Teaching Students the "How" and "Why" of Source Evaluation: Pedagogies That Empower Communities of Learning and Scholarship

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Today's Plan

➢ Beyond checklists

➢ Reframing source evaluation
    --Searching is strategic
    --Information creation as a process
    --Scholarship is a conversation

What do we want students to be able to do?

Librarians and faculty agree that source evaluation is an important part of research....

But—ask faculty about student learning outcomes and you get a variety of responses.

What We Hear from Faculty at AU

"I want students to be able to distinguish between popular and scholarly sources."

"I want students to be able to distinguish good websites from bad."

"I want students to be able to identify credible, reputable sources, whether on the web or in print."

Source Evaluation and IL Competency Standards

Standard Three: The information literate student evaluates information and its sources critically and incorporates selected information into his or her knowledge base and value system.

Performance Indicator: The information literate student articulates and applies initial criteria for evaluating both the information and its sources.

Outcome: Examines and compares information from various sources in order to evaluate reliability, validity, accuracy, authority, timeliness, and point of view or bias

Many of us organize evaluation criteria into checklists…

Look familiar?

Evaluating Information – Applying the CRAAP Test
Meriam Library 📖 California State University, Chico

When you search for information, you're going to find lots of it . . . but is it good information? You will have to determine that for yourself, and the **CRAAP Test** can help. The **CRAAP Test** is a list of questions to help you evaluate the information you find. Different criteria will be more or less important depending on your situation or need.

Key: ■ indicates criteria is for Web

Evaluation Cr…

Currency: *The timeliness of the information.*
- When was the information published or posted?
- Has the information been revised or updated?
- Does your topic require current information, or will
- ■Are the links functional?

Relevance: *The importance of the information for y…*
- Does the information relate to your topic or answer
- Who is the intended audience?
- Is the information at an appropriate level (i.e. not to…
- Have you looked at a variety of sources before deter…
- Would you be comfortable citing this source in your…

Authority: *The source of the information.*
- Who is the author/publisher/source/sponsor?
- What are the author's credentials or organizational a…
- Is the author qualified to write on the topic?
- Is there contact information, such as a publisher or e…
- ■Does the URL reveal anything about the author or so…
  examples: .com .edu .gov .org .net

Accuracy: *The reliability, truthfulness and correctne…*
- Where does the information come from?
- Is the information supported by evidence?
- Has the information been reviewed or refereed?
- Can you verify any of the information in another so…
- Does the language or tone seem unbiased and free o…
- Are there spelling, grammar or typographical errors…

Purpose: *The reason the information exists.*
- What is the purpose of the information? Is it to infor…
- Do the authors/sponsors make their intentions or p…
- Is the information fact, opinion or propaganda?
- Does the point of view appear objective and imparti…
- Are there political, ideological, cultural, religious, in…

Source Evaluation Checklist

Credibility
Is there an author listed? _____
Does the author provide any information about his/her academic credentials, professional experience, or other qualifications? _____
Can you contact the author? _____
If a website, do you know who sponsored or published the web site? _____

Accuracy / Verifiability of Data
Does the source provide documentation for the information provided? _____
Does the source include an explanation of its research methods? _____
Does the source rely on other sources for information? Are these listed in a bibliography or works cited list? If a website, does the site link to these sources? _____
Does the source provide information contradicted by other sources? _____

Currency
When was the source published? If a website, has the site been updated recently? .
Is the subject matter time-sensitive? _____
If a website, are the links on the site working? _____

Objectivity/Bias
Is the author affiliated with a particular organization that might have a bias or agenda? _____
Are all sides of an issue represented? _____
Does the absence of other viewpoints indicate a bias or hidden agenda? _____

Audience/Purpose
Is the level of the source appropriate to your needs? _____
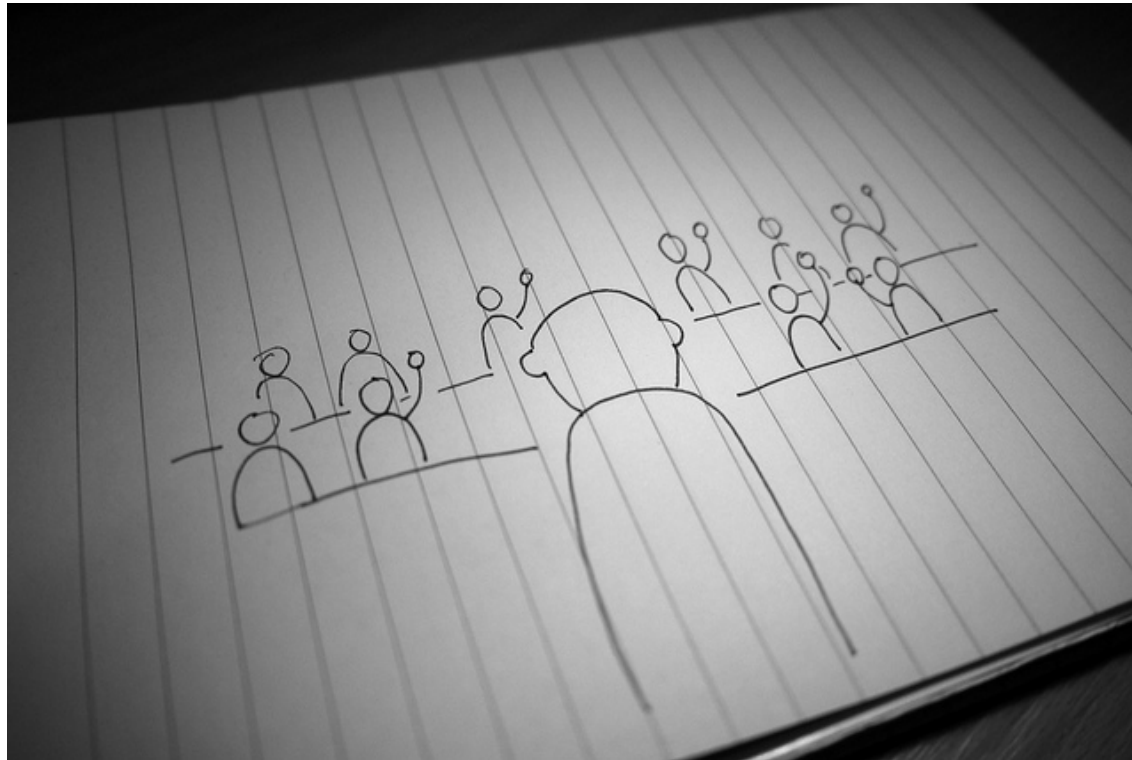Does it:
    Inform? _____
    Entertain? _____
    Persuade? _____
   Sell? _____

