

## Media Systems in the Post-Truth Era

INTL 190, Section Code B00

Tuesday and Thursday, 8am – 10:50am PST (online)

Join class by Zoom in Canvas

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*(class sessions will be recorded and made available to students asynchronously)*

### **Syllabus**

*(\*\*\*please note that this syllabus is subject to change based on the needs of the class and unfolding situation with coronavirus\*\*\*)*

Professor: Olga Lazitski ([okovalev@ucsd.edu](mailto:okovalev@ucsd.edu), [olgalazitskaya@gmail.com](mailto:olgalazitskaya@gmail.com) [preferred])

Preferred pronouns: she/her/hers

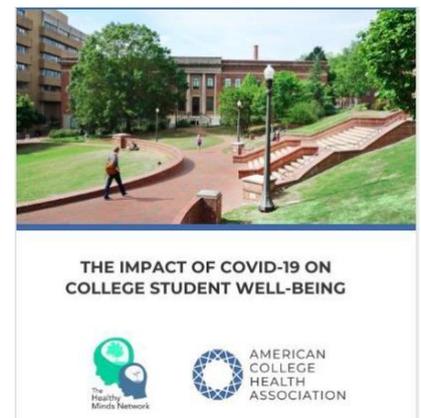
Office hours: Tu/Th at 11am and by appointment (*same Zoom link*)

Email communication: I will normally respond within 24 hours, except on weekends

Dear International Studies Program Students,

These are unprecedented times. COVID-19 has taken a toll on everyone. Here are a few items from a recent [study](#) that examined its impact on college students:

- Two-thirds of students report their financial situation has become more stressful
- Roughly one-third of students report that their living situation changed as a result of the pandemic
- 60% of students indicate that the pandemic has made it more difficult to access mental health care
- 65% of students report being very or extremely concerned about how long the pandemic will last
- 64% report being very or extremely concerned about people they care about contracting COVID-19
- 86% report concerns about their personal safety and security
- 6% report experiencing race-based discrimination as a result of the pandemic, while 41% report witnessing race-based discrimination (online or in person)



None of us is really ok.

### What's this got to do with class?

If you tell me you're having trouble, I'm not going to judge you or think less of you. I hope you'll extend me the same grace.

### So, let's lay out some ground rules:

- You never owe me personal information about your health (mental or physical) or anything else
- You are always welcome to talk to me about things that you're going through, however
- If I can't help you, I usually know somebody who can
- If you need extra help, or you need to miss class, or you need more time with something, just ask. I will work with you.

With that said...

### Welcome to INTL 190 "Media Systems in the Post-Truth Era"!<sup>1</sup>

Truth is a set of agreements. It is a social consensus, but it is a consensus constrained by conditions of reality.

—Michael Schudson

The very concept of objective truth is fading out of the world. Lies will pass into history. In times of universal deceit, telling the truth will be a revolutionary act.

—George Orwell



Behold! human beings living in a sort of underground den, which has a mouth open towards the light and reaching all across the den; they have been here from their childhood, and have their legs and necks chained so that they cannot move, and can only see before them; for the chains are arranged in such a manner as to prevent them from turning round their heads. At a distance above and behind them the light of a fire is blazing, and between the fire and the prisoners there is a raised way; and you will see, if you look, a low wall built along the way, like the screen which marionette players have before them, over which they show the puppets... [The prisoners] see only their own shadows, or the shadows of one another, which the fire throws on the opposite wall of the cave. How could they see anything but the shadows if they were never allowed to move their heads? And if they were able to talk with one another, would they not suppose that they were naming what was actually before them?

— The Republic of Plato, Book Seven.

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<sup>1</sup> If you've never taken an online class before, check out [this resource](#) to help you.

## Course Description



This seminar explores media practices of the political age of “post-truth” that we live in today and their problematic relationship with truth: Is there such a thing as truth? How do I know it's really there and not just a projection of my consciousness? Is there a way to understand what's “really” happening in the world without being influenced to think a certain way?

In 2016, the Oxford Dictionaries chose “post-truth” the [word of the year](#). This adjective was defined as “relating to or denoting circumstances in which objective facts are less influential in shaping public opinion than appeals to emotion and personal belief.” Spanish word “posverdad,” Chinese word “hòu zhēnxiàng,” Russian word “пост-правда,” German word “postfaktisch” captured the same meaning and became widespread within the discourses of the national public spheres.

