“Journalism in the Digital Age.”



This is publication of The Young Journalist, where journalism is taught as a serious academic discipline.



www.theyoungjournalist.com

Table of Contents

Introduction	**3**
Social Media Pros and Cons	**5**
Disinformation, Misinformation and Fake News	**9**
Is TikTok a National Security Risk?	**12**
Algorithmic Journalism	**15**
What is Artificial Intelligence?	**17**
Are There Limits to Freedom of Speech?	**19**

Introduction
“Journalism in the Digital Age.”



While our curriculum is innovative, it primarily focuses on famous journalists who created different journalistic styles. (e.g. Hunter Thompson = Gonzo / Nelly Bly = undercover / Walter Cronkite = Broadcast / Joseph Pulitzer = Yellow / Robert Capa = Photo). It also includes punctuation, grammar, vocabulary, Freedom of Speech and of the Press.

But technology has revolutionized every aspect of our lives, including the field of journalism. The Institute for Public Relation (IPR) survey of 1,106 journalists reports (2024) that 28% of journalists said they currently use generative artificial intelligence, followed by 20% who plan to explore its uses in journalism. 31% report a lack of trust in journalism and 28% reported a concern over disinformation.

Platforms like Twitter and Facebook have become crucial for real-time news distribution. They enable journalists to reach a global audience instantly. However, this also poses challenges in terms of verifying the accuracy of information and managing the spread of misinformation. These platforms have faced criticism for their handling of misinformation and their impact on democratic processes.

Algorithms designed to maximize engagement often prioritize sensationalist content over factual reporting, further undermine the credibility of journalism.

In a report by the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism, 75% of respondents expressed worries about misinformation. Another report by the Knight Foundation and Gallup found 64% of Americans expressing concerns about the spread of misinformation.

A study conducted by the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) found that false news stories are 70% more likely to be retweeted on Twitter than true stories, emphasizing the viral nature of misinformation.

The digital age has introduced new threats to journalists' safety, including online harassment and cyberattacks. Female journalists are disproportionately targeted,

Addressing these challenges requires a concerted effort from governments, technology companies, civil society, and journalists. Governments must uphold their commitments to press freedom and ensure the safety of journalists, while technology companies must take responsibility for the content shared on their platforms.

Websites, social networks, smartphone applications, and other digital platforms allow for fast reporting and dissemination of breaking news. In this race, journalists are facing challenges in certain areas, like confirmation of the sources, fact-checking, disinformation, and misinformation.

Social Media Pros and Cons



Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, X (Twitter), TikTok and Whatsapp are some of the most popular social media platforms. Statista.com reports that as of April 2024, Facebook, YouTube and Instagram had 7,569,000 active monthly users.

What are the pros and cons of social media?

The most disturbing aspects of social media is its effect on mental health. One of the most negative experiences is a feeling of **inadequacy about your life or appearance**.

Other people tend to share just the highlights of their lives, rarely the low points that everyone experiences. If you're feeling down and out and when you're scrolling through a friend's photos of their tropical beach holiday or reading about their exciting new promotion at work it can cause an increased risk for depression, anxiety and loneliness, because we feel we're not good enough. It can make you feel like others are having more fun or living better lives than you are.

Social media can be addictive. Many people feel so dependent on it that they struggle to go even a minute without it. Social media platforms are designed to capture your attention, keep you online, and have you repeatedly checking your screen for updates. It's how the companies make money.

The constant switching between different applications, videos, games and messages trains the brains of young minds to have a short focus. Youngsters grow accustomed to the quick busts of pleasure from social interaction. This affect prevents concentration on something for more than a few minutes at a time. Children develop the habit of constantly shifting their focus instead of concentrating on a single task.

Misleading and fake information is another of the disadvantages of social media. This can have serious consequences, including the spread of misinformation during a crisis or the manipulation of public opinion.

Privacy issues and data violations are another concern. As users we share personal information, putting us in danger of invasions of our privacy. This can lead to identity theft and other criminal activities that are carried out using digital devices and/or networks.



Cybercrime

But let's face it, we are social animals. According to psychologs.com, "The reason that humans are called 'social animals' is that, at our core, we are a social species that needs social relationships, cooperation, and communication to exist and thrive."

