Teaching Students to Become Expert Readers of the News

Susanna Lee and Meghan Manfra
North Carolina State University

November 11, 2021
Main Session: News Coverage of Thomas Jefferson during His Lifetime
Primary Source Skills

- **Source**: Consider who created a source as well as the circumstances of its creation and how these factors shaped the content.
- **Analyze**: Examine the content of the source, including embedded perspectives, themes, and messages about the past.
- **Contextualize**: Place the source in its time and place, and consider how these factors shaped the content.
- **Corroborate**: Verify the accuracy of the source's content or the typicality of its perspectives by examining other sources, both primary and secondary.
- **Interpret**: Apply the above skills to formulate and defend a historical argument about the past.
- **See the** [explanations](#).
Reading Historical News

James Thomson Callender was a political writer and newspaper editor. While writing for a Democratic newspaper, Thomas Jefferson, who was the most prominent Democratic, supported Callender's attacks on Federalists. After Callender's conviction for his attacks on Federalists under the Alien and Sedition Act, Jefferson withdrew his support and denied Callender a sought-after patronage position. Subsequently, while working for a Federalist paper, the Richmond Recorder, Callender published a series of attacks on Jefferson, alleging a relationship with his slave Sally Hemings.

Source: James Thomson Callender, Richmond Recorder (1802) in Encyclopedia Virginia
Student Activity

Goal: **Source, Analyze, Contextualize, and Corroborate** a news source with other sources. **Interpret** the evidence to support a position.
Break Out Session
Student Activity: Thomas Jefferson & Sally Hemings

- Draw a continuum on a whiteboard, with two endpoints: “Jefferson Was the Father of Hemings’ Children” and “Jefferson Was Not the Father of Hemings’ Children.” Optional: Create a spot for “Irrelevant Evidence.”
- Hand out pieces of evidence to students. Ask them to place evidence on the continuum.
- Ask students to review the placement of evidence on the continuum. Discuss key pieces of evidence and their placement. Ask students if they think any pieces of evidence are misplaced.
- After reviewing all the evidence, discuss: Did Jefferson father Hemings' children?
- Optional Post-Activity Writing Assignment: Write an essay taking a position on the Jefferson-Hemings controversy and supporting your position with evidence.
Break Out Rooms: Suggested Activities

Complete the student activity, and discuss the following questions.

- What are the possible benefits of this activity for your students?
- What are the challenges of incorporating this activity into your classroom?
- How might this activity be modified for your courses?
Assertion of TJ’s Paternity by Federalists

"Federalist journalist James Thomson Callender was the first to publish a specific account of Jefferson's connection to Sally Hemings. In the Richmond Recorder, 1 Sep. 1802, Callender first published the allegation that it was 'well known' that Jefferson kept a slave 'concubine,' whose name was Sally, and that their eldest son was Tom, age ten or twelve, who looked "strikingly" like Jefferson. He said he had learned this story from some 'Virginia Gentlemen.' Callender's story quickly spread throughout the Federalist press and became national in its range."
Denial of TJ’s Paternity by Jeffersons

"Jefferson's daughter Martha Randolph and two of her children denied the story to friends and family members. Jefferson's Randolph grandchildren named one of their Carr cousins as the father of Sally Hemings's children." (1874 Randolph letter; 1868 Randall letter; 1858 Coolidge letter)
Assertion of TJ’s Paternity by Hemings

"Sally Hemings's son Madison stated that Jefferson was his father. Her son Eston took the surname Jefferson as an adult. In 1873, Madison Hemings told a newspaper reporter that he was Jefferson's son, recalling that his mother became Jefferson's "concubine" in France and was pregnant with his child (who lived "but a short time") on their return to Virginia in 1789. Jefferson, he said, was "the father of all of [her children]," naming himself, Beverly, Harriet, and Eston." (1873 Madison Hemings recollections)
Denial of TJ’s Paternity by TJ’s Acquaintances

David Humphreys, who had been secretary to the American legation in Paris while Jefferson was ambassador, did not believe the story. A Philadelphia newspaper reported that Humphreys “has shown that the story of Sally was a falsehood.” Humphreys had left Paris before Sally Hemings arrived in 1787." (note from Philadelphia Aurora in Richmond Recorder, 1 Dec. 1802) Gen. Henry (Light-Horse Harry) Lee, a Federalist, was also not a believer. A Philadelphia newspaper reported that Lee, “who cannot be suspected of partiality for Mr. Jefferson, declared at general Bloomfield's table at Trenton a few days since, that there is no foundation whatsoever for that story." (note from Philadelphia Aurora in Richmond Recorder, 1 Dec. 1802)
Assertion of TJ’s Paternity by TJ’s Friend

"John Hartwell Cocke, Jefferson's friend and fellow member of the Board of Visitors of the University of Virginia, believed in Jefferson's connection with Sally Hemings. Decades after Jefferson's death, Cocke referred in his diary to the prevalence in Virginia of masters with slave families—'nor is it to be wondered at, when Mr. Jeffersons notorious example is considered.' He also mentioned the 'damnable practice' of bachelor plantation owners keeping slave mistresses, even more common in Virginia than elsewhere, "as Mr. Jefferson's example can be pleaded for its defence."