We will begin the course by examining the concepts of the “post-truth” era and “post-factual” age. We will look closely at the emergence of “post-truth” and the role of ideology and lies in different political regimes (such as neo-liberal Western regimes, authoritarian regimes of Russia and China, and Latin American populist regimes). We will explore the “post-truth” implications in both politics and media in different parts of the world. Using case studies from different countries, we will analyze how journalism has been reimagined in a “post-truth” world and how journalists within different political systems are dealing with the challenges of the post-truth era.

### What can you expect from me?

I will treat you with dignity and respect, especially in cases where a difference of opinion arises. Communication can be tricky though, particularly as I have mannerisms and humor from another part of the world, so sometimes signals get crossed. Also, keep in mind that some discomfort is inevitable because the goals of higher education include exposing you to new ideas, having you question beliefs you have taken for granted and grappling with problems you have never considered. You are welcome to disagree with me and/or your classmates, but everyone is expected to participate respectfully. My goal is to help you learn the content of the course, as well as develop the skills of critical thinking, critical reading and critical writing. In order to do this, I will challenge you to dig deep and we won't always agree and that's ok. Please do not hesitate to talk to me about any issues that arise.

You should know that I am committed to your success (however differently we may conceptualize success). I value cooperative and collaborative learning, knowing that you have much to contribute. I also value your best effort but recognize that no one can bring their best effort to every assignment or to every day. You can expect me to bring my best effort also. This means I will be prepared to facilitate your learning, listen to you and talk to you (rather than at you). But just like you, it is unlikely that I can bring my best to every single interaction (though I shall try my best).

P.S.: Please call me Olga and use she/her when speaking about me.

### Learning Outcomes:

At the conclusion of this course students will be able to:

- Understand how certain historical contexts, political situations and social conditions affect our interpretation and perception of “truth”;
- Analyze and critique historical and emergent narratives about “truth” and their influence on different political regimes;
- Recognize, analyze, and critically evaluate political and media discourses;
- Apply descriptive concepts, analytical concepts, and theoretical frameworks for understanding how the notion of “truth” has been manifested within different political regimes and media systems;
- Challenge the normative assertions made in various media texts;
- Develop critical self-reflexivity in the formation and maintenance of their own attitudes, beliefs, and value systems;
- Design a unique research project;
- Contribute to a meaningful academic debate;
- Write a well-constructed analytic essay.

### Requirements and Assignments

This course will be run as a seminar. Seminars work only when participants show up having done the reading and watching, thought about the issues suggested by the texts, and are prepared to discuss both the details and underlying arguments. Students are responsible for doing **all** of the readings/videos on the syllabus and participating **actively** in discussion. I’d prefer you to attend this course synchronously. However, if you have special circumstances, I ask you to let me know **ASAP** to make special arrangements for your individual case.

**Attendance:** In the current remote settings, UCSD allows both synchronous and asynchronous participation. However, regular synchronous attendance is encouraged. I will keep a running record of your presence in the discussion zoom meetings. I recognize that things come up that may cause you to miss class but let me know in advance whenever possible. Consideration of students on the borderline between grades will favor those who have been present in class.

**Participation:** This class is a seminar, which means that the professor will NOT lecture for the most part, but rather will lead an active thoughtful discussion. Thus, participation is key. Students should come to class prepared and ready for fruitful exchange. A relaxed, yet vigorous atmosphere will be our goal. Students are expected to regularly contribute to classroom discussions. Participation will be measured by verbal contribution in class as well as interaction via online discussion in Canvas. Regarding online discussion, the instructor will monitor and note both the frequency of comments and the quality of engagement. A worthy goal would be to initiate a discussion, comment on a discussion, or pose questions weekly in the Discussion forum in Canvas. Further participation could include making connections between class readings and your observations in culture, politic and media. In-class discussions will mostly be led by the class members, sometimes by the instructor or the collective class. Each class member should

come to class ready to contribute every meeting, and not merely to listen. [Here is the document to collaborate](#) where we are all going to write short in-class assignments. Class participation is 20% of the grade.

**Media diet diary (log and reflections):** The volume of news that comes at us and even the tendency to multi-task (“second screening”) can make it hard to actually identify all the news sources and stories we pay attention to. Keep a record of your media diet related to news and information during this session. Try to log it every day. For your reflection, from your notes, identify at least **one story** from at least 5 different legitimate news organizations to consider in detail. Reflect on the story in 5 separate paragraphs, which will each include the following information: (1) Brief label identifying the story (e.g., “story about China trade war”), (2) date of story and time you read/saw it, (3) news organization providing the story (CBS, New York Times, BuzzFeed, etc.), and (4) the actual site or printed source that transmitted the story (whether aggregator site—Huffington Post, Drudge), social media platform, print magazine, etc.). Finally, in each paragraph provide 50-100 words of commentary about the news organization source, describing what you like about the news source, your perception of its credibility, and how well informed you feel from reading news from that source. In the course of the quarter, you are expected to publish 2 short reflections (in weeks 2-4) on your media consumption habits to get a full credit for this assignment. Your media diet diary is 20% of your grade (10% per one reflection).

