

Ontario Model United Nations III



United States and Canada Joint Cabinet, Background Guide

April 7th to April 8th, 2018
omun.ca

Letter from the Chair

Dear delegates,

Welcome to OMUN III! My name is Jamie Oneschuk and I will be your chair for the United States and Canada Joint Committee this year. I am currently a Grade 12 student at UCC and I have had the privilege of being a member of the UCC Model UN team for the past two years, travelling to McGill, Georgetown, Berkeley and Columbia to compete in their prestigious conferences. Having started my Model UN experience at OMUN I, I am excited to help facilitate an exciting weekend of debate with all of you delegates at UCC. I hope that you will all enjoy OMUN as much as I have enjoyed all of my Model UN experiences, and I look forward to getting to know all of you.

Our committee, the joint cabinet is composed of members of both the United States and Canadian, President's and Prime Minister's cabinets, respectively. Our two topics of debate, NAFTA and Fake News, are two of the most significant topics that both nations face today. I am extremely excited to see the solutions you come up with to address the multifaceted issues.

I would like to take this opportunity to remind you all that position papers are due at the start of our first committee session on Saturday, April 7th, in order to be eligible for committee awards. Position papers would preferably be submitted to the email found on the website, but can also be handed in as a hard copy at the first committee session.

If you have any questions or concerns about the conference, don't hesitate to reach out. Best of luck to all of you, and I am excited to get started on what promises to be a great weekend!

Jamie Oneschuk
Chair, United States and Canada Joint Cabinet
OMUN III
uscad@omun.ca

Topic 1: North American Free Trade Agreement

Overview and History

The North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) has existed for over 20 years, being signed into law in 1994 while the Clinton and Chrétien administrations were in power in their respective countries. The purpose of the agreement was to remove barriers of exchange between Mexico, Canada, and the US. Many of the trade protections (i.e. taxes, tariffs, quotas etc.) that existed before this agreement made it much more difficult and expensive to export and import goods from other North American countries. When NAFTA was signed, it had 7 main goals, outlined in article 102 of the agreement:

1. Grant the signatories most favored nation status (lowest tariffs, fewest trade barriers, highest or non-existent quotas)
2. Eliminate barriers to trade and facilitate the cross-border movement of goods and services
3. Promote conditions of fair competition
4. Increase investment opportunities
5. Provide protection and enforcement of intellectual property rights
6. Create procedures for the resolution of trade disputes
7. Establish the framework for further trilateral, regional, and multilateral cooperation

NAFTA Thus Far

By removing many of the trade restrictions between the three countries, NAFTA has allowed North American to compete with other regions of the world, and match the strength of other economies like the EU and China. Through increasing the efficiency of trade between North American countries, decreases in costs of production allowed North American countries to sell produce and sell goods for lower prices, allowing them to be sold for cheaper both domestically and abroad. This allowed Canada, Mexico, and the US to compete on the international stage when it comes to producing low cost goods.

Trump and NAFTA

Donald J. Trump ran on a campaign of “America First” and as a result of that, he has decided to renegotiate the trade deal, due to the \$181 billion trade deficit that the US has with its NAFTA partners, and the estimates 1 million American jobs that have been lost due to the deal. As a result, he and his administration have threatened to back out multiple times, and have now started renegotiating the terms of the agreement with Canada and Mexico.

1. What are the issues with the current NAFTA and what can be done to remedy them for all sides?
2. Is Mexico needed for a trade deal? Would it be more beneficial for both Canada and the US to just have a two-way trade deal?

3. How long should the terms of this trade deal last? Should it be put up for review in a few years?

Bibliography

1. https://www.huffingtonpost.com/lori-wallach/nafta-at-20-one-million-u_b_4550207.html
2. <https://www.thebalance.com/history-of-nafta-3306272>
3. <https://www.thebalance.com/donald-trump-nafta-4111368>
4. <https://www.thebalance.com/nafta-pros-and-cons-3970481>

Topic 2: Fake News

Overview

The concept of “Fake News”, whilst seemingly a very new concept in the past year, has existed for many years in the past, and has recently taken a new turn with the digitization of the world. During the recent 2016 Presidential Election and current presidency of Donald Trump, fake news has been an incredibly major issue, with Trump recently stating that the “FAKE NEWS media knowingly doesn't tell the truth. A great danger to our country.” The latter part of his statement is incredibly accurate, as fake news poses a great danger to both America and Canada, and must be tackled to keep journalism clean and reliable in the future.