A Question for Our Audience:

What concerns do you have with using checklists?
What are the challenges with using them?

Our concerns with checklists

➢ Not authentic
➢ Inhibits meaningful conversation/discussion
➢ Promotes simplistic/dualistic thinking
➢ Focuses on "surface" characteristics
➢ Does not consider information need
➢ Some lists of criteria use circular reasoning
➢ Familiarity with criteria ≠ ability to apply criteria effectively
➢ Criteria change according to discipline

This is when we knew we had to try another approach…
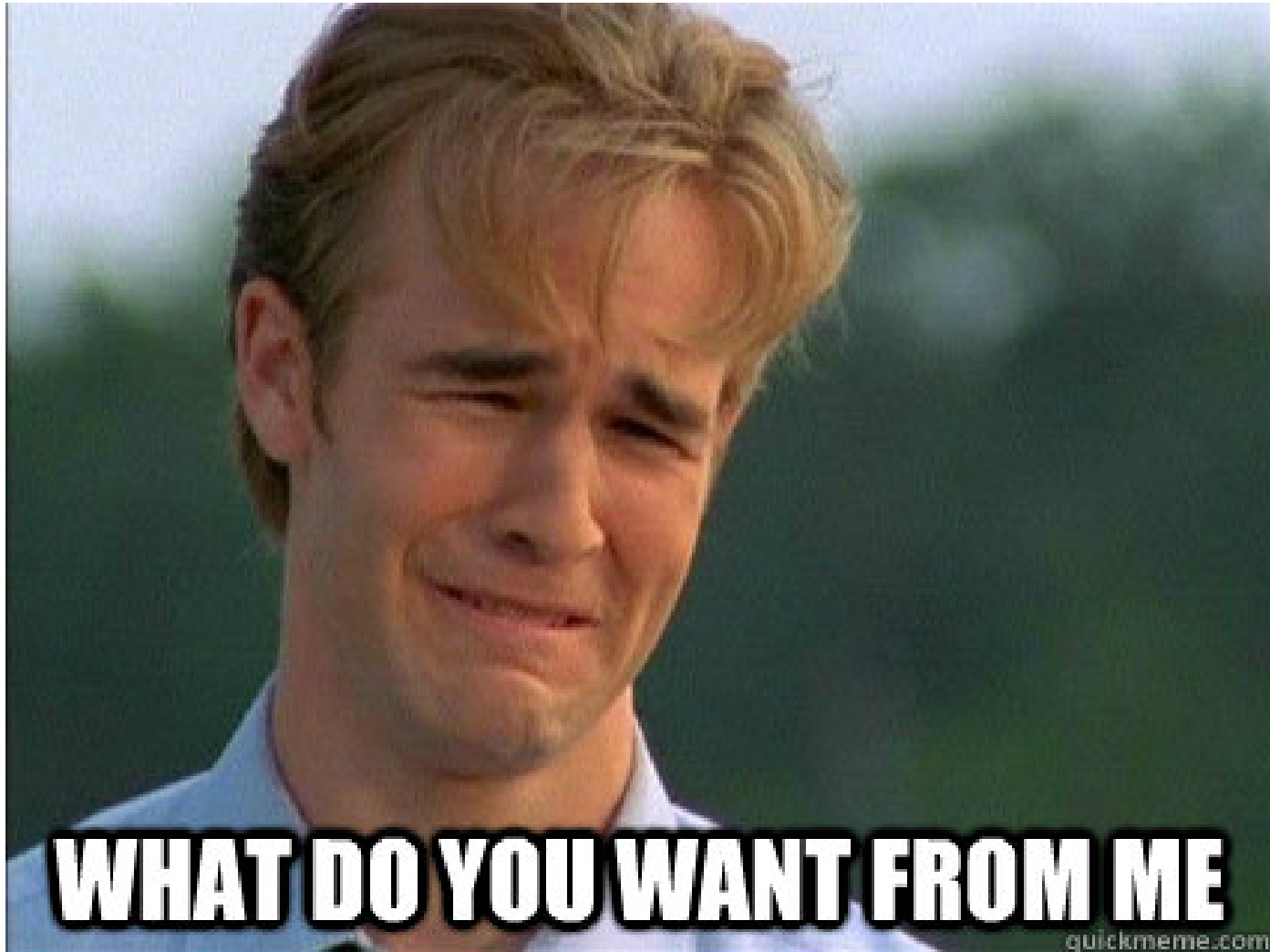
We inhabit a rich information ecosystem….