Social media allows us to connect with family, friends, and acquaintances from all over the world. The main advantage is this connectivity. It's not only the connectivity with other people, but also the connectivity with what's going on in the world. It offers an advantage for students and teachers because you can learn anything easily with access to the internet. If you are in any kind of emergency, you can quickly ask for help with a cellphone.

Social media also allows us to be creative and share our thoughts and ideas with a broader community. It serves as a platform for networking and professional growth, enabling individuals to connect with other their employer, teacher and business partners. Social media plays an important role in spreading awareness and information. It provides news, promotes good causes and raises awareness about social issues.

In conclusion, here are some social media do's and don'ts from webwise.ie:



Do think carefully about how you present yourself when you are choosing a profile image. Your online reputation is important. Think also about the language you use, even if used in jest, what you say and do online will lay down your digital footprint.

Do know who can access your personal information. Many sites allow you to decide which parts of your profile can be accessed by others. Assume that everything is public unless you are sure that it isn't. Opting for private doesn't always mean that only your friends can see your profile. In some cases, it means that everything you put on your profile can be seen by everyone but only your friends can post comments or IM you.

Do trust your instincts. If it doesn't look or "feel right", it probably isn't. If you find something online that you don't like or makes you feel uncomfortable, turn off the computer and tell an adult.

Do be careful with your personal information. The problem with posting personal information to the Internet is that as soon as it goes online, you have lost control over who will see it and how it will be used. Pictures can easily be copied and shared with 100,000 of others at the click of a button. Because of the digital nature of the photos, they can even be altered or distorted. Don't post any pictures that you wouldn't want everyone you know to see, that includes your parents and your teachers.

Do be careful with the personal information of others. Don't photo tag others without their permission. Don't share their personal details and information with the world. They have a right to privacy, and you have a responsibility to protect it.

The Don'ts

Don't assume everyone you meet online is who they appear to be – the fact that certain websites claim to connect students from the same school means nothing. The information

provided by users when they are registering is not checked. Anyone can create a user profile pretending to be anyone else. Moreover, anyone regardless of their real age can join as many school communities as they want.

Don't post information that could be used to find you offline – without meaning to, you can give away information that could help someone to find you. Be careful of posting photos with things like car registration plates or identifiable landmarks in them. As well as this, avoid posting messages to blogs along the lines of "I usually walk home down the lane by the railway tracks". There are some people out there who will piece together little snippets of information about you over a long period of time.

Don't reply to messages that harass you or make you feel uncomfortable! Even though you may really want to, this is exactly what cyberbullies want. They want to know that they've got to you and that you are worried and upset. They want to think that they are important being able to get a reaction from you. Remember, don't give them that satisfaction, remain in control.

Sources:
Webwise.ie
leverageedu.com
gradesfixer.com

Disinformation, Misinformation and Fake News

And Now There are "Deepfakes."



The *Cambridge Dictionary* defines fake news as "false stories that appear to be news, spread on the internet or using other media, usually created to influence political views or as a joke."

Dictionary.com defines misinformation and disinformation as:

Misinformation: "false information that is spread, regardless of whether there is intent to mislead."