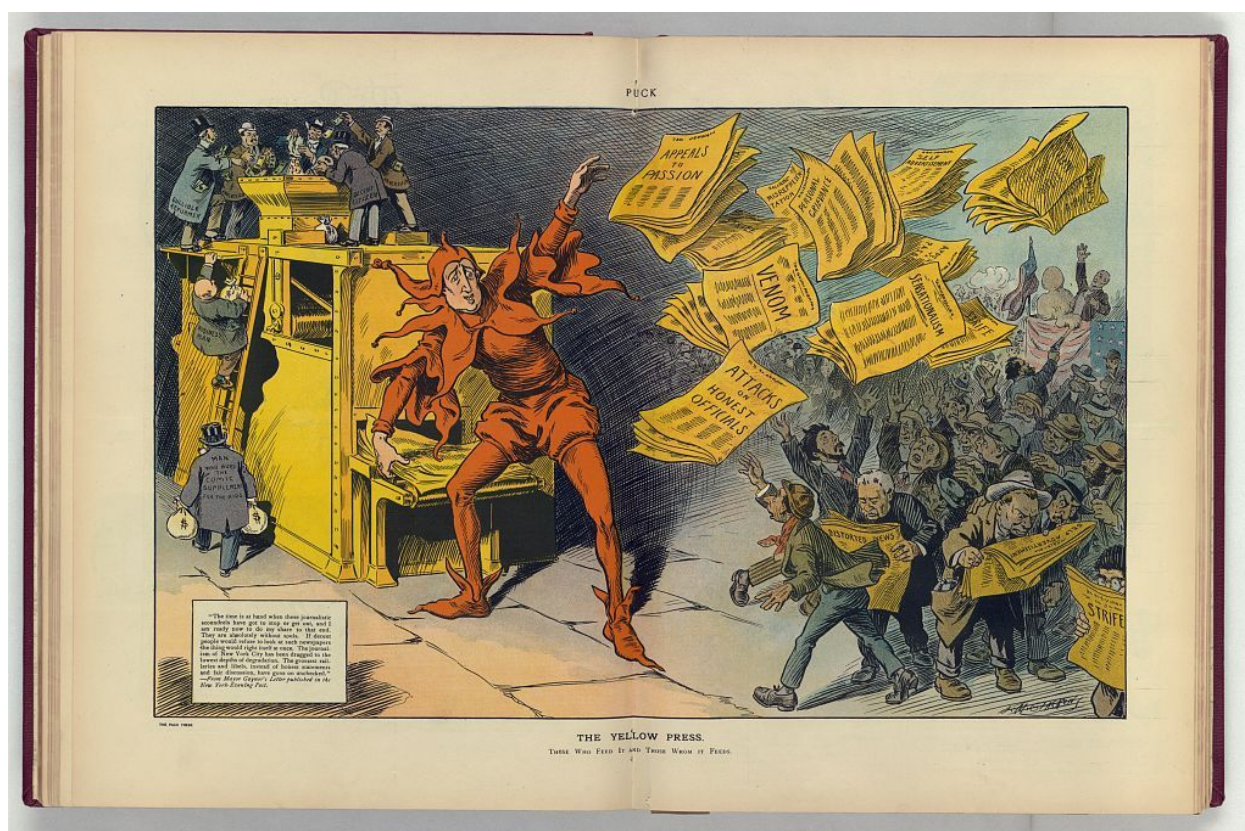


What is Fake News?

Fake news is news articles that are intentionally and verifiably false, and could mislead readers. Fake news articles originate on several types of websites. For example, some sites are established entirely to print intentionally fabricated and misleading articles, such as the above example of denvergurdian.com. The names of these sites are often chosen to resemble those of legitimate news organizations. Other satirical sites contain articles that might be interpreted as factual when seen out of context, such as the above example of wtoe5news.com. Still other sites, such as endingthefed.com, print a mix between factual articles, often with a partisan slant, along with some false articles. Websites supplying fake news tend to be short-lived, and many that were important in the run-up to the 2016 election no longer exist.

History

Despite the recent avalanche of Fake News in the past few years, Fake News has existed throughout history, with the first real outbreak of Fake News existing in the Roman Empire in 33 BCE, with Octavian running a “Fake News” campaign against rival Marc Antony, resulting in his suicide after multiple false allegations against his person. “Fake News” has often taken many different shapes and forms throughout history in its evolution to the form that we know today, specifically during the Spanish-American war in the early 20th century. In America during the late 19th century, as well as the early 20th century, producers Joseph Pulitzer and William Randolph Hearst battled against each other to become the most popular newspaper in New York City between their newspapers - the *New York World* and *The New York Journal*, respectively. Hearst and Pulitzer tried to outsell each other with what we would now know today as “clickbait”, using sensational headlines, images, falsified stories and interviews in order to get people to buy their newspapers.