➢ BUT—the students we meet in our classes struggle to find information that is useful to them

➢ How can we frame source evaluation in such a way that the importance of matching information <u>source</u> to information <u>need</u> is brought into focus?
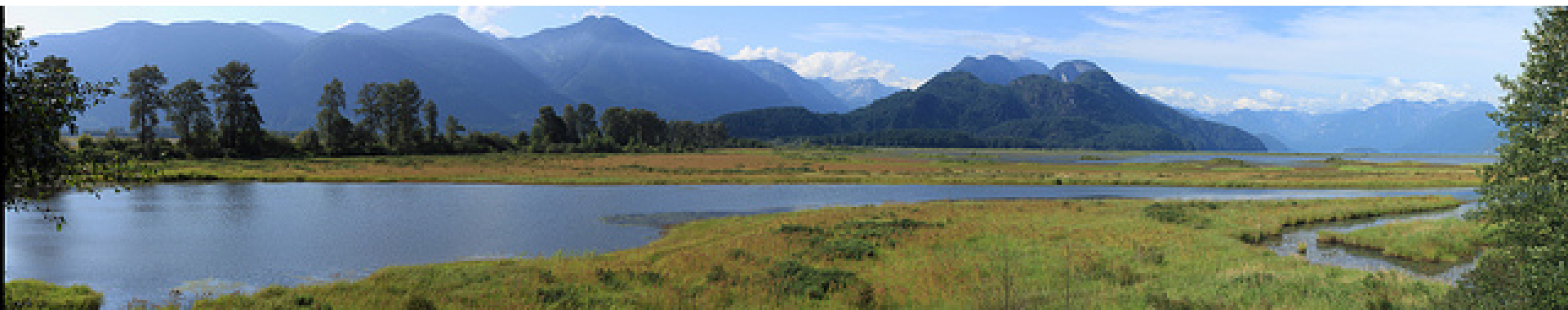
Active Learning Exercise #1
Searching is Strategic

Instruction scenario

➤ Library instruction for students writing "position" paper
➤ Students required to find multiple sources that support their claim/position
➤ Students expected to be "strategic" about research
➤ Students should recognize that they can <u>do</u> different things with information

Sample assignment prompt: "You want the research to serve you--not the other way around--so **embark on your research with an agenda**. Do you need to establish that your topic is actually one worth choosing? Do you need some **evidence** to back up one of the reasons you have come up with, that you can't make convincing simply with your own analysis and examples? Do you need to put forward someone else's reason for **context**, or as a **counterargument**? **Look for what you need**."

Learning Outcomes

<u>Students will</u>:

➢ Identify their information need

➢ Recognize that sources of information vary by content

➢ Evaluate the appropriateness of different kinds of sources (and content) in relation to their information need

Lesson Plan

➢ Introduction: Source evaluation involves making <u>choices</u>

➢ Information sources vary by content
--As a class, generate a list of information content found on the web
--4 student groups: Each group records on a whiteboard the information content of one of the following sources: (1) reference works, (2) books, (3) magazine articles, & (4) scholarly journal articles

Lesson Plan (cont.)

➤ Using Information: Research Scenarios

--Same 4 student groups– each group assigned a different research scenario

--Working with their assigned research scenario & the content lists generated by the class, each student group will select (at most) 3 kinds of information they believe would be useful

--Each group will locate one source that is relevant to their research scenario <u>AND</u> that contains at least one type of information they identified as useful. Each group reports to the class.

Research Scenario #1

You are writing a paper about the activist role that social media has played in community responses to violent encounters between police and African-Americans over the past year. You know this is not the first time social media has sparked political action. You are looking for background information—i.e., basic facts about other key events, movements, etc. that would help place this phenomenon in context.
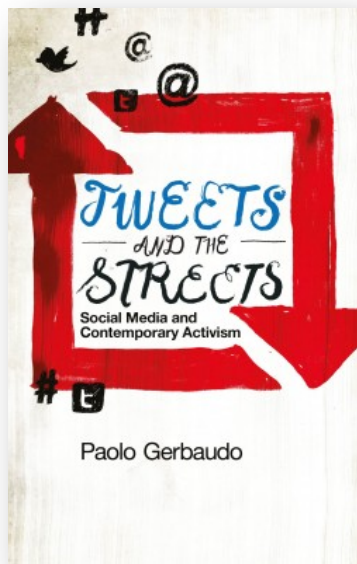
Research Scenario #2

You are writing a paper that examines the media's portrayal of Michael Brown. You are looking for concrete examples you can analyze to support your claim that the media's coverage of events in Ferguson, MO expresses—and contributes to—biases and stereotypes.

NYT regrets calling Michael Brown 'no angel,' - Los Angeles ...
www.latimes.com/.../la-ol-ferguson-michael-brown-a... ▼ Los Angeles Times ▼
Aug 28, 2014 - The New York Times is expressing contrite second thoughts about a profile of Michael Brown , the 18-year-old who was shot to death by a ...

