

Divisional Strategic Planning Brief – Social Science and PE

Campus Outcome:

Learning Assured – Develop students as global citizens.

Department Outcome:

Focus on Quality of SS&PE teaching. For SS&PE quality is about excellence in our classrooms and how our faculty develop themselves to continue their growth toward transformative teaching.

BACKGROUND & DESCRIPTION

Students are increasingly reliant on the internet for research. In so doing, they are often unaware that many of the resources they use are not credible. This issue extends beyond Social Sciences, and for that matter, education. This is a societal and global issue as social media and internet sources are increasingly accessible and manipulated. What has been termed “fake news” has crept into the classroom, the public forum and our everyday existence.

This realization is not lost on faculty. Dr. Heather Bryson, realizing how the phenomenon of “fake news” impacts the work of students and the educational process, crafted an intervention which will be the basis of this research brief.

In her words, “In recent years, I have bemoaned student-selected sources for historical research. The most egregious sources would stand out to me and evoke a kind of 'decline of civilization' dread.” In reaction to her feelings she crafted a way to address the issue.

INTERVENTION

Her first step to prepare for this project was to meet with Valencia librarians. In the late summer of 2018, she met with Erich Heintzelman and Chris Wettstein to familiarize herself with their resources and to discuss an information literacy presentation to her Fall 2018 Early American History course. The Valencia Library has a wealth of information concerning information literacy. The sources provided by Valencia's Library Website that helped to inform her practice included scholarship from the Association of College and Research Libraries and conclusions from Project Information Literacy. The following link is a libguide created by Valencia librarians to help students and teachers evaluate online information: <http://libguides.valenciacollege.edu/fakenews>.

This project involved four steps over the course of the Fall 2018 semester:

1. A background-knowledge probe and class discussion, August 2018
2. A "Fake News" workshop in the library, September 2018
3. A formative assessment in which students presented sources for a short research paper and worked collaboratively to evaluate the merits/shortcomings of sources, September 2018
4. A summative assessment in which students were evaluated on the sources used for their final research paper, December 2018

The most important step in this process was the "Fake News" workshop given by Erich Heintzelman and Chris Wettstein. Mr. Heintzelman and Mr. Wettstein delivered an interactive lecture on the prevalence of poor internet sources, the weaponizing of online information, and provided guides on information literacy to my students.

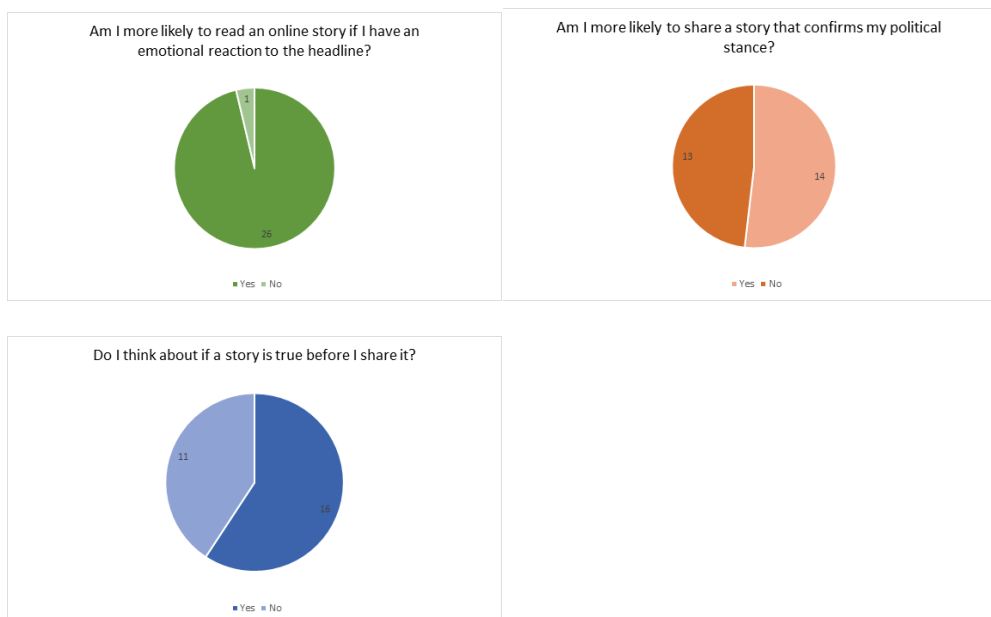
STRATEGIC RESULTS

In anticipation of the "Fake News" workshop, Dr. Bryson conducted a background-knowledge probe to assess how students think about online information and to get them to start thinking critically about their consumption and possible perpetuation of "fake news".

