

Mary: Welcome to Course Stories, produced by the instructional design and new media team of Ed Plus at Arizona State University. In this podcast, we tell an array of course design stories alongside other ASU online designers and faculty. On today's course story...

Kristy: And I think as subject matter experts and educators, we have just enjoyed sort of this assumed level of trust. I'm a professor at ASU and you come to my class, you should believe you that I know what I'm talking about. But we live in a world that's so fraught and these relationships are so complicated that I think we need to take a step back. I would just encourage all educators to sort take a step back and say, we really earned our students' trust, and probably not. We've never read these students before. And so some of the ways I recommend not just educators, but anyone in a relative position of power, is to be very transparent about your expertise and why you are where you are. And also the limits of your expertise. We don't know everything about our subject area, and we should be gracious in recognizing when, oh, I don't know the answer to this question, or let's look into this together. And so kind of being real about what we know and what we don't know.

Mary: Hi, I'm Mary Loader, an instructional designer from ASU Online.

Ricardo: I'm Ricardo Lyon. I'm a media specialist at the same place.

Mary: Yeah, we work together.

Ricardo: Let's get on with the show.

Mary: Okay.

Ricardo: Hey Mary.

Mary: Hi Ricardo.

Ricardo: How are you today? Wow.

Mary: I figured I'd switch it up.

Ricardo: Yeah. This scary person on the phone on a-

Mary: Menacing.

Ricardo: ...murder movie.

Mary: Well, this is a really important topic and I felt like we needed to set the tone.

Ricardo: Yes, it is a very important topic and I think that we have a lot of really great things for the listeners to hear in this episode.

Mary: I mean, truly. This is kind of different than we normally do. The interview is definitely going to be centered around the course itself, but you brought in a whole other venue.

Ricardo: This is like an old eighties show. This is a very special episode of course stories.

Mary: It's true though.

Ricardo: It's true. Today we're going to hear from Kristy Roschke, the instructor for MCO 427, Misinformation and Society.

Mary: We're also going to hear from Regina Revazova, who is an awesome podcast producer. She actually runs her own company for it and supports a few projects around campus. She has other social projects that are so meaningful that they document and it's...

Ricardo: Like a real journalist, a real, podcast producer.

Mary: Oh my gosh.

Ricardo: Not just us.

Mary: I can't even believe we got her to come here and speak with us and share her story because she grew up in Russia and as a journalist, but then she's still like nineties vibe. You'll hear it. It's so good.

Ricardo: A very unique perspective on misinformation.

Mary: And a little bit of some tidbits on how to produce a good podcast too.

Ricardo: Absolutely. That's my favorite part of this episode is helping you guys know how to produce your own podcasts.

Mary: Mainly because we need to have the people who are listening to this and who are developing the youth and adults out there through your own courses. We need to have you guys create things that help inform our society, that help expand the bubble.

Ricardo: Right. Something that we will talk about in the episode.

Mary: I'm really excited for Kristy's class. She's an amazing, passionate faculty member. She has so much support, but she has also just so much independent, really thoughtful ways to run her class, and also thoughtful ways to create a course that helps inform a society and create a stronger society for all of us.

Ricardo: And also to how to connect with students who might have differing opinions from where you're coming from. I think that's really thoughtful in that way. Who's going to be conducting this interview?

Mary: Oh, Deanna Soth, our fave.

Ricardo: She is our fave. She is the associate director of ID and M instructional design and new media over at Ed Plus.

Mary: She happens to also be my favorite boss I've ever reported to in the entire world. She's an amazing human and just a really great designer as well.

Ricardo: Okay. Are we ready to jump in?

Mary: I'm ready.

Ricardo: Let's do it.

Deanna: My name is Deanna Soth. I am associate director of instructional design at ASU Online Ed Plus.

Kristy: I'm Kristy Roschke. I'm the managing director of the News Collab at the Cronkite School at Arizona State University.

Mary: And you are most recently?

Kristy: And I'm most recently part of the president's award-winning team of study hall data literacy project.

Ricardo: Me too.

Kristy: I feel like I'm here with some fellow study hall associates. It's great.

Ricardo: Once you win the award then you recognize people that just have a different air about them.

Kristy: I feel like something changed that day when I learned about it. Actually, what happened was Jessica sent me an email and said that we had won it and I was like, is that a big deal? And she was like, Yeah, it's a big deal. So then I had to google it because I didn't know what it was.

Deanna: But it is a big deal.

Kristy: It is.

Ricardo: Did you go to the event?

Kristy: No, I don't think I made that cut. I feel like I'm on the bench of the team. Again because I didn't get to be record, like you don't see my face, you just feel me around.

Deanna: So Kristy, you and I have been working together for such a long time. You are teaching a new course, MCO 427 about misinformation. Can you tell us about it?

Kristy: I can. So this is part of our new bachelor's in digital media literacy that the Cronkite school's offering. And we thought because of where we are at this moment in time, it would be really important to have kind of a general survey course about misinformation, what it is, who's involved, kind of everything from those that create it to those that consume it, the why's and the how's of it.

