CLWN607 - Shadow Stalking: Suppression Metrics
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Prerequisites: RAIL304 (JesterU Foundation)

Course Description

Modern information suppression doesn't announce itself with censorship stamps and black bars. It operates through *algorithmic opacity*—shadow bans, SEO manipulation, engagement throttling, and strategic deplatforming. This course teaches students to detect, measure, and route around corporate suppression tactics by treating platforms as hostile terrain requiring reconnaissance.

Learning Objectives:

1. Identify suppression fingerprints across major platforms
2. Measure engagement anomalies that indicate shadowbanning
3. Reverse-engineer SEO deranking strategies
4. Build routing protocols to circumvent algorithmic suppression
5. Document suppression tactics for the C.U.B.E. archives

Module 1: The Suppression Taxonomy 🎭🔍

Core Concept: Not all silencing looks the same.

Suppression Types:

1. **Hard Suppression** 🚫
    - Account suspension/deletion
    - Content removal
    - Explicit platform bans
    - *Detection:* Obvious, leaves evidence
2. **Soft Suppression** 👻
    - Shadow bans (content invisible to non-followers)
    - Engagement throttling (algorithmically limited reach)

    - Search result demotion
    - *Detection:* Requires metrics comparison
3. **Strategic Suppression** 🎯
    - SEO manipulation to bury adversarial content
    - "Fact-check" labels that reduce shareability
    - Algorithmic deprioritization of specific topics/accounts
    - *Detection:* Needs longitudinal data analysis
4. **Ambient Suppression** 🌫️
    - Cultural pressure against discussing topics
    - Self-censorship through unclear guidelines
    - Chilling effects from selective enforcement
    - *Detection:* Behavioral pattern analysis

Assignment 1.1: Classify 10 real-world suppression examples using this taxonomy

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Module 2: Shadow Ban Detection Protocols 👤🔬

The Problem: How do you prove you're being suppressed when suppression is designed to be invisible?

Detection Methodology:

A. Baseline Metrics (Control Group)

1. Track engagement rates pre-suspected suppression
2. Establish normal distribution of:
   - Impressions per post
   - Engagement rate (likes/comments/shares per impression)
   - Follower growth rate
   - Reply visibility to non-followers

B. Anomaly Detection (Test Phase)

Shadowban Indicators:
- Impressions drop >70% with consistent posting
- Engagement rate normal AMONG followers, zero outside
- Content doesn't appear in hashtag searches
- @mentions don't notify recipients
- Replies only visible when directly viewing profile

C. Controlled Testing

Create test accounts:
1. Fresh account (control)
2. Post identical content
3. Compare visibility metrics
4. Document discrepancies

Real-World Case Study: X (Twitter) Shadow Bans

Symptoms:

- Tweet impressions crater suddenly
- Followers see content, non-followers don't
- Search results exclude your tweets
- No official notification

Verification Method:

1. Log out, search your own @handle + recent keywords
2. Use third-party tools (shadowban.eu, hisubway.online)
3. Compare engagement rates follower vs. non-follower
4. Check if tweets appear in hashtag feeds

Assignment 2.1: Conduct shadow ban audit on 3 accounts across different platforms. Document methodology and findings.

Module 3: SEO Suppression & Deranking 🔍📉

Core Concept: Google doesn't ban websites—it just makes sure you never find them.

SEO Suppression Tactics:

1. Authority Manipulation

- Downranking domains that challenge mainstream narratives
- Elevating "authoritative sources" (legacy media, .gov, .edu)
- *Example:* Alternative health sites buried under Mayo Clinic, WebMD

2. Topic Quarantine

- Specific topics trigger algorithmic skepticism
- YMYL (Your Money Your Life) category gets extra filtering

- Conspiracy-adjacent content automatically demoted

3. Retroactive Deranking

- Content that once ranked well suddenly disappears
- Often correlates with narrative shifts on controversial topics

4. The "Fact-Check Moat"

- Fact-checker labels reduce CTR by 30-50%
- Creates psychological barrier even if content accurate

Detection Framework:

🔍 SEO Suppression Audit:

Step 1: Historical Analysis
- Use Wayback Machine + SEO tools (Ahrefs, SEMrush)
- Compare ranking positions over time
- Identify sudden drops without technical cause

Step 2: Keyword Comparison
- Search phrases that SHOULD return your content
- Note which competitors rank instead
- Analyze if competitors have lower quality/relevance

Step 3: Incognito Cross-Reference
- Search from different IPs/locations
- Check personalization vs. universal suppression
- Document geographic/demographic variation

