Sources for Students on **Linguicism** and the **Politics of Language**

Link for sharing:
https://tinyurl.com/politicsoflanguage

Note to Viewers:

I welcome suggestions!
To suggest a text, please use the comment function or email me at missywatson.ccny@gmail.com.
And if you can't find a source, reach out and I'll help!

BIBLIOGRAPHIES. Want to read more about the topic before delving into assigning students readings?

- Click here for a brief bib of some of my fav disciplinary sources on this topic. The bolded citations are (imho) good ones to start with.
- Click here for a much longer (but not recently updated) bib compiled by sociolinguist Rosina Lippi-Green. Then, click "Download full bibliography"

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Readings for students on the politics of language

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Atkins, Brianna. "Did You Know You Sound White? Language Discrimination and Code-Switching in the Black Community." Unpublished manuscript of a City College undergraduate student, 2016.

Baldwin, James. "If Black English isn't a language, then tell me, what is?." The Black Scholar 27.1 (1979): 5-6. https://archive.nytimes.com/www.nytimes.com/books/98/03/29/specials/baldwin-english.html?_r=1&oref=slogin

Ball, Cheryl E., and Drew M. Loewe. *Bad ideas about writing.* (2017). Especially these chapters:
Writers are Mythical, Magical, and Damaged
You Need My Credentials to be a Writer
Failure is Not an Option
There is One Correct Way of Writing and Speaking
African American Language is not Good English
Official American English is Best
Good Writers Must Know Grammatical Terminology
Grading Has Always Made Writing Better
Texting Ruins Students' Grammar Skills
Texting Ruins Literacy Skills

Barmak, Sarah. "Straight Talk? Depends Who's Listening; The U.S. Is Separated between Red and Blue, Liberals, Conservatives but the Deepest Rift Might Be Linguistic." *Toronto Star*, 2008, p. ID.7. https://integral-options.blogspot.com/2008/11/straight-talk-depends-on-whos-listening.html

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Cisneros, Sandra. “Only Daughter.” Latina: Women's Voices From the Borderlands. Edited by Lillian Castillo-Speed. New York: Touchstone/Simon & Schuster, 1995. https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=&ved=2ahUKEwjDzqCZzNXtAhWNEVkFHUecA-8QFjAAegQIAhAC&url=http%3A%2F%2Fchawkinsteaching.weebly.com%2Fuploads%2F1%2F2%2F9%2F7%2F12977279%2Fonly_daughter.pdf&usg=AOvVaw02QBM39lzu0XA7kYsy2yuV

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La Chrisx. “La Loca de la Raza Cosmica.” http://www.geocities.ws/college_chicano_warrior/poems4/laloca.htm

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Other great online/video resources

The Language and Life Project. “The LANGUAGE and LIFE PROJECT at NC STATE is a non-profit outreach education endeavor to document and celebrate dialects, languages, and cultures of the United States. The LLP seeks to build awareness and appreciation of linguistic diversity through educational resources, television programs and award-winning documentaries.” Saleem Safwat’s TED talk, “Why I Keep Speaking Up….” https://www.ted.com/talks/safwat_saleem_why_i_keep_speaking_up_even_when_people_mock_my_accent

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Lyiscott, Jamila. TED Talk. “Why English Class is Silencing Students of Color.”
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Lysicott, Jamila. “Language, Race, and Power.”
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hh3MhQm8OmU&feature=emb_logo

Naomi Shihab Nye’s "Gate A4" https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Jb-iGnA4pbo

Carrie Gillon’s TED talk, “How we judge others when they speak (and we should stop).” https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hj7wkh6nONE

Kellam Barta’s TED talk, “No such thing as correct English.”
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VEFM905EOUk

Chandra Arthur’s TED talk, “The Cost of Code Switching.”
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Bo3hRq2RnNI

Harold Wallace III’s TED Talk, “Everyday Struggle: Switching Codes for Survival.”
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NJy5yeBSQ7o

