EVALUATING WEB SOURCES

The web is an excellent research tool, but because of the vast amount of information available on it, it is crucial to ensure that your sources are credible. Here are some tips on how to evaluate Web sources:

The Author:
- Can you find an author of the site? If the author isn’t listed on the page you’ve found, do some scrolling and clicking, or link to the homepage.
- Is the author a credible source? Are his or her qualifications listed?

The Sponsor:
- Does the Web site have a sponsor? You can usually find this information on a home page. Is the sponsor credible?
- What information does the domain name provide? The domain name indicates the type of organization that hosts the site: commercial (.com); educational (.edu); nonprofit (.org), governmental (.gov), military (.mil), or network (.net).
- Given the domain name and/or sponsor, what biases might this site promote? It’s ok to draw information from a site that is biased (all sources are), but you want to be aware of them.
- Are there advertisements posted on the site?

The Purpose and Audience:
- What is the function of the site? Does it make an argument? Educate? Sell a product? (Be wary of sites that pretend to give information but that are really advertisements).
- Who is the site’s intended audience? If you are not a member of this audience, is the information still relevant for your research purposes?

Currency:
- When was this site developed? Check for the date of publication or the latest update.
- How current are the site links? If many of them no longer work, that indicates the site is likely dated.


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