Deanna: Awesome. What a impactful experience for students. I hope that they were appreciative by the end of the class and hopefully learned some new things.

Kristy: Yeah, I hope so too. I mean, it was the first time we offered it this past semester, spring 2022. And so I was pleased to get kind of a wide variety of students and some good numbers for it being the first time we offered it. And I think it sort of speaks to the popularity of the topic that I was getting students from outside of Cronkite and I think it was a really enriching experience.

Deanna: Well it's true because digital literacy is something that we are trying to teach and explore within teaching best practices, not only learning best practices. And so that's why you came up for this podcast. What I thought was interesting about this course in particular though, in the course description it says of course this course is designed to investigate the sociocultural, historical, technological causes of misinformation to help students develop strategies and tactics to recognize misinformation. But also to develop resiliency. Can you tell me what you mean by that?

Kristy: Sure. So misinformation is just one way that we're impacted by digital technology's influence on the way that we do everything. So my field of research where the classes that I teach are really more about building those, I would refer to them as sort of 21st century literacy skills. I don't see digital literacy, media literacy, data literacy, any of these you hear these kind of popular terms nowadays as being any different than traditional literacy because you simply cannot be a person operating in this world without interfacing with digital technology. And you really need to boost those critical thinking skills. And so it's really about knowing how to take what you already know about the world and sort of translate it to these new platforms where the rules for communication might seem the same, but really they're not for a bunch of different reasons.

So I think that's kind of why we thought that misinformation, people hear about it because it's everywhere. You hear about it on the news all the time.

Deanna: Fake news.

Kristy: That's right. I really hate that phrase, but that's the one that everyone knows. And pretty much ever since 2016 it's gotten so much attention and really global attention and we continue to see more and more dramatic real world implications of what bad information can do, that we wanted to make sure we had a course just specifically talking about misinformation, even though we kind of touch upon sort of good and bad and finding incredible information, how to navigate complicated online communication systems across all the courses in our degree program.

Deanna: Do politics come up in the class at all?

Kristy: Yes, politics come up a lot. And I was prepared for that. Or maybe I should say I expected that, and I thought I was prepared, but I don't know that you could ever truly prepare because you just kind of don't know what students you're going to have and what sort of hot button issues are going to be. So I would say for this class, probably not surprisingly, the way it came up most was in response to Covid, but also kind of the insurrection, the January 6th insurrection, that was pretty topical and timely. And then at the end of the course we saw the Russian invasion of Ukraine. So this is the kind of class where you have to prepare and re-prepare and prepare again. And I'm constantly updating materials and we use the discussion board a lot to talk about these timely topics because really week to week, there was something new and a lot of it was if not directly politically charged, it could potentially be politically charged. So that was something that we kind of navigated together and I had to keep a close eye on.

Deanna: Do you think the asynchronous format of the course helps or hinders that?

Kristy: That's a really good question and I think it probably helps selfishly, because you don't get that tempers flare heat of the moment sort of thing that you might in a classroom. Although the flip side of that is you also don't have that let's all talk it through together sort of scenario. So I think what I had to do, and I had a great TA as well monitoring the discussion boards. And I guess I kind of also learned pretty quickly as we started the class to really tailor my discussion questions a little bit more narrowly. Which is not to say I didn't want it to discourage political conversation because I absolutely didn't, nor did I want to suggest that anyone's ideas were better than others. But in some cases some ideas are more evidence-based than others. And so I've figured out after the first couple of weeks that I should be a little bit less broad about my discussion questions so that we weren't meandering into places that if I wasn't able to check the discussion board, I wasn't like, eh.

Mary: Do you hear me?

Ricardo: I do.

Mary: One, two, three. Are we close enough for you?

Ricardo: Yeah, sounds great.

Mary: Okay, good. Hey, I'm glad the cord's not broken and it's just a cable. That's a lot cheaper to replace.

Ricardo: Yeah. And you're right, I think it was the red one.

Mary: It is. Toss it in the trash. Why are we even leaving it on the table?

Ricardo: Because I was just looking at the wrong one.

Mary: Do you have to put it in a recovery box for somebody to see it? Yeah, get rid of that. We don't need that anymore. We're rich.

Ricardo: Alrighty.

Regina: Okay. Do you want me to pronounce one more time my name? Just so you could get [inaudible]?

Mary: On the recording? It's a good idea.

Ricardo: Yeah.

Regina: Regina. Regina Revazova.

Ricardo: Regina Revazova.

Regina: Regina Revazova.

Ricardo: Revazova.

Mary: We're getting good at this.

Ricardo: This is going to be included in the podcast. Thank you for joining us for an interview to kind of support the interview that we have with Kristy today. Regina, you are Russian born journalist, correct? Is that how you would identify yourself? How about you introduce yourself and let us know who you are, please.