The questions that were asked in the survey:

1. Am I more likely to read a story if I have an emotional reaction to it?
2. Am I more likely to share a story that confirms my political stance?
3. Do I think about if a story is true before I share it?

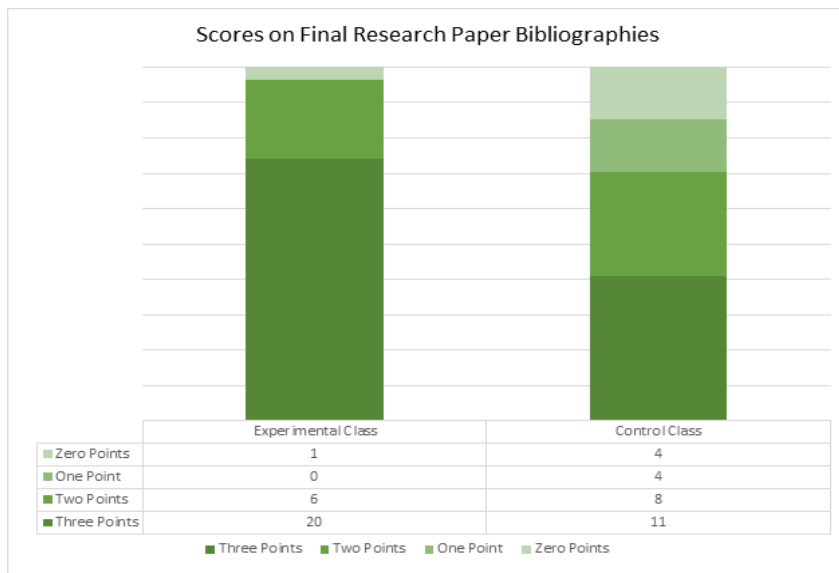
The results are below:



The conversations served as a primer for the "Fake News" workshop. The goal was to make the students more aware of the ways in which they consume and contribute to misinformation online.

The "Fake News" workshop and two formative assessments which helped students to evaluate sources in collaborative communities improved students' abilities to evaluate the validity of online resources. This improvement was assessed by measuring the strength of sources used on a final research paper in the AMH 2010 class that cycled through the workshop and formative assessments against another AMH 2010 class that did not.

To answer the guiding research question, "Will the 'Fake News' workshop and the employment of classroom assessment improve students' abilities to evaluate internet sources?", the answer is affirmative. By comparing two Early American History classes during the same semester, it is clear that the "experimental class", the class that went through the interventions, had an average score of 2.67 out of 3 whereas the "control class" had an average of 1.96 using the same scale.



REFLECTION

This project provided ample opportunity to assess and reassess student progress toward source evaluation. Not only were the students able to self-assess how they think about online sources, they were also able to work in groups to evaluate their self-selected sources. It also provided students with the opportunity to defend the value of their source choices. In addition, the summative assessment served to really prop up the acquired or strengthened skills of source evaluation as all but one student scored at least a 2 on a scale of 3.

In future courses, Dr. Bryson would like to devise more real-world assessments so that she can draw a more explicit connection between the search for good sources for academic research and the quest for good online information in general. Information literacy in the classroom and as a life skill cannot be underestimated in the 21st century. It is this aspect of political relevance that she plans to emphasize as she takes this process and replicate it in all of her classes. Source evaluation is good for a college education; it is also good for our world.

NEXT STEPS

Dr. Bryson will share this information with the SS&PE Division. As this is part of her TLA Portfolio, it will also be submitted online in the Valencia Action Research Project Builder.

SOURCE

Heather Bryson, Faculty Portfolio, Tenure Class of 2021.