

Critical Essay on Web Sources

Pick a controversial topic that is unfamiliar to you. Find websites that are related to your chosen topic. Avoid simple articles or encyclopedia articles for this exercise.

Paper should be 3 – 5 pages, double spaced. There should be **at a minimum** one website for each side of the issue (minimum websites = C grade). Be sure to give all web addresses for anything cited.

Your name should be on the front page with your class information.

Part 1: (one page)

Of all the websites you find, choose the very worst website. The definition of “worst” is up to you. For that website (ONLY), answer the following questions.

1. Note design and layout – what draws your eye? What colors are used? What pictures? Are they designed to influence you emotionally, mentally, socially....
2. Does the website have an agenda? Do you know what it is? Can you tell from looking at it or reading the main topics?
3. How can you tell if it’s telling the truth? (LOOK IT UP)
4. If there are testimonials, are full names given?
5. If there are testimonials, are they believable and/or verifiable?
 - a. Are there examples of hyperbole (an exaggeration beyond reasonable belief)?
6. Show examples of bias
 - a. How do you tell?
 - i. Strong statements, language
 - ii. Usually an appeal to emotion
 - iii. Only one side of a subject portrayed
7. Is it easy to track down just who wrote or produced this website (and is that a traceable subject?) Is there an “about” tab? What does it say?
8. Are you being manipulated by any of the above to espouse a specific point of view?
9. When was the information written? Has it been kept current?

Part 2

This section should be 1-2 pages long. Give a brief summary of other websites that are clearly pro and clearly con on your chosen topic. If you (at this point) have only used 3 websites, your best grade would be a C. Explain why you think they are pro and con – what kind of clues are there?

After a discussion of pro and con websites give examples of well-balanced articles on the subject that you feel do not show discernible bias (encyclopedia articles are acceptable here as are news articles found online as long as they cover both sides of an issue).

Part 3

The last part of your paper (generally a page or less) should cover what you think about the topic after doing the research – what your opinion now is.

Summary

Part I of your paper – is the narrative 1-9 list shown above on the worst website.

Part 2 –Discuss other pro/con websites and give examples of well-balanced website articles.

Part 3 – After your online research, what do you now believe?

“Danger, Will Robinson” (extra credit if you can identify the quote)

The 1-9 list is only for ONE website.

This is not a paper about a topic. It is a paper about evaluating online sources.

If you choose a subject that you already have strong feelings about, that will show up in your report and will weaken your grade.