**Unit 3 Handout 4: Credibility of Sources (RAVEN)**

**A. Definitions**

Bias — A personal opinion, belief, or value that may influence one’s judgment, perspective, or claim

Credibility — The degree to which a source is believable and trustworthy

Fake news - is a type of yellow journalism or propaganda that consists of deliberate disinformation or hoaxes spread via traditional print and broadcast news media or online social media.

Reliability — The extent to which something can be trusted to be accurate resolution — The act of solving a

problem or dispute

**B. Types of Media Bias**

1. Bias by omission – leaving one side out of an article, or a series of articles over a period of time;

* ignoring facts that tend to disprove liberal or conservative claims, or that support liberal or conservative beliefs;
* bias by omission can occur either within a story, or over the long term as a particular news outlet reports one set of events, but not another.

To find instances of bias by omission, be aware of the conservative and liberal perspectives on current issues.

2. Bias by selection of sources – including more sources that support one view over another.

* This bias can also be seen when a reporter uses such phrases as “experts believe,” “observers say,” or “most people believe.”

To find bias by use of experts or sources, stay alert to the affiliations and political perspective of those quoted as experts or authorities in news stories.

3. Bias by story selection – a pattern of highlighting news stories that coincide with the agenda of either the Left or the Right, while ignoring stories that coincide with the opposing view;

* Printing a story or study released by a liberal or conservative group but ignoring studies on the same or similar topics released by the opposing group.

To identify bias by story selection you’ll need to know the conservative and liberal sides of the issue.  See how much coverage conservative issues get compared to issues on the liberal agenda, or liberals compared to conservatives.

4. Bias by placement – Story placement is a measure of how important the editor considers the story.  Studies have shown that, in the case of the average newspaper reader and the average news story, most people read only the headline.  To locate examples of bias by placement, observe where a media outlet places political story.

* Bias by placement is where on a website (or newspaper) or in an article a story or event is printed; a pattern of placing news stories so as to downplay information supportive of either conservative views or liberal views.

5. Bias by labeling – Bias by labeling comes in two forms.

* The first is the tagging of conservative politicians and groups with extreme labels while leaving liberal politicians and groups unlabeled or with more mild labels, or vice versa.
* The second kind of bias by labeling occurs when a reporter not only fails to identify a liberal as a liberal or a conservative as a conservative, but describes the person or group with positive labels, such as “an expert” or “independent consumer group.”

6. Bias by spin – Bias by spin occurs when the story has only one interpretation of an event or policy, to the exclusion of the other; spin involves tone – it’s a reporter’s subjective comments about objective facts; makes one side’s ideological perspective look better than another.  To check if it’s spin, observe which interpretation of an event or policy a news story matches – the liberal or conservative.  Many news stories do not reflect a particular spin.  Others summarize the spin put on an event by both sides.  But if a story reflects one to the exclusion of the other, then you’ve found bias by spin.

*What is media bias?*

*Which type of media bias do you believe is most important to be able to identify? Why?*

Ms. Rubin Notes:

.com company

.edu academic institution

.gov US govenrent agency

.mil US military Site

.net Network of computers

.org Nonprofit organization

**C. Fake News – 4 Tips for Evaluating News (Harvard)**

1. Vet the publisher’s credibility.

Would the publishing site meet academic citation standards? Just because a site is popular among your friends does not mean its content is accurate. What is the domain name? Be wary of unusual top-level domain names, like “. com.co.” A second-level domain like “abcnews”  ay appear credible. But note that abcnews.com.co is a different and illegitimate site, though designed to appear similar to the original. What’s the publication’s point of view? Read the “About Us” section for more insight into the publisher, leadership, and mission statement. Also, confirm that you have not stumbled upon a satirical news site, like the Onion. Who is the author? Has he or she published anything else? Be suspicious if the byline, which names the author, is a celebrity writing for a little-known site or if the author’s contact information is a G-mail address.

2. Pay attention to quality and timeliness.

Do you notice splling erors [sic], lots of ALL CAPS, or dramatic punctuation?!?!?! If so, abort your reading mission. Reputable sources have high proofreading and grammatical standards.  Is the story current or recycled? Make sure an older story isn’t being taken out of context.

3. Check the sources and citations.

How did you find the article? If the content showed up in your social media feed or was promoted on a website known for clickbait, proceed with caution. Even if the information was shared by a friend, be sure to follow the steps below to vet the publisher’s credibility. Who is (or is not) quoted, and what do they say? If you notice a glaring lack of quotes and contributing sources, particularly on a complex issue, then something is amiss. Credible journalism is fed by fact-gathering, so a lack of research means a lack of fact-based information. Is the information available on other sites? If not, then it’s very likely that the journalistic jury is still out on whether this information is valid. Library databases are a great resource for confirming the credibility of information—check out [Harvard Library's list of public resources](http://guides.library.harvard.edu/fake). Can you perform reverse searches for sources and images? By checking cited sources, you can confirm that the information has been accurately applied and not altered to meet the author’s point of view. The same goes for images. In an era of Photoshop magic, you can’t always believe what you see.

4. Ask the pros.

Have you visited a fact-checking website? There are many good ones, like [FactCheck.org](http://factcheck.org), [International Fact-Checking Network (IFCN)](http://www.poynter.org/category/fact-checking/), [PolitiFact.com](http://politifact.com), or [Snopes.com](http://snopes.com). Do your own detective work and feel more confident in being able to identify fact vs. fiction.

Fake News Quiz: <http://factitious.augamestudio.com/#/>

**D. RAVEN**

The following template provides you with a set of questions and prompts that you can use to analyze the source of a document.

Reputation: What do you know about the reputation of the author, the sources, and the publication? Do past actions or lies indicate the author, sources, or publication may not be reliable? Is the author, source, or publication in a position of authority?

Ability to Observe

Is the author in a position that allows access to reliable evidence? If the article is about an event, did the author actually observe the event?

Vested Interest

Does the author have a personal stake in the topic or event? Would the author gain anything by being deceitful? Would the author gain anything by telling the truth?

Expertise

Does the author have specialized knowledge on the topic or event? Does the evidence come from a source that has expertise on the topic or event?

Neutrality

Does the author attempt to maintain neutrality about the issue, or is bias clearly evident? Is the source of the evidence attempt to maintain neutrality, or is bias clearly present?

*Using the RAVEN template determine if the following websites are credible or not and explain why.*

[*https://zapatopi.net/treeoctopus/*](https://zapatopi.net/treeoctopus/)

[*https://www.allaboutexplorers.com*](https://www.allaboutexplorers.com)