Katelynn Duggins’ TED Talk, “To Code Switch or Not to Code Switch? That is the Question.” https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sncGGjaYJ5I

Lueng, Karen. TED Talk. “Embracing Multilingualism and Eradicating Linguistic Bias.” https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S8QrGsxeEq8

Anne Curzan’s TED Talk, “What makes a word "real"?”
https://www.ted.com/talks/anne_curzan_what_makes_a_word_real?language=en

Micheal DeGraff. “Language Prejudice: Are you being judged by the way you speak?”
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_NjxrXWaSJk

John Baugh’s TED talk, “The Significance of Linguistic Profiling.”
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GjFtIg-nLAA

Karina Chapa’s TED talk, “The revolutionary power of bilingualism.”
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BMHEygNw6r0

Williams, Robert. On Ebonics (and the linguistic injustice of standardized testing)

“Talk American.” Code Switch, NPR Podcast.

https://www.npr.org/templates/transcript/transcript.php?storyId=636442508

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Arundhati Roy's blog post, "What is the Morally Appropriate Language in Which to Think and Write?" https://lithub.com/what-is-the-morally-appropriate-language-in-which-to-think-and-write/

David Shariatmadari's "The Limits of Standard English." https://www.theparisreview.org/blog/2020/01/07/the-limits-of-standard-english/

Marilynne Robinson's "My Western Roots." https://www.washington.edu/uwired/outreach/cspn/Website/Classroom%20Materials/Reading%20the%20Region/Northwest%20Schools%20of%20Literature/Texts/11.html

Kevin Abroad's "Linguistic Discrimination: My Story" Youtube video. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y1Rku8RmAf4

Patricia Ryan's TED talk, "Don't Insist on English!" https://www.ted.com/talks/patricia_ryan_ideas_in_all_languages_not_just_english

Ted Walker's TED talk, "The World's English Mania." https://www.ted.com/talks/jay_walker_on_the_world_s_english_mania

Steven Pinker's TED talk, "What Our Language Habits Reveal." https://www.ted.com/talks/steven_pinker_on_language_and_thought

Curtis "Wall Street" Carroll's TED talk "How I learned to read--and trade stocks--in prison." https://www.ted.com/talks/curtis_wall_street_carroll_how_i_learned_to_read_and_trade_stocks_in_prison

Kellam Barta's TED talk, "No such thing as correct English." https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VEFM905EOUk

Vongai Mambo's TED talk, "Defending Our Speech" https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vjWfkdOJmEg

"Is talking white really a thing?"

https://www.facebook.com/VoicesOfColorByInsider/videos/273025213266230/?hc_ref=ARQeQ9yf2wwHv6knK-GlzwuiHdnEe9Lh_jQqjZ2laG7K-BPTQ892X_PFZIw5dK7I7nQ

Lera Boroditsky's TED TALK "How language shapes the way we think."
https://www.ted.com/talks/lera_boroditsky_how_language_shapes_the_way_we_think?utm_campaign=social&utm_medium=referral&utm_source=facebook.com&utm_content=talk&utm_term=social-science

James Devitt's "How Bilingual Brains Switch Between Languages"
https://www.futurity.org/languages-bilingualism-1861262/

Nas Daily's "The easiest language?!"
https://www.facebook.com/nasdaily/videos/1898731746829462/

Nas Daily's "Why I have an accent."
https://www.facebook.com/ProjectNightfall/videos/293935168097633/UzpfSTUxNDc2NTIyNjoxMDE2MTMyMjA4ODczMDIyNw/

The Educational Linguist's blog post, "What if we treated language-minoritized children like gifted sociolinguists?
https://educationallinguist.wordpress.com/2016/03/25/what-if-we-treated-language-minoritized-children-like-gifted-sociolinguists/

Code-Switching and Why You're Tired. Short Blog post by Pearl Ratunil

Gerald Roche's Twitter Feed: https://twitter.com/GJosephRoche

The Accentism Project: https://accentism.org

The Vocal Fries Podcast: https://vocalfriespod.fireside.fm/

Language discrimination against African American English in Ann Arbor.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WWIbIA9BltQ