Step 4: Competitive Domain Analysis
- Compare backlink profiles
- Check domain authority scores
- Identify if suppression is topic-specific or site-wide

Case Study: Ivermectin Information Suppression (2021-2022)

Observable Pattern:

- Peer-reviewed studies deranked
- NIH/CDC pages dominate results
- Independent medical sites buried beyond page 5
- "Fact-check" labels on any positive coverage

Routing Strategy:

- Use alternative search engines (Brave, DuckDuckGo, Yandex)
- Search academic databases directly (PubMed, Google Scholar)
- Cross-reference with international sources (.uk, .au domains)

Assignment 3.1: Choose a controversial topic. Document SEO suppression patterns across 3 search engines. Develop routing protocol.

Module 4: Engagement Throttling & Reach Manipulation 📊🔻

The Invisible Hand: Your content still exists, but the algorithm ensures nobody sees it.

Throttling Mechanisms:

A. Follower Feed Suppression

- Posts shown to <10% of followers
- Algorithmic "interest" scoring reduces visibility
- Time-decay acceleration (content dies faster)

B. Discovery Suppression

- Removed from "Recommended" feeds
- Excluded from trending/explore pages
- Hashtag quarantine (appears in feed but not in search)

C. Interaction Throttling

- Likes/shares don't trigger notifications
- Comments don't bump post visibility
- Share functionality works but doesn't propagate

Measurement Protocol:

Engagement Throttling Detection:

Metric 1: Reach Rate
- (Impressions / Followers) × 100
- Normal: 15-30% for active accounts
- Throttled: <5%

Metric 2: Engagement Distribution
- Track WHEN followers engage

- If only immediate followers see content → throttled
- If content dies within 2 hours → accelerated decay

Metric 3: Comparative Analysis
- Post identical content from multiple accounts
- Measure reach differential
- >50% variance = likely throttling

Metric 4: External Verification
- Use link shorteners with analytics (bit.ly, tinyurl)
- Track actual clicks vs. platform-reported impressions
- Discrepancies reveal platform manipulation

Case Study: YouTube "Limited State" / Demonetization

Not banned, but:

- Videos don't appear in recommendations
- Removed from search suggestions
- No monetization despite meeting requirements
- Comments disabled or hidden

Creator Impact:

- Revenue loss without violation notice
- Audience can't discover content organically
- Shadowban without accountability

Assignment 4.1: Analyze 5 creators across platforms. Document throttling indicators. Calculate estimated reach loss.

Module 5: Routing Protocols & Counter-Tactics 🎪🌉

Philosophy: If they build walls, we build tunnels.

Counter-Suppression Strategies:

1. Platform Diversification

Never build on rented land.
- Own your distribution (email list, RSS, direct sites)
- Mirror content across platforms
- Use decentralized alternatives (Nostr, Mastodon, Substack)

2. Keyword Camouflage

Avoid trigger words that flag suppression:
- Use phonetic spelling ("v@xx" instead of "vaxx")
- Employ euphemisms (carnival metaphors in JESTERVII)
- Embed meaning in images/videos (text harder to scan)

3. Network Effects Exploitation

If you're shadowbanned:
- Encourage followers to manually check your profile
- Use Stories/ephemeral content (less algorithmic filtering)
- Cross-post to non-suppressed accounts
- Build engagement pods to artificially boost signals

4. Documentation & Transparency

Make suppression visible:
- Publish metrics showing before/after
- Use comparison accounts as control groups
- Archive evidence (screenshots, analytics, timestamps)
- Submit to C.U.B.E. archives for pattern analysis

5. Search Engine Routing

When Google suppresses:
- Use Yandex (Russian perspective)
- Use Brave Search (privacy-focused, different algo)
- Check Marginalia (independent web index)
- Try Kagi (paid, no ads = less manipulation)
- Access cached/archived versions (Wayback Machine)

Advanced Tactic: The "Canary Protocol"

Deploy test content periodically:
1. Post control message (neutral topic)
2. Post test message (potentially suppressed topic)
3. Measure reach differential
4. Document when suppression triggers
5. Refine content strategy based on findings

Result: Real-time suppression detection system

Assignment 5.1: Design a complete routing protocol for a hypothetical suppressed topic. Include backup platforms, keyword strategies, and verification methods.

Module 6: The Suppression-Industrial Complex 🏭🎭

Big Picture: Who benefits from information control?

