Evaluating Source Credibility Notes

Definitions

- **Relevancy:** How closely connected or appropriate ideas are to each other.
- **Authority:** The author has credentials to validate what they are writing about: they have extended education, work experience, proven research, etc.
- **Perspective**: the outlook or tendency portrayed.
- **Currency:** How recently an article was published
- **Accuracy:** Represents not only whether the ideas and evidence present are factually correct, but if the article also looks at ALL relevant facts, not just the ones that help the author's stance.

AUTHORITY

WHERE WAS THE SOURCE PUBLISHED?

- **Was the source published on-line?** This is not necessarily bad, but it will depend on...
    - Who published it?
    - Why was it published?
    - When it was published?
- **Is the source from a "Popular Source" vs. a "Scholarly Source?"**
    - **Popular**: Can have credibility, but have to look at other details to prove relevancy.
        - Sources designed to educate like Newspapers, magazines, textbooks can be more credible than entertainment publications like magazines.
    - **Scholarly** or governmental: Almost always credible in .
        - Primary- Reports from an original study
        - Secondary: Review of research, not an original study

PURPOSE

WHO WROTE IT? WHY?

Undertake brief online research into the author or the organization that published the info.

- Is the author affiliated with a university or another institution?
- What else has the author written?
- Do they have professional/career experience in that field?
- Did they publish this with ulterior motives? (like a biased interest group?)

CURRENCY

IS THE PIECE TIMELY AND APPROPRIATE FOR ITS FIELD?

In some disciplines, material can become outdated very swiftly like medicine or technology. In others, texts can continue to be considered valuable for longer like some legal issues.

ACCURACY

DOES IT HAVE SOURCES?

Sources should have clear works cited to consult for further sources to present factually correct information. Are those sources credible themselves?

Limiting sources

WHAT CAN LIMIT A SOURCE, EVEN IF IT'S VALID?

These criteria might not disqualify a source from being useful, so long as you recognize the limitation of these sources:

- Bias of publication of source
- Commercial/financial motives
- Too narrow/broad perspective for topic
- Other side not represented