

**PUR 4932/ EUS 4930**  
**RUSSIAN INFORMATION WARFARE:**  
**FROM PROPAGANDA TO GLOBAL DISINFORMATION CAMPAIGNS**

SUMMER A 2023

M, 9:30 A.M. – 1:45 P.M. | W, 9:30 A.M. – 12:15 P.M.

WEIMER 1078

**Instructor:** Kat (Ekaterina) Romanova

**Email:** [e.romanova@ufl.edu](mailto:e.romanova@ufl.edu) or Canvas Messages

**Office hours:** by appointment/ Zoom

**REQUIRED TEXTS**

There are no required textbooks for this course. All materials (readings, videos, blog posts, etc.) will be made available to you via Canvas, organized by week. All readings need to be completed **PRIOR** to the class they are assigned in order to get the most out of our class time.

**COURSE GOALS**

Propaganda has been a part of society and media systems for a long time. In an age when social media have made disseminating ideas easier, rewired propaganda and disinformation campaigns have become an effective tool in the political arsenal of many authoritarian leaders. Since the beginning of 20th century, Russia has been known as a major disinformation player in the global arena. Considering Russia's everlasting opposition to Western countries, European countries and the U.S. have been given special attention from Russian strategists. This course begins by looking at the history of Russian information warfare and its theoretical underpinnings. Next, we will examine various examples and main strategies of global Russian disinformation campaigns as well as discuss the most widespread narratives. This course will then conclude by considering the impact of Russian disinformation for democratic societies.

\* This syllabus is subject to change as the instructor deems appropriate and necessary.

**COURSE LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

By the end of this semester, students will be able to:

- Understand the history, tactics, and goals of Russian information warfare globally
- Analyze psychological and communication strategies behind propaganda and disinformation
- Understand target audiences and vulnerable populations for Russian disinformation in the EU and the U.S.
- Analyze strategies and channels of disinformation campaigns in the EU and the U.S.

- Recognize the impact and propose solutions for democratic societies (EU, US) to resist disinformation

## COLLEGE OF JOURNALISM AND COMMUNICATIONS OBJECTIVES

The Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communications requires that by graduation all students should be able to:

- understand and apply the principles and laws of freedom of speech and press for the US
- demonstrate an understanding of the history and role of professionals and institutions in shaping communications
- demonstrate an understanding of gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation and, as appropriate, other forms of diversity in domestic society in relation to mass communications
- demonstrate an understanding of the diversity of peoples and cultures and of the significance and impact of mass communications in a global society
- understand concepts and apply theories in the use and presentation of images and information
- demonstrate an understanding of professional ethical principles and work ethically in pursuit of truth, accuracy, fairness and diversity
- think critically, creatively and independently
- conduct research and evaluate information by methods appropriate to the communications professions in which they work
- write correctly and clearly in forms and styles appropriate for the communications professions, audiences and purposes they serve
- critically evaluate their own work and that of others for accuracy and fairness, clarity, appropriate style and grammatical correctness
- apply basic numerical and statistical concepts
- apply current tools and technologies appropriate for the communications professions in which they work, and to understand the digital world

## COURSE POLICIES

**PROFESSIONALISM:** I expect you to maintain a high level of professionalism in all of our interactions. This includes being courteous and respectful to everyone in the classroom. This includes making sure you are not being distracting to others in the class by using your cell phones, computers for non-class related things (e.g. social media, work for other courses), talking during lectures, or arriving late/leaving early.

**INSTRUCTOR INTERACTION:** Please feel free to make an appointment to chat with me. The best way to reach me is by e-mail. I check my e-mail account regularly, but please do not expect a response by e-mail after normal business hours/over the weekend. If I have not written back within 48 hours, please send your email again. As my email is considered a state public record, I do not discuss grades or any student records issues via e-mail. Please schedule a meeting with me to discuss these issues. The classroom is typically not an appropriate place for these discussions.

**LATE WORK/MAKE-UP WORK:** All written assignments must be turned in by 11:59 pm EST on the day the assignment is due. Canvas will automatically mark assignments as late if they are uploaded even one second after 11:59 pm. You have 24 hours after the due date to turn in your assignment for a 10% grade reduction. After 24 hours, the grade will be zero. It is your responsibility to make sure you properly uploaded your paper, blaming a group member doesn't work as it is the group's joint responsibility.

