Instructional Strategies: News Evaluation

CETL Workshop
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http://libguides.ucmerced.edu/elevate-news-evaluation/instructional
Outline

• Introduction
• Instructional Strategies & Resources
  • Evaluating News Sources: Active Approaches in the Classroom (Angela)
  • Critical Thinking and Argumentation, Assessing Sources (Jeremy)
  • News Evaluation Activity, Comparing & Corroborating (Sara)
• Discussion
Discussion

• What is important for students to know about news?
• How can students become increasingly critical of the news they consume?
• What instructional strategies have you found effective in building students’ critical thinking?
• How might these ideas translate into other subjects, courses, programs etc.
• What resources are valuable to you?
• Could you see using any of these ideas in your own instruction or mentoring?
News is Important to Us

"… news remains an important part of public life. More than seven-in-ten U.S. adults follow national and local news somewhat or very closely."

from The Modern News Consumer – Pew Research Center, 7 July 2016
Online News

Pathways

• 36% through a news organization website or app
• 35% through social media (47% for 18 – 29 year olds)

Discovery

• 39% seek out news
• 36% happen upon news while online

Sample Content via Social Media

- Blue Feed, Red Feed (*Wall Street Journal*, data from Facebook study)
- Example: Immigration feed
- intended to show differing viewpoints
- illustrates “very aligned” with left or right
Desire for Our Attention

Clickbait - Sample curiosity gap headlines:

• 16 Unethical Life Hacks You Won’t Learn in School
• The Tragic Transformations of the 15 Cutest Child Starts Ever
• When You Read These 19 Shocking Food Facts, You’ll Never Want to Eat Again
• The 7 Things Successful People Never Say
Desire for Our Attention

Fake News
16% of U.S. adults surveyed by the Pew Research Center responded that they had *unsuspectingly* shared a fabricated political news story.

Desire for Our Attention

Misrepresentation
Your cat may want to kill you, study says
USA Today, 1 Nov. 2015 Mallory Davis

No, A study did NOT Find That Your Cat Wants to Kill You
Huffington Post/HuffPost Science, 5 Nov. 2015 Hilary Hanson

Original Article:
Lack of Critical Analysis by Readers

Providing Critical Analysis

- climatefeedback.org example
- UC Merced, Center for Climate Communications
- scientists annotating and assessing
- using hypothes.is for annotations
- leveraging community & expertise

Analysis of “One of the most troubling ideas about climate change just found new evidence in its favor" The Washington Post

“Overall, this piece accurately describes the findings of a new research paper by Mann et al on linkages between rapid Arctic warming and extreme weather at Earth’s more temperate..

- 27 Mar 2017
News Evaluation
Critical Thinking
News Evaluation Activity
Comparing & Corroborating

• lesson taught in some Writing 1 and Writing 10 classes
• part of a News Evaluation focus this semester
Big Ideas

1. News is not monolithic. News articles have different purposes.
2. You can learn a lot from carefully examining language.
3. Corroboration is an important evaluative strategy.
4. Knowing *about* a source provides an extra evaluative edge.
5. Variation, in credibility and perspective, will occur in a single news source. You must evaluate.
6. A news article can be both accurate and biased.
Activity Details (Jigsaw)

- 3 articles from different news sources on the same topic
- mix of reporting and editorials

**Health Care Enrollment**

“HealthCare.gov signups fall short of last year, at 9.2M”
GOP sees dwindling interest in failed law, supporters claim sabotage

HealthCare.gov suffers first enrollment decline as GOP works to kill the ACA

“Obamacare Signups Sag and It’s Trumps’ Fault?”

**Oscars flub / Hollywood / Jordan Horowitz**

“La La Land’ producer Jordan Horowitz is the truth-teller we need right now”

“At the Oscars: Revenge of the Hollywood Crybullies”

“What it was like onstage during the Oscars’ best picture mistake”

**EPA Elimination / H.R. 861**

“Congress and Trump Won’t ‘Terminate the EPA’: Instead, they’ll restrict the agency in far subtler ways”

“Bill to Eliminate Environmental Protection Agency Introduced in Congress”

“Florida congressman gets little traction on legislation to abolish EPA”
*Palm Beach Post* (14 Feb. 2017)
Activity Details (Jigsaw)

- 3 articles from different news sources on the same topic
- students are assigned to read one of the 3 articles
- groups of 5-7 discuss the article (answer questions on Handout, Part I), students become experts
  - See Handout for Questions
Activity Details (Jigsaw)

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- students form new groups with one person representing each article, (answer questions on Handout, Part II), share findings
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• full class debrief & discussion
• instructor reveals sources
• shares resources for learning more about news sources
Resources

Media Bias/Fact Check
MBFC classifies news sources into five categories: least biased, left-center bias, right-center bias, left bias and right bias. It also comments on level of factual reporting.

AllSides
AllSides classifies news sources into categories: center, lean left bias, lean right bias, left bias and right bias. It also aggregates news and assigns it to one of three categories: from the left, from the center, from the right.
Our Observations of Students

- may not be familiar with partisan spectrum
- a few are very knowledgeable about news sources, most are not
- a lack of background knowledge can be a challenge
- mistook the tone of quoted people/sources for the tone of the writer
- expressed interest in sites like MediaBiasFactCheck and AllSides
- felt more confident in their evaluation when comparing sources
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