**Reading Less and Learning More: Teaching Students to Evaluate Online Information in Intro Psych and Beyond**

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We increasingly turn to the Internet for information on policy, community, and personal issues. Many of the same features that make the Internet a powerful source of information—its abundance of diverse sources and relative lack of gatekeepers—make it possible for questionable sources, misinformation, and patently fake news to prosper. Being able to evaluate online information to find reliable sources is thus a critical skill. And yet, extensive research suggests that young people, and often the rest of us, struggle to evaluate digital content. Young people report believing that the top search result is the most reliable and often evaluate websites based on how relevant the content seems instead of how reliable its source is.

This talk will focus on what we might do about this problem. Drawing on findings from recent research, I will first conceptualize what skilled approaches to evaluating information look like. A study with professional fact checkers, university-based historians, and Stanford University students found that fact checkers had developed a set of strategies for efficiently, effectively navigating digital content. In contrast, students and professors often treated the Internet like a print source and repeatedly stumbled in their evaluations. Next, I will explore how we might teach fact checkers’ approaches to evaluating online information to the young people in our courses. I will overview a curricular approach and present findings about its effectiveness from studies in diverse high school and college classrooms.

The students in our classrooms likely need more support learning to evaluate the information they depend so heavily on. Luckily, we are in a position to provide that support. Attendees will leave this session with an understanding of what such instruction might look like and what steps they can take to better support students in this critical area.

**Speaker Bio**

arah McGrew is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Teaching and Learning, Policy and Leadership in the College of Education at the University of Maryland, College Park. She studies educational responses to the spread of online mis- and disinformation, focusing specifically on young people’s civic online reasoning—how they search for and evaluate online information on contentious social and political topics—and how schools can better support students to learn effective evaluation strategies.

As part of the Stanford History Education Group, Dr. McGrew developed assessments of students’ online reasoning, conducted research on fact checkers’ strategies for evaluating digital content, and tested curriculum designed to teach these strategies to secondary and college students. Dr. McGrew’s current research focuses on two related questions: how best to support teachers to learn online reasoning themselves and design lessons for students, and how to design lessons in online reasoning that are rooted in civic and community issues that students know and care about.

Dr. McGrew earned a B.A. in Political Science and Education from Swarthmore College and an M.A. and teacher certification in the Stanford Teacher Education Program. She taught high school history in Washington, D.C. for five years before returning to Stanford to complete her Ph.D. in Curriculum and Teacher Education.