**ATTENDANCE:** Our class is scheduled as a fully face-to-face course this spring, and we will meet in our classroom during class time. I expect that you attend class, and you will have the opportunity to gain points by completing in-class assignments, but I do not take formal attendance. I do post slides on Canvas, but recommend that if miss class you obtain notes from a classmate. **IF YOU MISS CLASS PLEASE DO NOT ASK ME IF YOU MISSED "ANYTHING IMPORTANT."** Of course you did! I think every day is important. If what you mean to ask is if I made any announcements about changes to due dates or something of that nature, those types of announcements will always be posted on the course website.

**HONOR CODE:** Please note that all of your work in this class should conform to the university's honor code, which states: We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to hold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honesty and integrity by abiding by the Student Honor Code. On all work submitted for credit by Students at the University of Florida, the following pledge is either required or implied: "On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in doing this assignment." For more information, please see <http://regulations.ufl.edu/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/4.040-1.pdf> I will document and report all honor code violations, including cheating and plagiarism. The minimum penalty for a violation of the honor code is a zero on the assignment or exam, but may be higher depending on the severity of the violation.

**IN-CLASS RECORDING POLICY (FULL TEXT IS AT THE END OF THE SYLLABUS):** You can record **ONLY** me speaking, while delivering course lecture material in the classroom, during which a question-and-answer session is not present. You may not record me out of the classroom, nor may you record anything any of your classmates say. You cannot share your recordings, except with a lawyer, nor post them online anywhere.

**ACCOMMODATIONS:** Students with disabilities requesting accommodations should first register with the Disability Resource Center (352-392-8565, [www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/](http://www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/)) by providing appropriate documentation. Once registered, students will receive an accommodation letter which must be presented to the instructor when requesting accommodation. Students with disabilities should follow this procedure as early as possible in the semester.

**TECHNOLOGY USE:** Make sure to bring your laptop to the classroom. We'll need it for in-class assignments.

## HOW YOU GET POINTS

### POINT DISTRIBUTION

Weekly Quizzes	50 pts (5x10)
Weekly Practice Assignments	50 pts (5x10)
Framing Assignment	150 pts
Individual Presentation	50 pts
Comparative Case study (group)	200 pts
Group Presentation	80 pts
Peer Evaluations	20 pts
Class Discussion Participation	100 pts

**TOTAL** 700 pts

Letter grades will be calculated using this formula:

Letter	Course Points	Percentage	Grade Points
A	700-651	100-93	4.0
A-	650-630	92.9-90	3.7
B+	629-609	89.9-87	3.3
B	608-581	86.9-83	3
B-	580-560	82.9-80	2.7
C+	559-539	79.9-77	2.3
C	538-511	76.9-73	2
C-	510-490	72.9-70	1.7
D+	489-469	69.9-67	1.3
D	468-420	66.9-60	1
F	419-0	59.9-0	0

*I don't round up. I will keep grades posted on Canvas - it is your responsibility to check it and make sure you know where you are at.*

## OVERVIEW OF COURSE COMPONENTS

### WEEKLY QUIZZES

Completing weekly quizzes is a good way to learn theoretical concepts. Quizzes consist of a few simple true/false, multiple choice, or short answer questions probing the content of that week's lecture and/or readings.

### WEEKLY PRACTICE ASSIGNMENTS

I believe, and research has shown that active participation in learning is crucial for long term learning. Most weeks we will complete some sort of activity designed to help you understand the course material.

## CLASS DISCUSSION PARTICIPATION

You will be expected to participate in class discussions. If you are not present in a class meeting, participation points cannot be made up for any reason. Your contributions to our discussions are a major part of this course.

## WRITTEN ASSIGNMENTS

**FRAMING ASSIGNMENT:** You will examine how a current political issue/topic is covered in Russian media and Western media to examine for media framing. You will examine how the issue has been framed in at least 4 different media outlets (two Russian state-supported and two US or EU) and discuss why the various framing strategies were used.