Accent profiling: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xoOLBi8XL7I

TED Talk How we judge others when they speak (and we should stop)
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hj7wkh6nONE

5 Facts about English language discrimination
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Fdf8qX6ji40

PBS News Hour. "We stigmatize accents, but language belongs to everyone."
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xoOLBi8XL7I

Housing Discrimination PSA
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c_3mSW8XUZI

Writing Across Borders film
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Cv3uRPsskv0
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Disciplinary-ish texts that may be still useful/accessible to students

Alvarez, Sara P., Amy J. Wan, & Eunjeong Lee "Workin' Languages: Who We Are Matters in Our Writing." Writing Spaces: Readings on Writing, Volume 4.

Baker-Bell, April. "'I Can Switch My Language, But I Can't Switch My Skin': What Teachers Must Understand About Linguistic Racism." *The Guide for White Women who Teach Black Boys*, Edited by Eddie Moore, Ali Michael, and Marguerite W. Penick-Parks, 2017, pp. 97-107.

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Carson, Joan. "Becoming Biliterate." Journal of Second Language Writing 1.1 (1992): 37-60. Print.

Conference on College Composition and Communication. "Students' Rights to Their Own Language."

Conference on College Composition and Communication. This Ain't Another Statement! This is a DEMAND for Black Linguistic Justice! By *April Baker-Bell, Bonnie J. Williams-Farrier, Davena Jackson, Lamar Johnson, Carmen Kynard,* and *Teaira McMurtry*

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Gee, James Paul. "Literacy, Linguistics, and Discourse: Introduction."

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Inoue, Asao. "Habits of White Language." Handout. https://tinyurl.com/HOWL5

Johns, Ann M. "Discourse Communities and Communities of Practice: Membership, Conflict, and Identity."

Krachu, Braj. "World Englishes: Agony and Ecstasy." Journal of Aesthetic Education 30.2 (1996): 135-55. Print.

Kubota, Ryuko. “My Experience of Learning to Read and Write in Japanese and English as L2.” Reflections on Multiliterate Lives. Ed. Ulla Connor and Diane Belcher. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters, 2001. 96-109. Print.

Leki, Ilona. “History of Writing Instruction in English as a Second Language.” Understanding ESL Writers: A Guide for Teachers. Portsmouth: Heinemann, 1992. 3-9. Print.

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Milu, Esther. “Suppression of Translingual Practices in Africa: A Synopsis” and “Racialized Language Hierarchies and Standard Language Ideologies.” Excerpts from “Hip-Hop and the Decolonial Possibilities of Translingualism.” *College Composition and Communication*, v. 73, no. 3, 2022, pp. 384-390.

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You, Xiaoye. "The Choice Made from No Choice: English Writing Instruction in a Chinese University." Journal of Second Language Writing 13.2 (2004): 97–110. Print.

Young, Vershawn Ashanti. "Should Writers Use They Own English?." *Iowa Journal of Cultural Studies* 12.1 (2010): 110-117.

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Young, Vershawn Ashanti, Rusty Barrett, and Kim Brian Lovejoy. *Other people's English: Code-meshing, code-switching, and African American literacy*. Teachers College Press, 2014.

Other resources for teachers

Black Linguistic Justice and The Black Language Syllabus: http://www.blacklanguagesyllabus.com/

Your Pedagogy Might Be More Aligned to Colonialism Than You Realize. By Jamila Lyiscott.

"The Translingual Literacy Studies Digital Hub" (https://translingualliteracy.org/).