Regina: For the past many years, I barely, rarely mentioned that I am Russian born until the war in Ukraine. So I don't know, it kind of happens to you that you become part of your new culture, and over years it became my past I guess. And then of course half a year ago everything went upside down. So how would I identify myself right now? I'm just Regina Revazova. I do independent business. I've been a journalist for many years before the business. I still am on a verge. Sometimes there are journalistic projects that I work on, sometimes they're absolutely brand related production that I do for my clients. And yeah, I was born and raised in Russian. I spent 24 years out of my 38 living there.

Ricardo: So specifically, we have you on because we want to talk to you about misinformation, but can you give us a little bit about your connections to ASU?

Regina: Last fall right before the semester, I was contacted by the Cronkite School of Journalism. They asked me to teach a course, a part-time course. I am part of the NPR's Next Gen radio. We provide the most probably comprehensive from A to Z how to create a radio story. I'm part of that. I'm a mentor and I enjoy it tremendously. It's a little bit different format. It's a one week, very intensive program. And so when I was approached by Cronkite School, I thought I'll give it a shot in very, very, very part-time capacity. It happened to be much more work than I thought, but I enjoyed teaching the students

and seeing how fascinated they are with the storytelling and creation of their own shows.

Ricardo: And you produce some podcasts here at ASU, correct?

Regina: I do produce podcasts currently, one here at ASU. Yes, it's for School for Civic and Economic Thought and Leadership.

Mary: School of Civic and Economic Thought and Leadership at Arizona. That is a mouthful. We love our mouthfuls. That's why we love our acronyms.

Regina: That's I say Skittle.

Ricardo: The name of that podcast is?

Regina: Keeping it Civil.

Ricardo: Keeping It Civil.

Mary: I love that. I'm going to go listen to it. I had no idea.

Regina: Lots of the things are very controversial there currently in our society. So to keep that conversation civil but yet to have the conversation is the goal of the podcast.

Mary: That's awesome. Modeling good Communication in conflict. So important.

Ricardo: Very important. And you were a guest in one of the episodes and that's what a little bit inspired me to say, oh, we should Regina on. And there was one thing that you said specifically about in Russia, the culture in general. You used this really beautiful phrase, the sugar is a salt and the war is peace. And I thought, oh wow, that is so beautiful and so connected to what this conversation that we're having with Kristy is regarding misinformation. And so I'm excited to get some of your insights into misinformation as the episode goes on. So look forward to that, listener.

Regina: Yeah, I'm happy to unpack it.

Deanna: And then you have students writing a blog post, or several blog posts in the class. Tell us about that.

Kristy: Yeah, sure. So that's a recurring, well it is a recurring theme of our degree program. One of the digital literacies we want folks to learn is how to communicate for an online audience. And most of our students have at least at one point posted something on social media. And so they're kind of used to that. And they certainly read a lot of information on social media, but not a lot of them have that experience inserting hyperlinks into the things that they write and writing in the style that they might be used to seeing.

And I think more and more they're going to need to know how to do that in really a lot of different types of jobs. So we decided early on, even before we had the degree program, my colleague Dan Gilmore, blogging is really kind of integral to how he thinks media creation should be. And so we sort of added that into all the classes. And so it's not all that different from having response essays to class materials, but it's more of a sort living, breathing document. And that's, I think, a more practical way for them to incorporate other sources of information into their writing so that they could respond to the weekly questions.

Deanna: So including the blogs and then the rest of the students' interactions in the course, what surprised you the most?

Kristy: I think I was surprised by how heavy the class got early on. And again, no surprise given what we're living through in 2022, that they were incorporating a lot of their personal experiences into the class. And I had suggested that they do that. So I sort of set the stage for that. But it was pretty intense to the point where I felt like I should sort of course correct a little bit and say you don't have to be quite so personal. You can, and if this is cathartic and it's helping you work out how you understand these topics then absolutely do. But I kind of felt a little bit like maybe they, I don't know, maybe this is just my own projecting, but that they thought they should try to tie personal things to the conversations. And after reading 120 posts, I was getting a little impacted by it.

So I was just surprised I think by that. I'm a tinkerer by nature, so I've always changed things, but that is one thing that I'll change is it's not to say I don't think there should be a lot of reflection because I do. I think part of what you're learning is understanding how you think about things, how you learn things. There should be a lot of reflection. It's a lot of metacognitive activities. So I don't want to eliminate that all together. But I think maybe I leaned a little too far into let's make this a reflective and reflexive exercise where in some ways I thought maybe it wasn't as useful as I'd anticipated.

So I think I might step back from that a little bit. There's still ample opportunity for that and I always encourage them to write in first person if they want to, but I think I might actually, this seems weird because, I don't know, maybe it feels a little bit more traditional but might actually have them write a little bit more traditional sort of, I don't know, "research" types of stuff. Just so we could see how they're intellectualizing these things as opposed to just personalizing them.

Deanna: I really appreciate that. I wish more online instructors would see it as an iterative process and do the tinkering more. So thank you for saying that. It's much appreciated. Because it should be something that you're constantly changing, especially for the times. Who knows what's going to happen when you teach it next, and to make that super relevant for the students is really special for them in that moment learning not a completely canned class. Yeah, that's great. I love that.

