurs at the end of the semester university-wide. It is an important review of students' experience in the class, and students will be provided with class time to complete evaluations at the end of the semester.

Course Schedule (subject to change)

	Topics/Daily Activities	Readings Prior to Each Week (BS → Content → Weekly Content)	Deliverables
Week 1 5/22	What is Information Literacy? (Part 1)	Weekly Content → Week 1	
Week 2 5/27 5/29	What is Information Literacy? (Part 2)	Weekly Content → Week 2	In-class assignment 1
Week 3 6/3 6/5	What is Digital Literacy? Applied information and digital literacy: academic research tools and applications; intro to library research project	Weekly Content → Week 3	In-class assignment 2
Week 4 6/10 6/12	Limits of academic research; working on library research project	Weekly Content → Week 4	
Week 5 6/17	Poster presentations in class	Weekly Content → Week 5	Library research project - due prior to 11:59AM on 6/17
Week 6 6/24 6/26	Social media platforms; the relationship engineering design and social impact	Weekly Content → Week 7	In-class assignment 3
Week 7 7/1 7/3	Chatbots, image generators and the dissemination of mis/dis information; Applied engineering design ethics; principles of engineering design ethics; case study - deepfakes	Weekly Content → Week 8	In-class assignment 4
Week 8 7/8 7/10	Midterm review Midterm exam		Midterm exam on 7/10
Week 9 7/15 7/17	Perspectives on designing humane technology; Wikipedia; Group digital literacy plan begins; group and topic selection; platform selection for digital literacy plan; Group project meetings in-class	Weekly Content → Week 9	In-class assignment 5



Week 10 7/22 7/24	Group meetings in class	Weekly Content → Week 10	
Week 11 7/29 7/31	Group meetings in class	Weekly Content → Week 11	Digital literacy plan due by end of class on 7/29; Digital product deployed on 7/31.
Week 12 8/5	Final Group Presentations	Weekly Content → Week 12	Final exam 8/5



Statement on Academic Conduct and Support Systems

Academic Integrity:

The University of Southern California is a learning community committed to developing successful scholars and researchers dedicated to the pursuit of knowledge and the dissemination of ideas. Academic misconduct, which includes any act of dishonesty in the production or submission of academic work, comprises the integrity of the person who commits the act and can impugn the perceived integrity of the entire university community. It stands in opposition to the university's mission to research, educate, and contribute productively to our community and the world.

All students are expected to submit assignments that represent their own original work, and that have been prepared specifically for the course or section for which they have been submitted. You may not submit work written by others or "recycle" work prepared for other courses without obtaining written permission from the instructor(s).

Other violations of academic integrity include, but are not limited to, cheating, plagiarism, fabrication (e.g., falsifying data), collusion, knowingly assisting others in acts of academic dishonesty, and any act that gains or is intended to gain an unfair academic advantage.

The impact of academic dishonesty is far-reaching and is considered a serious offense against the university. All incidences of academic misconduct will be reported to the Office of Academic Integrity and could result in outcomes such as failure on the assignment, failure in the course, suspension, or even expulsion from the university.

For more information about academic integrity see [the student handbook](#) or the [Office of Academic Integrity's website](#), and university policies on [Research and Scholarship Misconduct](#).

Please ask your instructor if you are unsure what constitutes unauthorized assistance on an exam or assignment, or what information requires citation and/or attribution.

Course Content Distribution and Synchronous Session Recordings Policies

USC has policies that prohibit recording and distribution of any synchronous and asynchronous course content outside of the learning environment.

Recording a university class without the express permission of the instructor and announcement to the class, or unless conducted pursuant to an Office of Student Accessibility Services (OSAS) accommodation. Recording can inhibit free discussion in the future, and thus infringe on the academic freedom of other students as well as the instructor. ([Living our Unifying Values: The USC Student Handbook](#), page 13).

