Point of View

Labels

Magazines, newspapers, broadcasters and organizations may have a reputation for being politically left or right. The mental model is a horizontal line with starting on the left with progressive, liberal, moderate or centerist, continuing right with conservative, ultra-conservative sources. They may be associated with a particular political party, religious movement, denomination, or be secular, or they may have a one-issue cause (environmentalists). Some media outlets readily acknowledge a bias while others have unacknowledged bias and still others strive to present a variety of viewpoints. Knowing the source’s reputation alerts the reader to bias in the information it provides. Attitude should not be confused with factual accuracy.

Labeling bias is a form of stereotyping, and individual contributors to any of the media outlets or organizations listed below may not conform to the source’s reputation. Evaluating each document for individual point of view is important. It’s valuable to remember pundits apply labels to each other as well.

Editorials and talk shows — newspapers devote columns to editorials and personal commentaries. These are clearly labeled as expressing the opinion of the news agency, its editors or the commentary’s author. Such pieces can be helpful resources for papers on controversial topics by providing various points of view or by backing up a thesis statement. Similarly, broadcast media feature talk show hosts with clearly defined political agendas. Their job is to represent that...

Magazines and Newspapers:

- Advocate (gay/liberal)
- America (Catholic)
- American Legion (conservative veterans)
- American Prospect (conservative)
- Atlantic (leans liberal)
- Chicago Tribune Newspaper (liberal)
- Christian Century (protestant liberal)
- Christianity Today (evangelical)
- Commentary (conservative)
- Commonweal (Catholic)
- Congressional Digest (government policy)
- Dissent (progressive)
- E: The Environmental Magazine (environmentalist)
- Economist (conservative)
- Foreign Affairs (moderate/centerist)
- Guardian Newspaper - UK (liberal)
- Harper’s Magazine (leans liberal)
- Houston Chronicle Newspaper (liberal)
- Humanist (secular)
- Insight on the News (conservative)
- Los Angeles Times Newspaper (liberal)
- Mother Jones (progressive)
- Ms (feminist/progressive)
- Nation (progressive)
- National Review (conservative)
- New American (ultra-conservative)
- New Republic (liberal)
- New York Daily News Newspaper (liberal)
- New York Post Newspaper (conservative)
- New York Times Newspaper (liberal)
- New Yorker (leans liberal)
- Newsday Newspaper (liberal)
- Newsweek Magazine (centerist/liberal)
- Progressive (progressive)
- Rolling Stone (pop-culture/liberal)
- Sierra (environmentalist/liberal)
- Skeptical Inquirer (evidence-based scientific)
- Tikkun (Jewish/liberal)
- Time Magazine (centerist/conservative)
- USA Today Newspaper (centerist)
- US News and World Report Magazine (centerist)
- Utne Reader (liberal)
- Village Voice (liberal)
- Wall Street Journal Newspaper (conservative)
- Washington Post Newspaper (liberal)
- Weekly Standard (conservative)
- World Press Review (international perspectives)
- World Watch (environmentalist)

Radio and Television Networks:

- ABC TV (attempts objectivity)
- Air America Radio (liberal)
- BBC News Radio (international/moderate)
- CBS TV (attempts objectivity)
- CNN TV (attempts objectivity)
- FOX News TV (conservative)
- NBC TV (attempts objectivity)
- NPR Radio (leans liberal)
- PBS Radio (leans liberal)
- PRI Radio (international perspectives)
- Clear Channel (conservative)
Unstated Bias — not all opinion is clearly labeled. Persuasive writing whether in a book, magazine article, or on the web may have an unstated point of view that the reader must detect based on language used and information used and left out. The more the reader knows about a topic, the easier it is to detect bias. Because there is no oversight for quality on the web, anyone can upload content to a web page. Judging the value of that content can be difficult if the bias of the website’s author is disguised by how the website looks and reads. Of all the sources available to students, the web requires the most critical analysis before use in a research paper.

Detecting Bias

When deciding if a source is being objective about the information they are presenting, look for some of the following techniques used to convince readers that what they are reading is fact when it may not be:

1. Persuasive ("loaded") language — using words and sentences that solicit a positive or negative response from the reader or that lead the reader to a specific conclusion.
2. Misquoting a source— this often happens in the news media when reporters reword, paraphrase, or manipulate a statement or source’s information
3. Selective facts—taking information out of context or selective use of data—picking only information that supports the argument and leaving out the rest.
4. Distortion or stretching the facts—making issues more extreme by using misinformation or exaggeration.
5. Flawed research—basing a claim on too small a sample, manipulating statistics, using “fuzzy science” or “bad math,” failing to report contrary conclusions from other scientists.

Website Evaluation

Many websites are self-published. Beyond the criteria mentioned for all resources look for additional proof of value in websites. Some hoax sites look very credible until viewed with a critical eye. Look for:

1. Mission/Vision/Purpose Statement—reveals purpose of the website and point of view.
2. Credentials—a well-regarded sponsoring organization or an expert author. (Webpage content may not list an individual author.)
3. Date of last revision—this reveals how recently the content of a website has been reviewed.
4. Contact information— is there a physical address and telephone number the researcher can use to contact a real person with questions?
5. Loaded language—words that assign emotional value can be used to manipulate attitude. “Patriot” sounds better than “vigilante.” “Insurgency” sounds less scary than “civil war.”
6. Links—do other reputable websites link to the website and does it link to other reputable sites.

For additional help, contact the Lakeland Library Reference Desk at 440.525.7425 or reflibrarian@lakelandcc.edu