Kristy: I think there's some classes that they're not going to change a lot and that's fine, but I've always gravitated toward and have always taught classes that are timely. I work in a

journalism school and so if you can't make it fresh, I think having something canned in the area that I teach feels even worse than a canned math class or something like that.

Deanna: Totally. And so for our audience who are also teaching online or teaching at ASU or other institutions, what advice would you give them for creating trust with their students when they're presenting perhaps controversial topics or information?

Kristy: So that's a great question. I think there might be two elements to that if we're talking about incorporating controversial things. I do a lot of speaking and reading and researching on institutional trust. And I think as subject matter experts and educators, we have just enjoyed of this assumed level of trust. I'm a professor at ASU and you come to my class, you should believe you that I know what I'm talking about. But we live in a world that's so fraught and these relationships are so complicated that I think we need to take a step back. I would just encourage all educators to take a step back and say, have we really earned our students' trust? And probably not. We've never read these students before. And so some of the ways I recommend not just educators but anyone in a relative position of power is to be very transparent about your expertise and why you are where you are and also the limits of your expertise.

We don't know everything about our subject area and we should be gracious in recognizing when I don't know the answer to this question, or let's look into this together. And so being real about what we know and what we don't know is important. I think it's also important, specific to that controversial topics part of it, is that we want to encourage and foster civil dialogue. And in order to do that, students need to feel safe. And I don't want to sound all lovey dovey about that or touchy-feely about that or whatever, but I mean I think people should feel like they can speak their minds in a constructive way.

They need to understand those boundaries and they take their cues from the instructor. And so setting up parameters about how the community's going to operate, whether that's synchronous or asynchronous is very important. I have some sort of discussion board kind of rules of the road and they're not many, but above all it's respect other viewpoints. And then I try always to interact when I need to intervene and with that same level of respect. So I think the power dynamic and being transparent are really important.

Mary: So you grew up in Russia. And as an American, I have some potentially misinformed notions of living in Russia, and it's a controlled state and the narrative's controlled and it's the same in America, let's be real. But I would love to hear from your perspective being that you're a journalist and it sounds like taking in input from lots of different venues and different perspectives and narratives that they want pushed out. And I say they as the collective mind they, but tell us what that's like.

Regina: Well, Mary, it really depends who you ask. How old is the person? What's they, I don't know, background, where they lived. I can tell you for sure that I probably, so I was born in mid eighties and about six years after I was born, the Soviet Union collapses. So I don't remember anything from that time. And it was already in the really bad shape

when I was born. The collapse happens, again there's no free information to what I learned later in my life. The collapse happened just overnight. People were shocked. Just like you wake up and the country that doesn't exist anymore. Because people understood that there's something going on economically, there's something going on with salaries that are withheld. There's something going on with prices that are rising rapidly. And one day you wake up and it's a whole different reality. So I grew up through nineties and that was, I refer personally to that time as Russia didn't quite figure out what's going on.

In bigger cities, it was mafia run reality basically. Absolutely like no law. No law that anyone would observe, no courts that would not be continuously and constantly bribed. There were hierarchies instantly that were brought into existence, semi-criminal and very criminal. It depends again where you are. I was born and raised in Siberia, a small mining town and I had a good childhood. My parents were not politically charged for anything, they were just engineers. So it was a small mining town where they moved before I was born.

So I think I had the most freedom compared to many, many generations before and after. So it really depends who you ask. And I dreamt about journalism and that was the time, early 2000s when I was starting to think about college and getting my education. And I was writing in this little newspaper, in school newspaper. And my father was very adamant about me not going to journalist school because there were wars raging and opposed to Soviet Union. Chechnya now was a mess. And I remember saying, you're going to die under Russian tanks. You're going to die if you go into that was the perception. And he wasn't alone.

Mary: Well because he lived through that.

Regina: That was his lens.

Mary: How scary as a parent.

Regina: And I don't know, I just pushed kind of with my idea of like, oh, don't worry, it's going to be fine. It's not the same time where you grew, that country doesn't exist. So we had that gulf of freedom with much freer journalists back then. And it felt like we're finally turning a corner and things are going to be better. Although we were desperately poor, not us personal as a family unit, but like a society. And then there were these people that would just climb to the top just because there were some bureaucrats that would get tons of bribes and they would acquire tons of... It was a mess. It was a mess of estate, but there was lots of freedom. That kind of confusing reality.

Mary: Opportunism.

Ricardo: Yeah.

Mary: I think that's great. First of all, I think that's so cool because not that I had the same upbringing, but my dad was kind of upset later on in life that he raised such a strong-

headed daughter. But I think that's kind of our generation. We've all been so lucky that we didn't have when we were kids, at least major wars. We still potentially have a different perception on the hope of a society because of our childhoods.

Ricardo: We were kind of at the end of the Cold War where the big threats weren't as strong as they were in the generations right before us.

Mary: Absolutely. The living in fear was not our childhood. We were so lucky.