Great resources here from Illinois State University http://isuwriting.com/category/learning-outcomes/ and http://isuwriting.com/2018/05/06/translingual-and-transnational-literacies-attention-to-diverse-language-practices/

Zapata, Angie, and Tasha Tropp Laman. "" I write to show how beautiful my languages are": Translingual Writing Instruction in English-Dominant Classrooms." *Language Arts* 93.5 (2016): 366: http://www.ncte.org/library/NCTEFiles/Resources/Journals/LA/0935-may2016/LA0935Write.pdf?utm_source=LA+Journal+Announcement+-+93-5&utm_medium=Email&utm_campaign=Journals

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Savini, C. (2021). 10 ways to tackle linguistic bias in our classrooms. *Inside Higher Ed.*

Public examples of language attitudes/conflict/negotiation (good for analysis/discussion)

Blindfolded people judging other people's race and identities based solely on their voice.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EE3x1uS781s

Stopping the teaching of grammar gets wrongly spun on Fox news as assuming Black people can't learn grammar.
https://news.yahoo.com/amphtml/dr-carol-swain-says-relaxing-032121915.html

Professor Asks Student to 'Anglicize' Her Name.
https://www.nytimes.com/2020/06/21/us/phuc-bui-diem-nguyen-laney-college.html?action=click&module=Latest&pgtype=Homepage

"I won't hire people who use poor grammar. Here's why."
https://hbr.org/2012/07/i-wont-hire-people-who-use-poo

"You should only speak English in the workplace." "Man Threatens Spanish-Speaking Workers: 'My Next Call Will Be to ICE'":
https://www.nytimes.com/2018/05/16/nyregion/man-threatens-spanish-language-video.html

"Rachel Jeantel was the leading prosecution witness when George Zimmerman was tried for killing Trayvon Martin, but she spoke in African American Vernacular English (AAVE) and her crucial testimony was dismissed as incomprehensible and not credible"
https://www.linguisticsociety.org/sites/default/files/Rickford_92_4.pdf

It's acceptable to judge someone based on their language. Meme on judging people based on their grammar:
https://www.someecards.com/usercards/viewcard/MjAxMi1mYzZkNGFiMzAyMThjN2Q2/?tagSlug=confession

"We speak "American" in America." Sarah Palin tells immigrants to "speak American":
https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/video/2015/sep/07/sarah-palin-tells-immigrants-to-the-us-to-speak-american-video

Immigrants don't want to learn English. Joke about E.T. versus immigrants (E.T. speaks English and wants to go home):
https://www.reddit.com/r/Jokes/comments/6mou47/whats_the_difference_between_an_illegal_immigrant/ and

https://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/gop-immigration-learning-english_us_560315ace4b0fde8b0d124ea

Why are so many Americans "concerned with preventing any changes to their national language?" The myth that English is an official language: https://psmag.com/education/the-myth-of-english-as-americas-national-language

We should ban slang at school. http://www.bbc.co.uk/newsround/24534663

The Office, Kevin abbreviates for clearer communication
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_K-L9uhsBLM&feature=youtu.be

Accents are unacceptable, so nonnative English speakers should seek modification courses: https://www.csmonitor.com/1999/1103/p13s1.html and https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AtxQ15nTQAo

"It's weird to pronounce white names as Black, but not Black names as white." A parody: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Dd7FixvoKBw

Ellen DeGeneres mocks Sofia Vergara's accent in this Cover Girl commercial: https://www.dailymotion.com/video/xnn5n0

Using slang makes you sound stupid. https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-11420737

"We should save the "Queen's English"": https://www.independent.co.uk/news/education/schools/god-save-the-queens-english-our-language-is-under-threat-from-ignorance-inverted-snobbery-and-2099825.html

"Using "aks" instead of "ask" is ignorant and confuses readers." (Lippi-Green 190-192; 205). See also: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NbhPY06KrDg and https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U9F1LTO4e7Y

"Switch to Standard English if you want to be successful, says character on HBO show *Insecure* to fellow African American woman." https://www.pastemagazine.com/articles/2016/10/insecures-claps-back-at-code-switching-in-racist-a.html and https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_0uwDpKUl0g

You must be confused or stupid if you don't speak English, and imitating your accent is reasonable. A Parody of a Khmer woman: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R2NcwrPZBLM&list=PLveUJcTYzTrtTKpGMzrih8B6W4ZJAhMjP

Trevor Noah's "Don't Lose Your Accent / Learning Accents" https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MhCEdIqFCck

"Accents and errors make it too hard for many people to understand and should be eliminated." https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7f1f13QEfQc . And the burden for clear

communication rests solely/mostly on the one with the “accent” or “errors” (see Lippi-Green 71-74).

