**Lesson Plan: Evaluating Online Sources by Reading Laterally**

**75 minutes**

**Slides with notes:** [**https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/18ps7P4IJeBp89p94xH8fwi2YQiy\_qVGk98V3eM5xIgI/edit?usp=sharing**](https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/18ps7P4IJeBp89p94xH8fwi2YQiy_qVGk98V3eM5xIgI/edit?usp=sharing)

**Introduction** ~ **5 mins**

* Introduction to the Librarians
* Provide context for this lesson and assignment (the worksheet)

*Optional Script: Being informed and developing an opinion about controversial or current social issues can be a challenging and rewarding part of our lives. In our personal lives, we are part of social, family, and political communities that can be profoundly or subtly impacted by our opinions.*

*In college, you may be asked to critically think and make arguments about issues. One important aspect of making claims is to contextualize your claims by doing research and referring to sources.*

*In this class, you’ll be completing a bibliography where you must identify 12 sources, 6 of which must be from the library databases and 6 of which must be scholarly. This means that you may use up to 6 popular sources (news articles, magazine articles, and websites) and materials you find online through a Google Search. How do you find sources through the open web? This session will teach you a skill you can use to determine the credibility and bias of news sources you find online through the web and through databases.*

**About Online Information** ~ **10 mins**

* Print information ecosystem
  + Main Differences
    - Permanence
    - Reputation of the authors/publishers
    - Limited amount of books meant access occurred in one place (library)
    - Librarians, teachers or parents could evaluate material before access
* Online information today: Who is behind the information?
  + Impermeant
  + Unknown authors
  + Unlimited information
  + Evaluation impossible-even library databases aren’t evaluated at an article level

*Optional Script: Thus the burden of accessing and evaluating has shifted from librarians to students (us to you). If this strikes you as unfair, it is! Research has gotten tougher even while the process of accessing information has gotten easier. If research is difficult for you, it is not your fault, the information ecosystem we find ourselves in is dramatically different than when your professor or your parents (or yourself as a child) first did research.*

*Now, when we want to browse current events or controversial issues, we just Google it. The trouble is, the publishing methods and way information is displayed is completely different. Any individual or organization can publish an article arguing that the Earth is flat, and make it look darn credible, too. Unless you are familiar with the websites that show up in the search results, you’ll need to think more critically about who is behind the information. Who wrote it? What are they interested in sharing or selling? Why? Lateral reading helps us investigate and answer that question.*

* Center for Immigration Studies (example)
  + What do you think about this website? Why is it online? Are they making money?
* Vertical Reading can be misleading.
  + ***ASK STUDENTS****: Can we really tell who’s behind the info? What do you think?*
  + *About page (written by the same people)*
  + *.org*
  + *Library and Evidence pages*
  + *Clean, professional fonts*
  + *Clear branding*
  + *No ads*
* Lateral Reading (next)

**Lateral Reading** ~ **10 mins**

*Optional Script: A strategy for investigating* ***who's behind an unfamiliar online*** *source by leaving the webpage and opening a new browser tab to see what trusted websites say about the unknown source.*

* What happens if we open a tab and search Google for an information? Google the Center for Immigration Studies.
* Discuss Google algorithms – what do you see? How are things laid out?
  + *Wikipedia articles pushed to the front, Politifact website.. how do we use these?*
* What is Wikipedia?
  + Why do you hear not to cite Wikipedia?
  + *Push pack on credibility objections:*
    - *Content must meet certain standards for notability (what constitutes a notable article), proportionate representation of views, and verifiability (Editors cannot cite personal theories or other original research; must be information from academic publications or major news).*
    - *About 1200 editors/administrators who volunteer to enforce these content policies, flag vandalism, etc.*
    - *Claims must be hyperlinked, links must work, so references can indeed be verified.*
  + What if I told you Wikipedia *is* useful. Wikipedia is a play on what word?
    - *Encyclopedia*
  + We typically cite secondary sources, not encyclopedias, but it can be a helpful way to gain background knowledge! Reference for the web!
* **Resources for lateral reading**: Wikipedia, Fact-check websites, news articles about orgs/people, the web!
  + Wikipedia, footnote 5 (what kind of source are they using as evidence?)
  + Politifact, fact checks the validity of SPLC classifying it as a hate group.
  + Some doubts cast, but definitely seems to be strongly anti-immigration at the least

**Students Try: Model with Student Topics, Students Do Worksheet** ~ **25 mins**

* *What are your topics? A current controversial issue or something you’re interested in is great. (chat – send directly to us for anonymity)*
* Drop worksheet document in chat
* Demo Worksheet Part 1 (find a source)
  + PAUSE (**worksheet part 1) –** ***5 mins for students***
* Demo Worksheet Part 2 (lateral reading)
  + PAUSE (**worksheet part 2) – *10 mins for students***

**Q&A and Discussion ~** **5-10 mins**

*How did lateral reading help you learn more about an organization and evaluate an article?*

*Anything unclear?*

**How to Submit your Worksheet Assignment**

Turn in worksheet and 1-2 page reflection to Canvas by DATE. Cite your sources!

**Brief overview of Library Resources ~ 15 minutes**

* Discuss and compare Library Databases
  + Don’t need these for this worksheet assignment, but you will need them later on in this course. Linked in Canvas under Library Resources.
  + Gale Opposing Viewpoints – *how are things laid out? Browse issues…*
  + Academic Search Complete – *how are things laid out? Keyword boxes, peer review, etc. How is this different from how things are laid out in Google?*
* Lateral reading with scholarly sources – journals, authors.
* Citation resources, LibGuides (plug)