

ACTION PLAN

For all the weeks of Group Project

(We'll update it every week after the workshop class)

Group Picture Perfect: Project Proposal Summary

Our group is responding to the Narratives & Storying theme. The critical issue we are exploring is how algorithmic visibility, platform spectacle, and attention economies shape narrative formation and construct what becomes legible as truth online. We will be looking at the phenomenon of epistemic relativism and how certain aesthetics and platform mechanics are used to construct certain claims around knowledge and truth.

Keywords: Algorithmic Radicalisation, Fake News, Filter Bubbles, or Media Framing, Epistemic Relativism in media, Hyperstitions, framing

The Case Study

We are analysing multiple cases of disinformation to show how the platforms themselves act as storytellers. Our project investigates these pipelines by creating an experiential representation of platform manipulation. The user lands on what appears to be a standard news website/feed but is immediately subject to its mechanics. Eg. intrusive pop-ups, autoplay videos, and confusing redirects to conspiracy theory channels. These rabbit holes will cover various modern disinformation cases, including environmental news, influencer conspiracies, and celebrity spectacle.

Possible Research Questions

To guide our data collection, we will answer questions such as: How do platform affordances (like infinite scroll, autoplay, and algorithmic recommendations) hijack user agency to alter public perception of events? Furthermore, how do these dark patterns and attention economies physically and emotionally force users into rabbit holes?

Data Collection Methods

We plan to conduct an anonymous online survey focusing on User Experience (UX) and behavioural data. Rather than testing participants on factual details of specific news cases, the survey will focus on how real people experience algorithmic manipulation. We will ask participants how often they consume unintended content, which platform mechanics they find most difficult to disengage from, and the primary emotions they feel after falling into digital rabbit holes. This gathers both qualitative and quantitative data on how digital environments actively construct reality and colonise user attention.

The Digital Artefact: The Experiential Website

Our final output will be an interactive, experiential website that simulates the feeling of algorithmic radicalisation. We will embed the qualitative and quantitative data directly into the theoretical frameworks of the site's design.

WEEK 16

1. The Literature Review

Please find **3 academic papers/sources** each.

- Search for keywords like Algorithmic Radicalisation, Fake News, Filter Bubbles, or Media Framing.
- For every academic paper, you must save its reference it to our shared Reading List Document (*access sent in university mail*).

The workshop task asks us to check if our sources are biased or if we need more diverse data. So please ensure that.

2. Define Our Topic

We need to write a short paragraph that defines our problem using the papers/sources we found.

- “We are investigating how social media algorithms or other media frame news to change a user’s reality. We will explore how this leads to believing conspiracy theories or propaganda.”
- Read your 3 papers and see if they agree with this definition. If you find something new or surprising, let us know!

3. Prepare for the 5-Minute Talk

Next week, we must stand up in class and speak for **5 minutes** about what we found.

- We need to make **one PowerPoint slide** (although not compulsory, I think it would help us present better).
- The slide should show:
 - Our topic definition.
 - A bit about the papers/sources we found.
 - Any gaps we found in our research.

Action Plan:

- Everyone finds **3 papers/sources** over the weekend and adds them to the Reading List Document, along with your notes. **Please try to do this by Tuesday at the latest, so that we have enough time to make the slide.**
- **Would any of you like to put them onto one slide for the class? 😊**

WEEK 17

So, this week we are moving **beyond academic literature** to look at how our topic is represented in the real world (news, government reports, NGOs). Luckily, our topic is **LITERALLY BASED ON REAL-WORLD OCCURENCES**. So, it should not be too difficult for us.

Here is the step-by-step plan for us to complete before the next workshop:

1. Narrow Down Our Topic

I have some thoughts from our presentation today that I think we should all keep in mind about our topic. We forgot to connect our topic to the research brief we chose :)

- **Algorithms are the new storytellers:** The brief asks us to look at who is telling the story and why. Our project argues that algorithms are the new storytellers (because we are focussing on social media). They construct certain claims around knowledge and truth based on what keeps us online.
- **The platforms shaping our reality:** The brief mentions that stories are told in negotiation with platform affordances. Our topic explores exactly how features such as *likes, shares, and recommended for you* frame information to alter our reality.
- **Data Colonialism:** We are directly addressing the brief's theme of Data Colonialism. We are showing how users' minds are being colonised by data-driven agendas that prioritise profit or ideology over the truth.

The main task is to investigate and problematise a narrative.

2. Choosing Our Narrative

So now our task would be to choose a social media narrative such as a conspiracy theory or a widely recognised propaganda or disinformation.

Over the weekend, all of us should look online for such narratives that we can focus our research and digital artefact on. And we can put it in the group for a vote or discussion.

Let's try to fix our narrative by Sunday, so that we have three days to find non-academic sources for our project.

3. Things to Discuss for Our Meeting on Wednesday at 2PM

For the next workshop, we need to bring a **Draft Data Management Plan**. It doesn't need to be perfect, but it must cover:

1. **Topic Definition:** A refined definition based on our academic + non-academic research.
2. **Data Gathering Plan:** What data will we collect for the final project? Do we need to take interviews? Where will we get it? How?
3. **Data Ethics:** How will we be transparent? (e.g., Consent forms for interviews, anonymising data).

WEEK 19 & 20

Following our chat with Kaajal, I've put together a refined **summary of the project on Page 2**, so we have a clear, shared vision of what we're building (*I have changed our previous summary*). I've also broken down the task distribution for everyone and listed exactly what we need to prep for this week's workshop.