WATCH: Surveillance Video of Strong-Arm Robbery Tied to Michael Brown
Published August 16, 2014   f 0   🐦 5   💬 379   ✉ 🖨

Surveillance Shows Michael Brown Suspected In 'Strong Arm' Robbery
MailOnline

FOX BUSINESS
TRENDING
See what's trending on Fox Business right now.
Go Now!
Get Our Daily Newsletter

Adam Carlson
The Atlanta Journal-Constitution
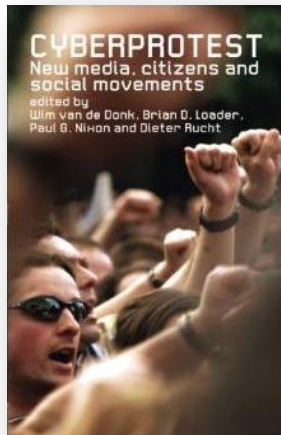
The Ferguson evidence: Michael Brown 'looked like a demon'

M · News · World news · Ferguson riots
Ferguson: Michael Brown 'taunted killer cop he was too much of a p***y to shoot him' before death

Research Scenario #3

You are writing a paper about the capacity of social media to effect social change. The power of this medium seems indisputable, but your prof mentioned that the long term impacts of digital activism are up for debate. Does digital activism produce engaged citizens or armchair activists? You need to inform yourself about the key claims of this debate so that you can address these in your paper.

CYBERPROTEST
New media, citizens and social movements
edited by
Wim van de Donk, Brian D. Loader, Paul G. Nixon and Dieter Rucht

æ american ethnologist
JOURNAL OF THE AMERICAN ETHNOLOGICAL SOCIETY

#Ferguson:

Digital protest, hashtag ethnography, and the racial politics of social media in the United States

1. Substitute or stepping stone? Assessing the impact of low-threshold online collective actions on offline participation.
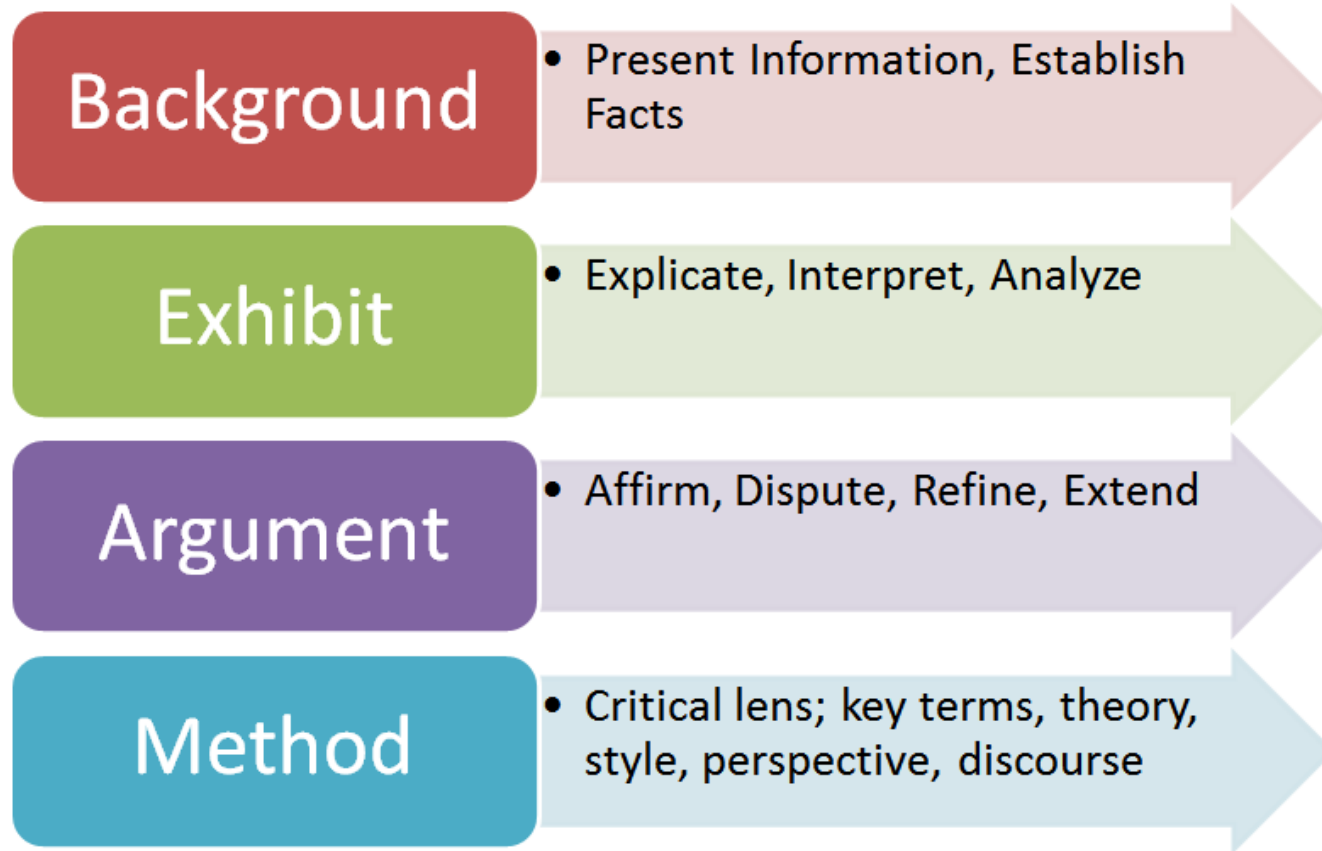
By: Schumann, Sandy; Klein, Olivier. European Journal of Social Psychology. Apr2015, Vol. 45 Issue 3, p308-322. 15p. DOI: 10.1002/ejsp.2084.