**Media digest presentation:** Once during the course, each student will be responsible for presenting a media digest (solo or in a group of 2 or 3 people). In those presentations (scheduled for every seminar meeting), students are asked to introduce the “news picture” of a day/week in 5-10 minutes. You can use slides, videos, your own recordings, or just read your script acting as if you are a news anchor. Your “news show” should contain an international piece, national piece, state piece, city news, community (UCSD) news, as well as some fake news that you come across and are ready to debunk (with the help of the fact-checking websites [<https://www.factcheck.org>, <https://www.politifact.com>, etc.], “no bias” clippers [<https://nobias.com/> or <https://www.adfontesmedia.com>, etc.]). Use [this document](#) to sign up for your presentation. Media digest presentation is 20% of the final grade.

**Discussion leading:** Once during the course, each student will be responsible for helping lead seminar discussions on issues, themes, questions, and puzzles that you think are particularly interesting and important from **all the texts** assigned for the meeting. Your job is to introduce the readings with a summary of the main points contained in the readings and ask **at least 5** thought provoking discussion questions. Each discussion leader should post discussion questions on Canvas under “Discussions” at the designated discussion forum by 11pm PST on the day before discussion leading. Use [this document](#) to sign up. Discussion leader responsibilities will count for a total of 10% of the grade.

**Final project (including your research pitch):** Each student is also responsible for writing an individual paper (15-20 pages, double-spaced) on the results of a case study. You will pitch your research project by posting one paragraph synopsis in Canvas by July 19 @ 11pm PST. I will give you my feedback on each proposal. Your final paper (based on your research) must adhere to APA or MLA formats (it will be specified in the prompt) and should deal with a minimum of

three different texts covered in class, but need not involve any sources beyond those on the syllabus. However, if you would like to use sources that are not on the syllabus in addition to the three required texts from the syllabus, you can do it. Your project will be the culmination of our reading and conversation. An assignment prompt with all details and guidelines (including instructions on citation styles) will be distributed later. Final paper is due **August 1, 2021 @1pm PST**. It is 30% of the grade.

### Individual and group work

I expect you to work independently on your final paper and your media diet reflections. However, you can work in groups on the other assignments (media digest and discussion leading). In case of teamwork, all collaborators will get a full credit for an assignment.

### Grading

Grades will be based on the following:

Class participation - 20%  
Media diet diary – 20%  
Media digest presentation – 20%  
Discussion leading – 10%  
Final project - 30%

### Student Support Resources

- [Library Help, eReserves and research tools](#)
- [Writing Hub](#)
- [Supplemental Instruction](#)
- [Tutoring](#)
- [Mental Health Services](#)
- [Community Centers](#): Learn about the different ways UC San Diego explores, supports, and celebrates the many cultures that make up our diverse community.
- **Accessibility**: Students needing accommodations due to a disability should provide a current Authorization for Accommodation (AFA) letter issued by the Office for Students with Disabilities (OSD), located in University Center 202 behind Center Hall. Please present AFA letters both to me and the OSD Liaison for International Studies as soon as possible so that accommodations may be arranged. OSD contact for further information: <https://disabilities.ucsd.edu/>; [osd@ucsd.edu](mailto:osd@ucsd.edu) | 858. 534.4382

### Inclusive Classroom

I am fully committed to creating a learning environment that supports diversity of thought, perspectives, experiences, and identities. I urge each of you to contribute your unique perspectives to seminar discussion each week so that we can learn from them, and from each other. If you should ever feel excluded, or unable to fully participate in class for any reason, please let me know.

Additional resources to support equity, diversity, and inclusion in our classroom, and beyond, may be found here: Office of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion:

858.822.3542 | [diversity@ucsd.edu](mailto:diversity@ucsd.edu) | <https://diversity.ucsd.edu/>  
<https://students.ucsd.edu/student-life/diversity/index.html>  
<https://regents.universityofcalifornia.edu/governance/policies/4400.html>