Regina: Yeah, me too I think. In kind of partially me too.

Mary: Nineties. I love nineties kids.

Deanna: What are the goals for the students in the class and then what do you hope that they'll take away after the class?

Kristy: Sure. So I think generally speaking, the goals for the students are to understand more about the way that mis and disinformation operate. And so that's sort of like if you think of it as a continuum from the people, the groups that the systems that create the bad information and the reasons why, whether there's a harmful intent or not, through the creation, how it actually gets created and how it gets distributed and what are some of the affordances of technology that enable that. Through to reaching somebody and what happens when it reaches someone and what are some of the sociological and psychological factors that might impact how someone is perceiving this information, and then what they might do with it. So it kind of covers the whole gamut. And the objectives would be to understand the nuances of each piece of that. And a big part of what we talk about is how, again, those sort of digital and technological systems undergird all of this.

So it's not just like you telling me a lie and me hearing it face to face. That's still misinformation, but it's very different from this system of misinformation that digital media enables. So we really want people to be able to unpack all of the parts of that process. And what I would want them to take away from it is being able to use some of these tools. We spoke earlier about resiliency and I'm not sure that I answered this question, but what are some of the tactics and the techniques and just understanding about people and systems that can help individuals make decisions when they encounter specific information. So in that moment when you see something you're not sure whether or not it's true, you would know how to handle that. But I also hate to say it's just about encountering that one piece of information.

Because really these are structural societal issues. And so understanding the role that we play as individuals, but also the role we play as parts of the groups that we're in, the networks we're in. As you kind of get back out to the macro level, what this is doing to our society and maybe ways that we can contribute to a solution, I've been thinking a lot about this in my research and I don't want students to come away from this class thinking they have to fix it. I think so much of the discourse around misinformation is that if only people knew better, we wouldn't have this problem. But that's just simply

not the case. This is bigger and stronger and thornier than any one person. So I'd like students to be able to place themselves within those systems and then work towards solutions. I also think that there's a lot of jobs that exist in jobs that will exist over the next decades that will need people who know how to do this. So thinking about ways to incorporate these solutions into their future jobs.

Deanna: That makes me wonder, outside of this class, what would you want to see changed in these systems if you could choose one big thing?

Kristy: Well, I mean I think that one thing is hard to say, but a thing, maybe it is the one thing that I would want to change is that social media is not necessarily to blame for misinformation or the blame for misinformation. But they play a huge role in this because there are just a few small companies that control pretty much all of the ways that we communicate. And the way that those systems operate are not transparent at all to consumers. So we don't have any idea how their algorithms work, how they're surfacing content to us, why we're seeing the things we see. We have maybe some insight, but not as much as we should into what content they might remove or they might push down so that we don't see it.

And in order for us to be empowered to be able to do something, we need to understand how those systems, those platforms work. That would be one part of it. But also this kind of boils down to structural issues within our society. So structural failings of democracies and capitalism and systemic racism and some of these things that put groups at odds with one another that then make us want to accept some of these narratives. It's way bigger than just the platforms, but I think it kind of easy, ha ha. First step is the platforms need to give us more information.

Deanna: I was thinking about Twitter the other day and I was thinking, I'm not sure it's fair that every tweet has the same potential audience. I wish some tweets were like the text was smaller and then other ones were bigger or something.

Kristy: Like if Twitter were a word cloud?

Deanna: Yeah, something like that.

Kristy: That's interesting. That's a really interesting thought. And I guess I would say a little bit kind of every tweet doesn't have the same potential audience, again because of the algorithm. So to your point, there is the potential there and we don't have any idea really the mechanisms behind which one gets that huge audience and which one doesn't. There's research around what types of messages are more popular and how bots can amplify certain messages to make them get bigger. Using your word [inaudible], imagining them be bigger. But we really don't know. And so I might tweet and you might tweet it exactly the same time similar content and yours might go viral and mine doesn't. And part of the problem is we don't know how that happens. So it's interesting to think about that. And that's one of the things like when we oversimplify the platform's role in misinformation, that's one of the ways that we can is just by

saying, well we have to just let the free market, like everyone gets the same chance, but really none of us get to control that. So we don't all have the same chance.

Ricardo: So Regina, what brought you here to the US?

Regina: So I was in journalism, I was reporting from Caucasus. Caucasus is this hot, unsettled, never settled spot in Russia. So I moved from Siberia to do that. Lots of ethnic tensions. Majority of Caucasus's population is Muslim, non-Russians, have nothing to do with actually ethnic Slavic DNA makeup. And it's kind of always rebellious region. Chechens are still now they're again get getting louder and louder at claiming the independence. They never associated with Russia. And there are lots of regions like that all over that big empire, let me call it that way. So that was the time I entered journalism. Acts of terrorism. The bombs are blowing in big market places like a mess, complete mess. But from the journalistic standpoint, I hate to say that, but there were stories, there were phenomenal things to report on. Corruption, human rights violation, you can go on and on and on about it.