1. Some things to keep in mind about our digital artefact

A user lands on what looks like a standard news feed or webpage. As they interact, the platform's mechanics (autoplay, intrusive pop-ups, infinite scroll, "recommended" redirects) hijack their agency, forcing them into various conspiracy pipelines (e.g. disinformation, influencer scams, celebrity spectacle). It is designed in such a way that the users get absorbed in the various content and end up exploring everything on it. **We are using this to explore platform affordances and the attention economy. We are proving that algorithms and UI design are the actual storytellers that construct a user's reality.**

The Goal: To make the user *feel* the sensory overload and algorithmic manipulation that leads to radicalisation, proving that platform design is a form of narrative control.

2. Possible Data Collection Method

We will run a short, anonymous online survey asking participants about their experiences with online media (e.g., How did the platform's design make you feel?). **We will have to design a set of questions to get the best possible dataset that we can directly incorporate into our project.** We could also design the survey using specific images or prompts that could instil a reaction from the participants. Towards the end of the survey, we can ask them how our survey design itself made them feel.

3. Work Division for TWO Weeks

To get us moving, here is how we can split the work for the next two weeks.

For the Research Leads

Goal: Your job is to build the escalation matrix for our website (*Do not worry by the name. It's just a fancy word I made up for this process* 😊). Algorithms blend celebrity gossip, political outrage, and conspiracies into one feed. We need you to curate a chaotic mix of content based on how deep the user is clicking, rather than what the specific topic is.

Fia and Danny:

Please collaborate on this task with **each other** 😊

~~☐~~ Come up with the levels of escalation. Instead of picking specific cases, gather real-world examples through research (or draft fake ones based on real research) that fit into these three levels of the user journey:

- **Level 1:** What innocent content does the user see when they first land on the site? (e.g., A trending hashtag about a celebrity, a basic recycling tip, a generic wellness post).
- **Level 2:** Gather content that is edgy, highly emotional, or uses “us vs. Them” that motivates users to click on them and learn more about them. E.g., “The mainstream media is lying to you about the trial”, or “Why your doctor doesn't want you to know this”).
- **Level 3:** The bottom of the rabbit hole where multiple conspiracies emerge and it is mixed with real facts. This aims to mimic real social media feeds. So, it is impossible to tell real from fake.

There are some research papers that talk about such disinformation and conspiracy theories as well. Don't forget to add the references to our [Reading List Sheet](#). **Once you have gathered enough cases, pass it on to the Practice Leads so that they know what kind of data they must translate into practice. Please do try to get this done in two weeks.**

Manaal:

~~☐~~ Analyse papers on attention economy, platform affordances, algorithmic amplification etc...

Write a short summary of how the *design* of platforms (like infinite scroll or autoplay) forces narratives onto users.

~~☐~~ Prepare questions for our data collection, surveying how people interact with and feel about platform mechanics. This data will be the foundation for our website.

~~☐~~ Put together project for Workshop 20 display.

For the Practice Leads

Goal: Figure out *how* we build this safely and design the user journey.

Meggie and Jude:

Please collaborate on this task with **each other** 😊

- ☐ ~~What does the homepage look like? What happens when they click the first link? Draw the flow of how the user gets trapped in the rabbit hole. You can use tools like Figma, Miro, or just pen and paper for now. **(Remember this is also for WEEK 19'S workshop task. Our group should outline two potential pieces of practice, one that represents and one that responds to the findings of our data. We should communicate our idea as an outline, storyboard or prototype.)**~~
- ☐ ~~Look into the ways needed to create annoying but functional web mechanics (e.g., timed pop-ups, auto-scrolling, or chaotic layouts).~~
 - *Important:* Check if we can build a website or need to consider other feasible ways. I can look into the required coding for such a website with you because I am familiar with web coding languages.
- ☐ ~~Check if there are other ways to incorporate our survey data into the website. Maybe the user can click a link, and a notification shows that their algorithm has been successfully altered and they will get more content related to the link they clicked. Every time a user engages with the content, the algorithm notifies them that it has changed and will recommend more similar content to them. Does this notification make people more aware of the content they consume online? Does it make them more conscious of what they click on?~~

APRIL

Timeline:

1. 25–26 March

- Everyone starts deciding on one celebrity case of their own
- Checking whether the case is workable as an interactive path
- Everyone shares their chosen case in the group with a short brief

2. 26 March

- Meeting with Kaajal, we should have:
 - our overall artefact idea- The artefact is an interactive, experiential news website that flips the standard mechanics of the attention economy inside out. Instead of operating as a manipulative black box, the platform features a completely transparent algorithm or GLASS BOX. We could name our website that as well.
 - the homepage logic- By adopting the addictive, infinite-scroll interface of a social media platform but populating it strictly with news and celebrity content, the artefact demonstrates exactly how platform logic categorises users, amplifies emotion, and constructs narratives in real time.
 - a list of everyone's cases.

3. By 27 March

- Finalise the overall direction and the case list. Make sure no more major changes after that if possible

4. 28 March – 10 April

- Each person writes the first full draft of their own interactive case path and shares their draft in the group
- Start developing the homepage / visual structure / page layout
- Begin mapping each path into the website format

If you have any suggestions/inspirations for the website design, do put in the group

5. 11 April – 20 April

- Finish the main content for all five paths
- Integrate everything into the website
- Refine the layout, navigation, and overall consistency

- Do the final editing, checking, references, AI acknowledgement if any
- Upload the artefact on to one of our digital portfolios

6. 21 April – 27 April

- Complete an introduction and rationale for project, and an assessment of our methods, findings, and response(s) - this should be between 1,500-2,000 words total and should be presented on the final website as an embedded part of the digital media artefact(s) rather than as a stand-alone, separate document.
- Fill the Submission Sheet (everyone must submit the same sheet).

Work Division:

One interactive path is to be developed by each of us.

Artefact Website Design- Manaal, Jude

Filling Submission Sheet, Case pathway development, content integration, and revision support - Maggie

Introduction, rationale, academic methods, references- Danny, Fia