Subjects: ATTITUDE (Psychology); CONFIDENCE intervals; GROUP identity; INTERNET; RESEARCH -- Finance; SOCIAL participation; TRUST; GROU process; MULTIPLE regression analysis; SOCIAL media; DATA analysis -- Software; DESCRIPTIVE statistics; ODDS ratio; Wired Telecommunications Carriers; Internet Publishing and Broadcasting and Web Search Portals

Academic Journal

BEAM Model (Bizup, 2008)

What would a writer do with this source?

Background • Present Information, Establish Facts

Exhibit • Explicate, Interpret, Analyze

Argument • Affirm, Dispute, Refine, Extend

Method • Critical lens; key terms, theory, style, perspective, discourse

Framing the Activity for Students

➢ Information is everywhere. You have <u>choices</u> to make about what information to use.

➢ There is no "best source" of information. The appropriateness of a source is determined by your information need.

Opportunities

➢ You, the instructor, are more likely to hear—and be able to address—the reasons why students choose the sources they do.

➢ An empowering message for students: You are not only consumers of information but also producers of scholarship.

➢ Students begin to discover that no one source—whether popular or scholarly— is likely to meet all their information needs. It is often necessary to consult multiple sources to become informed about an issue.

Be Prepared

➢ As with any student-driven activity, be prepared to probe student responses, ask for reasons why, etc.

➢ Check in with student groups to be sure they are focusing on the research scenario. Identifying <u>information</u> <u>need</u> is a key element of this activity.

➢ Be sure students consider the <u>purpose</u> of the information they are seeking. This part of the exercise calls for students to be strategic about research. They have a tendency to skip over this step.

Active Learning Exercise #2
Information Creation as a Process

# The popular v. scholarly class

Instruction Request: "teach students the differences in popular and scholarly sources. Be sure to cover the peer-review process and why scholarly sources are more reliable"
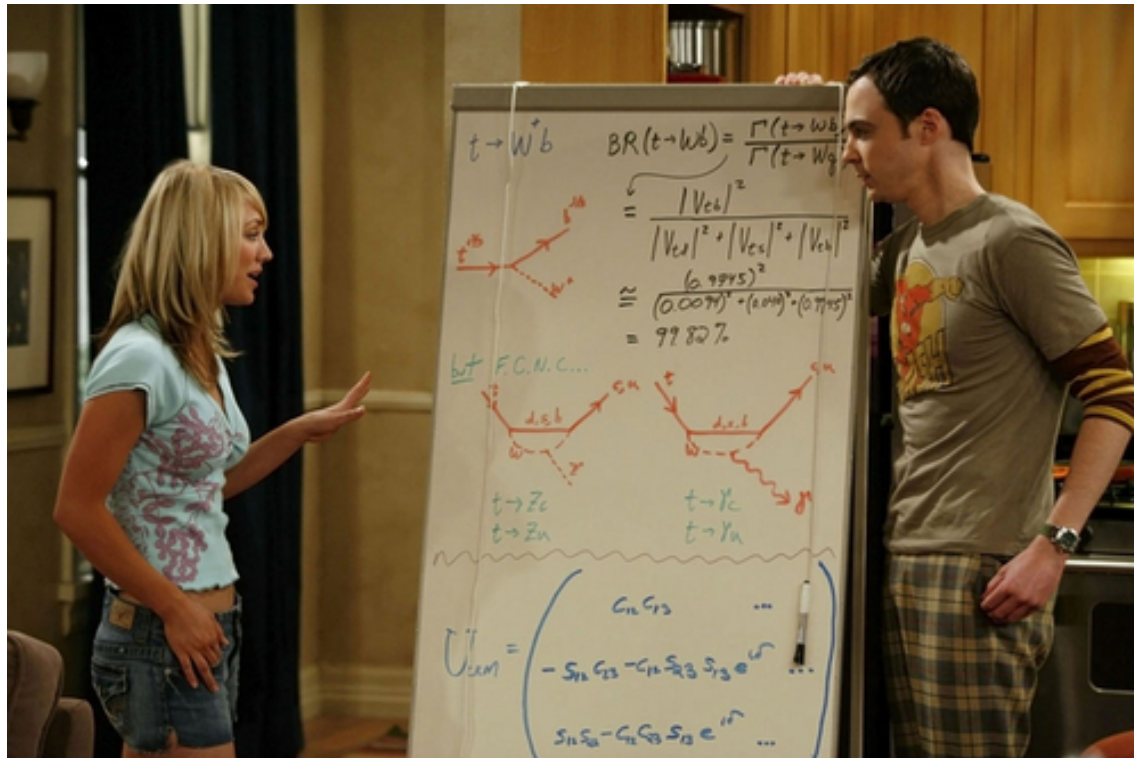
Students' takeaway from a session taught using a checklist approach

A "good" article is…

recently published
for an academic audience
written by someone with a PhD
found in a library database, or on a .gov , .edu, .org website
filled with charts and data
backed up with a long list of references
not biased, persuasive, or entertaining

