

# TMQ

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## Editors' Notes

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This issue of *Teaching Media Quarterly* offers two lessons on contemporary media topics. First, in “Discerning Fake Information: A critical approach for media and information studies,” **Melissa Villa-Nicholas** offers a lesson aimed at “teaching media studies students how to discern false information and news, and to understand the political and social context of the life cycle of false information.” The lesson requires approximately one 90-minute class period. The lesson begins with a mini-lecture on fake news, with topics including fake news and the 2016 election as well as fake news and social media. The lecture lays out some key tips for ferreting out false information, then breaks students into groups to investigate a fake news headline (such as #Pizzagate). Next, the student groups apply the same methods to the results of a Google search of “Martin Luther King Jr.,” which offers a revealing illustration of the ways in which the presentation of false information as “truth” online has been used in the service of white supremacy. The activity ends with a debriefing discussion about the politics of information.

Second, **Andy Ruddock**'s “Researching media reality: Using experience and theory to explain how media make our world” provides students with a historical and definitional overview of the critical media studies tradition to demonstrate the influential and pervasive qualities of media in our daily lives. The lesson plan prompts students to reflect critically on their personal media experiences as a way to understand the multitude of ways media shape society. Students are treated and trained as media researchers through exposure to critical media theory and understanding media as data sources, and are prompted, by the end of the lesson, to transform media interests into critical media research questions. The lesson plan is designed for a 10-week media course, but can be broken down into smaller units for week or day length readings and exercises, with units on social media, technological determinism, ethics, gender, audiences, and more. Each section/week of the lesson plan provides specialized readings, student activities, and learning objectives.