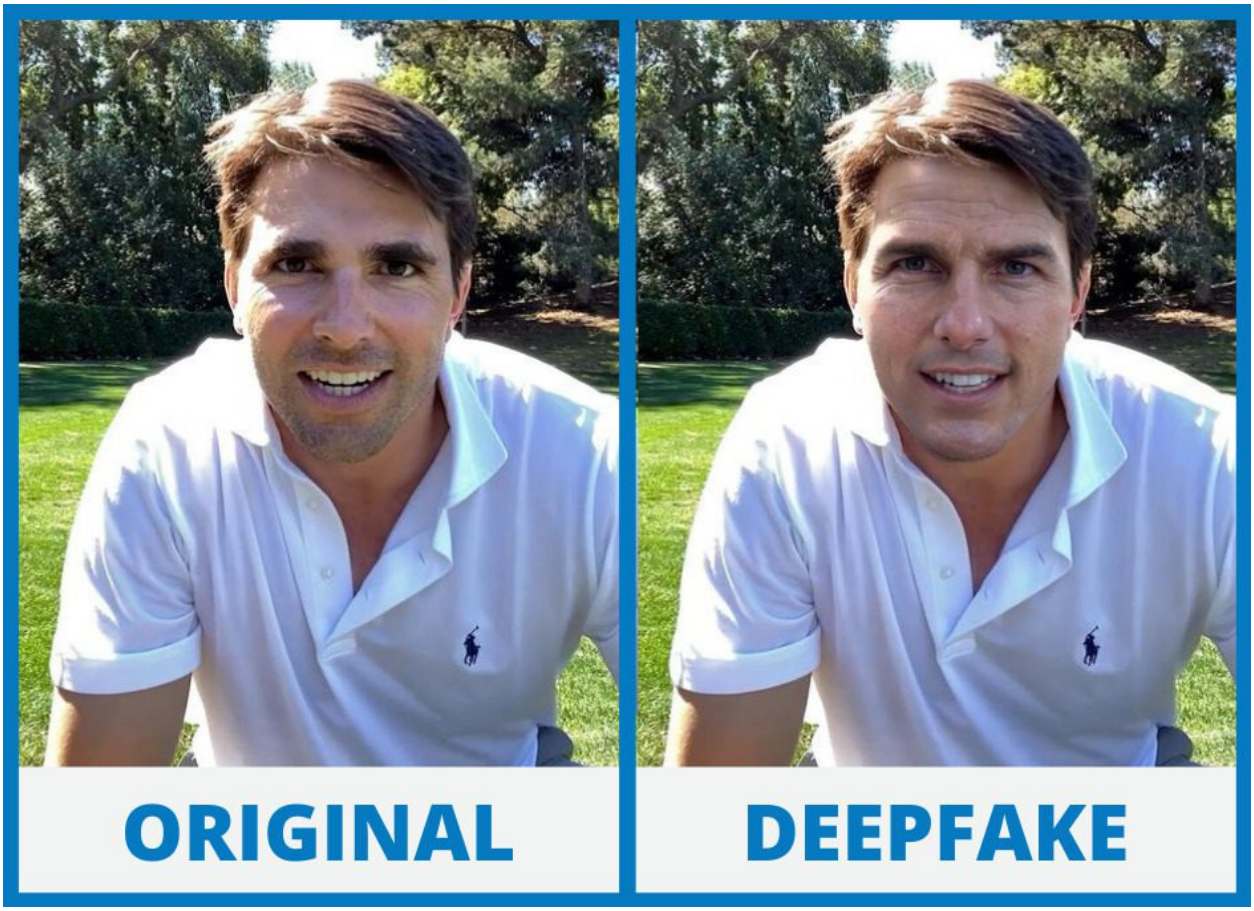
Disinformation: "deliberately misleading or biased information; manipulated narrative or facts; propaganda."

Both misinformation and disinformation refer to types of wrong or false information, though only disinformation is wrong on purpose.

According to the Center for Information Technology and Society at UC Santa Barbara, "The term *fake news* means "news articles that are intentionally and verifiably false" designed to manipulate people's perceptions of real facts, events, and statements. It's about information presented as news that is known by its promoter to be false based on facts that are demonstrably incorrect, or statements or events that verifiably did not happen."

What are deepfakes? Quoting from *Merriam-Webster*, "The term *deepfake* is typically used to refer to a video that has been edited using an algorithm to replace the person in the original video with someone else (especially a public figure) in a way that makes the video look authentic."

According to *Oxford Dictionaries*, deepfake is video of a person in which their face or body has been digitally altered so that they appear to be someone else, typically used with the intent to harm or to spread false information.



Quoting from *Merriam-Webste*r, "The term *deepfake* is typically used to refer to a video that has been **edited using an algorithm** to replace the person in the original video with someone else (especially a public figure) in a way that makes the video look authentic."

A common example of a deepfake video is 'face swap' in which the face of the victim is placed on a different body. This could create a scene which is embarrassing or even illegal. Another deepfake is known as 'face puppetry' in which the victim's lip movements are manipulated to literally put words into their mouths

Deepfakes are a new and particularly challenging type of audio, video, or image disinformation, generally used in malicious ways. They have the **potential to rapidly spread false words and actions to a global audience** and can be extremely difficult to distinguish from real content.

