

# Critical Evaluation of Sources

**Type of activity:** Group activity; Class discussion; Lecture

**Goal:** Encourage a critical inquiry approach to source evaluation that moves beyond the checklist method.

**Brief overview:** Evaluation of information sources goes beyond the 'scholarly v. popular' binary. By encouraging critical inquiry through open-ended questions, students will be able to engage more critically with their research assignments. Instructors will also have the opportunity to discuss how practitioners in one or more disciplines evaluate the information they use in their work.

## Learning Tasks

Because many college students remain focused on whether a source will “count” for a specific assignment, this activity is designed to help students consider a number of factors in determining whether or not a given source is appropriate for their project or assignment. Instead of using a checklist, encourage students to respond to open-ended questions about a selected source, such as:

- Who is the target audience(s) of this information?
- What are some of the main points in this information?
- Where was this information originally shared? Why might the creator/company have chosen this venue for their information?
- When was this information produced, and in what context?
- Why did the creator/company produce this information? For what purpose was this information created?
- How is this information being conveyed to the intended audience?
- How is evidence (or examples) used to support this information?
- What perspectives or which voices might be missing? Why might these have been excluded?

Following up:

- This activity could be used with a specific course reading or a source that you have selected for students to review and evaluate.
- Select some of the questions above and ask students to respond using a source they have selected themselves.