

How to Work with Biased Sources: Course Syllabus



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Instructor

Janet Goodrich earned a PhD in English from the University of Kentucky in 1998. Since then she has taught at four different colleges in two different states, home educated her children, and worked as an online writing tutor for an international educational company. These experiences have given her an amazing respect for the diverse ways people learn.

Course Length

3 weeks

Communication Preferences

If you have questions about the work, you may either use the [“Ask a Question” forum](#), or feel free to contact the instructor by email at AcrossthePage@gmail.com. I check my email daily and will respond.

Course Description

In this three-week course, students learn a method for evaluating bias when conducting research to learn about a current controversy. They practice using several tools to critically assess the type and extent of bias in sources, focusing on how to harvest information and perspective to develop a more complete understanding of a topic.

Prerequisite Knowledge

This course is narrowly focused on learning how to work with biased sources. It is designed to complement students' work in other courses that may ask them to research and write about a current controversy.

Evaluating source material is an important part of conducting research, and if we take a step back and think about the factors to be considered, we would include the credentials of the author, the currency of the information, the validity of the publication, the target audience and any references or citations to other sources. The topic of this course, identifying bias, belongs under the "validity" heading in this larger picture of determining whether a source should be used for research.

Students should be familiar with MLA Style format and documentation, should have access to the internet and, preferably, to a good library, and should be familiar with the basics of writing a thesis-driven academic essay that manifests a suitable tone, organization, support, awareness of opposing views, and careful revision and editing.

Additional Practice

For help with issues of writing and grammar, the Purdue OWL provides good [explanations and exercises](#). For assistance with MLA Style, refer to the Purdue OWL [MLA Style Guide](#). You may also consult a good handbook, such as [The Little Seagull Handbook](#).

Goal

By the end of this course, students should be able to identify, analyze, and discuss political bias in a current news source.

Learning Outcomes

Upon successful completion of this course the student will be able to:

- Identify clues to where a source falls along the political spectrum
- Analyze bias in a source
- Explain how critically engaging bias in a source affects research

Course Information

In addition to the Welcome and Overview of the Course, this class consists of three modules, each a week in length, and is delivered asynchronously online. The three modules are:

- Module 1: Identifying Bias
- Module 2: Analyzing Bias
- Module 3: Report Your Findings

Suggested Grade Breakdown

- Discussion 1 (10%)
- Review Activity 1 (10%)
- Bias Analysis Practice Assignment (10%)
- Discussion 2 (10%)
- Report Your Findings (30%)
- Discussion 3 (30%)

Suggested Requirements:

- There should be a complete work requirement for this course. All assignments and discussions must be submitted to receive credit.
- An average grade of 75% or above on class activities is considered passing.

Grade Rubrics:

Rubrics for Discussions and Assignments are provided in the Materials tab for the Course Overview.

Academic Honesty

All students are expected to submit their own work. This is the only way to learn. Do not copy anyone else's work, or copy anything from the internet, and represent it as your own. Any work found to be plagiarized will receive a 0 for the first occurrence. A second occurrence will result in an F for the course. If you would like additional clarity on what constitutes plagiarism, consider [doing this tutorial](#) on academic honesty, produced by the Open Educational Resource *College Success*.

Technical Requirements:

- Access to the course at Courses.AcrossThePage.net
- Ability to view PDF documents, and work with Microsoft Word documents

- A reliable laptop or other device with reliable internet access and ability to produce written documents

Discussion Requirements

- **Proofread before you post.** It shows a level of preparation and care if you read through the post and correct typos, missing or wrong words, etc. before submitting.
- **Interact.** Read other students' posts and comment thoughtfully on them.
- **Focus your comments on the message, not the messenger.** Debating ideas is encouraged, but make sure you do not attack another for his or her ideas.
- **Avoid posting "me too" or "I agree" posts.** If you agree with a post, take the time to articulate why you agree.
- **Keep your replies brief.** Replies should be no longer than 3 paragraphs at the most.

Discussion Tips

When replying to your classmates, your first impulse might be to agree or disagree with what they say. Actually, though, you have a variety of options. Here are a few:

- **Comment on an idea or observation new to you.** What does the student say that hasn't occurred to you before? How does it affect your understanding of the topic at hand?
- **Comment on how what someone else has posted connects to your own discussion post.** Does the classmate share your view of the issue under discussion? Point out the area of agreement and offer an additional point. Does the student take a different view? Point out the difference and indicate whether it influences your thinking in any way -- by helping you understand better where the "other side" is coming from, by prompting you to take new information into account, or perhaps even by encouraging you to change your mind in part or in full.
- **Ask a question.** What further information would you be interested in seeing? What questions does the post raise for you, and why?
- **Suggest something about the topic that the classmate seems to overlook.** Acknowledge what the classmate is saying, but help them to see anything they might be missing in their consideration of the topic.
- **Share a relevant experience.** Maybe a classmate's post will remind you of a time when you experienced, witnessed, or read about what they are saying, either affirming their point or coming to a different outcome.
- **Comment on what an observation or topic means to you.** What is your takeaway from what your classmate says -- a new way of seeing something, a change of mind, an increased appreciation for some aspect of the issue?

Keeping these options in mind can help to enrich our class discussions and make them more interesting and useful for you to participate in.