Definitions of terms associated with false information

Term	**Definition**	**Source**
misinformation	“False information that is spread, regardless of whether there is intent to mislead.”	Dictionary.com
disinformation	“Deliberately misleading or biased information; manipulated narrative or facts; propaganda.”	Dictionary.com
fake news	"Purposefully crafted, sensational, emotionally charged, misleading or totally fabricated information that mimics the form of mainstream news"	*Fake News: understanding media and misinformation in the digital age* (back cover)

Sources:

UW Bothelland Casandia College
National Library of Australia

Is TikTok a United States National Security Risk?
At What age is it Appropriate?



Why would TikTok be a United States security risk? What does that mean?

The reason TikToc is a national security risk is because of its relationship with China. TikTok is owned by ByteDance, a Chinese internet technology company headquartered in Haidian, Beijing.

About 4 in 10 Americans now label China as an enemy, up from a quarter two years ago and reaching the highest level in five years, according to an annual Pew Research Center survey released Wednesday, May 2, 2024.

There are concerns that the Chinese government could/would access sensitive user data through the short-form video app. Users have been concerned about their personal data being shared with third parties and possibly the government.

China is the only nation that could displace the United States as the world's leading power. Due to the risk of TikTok obtaining sensitive data on everyone including police and soldiers, having access to all data on the app, and being able to influence campaigns without oversight the app in its current form is a security risk.

On April 24, 2014, President Biden signed into law a bill that would force social media site TikTok to be sold or banned in the U.S. It is a bill that would force a sale of TikTok by its Chinese owner, ByteDance — or ban it outright.

Congress passed the measure because of national security concerns because of TikTok's Chinese ties. Both lawmakers and security experts have said there are risks that the

Chinese government could lean on ByteDance for access to sensitive data belonging to its 170 million U.S. users or to spread propaganda.

The measure is likely to face legal challenges, as well as possible resistance from Beijing. The issue could take months or even years to settle, during which the app would probably continue to function for U.S. consumers.

“It’s going to be a royal mess,” said Anupam Chander, a visiting scholar at the Institute for Rebooting Social Media at Harvard and an expert on the global regulation of new technologies.

TikTok has over a billion users. It has become so trendy that parents, teachers, doctors, and many others are on the app as well.

Attention spans are shrinking, and information is shared in seconds rather than minutes. TikTok satisfies our need to for immediate satisfaction.

TikTok is addictive. It was created to gain and hold your interest from the moment you log on. It is formatted in a way where the scrolling is endless; there will never be a moment when new videos won’t appear. Not only that but TikTok tracks how you interact with different content, thus creating a unique and personalized page for you that differs from user to user.

According to Security.org, kids using TikTok have a 64% chance of experiencing cyberbullying. Cyberbullying includes sending, posting, or sharing negative, harmful, false, or mean content about someone else. It can include sharing personal or private information about someone else causing embarrassment or humiliation. Some cyberbullying crosses the line into unlawful or criminal behavior. Cyberbullying can have a highly negative impact on a person, causing anxiety, and depression.

Common Sense, the leading independent source for media recommendations and advice for families recommends the TikTok app for ages 15+ mainly due to the privacy issues and mature content. The TikTok app requires that users be at least 12 years old to use the basic TikTok features, although there is a way for younger kids to access the app.

Some content may contain language or themes that are inappropriate for younger users and may be disturbing or even offensive to some other viewers. It is important for users to be aware of this and to use the platform responsibly.

But TikTok has changed the world of entertainment by providing a platform for individuals who might otherwise be overlooked by traditional promoters. Aspiring artists, comedians, dancers, and performers of all kinds have found their footing on TikTok, unburdened by the need for extensive resources or connections. This accessibility empowers individuals from

diverse backgrounds to showcase their talents, fostering a creative ecosystem that thrives on being clever rather than pedigree.

TikTok provides good advice. If you have a question regarding style, beauty, relationships, just ask TikTok! for people with different jobs and perspectives. For example, if you are looking for makeup advice, there are many makeup professionals that post advice videos and tutorials for you. So, whenever you want to know people's opinions on mostly anything, you can rely on TikTok to give you good advice.

