

## CRITICAL INFORMATION LITERACY GUIDE

*“[Critical information literacy] takes into consideration the social, political, economic, and corporate systems that have power and influence over information production, dissemination, access, and consumption.”*

– Lua Gregory and Shana Higgins, *Information Literacy and Social Justice* (2013)

Accessing, evaluating, and creating knowledge in an era of “fake news” and “post-truth politics” can be challenging, to say the least. Studying critical information literacy, as defined above, can help prepare us to participate meaningfully in the creation and dissemination of knowledge worldwide. Many of us have already learned useful skills to help us evaluate the **reliability**, relevance, currency, authority, and purpose of a wide range of sources. Critical information literacy asks us to build on those skills, adding such skills as interrogating **access** to information, contemplating the role media literacy plays in our intellectual and civic lives, and considering (more fully) audience **responses** to information.

**As members of the Colorado State University community**, such work will **help us meet important student learning goals\*** like 1) developing sophisticated strategies for reading, evaluating, synthesizing, and using sources in support of a claim, 2) reflecting critically on how we synthesize, communicate and create knowledge, 3) engaging thoughtfully with alternative perspectives, and 4) becoming more critical and creative users of emerging technologies. This work will also **help us to actualize our *Principles of Community*** by exercising the skills we need to enact fairness, equity, inclusivity, respect, and justice as we work toward advancing our own and others’ knowledge.

### Questions to consider as you read, evaluate, and synthesize the research presented below:

- How might the following research affect *how* you research? How you *access* information?
- How might this research influence how you *interpret*, *engage with*, and *respond to* the research you find?
- How might it influence how you *use* research to persuade a contemporary audience?
- How might the following research change your views of *media literacy* and *reliability* of information?

### INTERROGATING ACCESS to INFORMATION

#### Filter Bubbles

👉 “**Beware Online ‘Filter Bubbles’**” (Ted Talk, 2011)  
Eli Pariser discusses the dangerous consequences of ‘filter bubbles’ that prevent us from encountering alternative viewpoints that can help us broaden our worldview.

👉 “**Your Own Facts**” (*New York Times Book Review*, 2011)

Evgeny Morozov reviews Eli Pariser’s book, *The Filter Bubble: What The Internet Is Hiding From You*, which explores the effects of online personalization on our intellectual and civic lives.

👉 “**Free Yourself From Your Filter Bubbles**” (TedWomen, 2017)

Joan Blades and John Gable, who hold opposing political views, offer advice on how to work to better listen to (and understand) alternate views.

### EVALUATING RELIABILITY of INFORMATION

#### Media Literacy Tools: Evaluating Sources

👉 “**Crash Course on Navigating Digital Information**” (video series)

This 10-episode video series teaches viewers the skills needed to evaluate online information, including how to read laterally, evaluate types of evidence, understand how social media and search engines work, and break bad habits.

👉 “**Fake or Real? How to Self-Check The News and Get the Facts**” (*All Tech Considered*, 2016)

This article provides advice on how to best distinguish between real and fake news based on advice from a professor of communication and media *and* the director of the International Fact-Checking Network.

👉 “**Web Literacy for Student Fact-Checkers**” (PressBooks, 2017)

### CONSIDERING RESPONSES to INFORMATION

#### The Diminished Value of Reason

👉 “**Why Facts Don’t Change Our Minds**” (*The New Yorker*, 2017)

Elizabeth Kolbert draws from recent research by cognitive scientists and other researchers to help us understand why reasonable people respond irrationally to research and facts.

👉 “**Why Do We Believe Things That Aren’t True?**” (Tedx Talk, 2017)

Cognitive scientist and co-author of *The Knowledge Illusion: Why We Never Think Alone*, Philip Fernbach explores how much we really know and why we think we know more than we do.

👉 “**Political Extremism is Supported by An Illusion of Understanding**” (*Psychological Science*, 2014)

\* See Student Learning Outcomes and Content Criteria descriptions for CO3XX courses

## Search Engine Bias

### ***Algorithms of Oppression: How Search Engines Reinforce Racism*** (ebook, 2018)

Information studies professor Safiya Umoja Noble interrogates search engines like Google, exposing “a culture of racism and sexism in the way discoverability is created online” through biased search algorithms and data discrimination.

### **“Google Search: Hyper-visibility as a Means of Rendering Black Women and Girls Invisible”** (*InVisible Culture: An Electronic Journal for Visual Culture*, 2013)

In this article, Safiya Umoja Noble interrogates the significant consequences of Google search engine results, focusing on results for “black women.”