Ricardo: There's a lot of truth to be uncovered.

Regina: Still journalists are killed, still journalists are threatened. People that fight for human rights are disappearing in the middle of the night. Things like that would happen. And then I married a journalist. I married another journalist who was actually covering events in that region for IWPR. IWPR is really well known across the world outside of the United States. It's a institute for war and peace reporting. So they have offices in every hotspot. They used to have office in Yugoslavia, he used to have office in Caucasus. Now they still have in South Caucasus, which is independent for the past 30 years, 30 plus years, they had office in Afghanistan, not anymore. Really amazing. And they do in depth journalism and they train people on the ground. So that's what basically my ex-husband now was doing. We were married at that time and it was 2006, 2007 when Putin basically declared a war on independent journalism.

He didn't openly declare a war, but he declared a war clearly. he declared a war on three major groups of people that were emerging in freer, crazier but freer Russia. Number one was his political opponents. Within a couple of years, they became non-existent. Number two was independent business. He brought the wealthiest men in Russia into the court in a small cage like a dog cage to showcase that this is what is going to happen to, this is the wealthiest person maybe in the world and this is what I can do with him. And the third group was journalists. So the crackdown across the country, not just journalists, human rights groups, everything that would report on things on the ground. And my ex-husband was one of them. I mean imagine, we're sitting having conversation here and someone rushing in, I don't know, six, five huge guys in black masks, you can see only they eyes.

And they threaten you. They grab your recruitment here, they humiliate you, and they disappear. And they don't have any plates, any badges, any identification.,

Mary: No way to hold them accountable.

Regina: Absolutely not.

Mary: That's frightening.

Regina: And that's coming from the toughest of the top of the government. That was our experience. That was his experience. He had to flee. And we applied for political asylum. Things shifted drastically. Since then, I've never went back. I doubt that I'll ever go back. The same thing with him. And that's when really that propaganda machine started to turn its wheels. And I don't think the world realized at that time what's really happening. But now we're seeing it in a full kind of mode in the ugliest way possible, spilling out in Ukraine and in all the suffering it's creating for sure.

Mary: That's frightening.

Regina: I'm sorry if I'm too...

Ricardo: No, this is wonderful.

Mary: This is so important.

Regina: If I'm too descriptive.

Mary: No, I think it's so good.

Ricardo: It's really giving some powerful context to...

Mary: How important it is to be aware and how important it is to take a stand to make sure our society is informed. I'm now going to go do a bunch of research on Russia in 2006 and seven and see where the build was happening. Were there cues? Because I want to know. Because I want to know if I can see them in our own society.

Regina: Here's a major difference that I always thought between the States and Russia. And I'm not an expert. I don't research the topics from my lived experiences. I think the major difference in the United States is that it had a country had an opportunity to forge that small minority of people that think, the think and they watch and they vote and they hold people accountable at their own expense.

Mary: That's so true.

Regina: Russia never developed it to the point where they actually couldn't be marginalized by loud mouths, by government, by just stupid people. America was able to, over the past 400 years, forge that very important. And again, it's a minority. It's always a minority that basically is the country. And that's the most precious thing I think that Russia never, it never had time. You have to forge a generation after generation. At least you have to not suffocate it as soon as it tries to spread. And that's what Russia does.

Mary: Makes me so much happier my dad made me read the US Constitution every summer at the beach. He was kind of silly about it. Now I kind of appreciate it.

Regina: Good.

Mary: In all of its flaws and ability to grow, it still is a pretty okay baseline.

Deanna: Could you give us some tips on how we as just regular citizens can avoid misinformation?

Kristy: Yeah. So I think one of the things, what's most important to remember is that when we have a visceral reaction to any kind of information, whether it's true or false or whatever, we are more likely to want to act on it. So people who create disinformation know that, and they create messages that are sort of designed to elicit a visceral emotional response. So a piece of advice would be when you see something that makes your blood boil or makes you really excited or just gives you some sort of extreme reaction, that would be a good time to pause and think about why you're having that reaction. Do I feel vindicated by a belief that I hold when I see this piece of information? And if so, maybe they're playing me. Maybe I'm being played and they're trying to make me think this way.

And that is when I would suggest people take the time to simply check it out. And truly, it's not that hard to find out whether something is accurate or not. Some things are trickier than others because most falsehoods have some element of truth in them. But to see if something is being covered by legitimate, credible news sources, really kind of only need to do a Google search on most things. And if something has transpired in the world, you'll see lots and lots of places covering it.

And that sort of safety and numbers tells you, okay, this is legitimate. But I think that's the first thing is to check those emotional responses. You don't usually get really excited about some deep dive into tax policy or something. So that's not likely to trip you up, but something that you care about. And you mentioned controversial topics before, so oftentimes it's a controversial topic, so check those emotions and that's the time when you want to take 30 seconds and Google it. Know that there's a lot of ways information can be taken out of context online. And if you're feeling bad about it, that might be happening.

Ricardo: So Regina, we were talking a little bit about how to identify misinformation or how to avoid misinformation.