### UCSD Academic Regulations and Policies

**Academic Integrity:** Each student is expected to abide by [UCSD's policy on Integrity of Scholarship](#) and to excel with integrity in our course. Students are expected to do their own work (individually or in groups) and properly cite works and ideas produced by others, as outlined in the UCSD Policy on Academic Integrity and published in [the UCSD General Catalog](#). Academic Integrity is expected of everyone at UC San Diego. This means that you must be honest, fair, responsible, respectful, and trustworthy in all of your actions. Lying, cheating, or any other forms of dishonesty will not be tolerated because they undermine learning and the University's ability to certify students' knowledge and abilities. Thus, any attempt to get, or help another get, a grade by cheating, lying or dishonesty will be reported to the Academic Integrity Office and will result in sanctions. Sanctions can include an F in the class and suspension or dismissal from the University. So, think carefully before you act. Before you act, ask yourself the following questions: a: is my action honest, fair, respectful, responsible, and trustworthy, and b) is my action authorized by the instructor? If you are unsure, don't ask a friend, ask your instructor, instructional assistant, or the Academic Integrity Office. You can learn more about academic integrity [here](#). Violations will be subject to disciplinary measures as outlined by the University. If you have any questions regarding this policy, please let me know, or feel free to reach out to UCSD's Academic Integrity office directly: [aio@ucsd.edu](mailto:aio@ucsd.edu).

Please consider taking **the UCSD Integrity Pledge**. You can do it [here](#). Also, watch [this video](#) to better understand what plagiarism is and how avoid it.

Finally, please also abide by UCSD's [Principles of Community](#) and [the Student Code of Conduct](#) to support equity, diversity, and inclusion in our classroom.

### Course Texts:

All of the texts and videos are available either online (the links are attached to the course schedule) or as files uploaded on Canvas. If you experience difficulties accessing course readings, please email me. For the documentaries and some of the videos you need to be connected to UCSD VPN. If you have issues with that, please check out [this document](#) that will help you set up UCSD VPN on your device.

## Course Schedule – Reading Assignments and Due Dates

NB: The amount of reading could be reduced as we advance through the course

### Week 1

Tuesday 06/29 – Introduction: discussion of themes and aims of the course

- No readings due

- Introduction + bio
- Students introductions and interests
- Seminar goals and assignments

Sign-up: digests, discussion leading and research presentations

Thursday 07/01 – Post-truth contextualized

- ❖ Lee McIntyre (2018). Post-truth. Cambridge: MIT Press (preface and chapter 1 “What is post-truth?”).
- ❖ “The post-truth world. Yes, I’d lie to you” (September 2016). *The Economist*. <https://www.economist.com/briefing/2016/09/10/yes-id-lie-to-you>
- ❖ Yuval Harari (August 2018), “Humans are a Post-Truth Species,” *The Guardian*. <https://www.theguardian.com/culture/2018/aug/05/yuval-noah-harari-extract-fake-news-sapiens-homo-deus> + **check out Harari’s graphic novel** (a 5-page comic interpretation of his argument in the day’s folder under “files” in Canvas)

### Week 2

Tuesday 07/06 – Truth and kinds of truth

- ❖ Hannah Arendt (February 1967). “Truth and Politics,” *The New Yorker*. <https://idanlandau.files.wordpress.com/2014/12/arendt-truth-and-politics.pdf>
- ❖ Michael Schudson (2019). “Belgium Invades Germany: Can Facts Survive Politics?” in James Katz and Kate Mays *Journalism and Truth in an Age of Social Media*. Oxford University Press (pp. 21-34).
- ❖ Marci Shore (2017). “A Prehistory of Post-Truth, East and West,” *Eurozine and Public Seminar*. <https://www.eurozine.com/a-pre-history-of-post-truth-east-and-west/?pdf>

## Thursday 07/08 - Post-factual politics: ideologies and political regimes

- ❖ “Does Democracy Need Truth?: A Conversation with the Historian Sophia Rosenfeld” (January 2019). *The New Yorker*. <https://www.newyorker.com/news/q-and-a/does-democracy-need-truth-a-conversation-with-the-historian-sophia-rosenfeld>
- ❖ Jan-Werner Müller (2016). *What is populism?* Philadelphia: PENN, University of Pennsylvania Press. (pp. 1-6 and 101-103).
- ❖ Jacob Levy (November 2016). “Authoritarianism and Post-Truth Politics.” *Niskanen Center*. <https://www.niskanencenter.org/authoritarianism-post-truth-politics/>
- ❖ Václav Havel (1978). *The Power of the Powerless* (pp. 1-26). <https://www.nonviolent-conflict.org/wp-content/uploads/1979/01/the-power-of-the-powerless.pdf>

## Week 3

### Tuesday 07/13 - Post-truth and social media

- ❖ McIntyre, L. (2018). *Post-truth*. Cambridge: MIT Press (chapter 5 “The rise of social media and the problem of fake news”)
- ❖ Mounk, Y. (April 30, 2018). “Can liberal democracy survive social media?” *The New York Review of Books*. <http://www.nybooks.com/daily/2018/04/30/can-liberal-democracy-survive-social-media/?printpage=true>
- [Please watch this documentary on Netflix:](#)
  - ❖ “The social dilemma” (2020), directed by Jeff Orlowski. <https://www.netflix.com/title/81254224>