Best

Better

Not that good

Scholarly
Article

Magazine
Article

Blog
Post
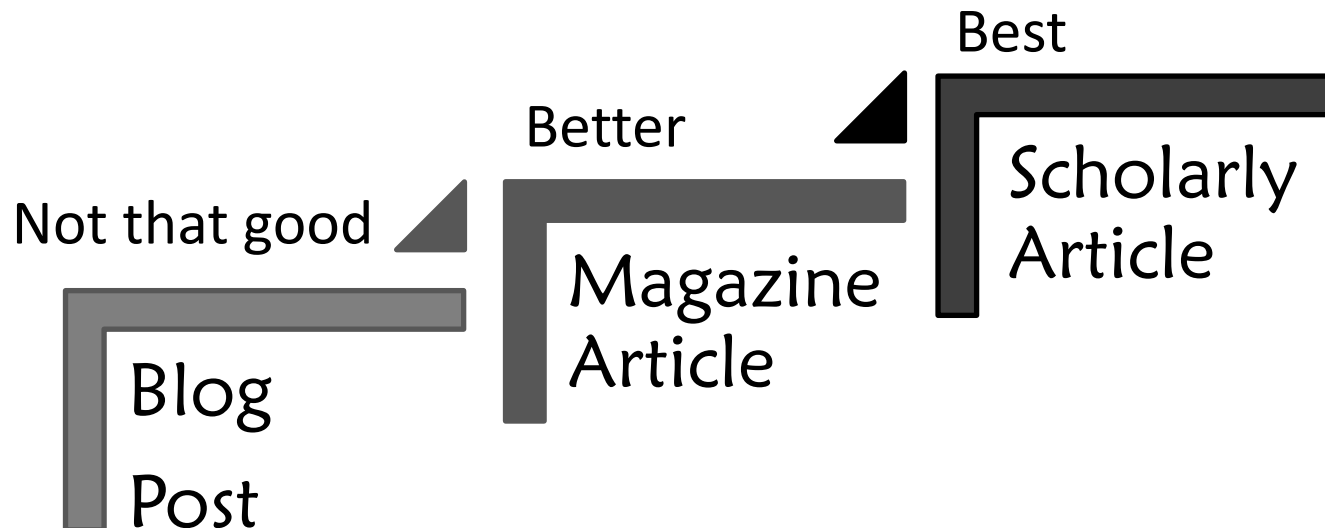
My takeaway

It's possible for students to evaluate a source and determine whether they should use it for their assignment, *without* reading it.

Learning Outcomes

Students will recognize how the information creation process can serve as an indicator of authority

Students will recognize that instant publishing found on the web (e.g., breaking news, social media) comes at the cost of accuracy, while the thorough review & revision process of a book often comes at the cost of currency. *From ACRL Framework, Revision #2, 06/17/14*

Students will recognize that the value accorded a source's authority, accuracy and timeliness will vary based on the information need.

Planning & Set-up

- Break students up into groups of 3 or 4.
- Pre-chosen examples of

    Blog post

    Newspaper article

    Magazine article

    Scholarly article

- Examples should coincide with class topics

Blog Post

the **two-way**   BREAKING NEWS FROM NPR

america   international   economy   must reads   contact us   f

america

'Nothing New' In Netanyahu's Speech, Obama Says

MARCH 03, 2015   1:11 PM ET

KRISHNADEV CALAMUR

SHARE

Newspaper Article

ProQuest

Full text

☐ Add to selected items   📲 Save to My Research   ✉ Email   🖨 Print   📋 Cite   💾 Export/Save ▾   ◎ Save to Flow **BETA**   ⋘ Share ▾

For Netanyahu Speech, Lawmakers Check Politics at Chamber Door; Everyone felt compelled to agree: controversy over address didn't harm U.S.-Israel alliance

Williamson, Elizabeth. **Wall Street Journal (Online)** [New York, N.Y] 04 Mar 2015: n/a.

⏩

Other formats:

📄 Citation/Abstract

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⊟ **Abstract (summary)**   Translate

Everybody on the House floor did it. Because although Mr. Netanyahu attacked the Obama administration's efforts to negotiate a nuclear deal with Iran, and some Democrats called the speech a condescending lecture, and Republicans judged it a valuable insight, everyone in the chamber had to agree--or act as if they agreed--that the occasion wasn't about politics.

⊟ **Full Text**   Translate

WASHINGTON--At the outset of his 39-minute speech to a joint meeting of Congress, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu assured his audience of cheering Republicans and grim Democrats: "No matter what side of the aisle you're on, I know you stand with Israel."

In fact, there was an awful lot of standing with Israel in the chamber--20 standing ovations amounting to a stadium-style cheer every two minutes. Everybody on the House floor did it.

Why? Because although Mr. Netanyahu attacked the Obama administration's efforts to negotiate a nuclear deal with Iran, and some Democrats called the speech a condescending lecture, and Republicans judged it a valuable insight, everyone in the chamber had to agree--or act as if they agreed--that the occasion wasn't about politics.

Outside, of course, there was plenty of politics. The speech was boycotted by some 50 Democrats and was accompanied by a highly partisan Twitter smackdown. It was followed by dueling news conferences by Democrats, Republicans and President Barack Obama himself.

Magazine Article

A STATEMENT ON THE CRISIS IN THE U.S.-ISRAEL RELATIONSHIP

BY THE Editors of Commentary

Scholarly/Peer-Reviewed

From: *Israel Affairs*, 8(1/2), 2001

Israel 1948–98:
Purpose and Predicament in History

MORDECHAI NISAN

BETWEEN EXISTENCE AND IDENTITY

One hundred years of modern Zionism and fifty years of the State of Israel provide convenient historical landmarks to reflect on the political return of the Jewish people to history. It was a vibrant collective memory that enabled this people to imagine that a national renaissance could be wrought from the legacy of an extraordinary march through time. The memory bank of the Jews meandered comfortably from Abraham to Moses, to David and Hillel – and from exile to homeland: it constituted the spiritual strength of an ancient people, which was compromised by contact with modernity and its assimilationist pull. The history of the Jews demanded a reconstruction to escape the dim shadows of Diaspora life, its indignities and insecurities, on the way toward redirecting the path of Jewish history, in concrete ideological, geographical and political ways. Memory, in short, provided the Jewish people with the springboard for a return to history.