Distribution or use of notes, recordings, exams, or other intellectual property, based on university classes or lectures without the express permission of the instructor for purposes other than individual or group study. This includes but is not limited to providing materials for distribution by services publishing course materials. This restriction on unauthorized use also applies to all information, which had been distributed to students or in any way had been displayed for use in relationship to the class, whether obtained in class, via email, on the internet, or via any other media. ([Living our Unifying Values: The USC Student Handbook](#), page 13).

Students and Disability Accommodations:



USC welcomes students with disabilities into all of the University's educational programs. [The Office of Student Accessibility Services](#) (OSAS) is responsible for the determination of appropriate accommodations for students who encounter disability-related barriers. Once a student has completed the OSAS process (registration, initial appointment, and submitted documentation) and accommodations are determined to be reasonable and appropriate, a Letter of Accommodation (LOA) will be available to generate for each course. The LOA must be given to each course instructor by the student and followed up with a discussion. This should be done as early in the semester as possible as accommodations are not retroactive. More information can be found at osas.usc.edu. You may contact OSAS at (213) 740-0776 or via email at osasfrontdesk@usc.edu.

Support Systems:

[*Counseling and Mental Health*](#) - (213) 740-9355 – 24/7 on call

Free and confidential mental health treatment for students, including short-term psychotherapy, group counseling, stress fitness workshops, and crisis intervention.

[*988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline*](#) - 988 for both calls and text messages – 24/7 on call

The 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline (formerly known as the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline) provides free and confidential emotional support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, across the United States. The Lifeline is comprised of a national network of over 200 local crisis centers, combining custom local care and resources with national standards and best practices. The new, shorter phone number makes it easier for people to remember and access mental health crisis services (though the previous 1 (800) 273-8255 number will continue to function indefinitely) and represents a continued commitment to those in crisis.

[*Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention Services \(RSVP\)*](#) - (213) 740-9355(WELL) – 24/7 on call

Free and confidential therapy services, workshops, and training for situations related to gender- and power-based harm (including sexual assault, intimate partner violence, and stalking).

[*Office for Equity, Equal Opportunity, and Title IX \(EEO-TIX\)*](#) - (213) 740-5086

Information about how to get help or help someone affected by harassment or discrimination, rights of protected classes, reporting options, and additional resources for students, faculty, staff, visitors, and applicants.

[*Reporting Incidents of Bias or Harassment*](#) - (213) 740-5086 or (213) 821-8298

Avenue to report incidents of bias, hate crimes, and microaggressions to the Office for Equity, Equal Opportunity, and Title for appropriate investigation, supportive measures, and response.

[*The Office of Student Accessibility Services \(OSAS\)*](#) - (213) 740-0776

OSAS ensures equal access for students with disabilities through providing academic accommodations and auxiliary aids in accordance with federal laws and university policy.

[*USC Campus Support and Intervention*](#) - (213) 740-0411

Assists students and families in resolving complex personal, financial, and academic issues adversely affecting their success as a student.

[*Diversity, Equity and Inclusion*](#) - (213) 740-2101

Information on events, programs and training, the Provost's Diversity and Inclusion Council, Diversity Liaisons for each academic school, chronology, participation, and various resources for students.



[USC Emergency](#) - UPC: (213) 740-4321, HSC: (323) 442-1000 – 24/7 on call

Emergency assistance and avenue to report a crime. Latest updates regarding safety, including ways in which instruction will be continued if an officially declared emergency makes travel to campus infeasible.

[USC Department of Public Safety](#) - UPC: (213) 740-6000, HSC: (323) 442-1200 – 24/7 on call

Non-emergency assistance or information.

[Office of the Ombuds](#) - (213) 821-9556 (UPC) / (323-442-0382 (HSC)

A safe and confidential place to share your USC-related issues with a University Ombuds who will work with you to explore options or paths to manage your concern.

[Occupational Therapy Faculty Practice](#) - (323) 442-2850 or otfp@med.usc.edu

Confidential Lifestyle Redesign services for USC students to support health promoting habits and routines that enhance quality of life and academic performance.