Should stenographers learn Black English?
https://www.nytimes.com/2019/01/25/us/black-dialect-courtrooms.html?action=click&module=News&pgtype=Homepage&fbclid=IwAR2XFAI84cCmBrt3OARYzbSZe3Xgry6dYMHrZNm3h8uWwsiaCPmKsMVjJa8

How nonnative English speakers get wrongly judged.
https://www.upworthy.com/this-guy-was-fed-up-with-his-classmate-he-s-gone-viral-for-calling-out-his-own-ignorance

The CUNY professor who faced criticism from her Chair for inviting students to draw on their language differences in academic writing.
https://teacher-scholar-activist.org/2017/10/09/stank-2-0-and-the-counter-poetics-of-black-language-in-college-classrooms/

When teachers claim “This is not your language” to multidialectical students, insinuating plagiarism: https://www.chronicle.com/article/Not-Your-Language-How-a/238239

Labels matter! Taking issue with “English as *second* language” and “nonnative speaker” labels: https://www.dropbox.com/s/h6r0d1xyh0gufs9/2003TM13.4NNEST.pdf?dl=0 and maybe https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AeeBlXKkxeM&t=64s

When heritage languages feel distant and overly politicized--My Spanish:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fE-c4Bj_RT0

Spanish dialects/accents stereotypes:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VlK-neOypDM&t=92s

The power of Nuyorican accents: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qtOXiNx4jgQ

Translation is hard, tricky, and (can be) humorous. When Spock sings “My Milkshake Brings All the Boys to the Yard”
https://www.facebook.com/groups/834976033333570/permalink/1076126832551821/
and other (more serious) examples of the challenges and marvels of translation:
https://www.wnycstudios.org/story/translation/

Customer goes on racist rant about Spanish words on Mexican restaurant menu.
https://thehill.com/blogs/blog-briefing-room/news/436007-customer-goes-on-racist-rant-after-finding-spanish-words-on-a?fbclid=IwAR1fJIzO9M3vtJH6ZL7h0isGgoEmBRGUD_myWtboL43f9qQB9bfaeAcMjTY&fbclid=IwAR2WqVCZ1ZOQIxshqgdgCK8049u9X_lgzYmI4-LCxgYX6Vv0VIcvfQ-v6nA

Restaurant worker fired for speaking Spanish.

https://www.nbcnews.com/news/latino/restaurant-worker-who-says-she-was-fired-speaking-spanish-fights-n959606 Sources on the Media and Language

These sources cover the ongoing scholarly debate over whether — and how — television, radio, and social media actually drive language change, versus simply reflecting or accelerating changes already underway.

General Overviews & Foundational Voices

David Crystal — Txtng: The Gr8 Db8 (book) and personal blog

https://david-crystal.blogspot.com/

Crystal is the most classroom-friendly linguist writing on this exact question. His blog and this short book directly address whether texting/internet language is "ruining" English — his answer, backed by data, is no. Good starting point for students who arrive with strong opinions about "kids these days."

Language Log (Mark Liberman, Geoffrey Pullum, et al.)

https://languagelog.ldc.upenn.edu/nll/

A long-running linguistics blog from University of Pennsylvania faculty. Frequently debunks popular claims about media-driven language decline using real corpus data. Academic authorship but conversational tone — assign individual short posts rather than the whole site.

Merriam-Webster — "Words We're Watching"

https://www.merriam-webster.com/topics/words-were-watching

Short, dated posts tracking specific words as they move from informal/online use toward dictionary entry (e.g., "low-key," "hangry," "explainer"). Useful as primary-source evidence: students can trace a word's media origin and spread in real time.