**COMPARATIVE CASE STUDY:** For this assignment, working as a group, you will write a 1,500-word report aimed to analyze examples of Russian disinformation narratives online, highlight channels and investigate strategies. Your report should be informed by class concepts.

## INDIVIDUAL PRESENTATION

To report your findings from framing assignment, you will develop a 15 minute in-class presentation (using PowerPoint, etc.).

## GROUP PRESENTATION

To report your findings from a group case study assignment, you will develop a 15 minute in-class presentation (using PowerPoint, etc.).

## TENTATIVE COURSE SCHEDULE\*

CLASS/DATE	TOPIC	DUE
1 5/15	How has it begun? Historical overview of Russian propaganda. Definitions and theories. From Early 20th century, the Cold War era, and the 90s to Putin	Info-sheet
2 5/17	What is it about? Common narratives from the Cold War to the war in Ukraine	
3 5/22	Why does it work? Pt. 1 Psychological and communication theories of persuasion	
4 5/24	Why does it work? Pt. 2 Psychological and communication theories of persuasion	
5 5/29	HOLIDAY NO CLASS	
6 5/31	“Rewired” propaganda? Modern disinformation campaigns. Review of common narratives and strategies in comparison with Soviet propaganda	Framing assignment
7 6/5	How widespread is it? Russian disinformation supply chains within the U.S. and European societies. Cases, contexts, and outcomes	Individual Presentation
8 6/7	What are the instruments? Weaponization of social media channels, “troll” factories, armies of bots, creation of international news media agencies (RT, Sputnik)	
9 6/12	Did Russia write a Propaganda Playbook? Narratives, themes, dissemination strategies. Cases from other countries	
10 6/14	How bad is it and what can we do? Implications of disinformation campaigns for democratic societies. Strategies to resist disinformation	
11 6/19	HOLIDAY NO CLASS	
12 6/21	GROUP PRESENTATIONS	Case study Group Presentation Peer evals

*\*Schedule is subject to change. Any changes will be discussed in class and sent out via e-mail/Canvas announcement.*

*\*\*All weekly reading assignments should be completed before our class meeting for that week.*

## EXTRA CREDIT OPPORTUNITIES

- For student evaluations of teaching (<https://evaluations.ufl.edu>, also available via Gator Rater tab on Canvas), all members of the class will be awarded 10 points to their final grade if 80% of the enrolled class completes evaluations, and 15 points if 100% of the enrolled class completes evaluations. That, typically is enough to move many students from B+ to A- or A- to A.

*\*If there are any other extra credit opportunities, students will be notified via Canvas.*

## STANDARD UF POLICY INFORMATION AND LINKS

### **UF Grading Policy**

<http://gradcatalog.ufl.edu/content.php?catoid=10&navoid=2020#grades> (Links to an external site.)

<https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/grades.aspx> (Links to an external site.)

### **UF Policy on Controversial Issues**

People learn best when they are encouraged to ask questions and express their diverse opinions on course content, which may include images, texts, data, and theories from across the disciplines. This is especially true in courses that deal with provocative or contemporary issues. UF offers many such courses, in which students encounter concepts of race, color, sex, and/or national origin. We teach these important issues because understanding them is essential for anyone who seeks to make economic, cultural, and societal contributions to today's complex world. With this in mind, we do not limit access to, or classroom discussion of, facts, ideas, and opinions—including those that some may find uncomfortable, unwelcome, disagreeable, or even offensive. In response to challenging material, students and instructors are encouraged to ask honest questions and thoughtfully engage one another's ideas. But hostility, disruptive and disrespectful behavior, and provocation for provocation's sake have no place in a classroom; reasonable people disagree reasonably. These guidelines can help instructors and students as they work together to fulfill the mission of the University of Florida, which includes the exploration of intellectual boundaries, the creation of new knowledge, and the pursuit of new ideas.

### **Video and Audio Recordings**

Students are allowed to record video or audio of class lectures. However, the purposes for which these recordings may be used are strictly controlled. The only allowable purposes are (1) for personal educational use, (2) in connection with a complaint to the university, or (3) as evidence in, or in preparation for, a criminal or civil proceeding. All other purposes are prohibited. Specifically, students may not publish recorded lectures without the written consent of the instructor.