TikTok is a great way of reaching small businesses. With millions of users on TikTok, thousands and thousands include small businesses with all different types of products. TikTok is a great way for them to advertise to their target audience. Not only does TikTok let you discover new businesses, but it also lets you interact with them.

TikTok is also an educational tool providing a good amount of education on whatever subject or topic you need help with. Users can search up learning how to draw, how to ride a skateboard without falling, and plenty of online tutors show up. On their pages they usually have a wide variety of videos that give you the information you need, and most of these videos are extremely helpful.

TikTok's short-form nature is inherently conducive to trendsetting and challenges. Whether it's a dance routine, a lip-syncing trend, or a quirky meme, these viral challenges sweep through the platform like wildfire, encouraging users to participate, innovate, and put their unique spin on the latest trend. This rapid cycle of creativity keeps the platform dynamic and continuously renews user engagement.

As we've explored the pros and cons of this captivating platform, it's clear that TikTok is a change agent in how we communicate, connect, and consume content. The pros, from its role in changing entertainment to making connections across the world, are undeniable. However, the cons, too, cannot be ignored, as the platform struggles with issues of privacy, misinformation, and the responsibility that comes with shaping the future of communication.

Sources:
Stopbullying.org
Office of Public Affairs
Department of Justice
thecommuniquechs.com
The New York Times
https://www.timecamp.com/
The Los Angeles Times

Algorithmic Journalism



<journalism/algorithms>

Algorithmic journalism is a term that attempts to describe the procedures that have been brought about by recent technological changes in the field of journalism. Some researchers define algorithmic journalism as “the process of using software or algorithms to automatically generate news stories you’re interested in without you going to find them.”

Algorithmic-driven content curation systems such as the Facebook News Feed and Instagram Feed monitor user behavior, interests and actions to recommend relevant content. For instance, if you engage with basketball content, you’ll likely see more of it.

Social media platforms employ sophisticated algorithms as intelligent guides, carefully sorting and matching content to audiences with similar preferences. Understanding the ins and outs of algorithms and why they are important is essential for any social media marketing strategy:

These algorithms aim to refine content suggestions by adapting and learning from user interaction. They collect user signals to match them with relevant content.

Key signals include:

- **User engagement**: Likes, shares and comments indicate that users find the content interesting and relevant.
- **Relevance**: Keywords and hashtags give content context and improve its visibility.
- **Timing and frequency**: Posting consistently and at the right time when your audience is active can boost visibility.
- **Recency**: Newer posts are prioritized over older ones.
- **User interactions**: Accounts followed, interactions and click-through rates on links signals relevance and content quality.
- **Profile authority**: Follower count, consistency and engagement impact organic reach.

- **Location**: Algorithms take into account the location and demographics of users when curating content. Content may be promoted to users in similar locations.
- **Content type**: Different content types, like videos, images and text, are treated based on user interaction. Many platforms favor videos because they're more engaging.
- **Virality**: Content gaining popularity and shares signals relevance to the algorithm.
- **Watch time**: This is the duration users spends watching videos (IG Reel, YouTube Shorts)

In 1964, Marshall McLuhan published *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*, a book in which he introduced his famous phrase "The medium is the message." This innovative and provocative idea proposed that not only the content of media but also the form and the medium through which it is presented significantly influence the perception and understanding of the message. McLuhan argued that the medium itself was an integral part of the message, and its impact extended beyond the specific content being conveyed.

In the era of artificial intelligence, the algorithm is the message. The way algorithms select, generate, and present content will have a profound effect on the perception and understanding of information.

Sources:
Scholarly Community Encyclopedia
Neimanlab.org
Sproutsocial.com

What is Artificial Intelligence and How Has it Changed Journalism?



Artificial intelligence, or AI, is technology that enables computers and machines to imitate human intelligence and problem-solving capabilities.

The development of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in journalism has changed the usual way of writing journalism, particularly by enhancing efficiency and productivity.

The combination of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in journalism, presents a complex landscape filled with both advancements and challenges.

AI's replaces work once done by a human, by taking on tasks such as data collection and sorting through large volumes of information. By taking over these time-consuming tasks, AI allows journalists to devote more time and energy to the making storytelling more complex and interesting.