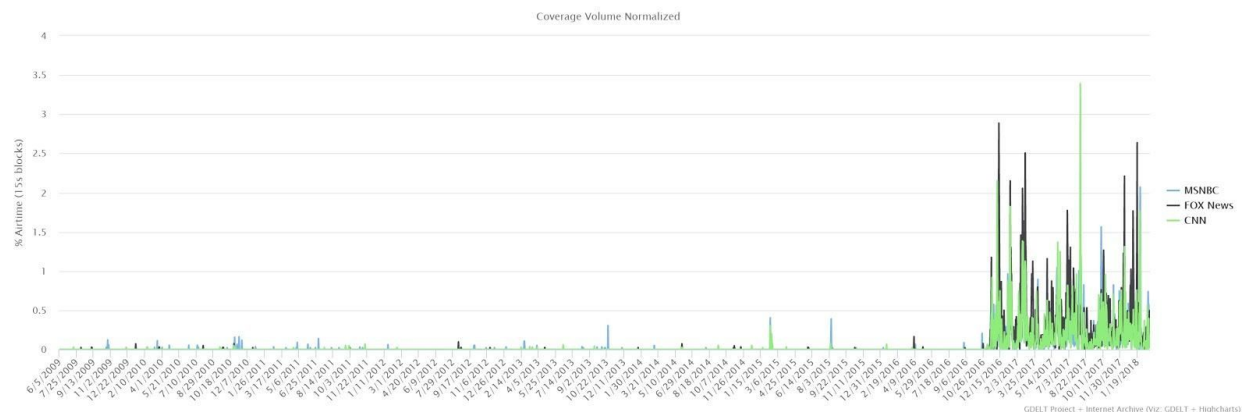
This comic, from the Library of Congress, shows Hearst throwing his newspapers with their outrageous headlines to a crowd of people, epitomizes the way that fake news and yellow journalism became mainstream in those times. The dangers of fake news were also apparent, as they were one of the clear causes of the Spanish-American War that began in 1898. Since the very early 1890s, Pulitzer and Hearst used false stories to drum up American However, despite all of this anti-Spanish sentiment due to yellow journalism, the explosion of the USS Maine, which Hearst claimed was “Split in Two by an Enemy's Secret Infernal Machine” was the last

straw for Americans. This false claim said that the Maine was destroyed by a Spanish torpedo, raising American sentiment and resulted in the Spanish-American War, where the United States “liberated” Cuba from its Spanish rule.

However, after the Spanish-American War and the yellow journalism that caused it, fake news would take a backseat, only being used in propaganda during the First and Second World Wars.

2016 Presidential Election

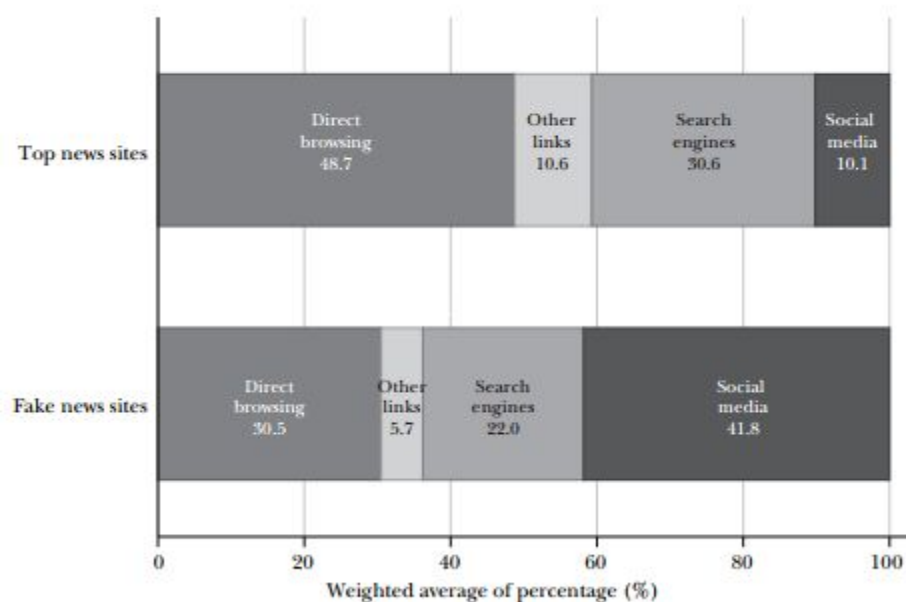
Fake news became a global subject and was widely introduced to billions as a subject mainly due to the 2016 U.S. presidential election.