Yet, the political return that culminated in the founding of the State of Israel in 1948 is but one aspect of this extraordinary human triumph. The broader context of Israel's place in the Middle East and the world touches

Activity Questions

Team Name

Team #loex2015

Q1: Research Process

Describe the research process of the author/s of this source.

Pedagogical intent: To focus on process rather than format; to downplay the physical characteristics of the source and the author's credentials
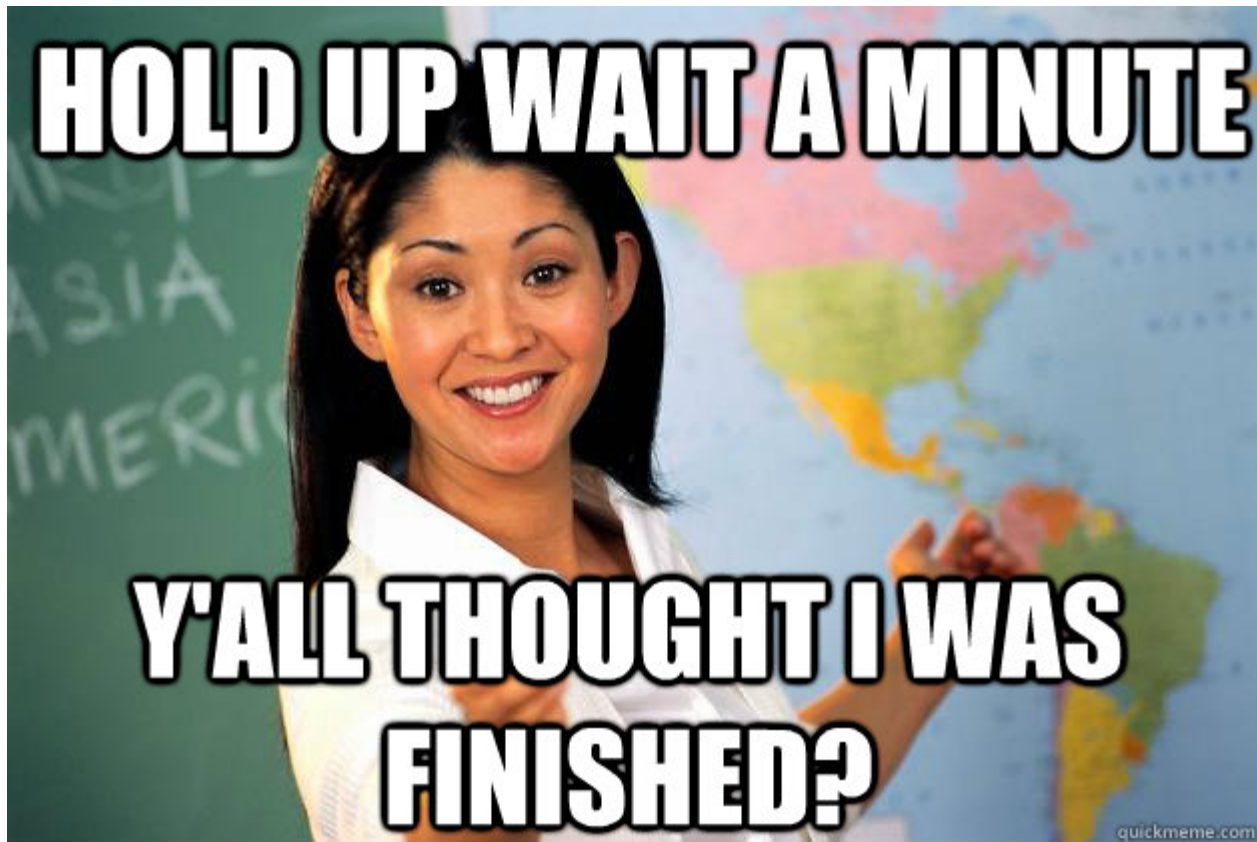
Q2: Review & Revision Processes

Describe any review and revision processes that this source went through before it was published or posted.

Pedagogical intent: To introduce the review and revision process, which will include the concepts of timeliness and accuracy, without favoring one type of source over another

Pairing Class Responses

	Team Name	Research	Review/Revision
2	Team Tigers *Blog*		
3	Team We're #1		
4	Team War Eagle		
5	Team Livin' 4 the Weekend *Blog*		
6	Team Aubie		
7	Team RBD		
8	Team We <heart> the Library		

How does your source's research, review, & revision processes impact whether you would use it for this assignment?