### Thursday 07/15 – U.S. media system

- ❖ David Roberts (November 2017). “America is facing an epistemic crisis,” *Vox*. <https://www.vox.com/policy-and-politics/2017/11/2/16588964/america-epistemic-crisis>
- ❖ Reece Peck (2019). *Fox Populism. Branding conservatism as working class*, Cambridge University Press. (pp. 85-111; 151-154; 232-244) <https://www.cambridge.org/core/books/fox-populism/59EFFF4A76BAAE514FDFA49B02EE6EDB>
- [Please listen to this podcast and read Harari’s email to Bill Gates \(its PDF is in the day’s folder\):](#)
  - ❖ Bill Gates (November 2020). “Why do we believe lies?” The 3<sup>rd</sup> episode of Gates’ podcast [https://www.gatesnotes.com/Podcast/Why-do-we-believe-lies?WT.mc\\_id=20201130100000\\_PodcastLies\\_PTR-YNH\\_&WT.tsrc=PTRYNH&fbclid=IwAR0pDDt0XUhmVkJVPoTSS5AYAGHSZL4](https://www.gatesnotes.com/Podcast/Why-do-we-believe-lies?WT.mc_id=20201130100000_PodcastLies_PTR-YNH_&WT.tsrc=PTRYNH&fbclid=IwAR0pDDt0XUhmVkJVPoTSS5AYAGHSZL4)

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Week 4

Tuesday 07/20 - Latin American media systems

- ❖ Robert Samet (2019). Deadline: Populism and the Press in Venezuela. The University of Chicago Press. (pp. 1-19, pp. 111-129).
- ❖ Robert Samet (2020). Channeling populism. *The Immanent Frame*. <http://tif.ssrc.org/2020/03/18/channeling-populism>
- ❖ Max Fisher and Amanda Taub (August 2019). “How YouTube radicalized Brazil.” *The New York Times*. <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/08/11/world/americas/youtube-brazil.html?searchResultPosition=1>

Thursday 07/22 – Russian media system

- ❖ Peter Pomerantsev (2014). Nothing is True and Everything is Possible: The Surreal Heart of the New Russia, New York: PublicAffairs. (pp. 3-76 - Act 1: “Reality Show Russia”).
- ❖ Gulnaz Sharafutdinova (2020), *The Red Mirror: Putin’s Leadership and Russia’s Insecure Identity*. Oxford University Press. (pp. 133-149).

Week 5

Tuesday 07/27 – Chinese media system

- ❖ Raymond Zhong, Paul Mozur and Aaron Krolik (December 2020). “Leaked Documents Show How China’s Army of Paid Internet Trolls Helped Censor the Coronavirus,” *ProPublica*. <https://www.propublica.org/article/leaked-documents-show-how-chinas-army-of-paid-internet-trolls-helped-censor-the-coronavirus>
- ❖ “China jails citizen journalists who reported on COVID-19. IPI condemns sentencing of Zhang Zhan” (December 2020). *International Press Institute*. <https://ipi.media/china-jails-citizen-journalists-who-reported-on-covid-19/>
- ❖ Gary King, Jennifer Pan and Margaret Roberts (2014). “Reverse-engineering Censorship in China: Randomized Experimentation and Participant Observation.” *Science in Context* 345, no. 6199 (Aug.): 859-892. <https://science.sciencemag.org/content/sci/345/6199/1251722.full.pdf>

Thursday 07/29 – Fighting post-truth: alternative media and critical thinking

- ❖ Lee McIntyre (2018). *Post-truth*. Cambridge: MIT Press (chapter 7 “Fighting post-truth”)
- ❖ David Wineberg (November 2020). “Bellingcat Solves Mysteries You’ve Heard

Of,” *Medium*. <https://medium.com/the-straight-dope/bellingcat-solves-mysteries-youve-heard-of-8525fb7162ce>

- ❖ Olga Lazitski (2020). “Alternative professional journalism in the post-Crimean Russia: Online resistance to the Kremlin propaganda and status quo.” Volume 10, Number 1 Issue of the #ISOJ Journal. <https://isoj.org/research/alternative-professional-journalism-in-the-post-crimean-russia-online-resistance-to-the-kremlin-propaganda-and-status-quo/> [optional]

**Final paper – Sunday, August 1, 2021 @1pm PST**

*Cheers! J*