Regina: It's tough.

Ricardo: Is there any tips that you can give to our listeners about how to do this?

Regina: Listen, one thing that I would advise to everybody, experience more than just your immediate bubble. Read more stuff that is outside of your comfort zone. Hear people, go attend things that are not comfortable for you maybe too. Be exposed to stuff.

America allows you actually both versions of it. You can get as close minded as you can possibly imagine in this country because you have so much freedom to choose. And you can get a phenomenal, absolutely phenomenal person that would be fascinating as soon as they open their mouth. Because again, this country allows you to do that. And what you choose, and there are many options in between too. What you choose oftentimes comes down to your shoulders.

And the best way to have a, what is it, the vaccination from the things that someone decided to put in your brain and a few months later you'll all of a sudden think that you think these things, but it was a very carefully crafted narrative for you to absorb entirely. To prevent that from happening, gosh, keep your brain muscles on cons. They have to twitch constantly. And that includes uncomfortable situations and that includes the repulsive people sometimes that you don't agree with. Do that for yourself. Do yourself a big favor.

Mary: Discernment is a superpower. To be able to tell the difference, and you can't unless you experience it all.

Regina: University is a bubble. We were just talking about it on Keeping It Civil. University is the biggest bubble you can imagine too. Don't be within the campus mentally.

Ricardo: Right, look at outwards.

Regina: Absolutely, yeah.

Ricardo: But also listen to course stories wherever you can listen to podcasts.

Mary: Jump in our bubble anytime.

Regina: Your bubble is important by the way.

Mary: How does this course story end?

Kristy: I'm not sure it does end. I think that digital literacy, media literacy, it's a lifelong practice. People are constantly needing to upgrade their skills. And what I hope students get from this class is to understand the underpinnings of misinformation as it is right now, and also to understand that it's an ever evolving concept. And we're going to be plagued by this, I think, for the rest of eternity. And so what I would hope students would continue to do following this class is to take what they learn in this class so that they can continue to teach themselves and continue to have a lifelong interest in this subject matter so they can recognize as new platforms develop, as new problems arise, they feel like they have the skills to be resilient when it comes to misinformation.

Ricardo: So Regina, we have instructors that we want to encourage to create podcasts that support their courses. Is there any kind of advice that you can give to people who are starting to plan their podcasts in regards to formats or just concepts in general?

- Regina: First of all, congratulations. When you start thinking about podcasts, it means you have stuff to say. That's amazing. Because not everybody has stuff to say. Podcast is a good version of Russia in nineties.
- Mary: Wild West.
- Regina: You can shine and do that. Don't shy away from shining because people really do appreciate that if you are creating podcasts in addition to your courses, because courses do allow some freedom to express yourself the way you want, of course. But podcasts on the other hand boosts that in so many ways. And what is your end goal? And don't be intimidated by the number of podcasts. Why do we have so many podcasts? The entry barrier is so low. You can start, You don't need to have fancy or Ricardo helping you because-
- Ricardo: But he is there to support your faculty, ASU online faculty.
- Mary: So don't not use Ricardo.
- Regina: Absolutely use Ricardo, absolutely. But a lot of people that are not as lucky as you don't have Ricardo. So what they do is they just start things.
- Ricardo: And instructors, you have a captive audience, you have students, and these can be in the form of assignments to listen to the podcast. And just to tell you anecdotally, from the few times that we have introduced podcasts into courses, the feedback is super positive. And the students really love to consume it. They will listen to it multiple times to get themselves prepared for the week.
- Mary: And such a cool way to include people that have really deep knowledge in certain subjects that they're not the instructor, but they're the instructor's buddy they went to college with.
- Ricardo: We have Regina on right now.
- Mary: Her friend Regina we just brought on. I mean, this is the place that you can create a legacy really easily.
- Regina: And I would say experiment. Take those students, invite them to the spot. Do stuff where all of a sudden your listeners become the big part of the conversation somehow. Because podcast is not being with the mic and talking to some audience that is sitting and listening passively. It's a conversation. So experiment with bunch of different things, whatever comes to your mind, it's your place to play.
- Ricardo: And probably more so than we have instructors who are developing their own podcasts, we have instructors who are assigning podcast assignments to their students to create their podcast. Is there any kind of, for a student, I think experiment is one great tip for a student who's going to be creating something for their instructor or for their course.

Regina: You have idea? That's wonderful. Go for it. Don't be intimidated that it's not going to sound like Joe Rogan. Joe Rogan was producing really crappy, really crappy podcasts for the first 20 years until he was just consistent with this. And that's big part of his success. But if you go back, back, back and listen, I don't know if they're still available. His content was absolutely not fascinating to say the least. Don't be intimidated. You have to go through the process where you're not very happy. Because I know a lot of the creators, they want everything to sound ideal. You have the concept, you have the idea. Do little research, entry barrier's low, buy that microphone for 20 bucks. Go and record. Go and again and again, and stick to the schedule that you can't afford. If it's once in two weeks, if it's once a month, if it's every day. But I think being okay with not sounding okay for the first many, many times, don't give up.