This graph, created by the Internet Archive Television News Archive, shows the massive increase in media coverage of fake news during the election. From 2009 until the election in 2016, there was very little coverage, with it spiking during the election, showing the recent prominence of fake news.

In a study made by Stanford University, a list of fake news websites, on which just over half of articles appear to be false, received 159 million visits during the month of the election, or 0.64 per US adult. This same study found “115 pro-Trump fake stories that were shared on Facebook a total of 30 million times, and 41 pro-Clinton fake stories shared a total of 7.6 million times,” showing the major bias in favour of the now President Donald Trump. In another study by BuzzFeed News, it was discovered that the top twenty fake news stories during the 2016 Election had 8,711,000 shares, reactions, and comments on Facebook, while the top twenty real news stories were only shared, commented on, and reacted to 7,367,000 times. Investigations by BuzzFeed and the Guardian revealed that more than 100 sites posting fake news were run by teenagers in the small town of Veles, Macedonia, that “Endingthefed.com”, a site that was responsible for four of the ten most popular fake news stories on Facebook, was run by a 24-year-old Romanian man who did it to “help Donald Trump’s campaign”, and that A US company called DisinfoMedia owns many fake news sites, including NationalReport.net, USAToday.com.co, and WashingtonPost.com.co, and its owner claims to employ between 20 and 25 writers.

Share of Visits to US News Websites by Source



This image shows the difference between people finding their way to fake news, with it mainly being through social media compared to normal news sites.

Despite this seeming plague of fake news, there has been a major response by sites such as Facebook in labelling fake news articles, where the company uses third party fact-checkers. If a post has been proven to be a fake news story, the post cannot be turned into an ad or promoted. This came into use in 2017, where Facebook targeted 30,000 accounts related to the spread of misinformation regarding the French presidential election. [10] Artificial Intelligence, whilst still a new technology, also has major potential in solving fake news and the problems around it, and is being developed to stop fake news through algorithms in multiple nations, but is still very much in its infancy.

Ultimately, fake news is a major danger if left alone, and could easily spiral out of control without major action by this committee. Despite recent actions made by companies, there is still much work to be done in combating fake news, and there is much debate to be done in terms of potential solutions in stopping fake news from corrupting the media.

Questions to Consider:

1. How can we go about reducing fake news in the media?
2. What are some of the major dangers of fake news if it is not stopped in the future?
3. What are some ways to increase awareness against fake news?

Bibliography

1. Trump, Donald J. "FAKE NEWS Media Knowingly Doesn't Tell the Truth. A Great Danger to Our Country. The failing @nytimes Has Become a Joke. Likewise @CNN. Sad!" *Twitter*. Twitter, 25 Feb. 2017. Web. 25 Feb. 2018.
2. Oppen, Frederick Burr. *The fin de siècle newspaper proprietor* Digital image. *Library of Congress*. United States Government, 7 March, 1894. Web. 25 Feb. 2018.
3. Glackens, Louis M. *The Yellow Press*. Digital image. *Library of Congress*. United States Government, 12 Oct. 1910. Web. 25 Feb. 2018.
4. *Fake News Graph, 2009-2018*. Digital image. *Global Database of Events, Language, and Tone*. Kalev Leetaru, 25 Feb. 2018. Web. 25 Feb. 2018.
5. Silverman, Craig. "This Analysis Shows How Viral Fake Election News Stories Outperformed Real News On Facebook." *BuzzFeed*. N.p., 16 Nov. 2016. Web. 25 Feb. 2018.
6. Silverman, Craig. "This Analysis Shows How Viral Fake Election News Stories Outperformed Real News On Facebook." *BuzzFeed*. N.p., 16 Nov. 2016. Web. 25 Feb. 2018.
7. Allcott, Hunt, and Matthew Gentzkow. "Social Media and Fake News in the 2016 Election." *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 31.2 (2017): 211-36. Web. 25 Feb. 2018.
8. Auchard, Eric. "Facebook Cracks down on 30,000 Fake Accounts in France." *Reuters*. Thomson Reuters, 13 Apr. 2017. Web. 25 Feb. 2018.