Key Players:

1. Platform Companies

- Liability protection (Section 230 compliance theater)
- Advertiser appeasement
- Government pressure response

2. Third-Party "Fact-Checkers"

- NewsGuard, Snopes, PolitiFact
- Funded by foundations with political agendas
- Act as algorithmic gatekeepers

3. Government Agencies

- DHS Cybersecurity, FBI, intelligence community
- Direct flagging to platforms (Twitter Files revelations)
- "Misinformation" task forces

4. NGOs & Think Tanks

- ADL, SPLC, Atlantic Council
- Define "hate speech" and "extremism"
- Create pressure campaigns for deplatforming

5. Legacy Media

- Fear competition from independent creators
- Use "misinformation" claims to delegitimize rivals
- Benefit from algorithmic preference

Case Study: The Censorship-Industrial Complex (Twitter Files)

Revealed:

- Government agencies directly requesting content removal
- Weekly meetings between FBI and Twitter
- Blacklists and whitelists of accounts
- "Visibility filtering" (shadowbanning) at scale

Implications:

- "Private company" excuse = fig leaf
- State-adjacent censorship infrastructure
- No transparency, accountability, or appeals process

Discussion Question: If government can't directly censor (First Amendment), but can pressure private platforms to censor, is that a loophole or a violation?

Module 7: Building Counter-Infrastructure 🔧🎪

Final Project Concept: Don't just route around suppression—build alternatives.

Infrastructure Components:

1. Discovery Layer

- RSS feeds (can't be algorithmically throttled)
- Decentralized social protocols (Nostr, AT Protocol)
- Direct subscription models (Substack, Ghost)

2. Hosting Layer

- Own your servers (VPS, dedicated hosting)
- Use censorship-resistant DNS (Handshake, ENS)
- Mirror content across jurisdictions

3. Payment Layer

- Avoid PayPal/Stripe (known to deplatform)
- Use crypto for censorship resistance
- Build direct patron relationships

4. Communication Layer

- Encrypted messaging (Signal, SimpleX)
- Email lists (owned distribution)
- Peer-to-peer networks

5. Archival Layer

- Internet Archive mirrors
- IPFS/decentralized storage
- Local backups (always)

The JesterU Stack:

Content: Own website + mirrors
Distribution: RSS + Email + Nostr
Discovery: SEO + Cross-posting + Network effects
Monetization: Direct subscriptions + crypto
Backup: IPFS + Archive.org + Local storage
Communication: Signal + Matrix
Documentation: C.U.B.E. archives

Final Exam: Live Suppression Audit 🎪🔥

Instructions:

Select a topic currently under active suppression. Execute a full analysis:

1. **Taxonomy Classification** - What type of suppression is occurring? (🚫👻🎯📉)
2. **Metric Documentation** - Provide before/after data showing suppression
3. **Actor Identification** - Who is implementing the suppression and why?
4. **Routing Protocol** - Design a complete workaround strategy
5. **Counter-Infrastructure Proposal** - How would you build around this permanently?
6. **C.U.B.E. Submission** - Format findings for archive inclusion

Grading Criteria:

- 🔵 Validated Truth: Evidence-based, falsifiable claims (epistemic quality)
- 🎪 Practical Application: Actually executable routing protocols
- 🤡 Jester Spirit: Creative solutions with plausible deniability
- 📚 Documentation Quality: Clear enough for others to replicate

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Course Readings 📖

Required:

- *The Twitter Files* (Taibbi, Weiss, et al.)
- *Censored* (Project Censored annual reports)

- *Manufacturing Consent* (Chomsky & Herman)
- SEO documentation (Google Search Quality Guidelines)
- Platform ToS documents (read what they can actually do)

Recommended:

- *The Master Switch* (Tim Wu)
- *Algorithms of Oppression* (Safiya Noble)
- Archive of deplatforming cases (C.U.B.E. repository)

Office Hours 🎪

Available via:

- C.U.B.E. archive queries
- Encrypted channels (for sensitive audits)
- Public forums (for methodology questions)

Remember: The goal isn't to break rules—it's to expose when rules are being applied selectively to suppress truth. Document everything. Route around damage. Build alternatives.

Class Motto: *"They can throttle the signal, but they can't stop the truth from routing."* 🎪📡

🤡📚 CLWN607 - Where Shadow Bans Meet Sunlight 🎪🔦

Suppression Type Glyphs:

- 🚫 Hard Suppression (obvious bans)
- 👻 Soft Suppression (shadow tactics)
- 🎯 Strategic Suppression (targeted deranking)
- 🌫️ Ambient Suppression (cultural chilling)