With AI, Journalists are now able to engage more deeply with complex stories, leveraging their human insight, empathy, and investigative skills in ways that were not possible before. Especially in fast-paced environments like breaking news or live reporting, AI tools are invaluable, providing instant data analysis and content suggestions. This capability greatly accelerates the delivery of news, ensuring that audiences receive timely and relevant information.

AI presents a complex landscape filled with challenges raising critical concerns regarding bias and transparency, leading to questions about the impartiality and accountability of AI-driven journalism. Additionally, the issue of authorship and credibility becomes prominent, as readers often consume AI-generated content without awareness, sparking debates about trust and authenticity in journalism.

it simultaneously poses a threat to the integrity of news and information through the potential spread of misinformation. There is an urgent need to ensure that AI-generated content remains accurate and is not employed to deceive or mislead audiences.

Nevertheless, despite the advancements in AI, the role of human journalists will remain critical. Ethical decision-making is another area where human journalists are irreplaceable. They play a crucial role in determining the direction and tone of journalistic content, ensuring that it aligns with ethical standards and serves the public interest.

Investigative journalism is another field where humans can't be replaced. Uncovering hidden truths often requires persistence, intuition, and an ability to engage with sources on a personal level - qualities that AI lacks.

The ability to connect with audiences on an emotional level and convey the human aspect of stories is a uniquely human skill and one that is critical to impactful journalism.

How does Artificial Intelligence work?

Humans have long feared machines—more specifically, the possibility that machines might someday acquire human intelligence and strike out on their own.

AI are computer systems that can perform tasks traditionally associated with human intelligence — such as making predictions, identifying objects, interpreting speech and generating natural language.

Artificial intelligence systems work by using algorithms and data. First, a massive amount of data is collected and applied to mathematical models, or algorithms, which use the information to recognize patterns and make predictions in a process known as training.

Training is when the AI model is fed massive amounts of data, then asked to make decisions based on the information. Data scientists analyze these decisions and make adjustments based on the AI output's accuracy.

Trainers ask include: Does the AI perform as expected? Does the AI need to account for additional variables? Does the AI suffer from overfitting, a problem that occurs when a machine learning model memorizes data rather than learning from it?

The AI is given a novel dataset without the tags and targets initially used to help it learn. If the AI can make accurate decisions, it passes the test. If not, it's back to step 1.

Sources:
ibm.com
scienceresearch.com
performance-intensive-computing.com

Are There Limits to Freedom of Speech?



The case known as "Missouri," claimed that the U.S. government was asking social media companies to remove alleged misinformation and users accounts sharing misinformation from their platforms regarding the 2020 presidential election, COVID-19 origins and treatment, and election integrity.

According to Missouri, the social media companies complied with these requests and had their posts and stories removed or downgraded on the social media platforms. But, Missouri sued the federal government in the United States District Court for the Western District of Louisiana for censorship under the First Amendment.

THE UNITED STATES ATTORNEY'S OFFICE
WESTERN DISTRICT of LOUISIANA

In response, the U.S. government alleged that their speech as a government was legal because they were flagging content that violated the platforms' policies and sought to stop the spread of online misinformation campaigns.

The Western District of Louisiana agreed with Missouri, that the government asking social media companies to remove alleged misinformation violated the First Amendment.

On June 26, the Supreme Court handed the Biden administration a major practical victory on Wednesday, rejecting a Republican challenge that sought to prevent the government from contacting social media platforms to combat what it said was misinformation.

The decision, by a 6-to-3 vote, left for another day fundamental questions about what limits the First Amendment imposes on the government's power to influence the technology companies that are the main gatekeepers of information in the internet era.

The case arose from a barrage of communications from administration officials urging platforms to take down posts on topics like the coronavirus vaccine and claims of election fraud.



United States Supreme Court

Three dissenting votes: Justice Samuel A. Alito Jr., (seated second from right) Joined by Justices Clarence Thomas (seated second from left) and Neil M. Gorsuch, (standing second from left) dissented.

"For months," Justice Alito wrote, "high-ranking government officials placed unrelenting pressure on Facebook to suppress Americans' free speech. Because the court unjustifiably refuses to address this serious threat to the First Amendment, I respectfully dissent."

To dissent: to differ in opinion. Especially, to disagree with a majority opinion.

Sources: *New York Times*
Merriam Webster
Ballotpedia.org