

# Who's an Authority? Recognizing Scholarly Sources in the Library: Library Instruction Plan

## Workshop Professor:

Michelle Keba

## Workshop Description:

Are you finding reliable sources for your research papers and projects? Has your professor asked you to use scholarly sources? What is a scholarly source anyway? In this workshop, learn how to critically evaluate the information you find through books, articles, and websites.

## Course Assignment:

N/A

## Learning Outcomes:

After completing the library instruction session, students will be able to:

- produce criteria for evaluating information sources in order to cultivate a skeptical stance and a self-awareness of their own biases and world views.

## Materials:

Blank paper folded like an accordion

## Assessment:

Students will fill out the minute survey at the end of class identifying one thing they learned or liked and one thing they would change or improve.

## Who's an Authority? Recognizing Scholarly Sources in the Library Workshop Outline: (50 minutes)

- **Welcome/Introduction (2 min)**
  - "The amount of information at our disposal can be mind-boggling. Even when a library can't provide sources of information on a particular topic or information that will answer a particular question, the Internet almost certainly can. Because of this, we're rarely in a situation where we can't find information, but we are often in a situation where we need to decide if the information we've found is something we can use. Remember that not all information is of the same quality, and we need to be somewhat skeptical of what we find."
  - "Today, we'll identify some of the characteristics of quality information, and we will practice evaluating sources based on these characteristics."
- **Developing a List of Criteria to Evaluate (10 min)**
  - Show the website Yelp, and ask the students if they have used it before. Explain how the website works if necessary.

**\*\*This lesson plan was adapted from "Establishing and Applying Evaluation Criteria" p. 74 -78 in Teaching Information Literacy Threshold Concepts Lesson Plans for Librarians, edited by Bravender, McClure, and Schaub (2015).\*\***

*Updated 10/25/16 MK*

- Explain to students that they will be working in groups to evaluate the reliability of a Yelp review.
- They will read the Yelp reviews of a local coffee shop and think about why they would trust the Yelper's review or not.
- After each group member has read the Yelp review, have them "round table write" reasons why they trust the review or don't trust the review.
- Call on a group to read the first reason on their list, write that reason on the board and ask if any other groups had a similar reason. Put check marks next to the reason if any other groups had it.
- Go through each group's list until they don't have any reasons left.
- Condense the reasons into a list of criteria to use when evaluating information sources. Criteria could include:
  - Author Credentials
  - Bias
  - Content/Reliability
  - Date/Currency
  - Relevance
  - Publication Process/Prestige
  - References
- **Active Learning (15 min)**
  - Explain to students that they will also have to evaluate information on scholarly topics.
  - Show the video Uneven Outcry Over G.M.O. Foods in Opposing Viewpoints.
  - Explain that the video is over 3 years old now and there has been a lot of controversy about GMOs. Tell them you want them to work in pairs to find reliable sources that explain if GMOs are safe to eat.
  - One source should be from the library and one should be from the Internet
  - Walk around and check in with students. Ask them to show you their sources and explain why they are reliable
  - Come together as a whole class and show some example sources
- **Wrap Up**
  - Remind the students to contact the reference desk or their library liaison if they have trouble finding articles
  - Encourage them to set up an appointment with the Center for Writing Excellence if they need help writing their paper or citing in APA style
  - Have the students turn in the minute paper at the end of class