### **“Challenging the Algorithms of Oppression”** (Video, 2016)

In this video recording of her talk at the 2016 Personal Democracy Forum, Safiya Umoja Noble explains the significant effects of the role commercial interests play in our access to information.

## Representation in Classifying Information

### **“The Power to Name: Representation in Library Catalogs”** (*Signs*, 2001)

Information studies professor Hope A. Olson identifies “the constructed limits of systems for naming information” and reflects on who and what get excluded or marginalized in classification systems.

### **“Classifying Identity: Organizing an LGBT Library”** (*Library Philosophy and Practice*, 2016)

Librarians Kristy Nowak (CSU) and Amy Jo Mitchell discuss the challenges they encountered when using the Library of Congress classification system to classify a library of LGBT materials, noting how such systems can marginalize disadvantaged populations and challenge successful information access.

### **“The Future of Knowledge in the Public”** (Chapter 5 in *Algorithms of Oppression*, 2018)

In this book chapter, information studies professor Safiya Umoja Noble discusses the “politics of cataloguing and classification bias” in the development of information classification systems.

In this online book, Michael A. Caulfield (Dir. of Blended and Networked Learning at WSU Vancouver) teaches effective fact-checking strategies.

### **AllSides.com** (news website)

A website that presents current news “from the Left, Center, and Right of the political spectrum,” side by side so readers can see a fuller picture of how current news gets covered.

### **“Media Bias Chart”** (ad fontes media)

Search an interactive media bias chart to find out where some media sources fall along reliability, political bias, and overall quality ratings.

### **“Debunking False Stories”** (FactCheck.org)

FactCheck.org, a nonpartisan and nonprofit organization, works to debunk misinformation and provide resources on how to recognize and respond to false information. This particular page corrects misinformation that has been published.

## Contemplating Media Literacy

### **“You Think You Want Media Literacy...Do You?”** (*Data & Society: Points*, 2018)

Researcher danah boyd argues we need to reconsider why and how we teach ‘media literacy’ and encourages teachers to increase students’ awareness of how our interpretation of knowledge is socially constructed.

### **“How Real is Fake News?”** (Tedx Talk, 2018)

Award-winning journalist Sharyl Attkisson explores the idea of “fake news,” including who is behind it and why.

### **“Spreadable Spectacle in Digital Culture: Civic Expression, Fake News, and the Role of Literacies in ‘Post-Fact’ Society”** (*American Behavioral Scientist*, 2017)

Communication scholars argue that given the proliferation of “spreadable spectacle” in our communities, we must reposition media literacies as working in support of a common good.

### **“Did Media Literacy Backfire?”** (*Data & Society: Points*, 2017)

Media literacy scholar danah boyd contemplates how some of the fundamental teachings of media literacy, including questioning and not trusting information sources, may be backfiring because we are less likely to listen meaningfully to opposing views.

Four scholars present their research that suggests political polarization and extremism is rooted in a mistaken understanding that we understand “the causal processes underlying policies.”

### **“The Trouble With Intuition”** (*The Chronicle of Higher Education*, 2010)

Psychology professors Daniel J. Simons and Christopher F. Chabris call into question Malcolm Gladwell’s argument about the power of intuition in his popular book, *Blink*, expressing concern for the troublesome consequences of readers overlooking our often misguided intuitions about how our minds work.

### **Post-Truth Rhetoric and Composition** (ebook, 2017)

Rhetoric and composition professor Bruce McComisky argues people are now less persuaded by reason, truth, facts, and logic (logos) than by pathos and ethos, putting public discourse, society, and composition studies at great risk.

## Confirmation/Desirability Bias

### **“Your Opinion Is Set In Stone”** (*New York Times*, 2017)

Psychology researchers discuss different ways in which confirmation bias and desirability bias can reinforce polarizing political beliefs.

### **“Confirmation Bias: A Psychological Phenomenon that Helps Explain Why Pundits Got It Wrong”** (*The Conversation*, 2016)

Psychology professor Ray Nickerson explains different types of confirmation bias and the possible role they played in the results of the 2016 presidential election.

### **“Your Lying Mind”** (*The Atlantic*, 2018)

Journalism professor Ben Yagoda explores to what extent we can learn to alter or reign in our inherent cognitive biases.

### **“Befriending Radical Disagreement”** (*OnBeing* podcast, 2019)

Krista Tippett visits with Derek Black (former white nationalist) and his friend Matthew Stevenson about how friendship and sharing meals helped open their minds and move past initial identity bubbles.