**Should we stop saying 'fake news'?**

After [rocketing into the public consciousness](https://list-manage.us13.list-manage.com/track/click?u=986b63cc0ee0561c292118500&id=7fa6b8321c&e=d0797607bf) over the last year, the phrase “fake news” has become an ideological weapon for politicians around the globe ([especially despots](https://list-manage.us13.list-manage.com/track/click?u=986b63cc0ee0561c292118500&id=b482d667f8&e=d0797607bf)) and a clumsy catch-all that falsely equates all forms of misinformation. What was once a way to describe sensationalized fiction engineered to go viral – and earn ad revenue – by tapping into current events or controversies has devolved into an overbroad and, [some contend](https://list-manage.us13.list-manage.com/track/click?u=986b63cc0ee0561c292118500&id=9e3be1ee78&e=d0797607bf), [dangerous term](https://list-manage.us13.list-manage.com/track/click?u=986b63cc0ee0561c292118500&id=4dac979933&e=d0797607bf).

**• Discuss:** What does the term “fake news” mean? What are the distinctions among various types of misinformation, such as opportunistic fiction, manipulated images, hoaxes, unintentional rumors and journalists’ mistakes? What might we lose by referring to all of these things with one term? What other terms might more accurately describe each type?

**• Idea:** Create a taxonomy of types of misinformation. (For inspiration, see Claire Wardle’s [“7 Types of Mis- and Disinformation.”](https://list-manage.us13.list-manage.com/track/click?u=986b63cc0ee0561c292118500&id=45362d362b&e=d0797607bf))

**• Idea 2:** Challenge students to observe and collect examples reflecting the ways the term “fake news” is used. Analyze the results.

**• Act:** Visualize the findings of your “fake news” field study, publish them on Twitter and tag journalists, media scholars and others who have debated the term’s meaning and use.

**• Related and relevant:**

◦ ["How to spot fake news -- an expert's guide for young people"](https://list-manage.us13.list-manage.com/track/click?u=986b63cc0ee0561c292118500&id=c5ea076fa2&e=d0797607bf) (Beth Hewitt, The Conversation)

▪ **Discuss:** What is the difference between being skeptical about information and being cynical?

◦ A recent Comedy Central special, “*[The Fake News with](https://list-manage.us13.list-manage.com/track/click?u=986b63cc0ee0561c292118500&id=e5aa280c62&e=d0797607bf) [Te](https://list-manage.us13.list-manage.com/track/click?u=986b63cc0ee0561c292118500&id=0d4e47013a&e=d0797607bf)[d Nelms](https://list-manage.us13.list-manage.com/track/click?u=986b63cc0ee0561c292118500&id=7fd136d053&e=d0797607bf)*,” satirizes both “fake news" and legitimate broadcast news media.

▪ **Discuss:** How does this show differ from actual "fake news"? Is its satirical context clear?