A "class lecture" is an educational presentation intended to inform or teach enrolled students about a particular subject, including any instructor-led discussions that form part of the presentation, and delivered by any instructor hired or appointed by the University, or by a guest instructor, as part of a University of Florida course. A class lecture does not include lab sessions, student presentations, clinical presentations such as patient history, academic exercises involving

solely student participation, assessments (quizzes, tests, exams), field trips, private conversations between students in the class or between a student and the faculty or lecturer during a class session.

Publication without permission of the instructor is prohibited. To “publish” means to share, transmit, circulate, distribute, or provide access to a recording, regardless of format or medium, to another person (or persons), including but not limited to another student within the same class section. Additionally, a recording, or transcript of a recording, is considered published if it is posted on or uploaded to, in whole or in part, any media platform, including but not limited to social media, book, magazine, newspaper, leaflet, or third party note/tutoring services. A student who publishes a recording without written consent may be subject to a civil cause of action instituted by a person injured by the publication and/or discipline under UF Regulation 4.040 Student Policy on Course Syllabi 3 UF, Academic Affairs, July 28th, 2021 Honor Code and Student Conduct Code.

### **Course Evaluation**

Students are expected to provide professional and respectful feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing course evaluations online via GatorEvals. Guidance on how to give feedback in a professional and respectful manner is available at <https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/students/>. Students will be notified when the evaluation period opens, and can complete evaluations through the email they receive from GatorEvals, in their Canvas course menu under GatorEvals, or via <https://ufl.bluera.com/ufl/>. Summaries of course evaluation results are available to students at <https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/public-results/>

### **University Honesty Policy**

UF students are bound by The Honor Pledge which states, “We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to hold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honor and integrity by abiding by the Honor Code. On all work submitted for credit by students at the University of Florida, the following pledge is either required or implied: “On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in doing this assignment.” The Honor Code (<https://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/process/student-conduct-honor-code/>) specifies a number of behaviors that are in violation of this code and the possible sanctions. Furthermore, you are obligated to report any condition that facilitates academic misconduct to appropriate personnel. If you have any questions or concerns, please consult with the instructor or TAs in this class.

### **Software Use**

All faculty, staff, and students of the University are required and expected to obey the laws and legal agreements governing software use. Failure to do so can lead to monetary damages and/or criminal penalties for the individual violator. Because such violations are also against University policies and rules, disciplinary action will be taken as appropriate. We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to uphold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honesty and integrity.

### **Student Privacy**



There are federal laws protecting your privacy with regards to grades earned in courses and on individual assignments. For more information, please see: <http://registrar.ufl.edu/catalog0910/policies/regulationferpa.html> (Links to an external site.)

## CAMPUS RESOURCES

### HEALTH AND WELLNESS

#### **U Matter, We Care:**

If you or a friend is in distress, please contact [umatter@ufl.edu](mailto:umatter@ufl.edu) or 352 392-1575 so that a team member can reach out to the student.

**Counseling and Wellness Center:** <http://www.counseling.ufl.edu/cwc> (Links to an external site.), and 392-1575; and the University Police Department: 392-1111 or 9-1-1 for emergencies.

#### **Sexual Assault Recovery Services (SARS)**

Student Health Care Center, 392-1161.

**University Police Department** at 392-1111 (or 9-1-1 for emergencies), or <http://www.police.ufl.edu/> (Links to an external site.).

### ACADEMIC RESOURCES

**E-learning technical support** 352-392-4357 (select option 2) or e-mail to Learning-support@ufl.edu. <https://lss.at.ufl.edu/help.shtml> (Links to an external site.).

**Career Resource Center**, Reitz Union, 392-1601. Career assistance and counseling. <https://www.crc.ufl.edu/> (Links to an external site.).

**Library Support**, <http://cms.uflib.ufl.edu/ask> (Links to an external site.). Various ways to receive assistance with respect to using the libraries or finding resources.

**Teaching Center**, Broward Hall, 392-2010 or 392-6420. General study skills and tutoring. <https://teachingcenter.ufl.edu/> (Links to an external site.).

**Writing Studio**, 302 Tigert Hall, 846-1138. Help brainstorming, formatting, and writing papers. <https://writing.ufl.edu/writing-studio/> (Links to an external site.).