Know Your Government
A Civics Workshop
Fact or Fake
‘The Role of Media in Our Political System’
WHAT IS THE LEAGUE?

Since 1920, the League of Women Voters has encouraged and informed active participation in Government, working to increase understanding of major public policy issues and to influence public policy through education and advocacy.

The League works to register voters and to provide voters with election information through voter guides, candidate forums and debates. The League does not support or oppose candidates or political parties. The League is an activist, grassroots organization whose members believe that voters should play a critical role in their democracy.

Membership is open to everyone.
Know Your Government

- Collaboration between League of Women Voters of Westchester, Sleepy Hollow High School and Hackley School
- Content developed by students and delivered to Westchester Libraries and other community organizations by 60+ LWV of Westchester volunteers
- Grant from the Westchester Community Foundation
- 2018 ‘Getting Ready for Midterms’
- 2019 ‘Fact or Fake - The Role of Media in Politics’
Workshop Flow

With small group discussions

• The Role of Media
• Fake News and Social Media’s Impact
• Tools for Discerning Fact from Fake News

Discussion is non-partisan, encouraging open minds and conversations among diverse groups
The Fourth Estate

DEMOCRACY

JUDICIAL
EXECUTIVE
LEGISLATIVE
MEDIA
The Role of Media in our Political System
Journalism’s First Obligation is to the Truth

- Ultimate Allegiance to Citizens
- Storytelling with a Purpose
- Forum for Public Criticism and Compromise
- Independence from Those They Cover
- Discipline of Verification
- Comprehensive and Proportional
- Independent Monitor of Power

Citizens have Rights and Responsibilities when it comes to the News.

American Press Association
Straight News, Analysis, and Editorializing: The Differences

- **Straight News**: Who, What, Where, When, Why, How?
- **Analysis**: Consider facts, frame the issue and possibly offer conclusions.
- **Editorializing**: Someone’s opinions.
  - Distinction between Op-Eds and Editorials
- **Can one outlet do all three? YES!**
  - New York Times
  - Los Angeles Times
  - Wall Street Journal
Discussion:

1. By a show of hands, who gets their news from television...radio...newspaper...digital...social media...podcasts?

2. Do you notice any bias in those sources?
Media Consolidation: The Illusion of Choice

Media has never been more consolidated. 6 media giants now control a staggering 90% of what we read, watch, or listen to.

Consolidation

1983
In 1983, 90% of American media was owned by 50 companies

2011
In 2011, that same 90% is controlled by 6 companies
Diversify your Weekly Media Diet:
Staying Informed while avoiding Media and Confirmation Bias

- Pick up the daily newspaper
- Subscribe to a morning email briefing from NYT, Axios, etc.
- Listen to news radio or podcasts
- Browse news websites
- Download apps, turn notifications on
- Watch evening TV News
- Read and watch local news
1st Amendment: Public Discussion is a Political Duty

- Democracy needs a Free Press to report on facts to hold powerful institutions and individuals accountable.
- Independent media stifled or state run in North Korea, Venezuela, Turkey, Russia and Hungary, etc.
- Attacks on journalism as “fake news” and “true enemy of the people” are dangerous
- Perception trickles down into general population causing societal distrust of media, governments and undermines the fourth estate.
What is “Fake News”?

- Questionable news exhibits extreme bias, propaganda, or inadequate sources
- An overt attempt to spread hoaxes or false information with the purpose of profit or influence
- Produced by those searching to make money, for entertainment, untrained journalists, those seeking to influence political beliefs
Danger of ‘Fake News’: 

- Pizzagate - 2016 assault rifle shooting at Washington DC pizzeria
- Meddling in the 2016 US presidential election
  - Fake news on social media used to harm candidates and undermine democracy
- President Trump’s use of the term “fake news” to create distrust
  - BBC cameraman harassed and physically assaulted at rally
- Facilitates global extremism
- Can influence financial markets
- As it becomes increasingly difficult to discern fact from fake news, people lose faith in media sources and democratic institutions, even the outcome of elections.
Computer Algorithms and Human Moderators Ineffective Against Malicious use of Social Media:

- Sri Lankan Government blocked FB and Instagram after Easter Sunday bombing to combat ‘false news reports’
- Facebook
  - Brazilian Election affected by fake news
  - UN blames FB for helping spread hate and contributing toward Myanmar Rohingya genocide
  - 1000 fake news sites, including those directly associated with Indian political parties were banned
- Whatsapp
  - Misinformation linked to 30 murders in India
- 2016 US Presidential Election impacted by Twitter bots and Facebook Cambridge Analytica scandal
RUSSIAN SOCIAL MEDIA CAMPAIGN
“The Internet Research Agency (IRA) carried out the earliest Russian interference operations identified by the investigation — a social media campaign designed to provoke and amplify political and social discord in the United States. The IRA was based in St. Petersburg, Russia, and received funding from Russian oligarch Yevgeniy Prigozhin and companies he controlled. Prigozhin is widely reported to have ties to Russian President Vladimir Putin...”
Can you tell real news from fake news?
Obama Signs Executive Order Banning The National Anthem At All Sporting Events Nationwide

by Jimmy Kistling, ABC News - November 11, 2016 - 1 Share - 4 Comments

President Obama signs an Executive Order banning the National Anthem at sporting events around the country. (AP Photo / Dennis佯 System)
Dreamer detained after speaking out may be deported, attorney says

By AMANDA MALE
Mar 2, 2002, 1:10 AM ET

A young woman arrested by Immigration and Customs Enforcement officers in Mississippi on Wednesday could be deported as early as this week, her attorney said.

Daniela Vargas, 22, was taken into custody after speaking at a press conference. The attorney of Jackson City Hall. Her attorney, Abigail Peterson,
FAKE NEWS!
Websites that Detect Fake News

- **PolitiFact.com** – Pulitzer Prize winning service with its famous *Truth-O-Meter*:
  [http://www.politifact.com](http://www.politifact.com)

- **Snopes.com**: [https://www.snopes.com/news](https://www.snopes.com/news)

- **FactCheck.org:** [https://www.factcheck.org](https://www.factcheck.org)

- **Washington Post Fact Checker** by Glenn Kessler:

- **Media Bias/Fact Check (MBFC) News**: [https://mediabiasfactcheck.com](https://mediabiasfactcheck.com)

- **Mobile app Factitious** checks your ability to detect fake news

- **USAFacts.org** -- a non-profit organization whose goal is to allow people to understand US government revenue, spending and societal impact. Nonpartisan.
We have lots of opportunities to Vote ...Based on Real News!

**MARCH:** Village Mayor / Trustee Elections (some villages vote in March, others in November)

**MAY:** Local School Board / Budget Elections

**JUNE:** Federal Primary Election (e.g., US Senate, US House)

*NY State / Local Primary Election (e.g., Governor, Lt. Governor, Attorney General, NY Assembly, NY Senate, County Legislature)*

**NOVEMBER:** General Election

Note: Voting can be done in person or by absentee ballot

*In NY State, only voters affiliated with a political party can vote in that party’s primary elections.*
New York Voting Guide

Board of Elections
40 North Pearl
5th Floor
Albany, NY 12207
Phone: 518-473-5086
Fax: 518-486-4546
Email:  
Website:  

Registration Deadlines
In Person:
Friday, March 8, 2019
By Mail:
Postmarked by Friday, March 8, 2019

Election Dates:
Tuesday, March 19, 2019 (Village Elections)

Eligibility Requirements

To be eligible to vote in New York, you must be:

- A U.S. citizen
- 18 years old by the date of the general, primary or other election in which you want to vote
- A resident of your present address for at least 30 days before the election
- Not in jail or on parole for a felony conviction
- Not claiming the right to vote elsewhere
- Not adjudged mentally incompetent by a court
One voice can make a difference

- Elected officials work for you
- Your personal experience qualifies you
- Share your ideas with your local, county, state and federal legislators
  - Call
  - Visit
  - Write or Email
  - Social Media
- Build relationships with elected officials
- Tips in The Citizen Lobbyist:
  - One minute lobbying
  - Writing right
  - How to find out about current legislation
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Please Join Us at an Upcoming Workshop!