Mary: Filming on site. The students are walking by. It's very noisy.

Ricardo: So this is part of what might not be okay.

Regina: Or maybe it could become a part of conversation too.

Mary: Yeah, I think extra sound's actually kind of fun. Plus, I think Joe Rogan got himself a Ricardo. That's I think where he turned the page. He got a real production team. So what's really nice for our students and our faculty is they have access to studios all over the multiple campuses that are here. So check it out. I mean, we have these creator spaces in the libraries. We have one button studios in lots of locations. We have our Ed Plus studios, the Fulton schools have studios. There are so many opportunities around campus to get the help.

Regina: And sometimes just grab your blanket and bring it and put it on the wall and record it in the regular setting. That's the thing about audio. You really need to make sure that this sound is not bouncing from these hard surfaces. So any place that you can have, I don't know, we are recording. We are going to start new season recording at the [inaudible] library. It's perfect. They have this antique furniture, soft furniture. They have carpet on the floor. It's a tiny little space and there are shelves with books that absorb sound ideally. So instead of driving for all of our speakers to downtown Phoenix, which we used to do to the PBS studios, I'm like, no, no, no, no, no. This will save us so much time in headache.

Mary: And you can do it using Zoom. I mean, Zoom separates your audio.

Ricardo: There are plenty of professional podcasts that are being recorded on Zoom, especially during the pandemic. And I think that the listener has adjusted to going, okay, what I'm here for is the content. I think of course you always want to try to maximize your quality as much as possible, but that should not be the barrier that keeps you from creating a podcast.

Regina: And quote your guests. People are much more comfortable nowadays with technology, so don't be shy to tell them, do you have a mic? Do you headsets with this tiny little mic? It improves quality tremendously. And we want you to sound fascinating and the

best you can possibly sound. There are apps that have all of them have some free version like Riverside FM that records the highest quality possible, both video and audio. And it's very different from Zoom actually. You can tweak the settings in the Zoom that will allow you really high quality too. So I'm not downgrading Zoom at all, but there is Zencaster. There's so many right now, so I completely agree. And coach, coach, coach your guests. They're probably going to have at least the earbuds with wired earbuds from previous versions of iPhone when it was cool still to wear wired earbuds. I still have them.

Ricardo: As we're closing out here, we just want to ask if you have anything that you want to plug, anything you want to share with the listeners?

Regina: Can I just shout out to my company?

Ricardo: You absolutely can.

Regina: Or I don't want to compete with anyone that I'm not supposed with.

Ricardo: Well, it's a big pool, so we're not competing. We're sharing the space.

Regina: Yeah. Well, I run my own in independent company. It's called Open Conversation. The website is openconversation.com. And that's what we specialize in. We produce podcasts constantly, consistently. So if anyone needs my assistance in creating one, let me know.

Ricardo: Terrific. Well, thank you so much for joining us and bringing so much insight and color to the conversation that we're having here. We really appreciate it.

Regina: It's my honor to meet you and to talk to you. I'm glad that I ran into you, Ricardo, and thank you so much for this platform.

Ricardo: Wow, that was so cool to have Regina on with us. That's just like a cool presence just in the room. I mean, definitely you can tell that she has had that NPR training because she just has that NPR voice.

Mary: And she sounds so good. We sound like idiots next to her, but she's amazing.

Ricardo: There was a little, what's the word? Modest, making you modest? Humiliating. Not humiliating, but it gave us-

Mary: Humbling.

Ricardo: Humbling, that's the word.

Mary: She was lovely. She's not humiliating, she's amazing.

Ricardo: But yeah, she is amazing. And we really want you guys to go check out all the podcasts that she does for her company Open Conversation.

Mary: I love the whole experience that Kristy gave us around her classroom, around digital literacy, how to be better in that space. How to create and produce media. And then also the iterative of design approach that she's taking to things and how she's creating things. I think it's something to highlight.

Ricardo: Yeah, top notch.

Mary: Presidential.

Ricardo: Presidential. So thank you. Well, thank you guys for listening to this episode. Is there anything we can have the listeners do?

Mary: Actually, yes. We have a very poor followership on Twitter. I think it's me and like my mom. No, it's not even my mom. And oh, we have another instructional designer and I don't know the bots. The bots like us, but we'd love real humans to follow us. So follow us on Twitter at @CourseStories.

Ricardo: @CourseStories.

Mary: That's right. The @ sign and course, and then stories.

Ricardo: Exciting. And that's also going to be linked in our show notes and all that stuff too.

Mary: Absolutely. And we might actually start posting fun things there, so follow us to laugh more.

Ricardo: Yeah.

Course Stories is produced by the instructional design and new media team at Ed Plus at Arizona State University. Course Stories is available wherever you listen to podcasts. You can reach us at coursestories@asu.edu. If you're an instructor at ASU Online, tell us your course story and we may feature it in a future episode. Thanks for listening.

Mary: We've solved misinformation, folks.