



ASPEN TECH  
POLICY HUB



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# Addressing Radical Content on Social Media

*A digital literacy workshop for universities*

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Addressing Radical Content on Social Media is a proposed 1-hour workshop that will empower Rochester Institute of Technology (RIT) and other university students to navigate the social media landscape safely and critically. The workshop will teach students to identify and respond proactively to radical content, equipping them to preserve their mental well-being and intellectual development in the face of growing radical content on social media. The workshop can additionally serve as a starting point for developing more comprehensive courses on the subject.

## PROBLEM

As heavy users of social media, college students are [often exposed](#) to divisive and hateful content such as radicalization campaigns. This harmful content can spread extremist ideologies, misinformation, and conspiracy theories, as well as promote damaging behaviors such as substance abuse. Studies have shown that young adults' exposure to harmful social media content correlates with [increased risk behaviors](#), such as glorifying violence, promoting extreme beliefs, and neglecting academics.

RIT and similar universities are uniquely positioned to reduce the impact of harmful social media content on young adults by educating their students. The Addressing Radical Content on Social Media digital literacy workshop will be a vital tool to help RIT and similar universities promote campus safety and support students during a critical time in their development.

To learn more about  
this project, please visit

[aspen.tech/policyhub.org/fellowship](https://aspen.tech/policyhub.org/fellowship)



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*Interventions to mitigate the negative impact of harmful social media content can be vital in a university setting.*

## SOLUTION

Teaching the Addressing Radical Content on Social Media workshop at RIT and other universities that lack institutionalized social media literacy training will equip students to navigate an increasingly complex social media environment with care. The workshop will provide students with strategies to identify questionable content online and opportunities to practice these strategies via group discussions and role-playing. The workshop will be divided into 4 segments: (1) an introduction on the rise and impact of popular digital platforms; (2) an overview of different types of radical content and how to identify misinformation; (3) an outline of recommendations for navigating the digital landscape; and (4) an overview of key points and opportunities for continued learning. Universities could include the workshop in their orientation or health and wellness programs, or run them via partnership with student groups. Universities could also build on the single-session workshop to develop a comprehensive course on social media literacy.

The longer course could include lessons on cybersecurity, the history of misinformation, and the psychology behind radical content. Like the single-session workshop, the course would be interactive; it would include class discussions and group projects. Projects would be based on real-world examples, enabling students to create their own content campaigns against misinformation.

*For more information, please see:*

- (1) a [memo](#) describing the workshop; and
- (2) a [workshop outline](#) detailing the the timing and content of the workshop.



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## PROJECT BRIEF

### ABOUT THE HUB

The Aspen Tech Policy Hub is a Bay Area policy incubator, training a new generation of science and tech policy entrepreneurs.

We take science and tech experts, teach them the policy process, and support them in creating outside-the-box solutions to society's problems.