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Location</th>
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<td>2:30 PM</td>
<td>Country House Assisted Living</td>
<td>2000 Baldwin Road, Yorktown Heights</td>
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<tr>
<td>7/10/19</td>
<td>3:30 AM</td>
<td>Tuckahoe Library</td>
<td>71 Columbus Ave, Tuckahoe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8/17/2019</td>
<td>10:00 AM</td>
<td>Ossining Library</td>
<td>53 Croton Ave, Ossining</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9/15/2019</td>
<td>2:00 PM</td>
<td>Lewisboro library</td>
<td>15 Main Street, S. Salem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10/22/2019</td>
<td>7:00 PM</td>
<td>Hendrick Hudson Free Library</td>
<td>185 Kings Ferry Road, Montrose</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
The League and the NYS Social Studies Supervisory Association (NYS4A) are pleased to announce the publication of 7 lesson plans for teachers of the New York Grade 12 Participation in Government course.

The 7 lesson plans are designed to provide teachers and students with information specific to New York State. Lessons can be customized to meet the needs of individual classrooms or student interests and are designed to be inquiry-based and non-partisan.

7 TYPES OF MIS- AND DISINFORMATION

SATIRE OR PARODY
No intention to cause harm but has potential to fool

MISLEADING CONTENT
Misleading use of information to frame an issue or individual

IMPOSTER CONTENT
When genuine sources are impersonated

FABRICATED CONTENT
New content is 100% false, designed to deceive and do harm

FALSE CONNECTION
When headlines, visuals or captions don’t support the content

FALSE CONTEXT
When genuine content is shared with false contextual information

MANIPULATED CONTENT
When genuine information or imagery is manipulated to deceive
Can you tell real news from fake news?

Newsmediaalliance.org
Which story is “fake”?
Kate McKinnon Mocks Sessions As Forrest Gump On 'SNL'

March 5, 2017 - 9:35 AM ET

JAMES DOUBEK

Kate McKinnon provided the most memorable political impressions of the night — far from the first time she’s done so — on Saturday as Saturday Night Live returned with its first live episode in three weeks.
Breaking: First Person To Be Charged For Threatening To Assassinate Donald Trump

‘My life goal is to assassinate Trump’: Ohio man is first to be charged for sending threatening election night tweet on election night...
Breaking: First Person To Be Charged For Threatening To Assassinate Donald Trump

‘My life goal is to assassinate Trump’: Ohio man is first to be charged for sending threatening election night tweet. On election night hun...

Donald Trump Won 7.5 Million Popular Vote LANDSLIDE in Heartland
Which story is “fake”?
REPORT: CONVICTED TERRORIST ORGANIZING NEXT WOMEN’S MARCH

Women’s rights movement hijacked by militant left

Jamie White | Infowars.com - MARCH 4, 2017

A convicted terrorist is reportedly among the organizers of another upcoming women’s march called the “Day Without a Woman.”

TODAY ON THE ALEX JONES SHOW

Friday, March 3: Trump is right AGAIN - Police say the suspect behind the recent bomb threats of Jewish synagogues is an anti-Trump communist in yet another example of...
Malala Yousafzai's UN speech set to music for International Women's Day

BBC Radio 3 announces Kate Whitley's composition, using statements about every girl's right to education, will broadcast on 8 March

Malala Yousafzai delivered the speech to the UN on her 19th birthday. Photograph: Jonathan Brady/PA

Malala Yousafzai's 2013 speech to the UN, in which she spoke powerfully about every girl's right to an education, has been set to music.