Points to consider

http://cognitivedesigner.com/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2010/10/point-a-b.jpg
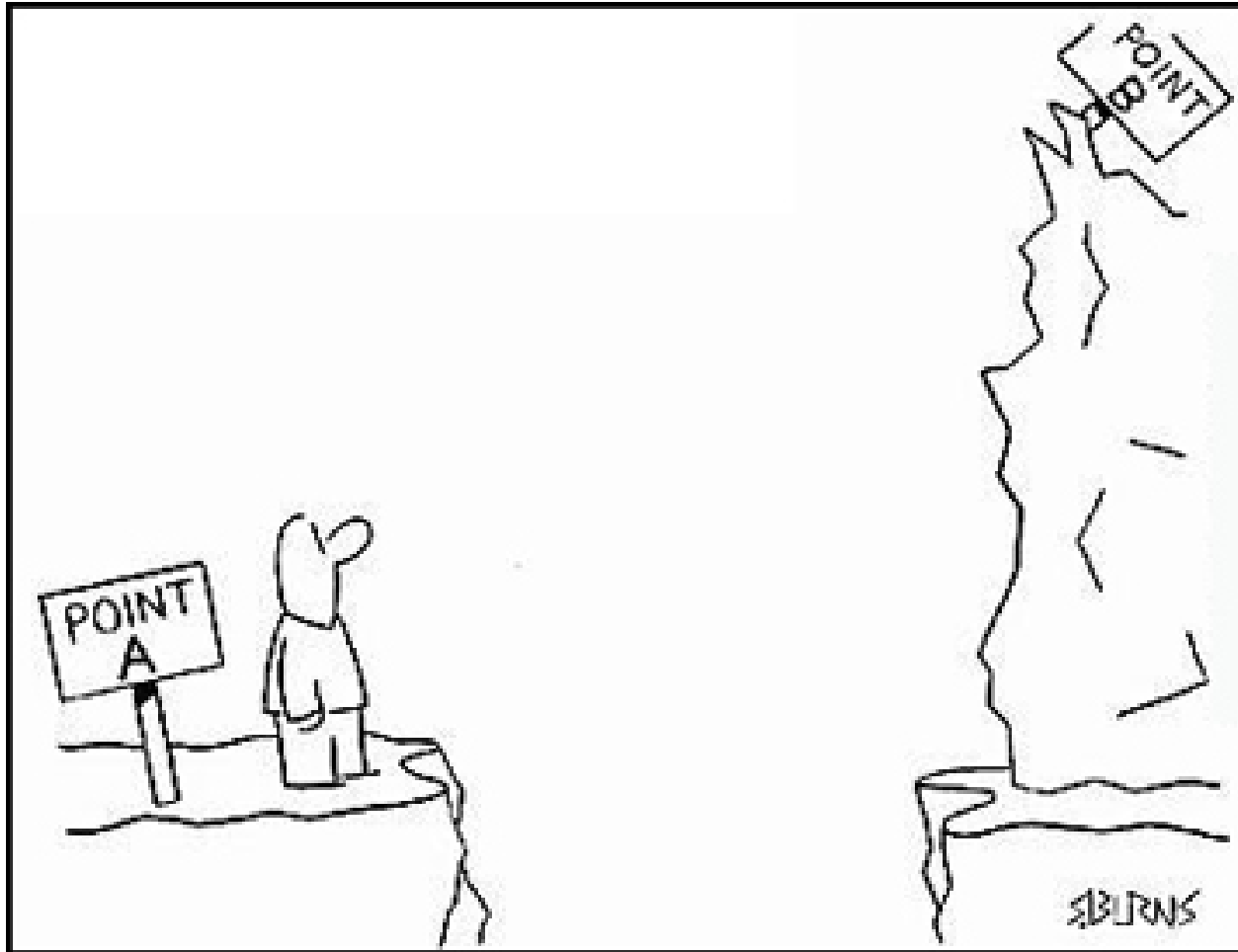
Active Learning Exercise #3
Scholarship is a Conversation

Class Activity

Students will:

➢ Recognize that knowledge can be organized into disciplines/scholarly communities

➢ Determine which disciplines/scholarly communities best meet information need

Aka "Show them Subject Databases"

Look familiar?

Indexes and Databases by Subject

General Interest

Agriculture	Human Development and Family Studies
Anthropology	Industrial & Graphic Design
Architecture	Law
Art	Library Science
Bibliography	Mathematics
Biography	Medicine
Biological Sciences	Military Science
Building Science	Music
Business	News and Current Affairs
Chemistry	Nursing
Communication Disorders	Nutrition Science and Dietetics
Communication and Journalism	Pharmacy
Community Planning	Philosophy and Religion
Consumer and Design Sciences	Physics
Demographics	Plant Sciences
Dissertations	Political Science
Education	Psychology
Encyclopedias	Science (general)
Engineering	Social Sciences (general)
English Language and Literature	Sociology and Social Work
Environment	Sports
Fisheries	Statistics - Data
Foreign Languages and Literatures	Statistics
Forestry	Sustainability
Geography	Textiles
Geology	Theatre
Government	Veterinary Medicine
History	Women's Studies
Hotel and Restaurant Management	Zoology and Wildlife Management
	eBooks

Student Instructions

- Create a "family name"

- Review abstract and highlight important keywords/concepts

- Using the Databases by Subject page, determine the top 3-5 subject areas that BEST address your abstract's topic/are MOST appropriate for your abstract's topic

Abstract: After the former University of Pennsylvania assistant professor Kristen Stromberg Childers was denied tenure four years ago, she raised an eyebrow over what she read in her personnel file. Faculty members judging her tenure case called hers a "complicated case" in which it was "especially hard to judge productivity" because she had taken two rounds of maternity leave and family medical leave to tend to her oldest child's medical issues. Childers is now filing an unusual lawsuit that alleges the university discriminated against her because of her gender and child care responsibilities. The alleged discrimination is a violation of the Civil Rights Act or 1964.

A group of librarians said:

- Teams head-to-head
- Score keeper (Instructor)
- Which team goes first? Coin toss.
- Back and forth
- Winning teams receive fabulous library prize

Benefits/Challenges

- Active/competitive participation
- Students begin to situate themselves in their own discipline
- Opportunity for informal/formal assessment
- Takes work to set up on front-end
- Must be "present" throughout session
- Need time for in-class follow-up

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