Scholarly / Research-Based (accessible entry points)

"Investigating Media Influence on Language Change in Low-Contact Communities" (Seattle Pacific University, honors thesis)

https://digitalcommons.spu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1175&context=honorsprojects

A readable, undergraduate-level literature review that lays out the classic argument (Chambers, Trudgill) that broadcast media alone cannot drive core grammatical or phonological change —

face-to-face interaction is still required. Good model of how to synthesize prior sociolinguistic research.

"Will AI Shape the Way We Speak?" — arXiv preprint on synthetic voices and sociolinguistic influence

https://arxiv.org/pdf/2504.10650

Opens with a concise literature review of three decades of research on media's role in diffusing linguistic features, then extends the question to AI voice assistants. Useful bridge from "TV era" language-change scholarship to a current, unresolved question.

"Digital Dialects: The Impact of Social Media on Language Evolution" (open-access literature review)

https://ejournal.ipinternasional.com/index.php/ijere/article/view/986

A short, open-access review article that frames three research questions — does social media drive language change, what new communication forms has it produced, and what are the costs/benefits for literacy. Good as a model literature review for students writing their own.

Discussion prompt: Have students compare the "media can't really change language" camp (Chambers, Language Log) against the "media clearly accelerates change" camp (the social-media studies above). Where does the disagreement actually lie — in what counts as "real" language change?

How Media Manipulates Language

These sources address how word choice, framing, and euphemism are used deliberately in journalism, political messaging, and infotainment — plus tools for helping students spot it.

George Orwell — "Politics and the English Language" (1946)

https://www.orwellfoundation.com/the-orwell-foundation/orwell/essays-and-other-works/politics-and-the-english-language/

Still the single best short text for teaching this topic. Orwell's catalogue of "dying metaphors," euphemism, and jargon as tools of political evasion maps directly onto modern infotainment and spin. Pairs well as a close-reading exercise followed by a modern example (a political ad, a press release).

Tools for Analyzing Political Language & Bias

AllSides — "Examples of Media Bias and How to Spot Them"

https://www.allsides.com/media-bias/how-to-spot-types-of-media-bias

Walks through concrete types of bias (spin, slant, sensationalism, word choice) using real side-by-side headline examples — e.g., the same Florida law called the "Don't Say Gay bill" by one outlet and the "FL education bill" by another. Excellent for a short in-class exercise on framing.

AllSides / Red Blue Dictionary

https://www.allsides.com/dictionary

Defines politically contested terms (e.g., "illegal immigrant" vs. "undocumented immigrant") and shows how connotation shifts by audience. Note for students: AllSides itself is a

media-bias-rating company with a stated balance mission — worth a brief conversation about who decides what counts as "balanced."

FAIR.org (Fairness & Accuracy in Reporting)

https://fair.org/

A long-running media-criticism outlet analyzing loaded language and framing choices in news coverage. Independent bias trackers (AllSides, Media Bias/Fact Check) rate FAIR itself as left-leaning — a useful teaching moment about reading criticism of media bias with the same critical eye you'd apply to the media itself.

Media Literacy / Misinformation Organizations

News Literacy Project — RumorGuard and news literacy resources

https://newslit.org/

Nonpartisan education nonprofit; publishes classroom-ready lessons on misinformation, framing, and manipulated content. Its motto — move past "is this real?" to "why was this done and by whom?" — is a good framing device for a unit on infotainment.

Common Sense Education — Media Literacy Resource Collection

https://www.commonsense.org/education/articles/media-literacy-resources-for-classrooms

A curated, regularly updated hub of lessons, videos, and printables organized by topic (interpreting media, media manipulation, media creation). Good one-stop link list if you want students to browse and pick a lesson themselves.

MediaWell (Social Science Research Council)

https://mediawell.ssrc.org/

A running, curated collection of academic research on media manipulation and disinformation. More scholarly than the other entries here — best for a research-paper unit rather than a single-class reading.