BBC Radio 3 announced it commissioned the composer Kate Whitley to set to music the text, by the schoolgirl who survived a murder attempt by the Taliban,
REPORT: CONVICTED TERRORIST ORGANIZING NEXT WOMEN’S MARCH

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Did you know?
(Study, published Jan 2019 in Science Advances: Less than you think: Prevalence and predictors of fake news dissemination on Facebook)

- More than 40% of visits to 65 fake news sites come through social media
- Facebook was a major conduit for visits to fake news sites
- More than a quarter of voting-age adults visited a fake news website supporting Clinton or Trump in the weeks before the 2016 election
- Visual repetition influences memory in terms of reading headlines
- Seniors over 65 shared nearly 7 times as many articles from fake news domains as people ages 18-29
- Conservatives were more likely to share “fake news” stories
Self-Identified Conservatives and Seniors Share more Fake News on Facebook

Source: Science Advances (Guess, Nagler, Tucker, et al, Jan 2019)
What is Social Media?

“Social media are web-based communication tools that enable people to interact with each other by both sharing and consuming information.” - Lifewire

- Examples: Facebook, Instagram, Whatsapp, Twitter, Blogs, SnapChat
Facebook-Cambridge Analytica Scandal

- Facebook exposed data of 87+ million users to Cambridge Analytica
- Stolen data from quiz takers and their friends is sold
- Exposed a security vulnerability in Facebook
- May have played a role in the 2016 election
Implications of the Facebook-Cambridge Analytica Scandal:

- DC Attorney General files lawsuit against Facebook
- Pro-Trump messages and anti-Hillary propaganda spread via Russian troll farms and bots
- Connection between Cambridge Analytica, Trump campaign, and Russian operatives in 2016 being investigated
- Cyber security and social media monitoring is critical
Russians also paid Facebook to have this ad shown to people residing in Washington, DC:

This Russian ad was targeted to people living in South Carolina on June 30, 2016. There's no real "Black Matters" group.
Fake News Video and Images

- Fake news can also come in the form of edited and manipulated clips and images
- Videos taken out of context
Did Obama really say this?
The video seamlessly meshed two separate clips from the same speech to have Obama say:

**Manipulated video:**

"And for the international order that we have worked for generations to build, ordinary men and women are too small-minded to govern their own affairs, that order and progress can only come when individuals surrender their rights to an all-powerful sovereign."

What Obama really said:

“We meet here at a moment of testing for Europe and the United States, and for the international order that we have worked for generations to build...Those ideals have often been threatened by an older, more traditional view of power. This alternative vision argues that ordinary men and women are too small-minded to govern their own affairs, that order and progress can only come when individuals surrender their rights to an all-powerful sovereign.”
How to tell fake from real news websites:

- Check the website address
  - Be aware of .com.co
  - Scan for WordPress
- Scan headlines
  - Be aware of politically framed content
  - Are other media outlets reporting this?
- Read the “About Us” section
- Pay attention to the people they mention and quotes
- Read comments
- Pay attention to images and logos
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by Jimmy Knoft, ABC News - November 17, 2016 - 3125 - 4
News Guard Chrome Extension

- Browser plug-in for Google Chrome
- Gives trustworthiness rating to sites using a checklist of criteria
  - Red vs Green icon
- Based on assessments from trusted reporters
- Developed in response to declining trust in mainstream media and the rise of fake news
Forbes shared a link.

6 Ways That’ll Get You Taken Seriously At Work Right From The Forbes.com

This website generally maintains basic standards of accuracy and accountability.

The website of the American business magazine Forbes, a publication with a rich history of reporting on financial issues.

CREDIBILITY
- Does not repeatedly publish false content
- Gathers and presents information responsibly
- Regularly corrects or clarifies errors

TRANSPARENCY
- Website discloses ownership and financing
- Clearly labels advertising
- Reveals who’s in charge, including any possible conflicts of interest
- Provides information about content creators

See the full Nutrition Label →
Important things to note:

● Media bias vs fake news
● Be aware of confirmation bias
● Ways to identify reliable sources
● Widening your own “media diet” by reading outlets that oppose your political beliefs
● Utilize local news sources and understand their biases
● Be wary of impact of fake news on internet safety and manipulation of politics in order to be a well-informed voter
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Suggested follow-up:

✓ Read our Constitution and Bill of Rights
✓ Stay current on local and national issues
✓ Take in a variety of news sources
✓ Attend local meetings of your school, city, town, village and country boards
✓ Get to know your elected officials, share your opinions
✓ At the very minimum, VOTE IN EVERY ELECTION