(Cocke journal, 26 Jan. 1853, 23 Apr. 1859, University of Virginia Library)
Assertion of TJ’s Paternity by Visitor

"Elijah P. Fletcher, Vermont schoolteacher and future mayor of Lynchburg, Virginia, reported that Albemarle County citizens believed the story. Passing through Charlottesville, Fletcher talked to members of both political parties, who told 'many anecdotes much to [Jefferson's] disgrace.' He gained the impression that 'the story of Black Sal is no farce--That he cohabits with her and has a number of children by her is a sacred truth.'" (1811 Fletcher letter)
"Adams, who was estranged from Jefferson at this time, stated his strong disapproval of Jefferson’s financial contributions to James T. Callender, whose testimony on any subject Adams considered not worthy of belief. He continued: 'Callender and Sally will be remembered as long as Jefferson, as blots in his character. The story of the latter is a natural and almost unavoidable consequence of that foul Contagion in the human Character, Negro Slavery.'" (Adams to Colonel Ward, 8 Jan. 1810, Massachusetts Historical Society)
"Sally Hemings’s birth patterns match Thomas Jefferson’s Monticello visitation patterns… [T]he observed correlation between Jefferson’s presence at Monticello and the conception windows for Hemings’s known children is far more likely if Jefferson or someone with an identical pattern of presence at and absence from Monticello was the father. There is no documentary evidence suggesting that Sally Hemings was away from Monticello when Jefferson was there during her conception windows."
Emancipation of Hemings Family

"The children of Sally Hemings that are known from Jefferson’s records all became free by the age of twenty-one, the only case of an entire enslaved Monticello family achieving freedom." (1826 will; Farm Book, p. 130; 1862 Edmund Bacon recollections, p. 102; 1858 Ellen Coolidge letter)
DNA Testing

A team of geneticists conducted a series of DNA tests in 1998. The study tested Y-chromosomal DNA samples from male-line descendants of Field Jefferson (Thomas Jefferson’s uncle), John Carr (grandfather of Jefferson’s Carr nephews), Eston Hemings, and Thomas C. Woodson. The study indicated a genetic link between the Jefferson and Hemings descendants. The results of the study established that an individual carrying the male Jefferson Y chromosome fathered Eston Hemings, the last known child born to Sally Hemings. There were approximately 25 adult male Jeffersons who carried this chromosome living in Virginia at the times of conception. Most lived far from Monticello, but a few lived in close proximity and are known to have visited Monticello. The DNA testing also found no genetic link between the Hemings and Carr descendants. (DNA tests 1998)
Main Session: Post Break Out Room Discussion
Thomas Jefferson Was the Father of Sally Hemings’ Children

Thomas Jefferson Was Not the Father of Sally Hemings’ Children
Were Callender's allegations "fake news"?
To what extent did the other evidence corroborate his account?
What are the possible benefits of this activity for your students?
Descriptions of Sources Taken From:

Main Session:
News Coverage of Thomas Jefferson Today
History appears in news articles and opinion pieces.

- Journalists and opinion writers usually follow different standards than historians. Historians follow **scholarly standards**.
- Coverage of history in the news often includes many factual errors and interpretive problems.
- Students must scrutinize history in the news for bias and reliability.
Words often implicitly support or obscure specific interpretations.
What does this headline suggest about Thomas Jefferson & Sally Hemings?

The slave who stole a President's heart: As US elects its first black President, a new book reveals a sex scandal that shows how much America has changed.
Student Activity

Goal: **Analyze** embedded perspectives, themes, and messages about the past in current news.
Break Out Session
Student Activity: Reading the News

Read the descriptions of Sally Hemings in the different news sources. Discuss / Answer the following questions:

- How was Sally Hemings described in different ways in different news sources?
- In what ways did the different descriptions of Sally Hemings carry different interpretations of her experiences as an enslaved woman?
Break Out Rooms: Suggested Activities

Complete the student activity, and discuss the following questions.

● What are the possible benefits of this activity for your students?
● What are the challenges of incorporating this activity into your classroom?
● How might this activity be modified for your courses?

“Last year a new element was added to the experience: the ‘Hemings Family Tour,’ which tell stories about Sally Hemings, Jefferson’s mistress and mother of six of his children.”
“Fate of Thomas Jefferson statue unclear after vote,”
WWNYTV, October 19, 2021

“Jefferson fathered at least six children with Sally Hemings, an enslaved woman who was his late wife’s half sister. The sexual relationship between Jefferson and Hemings, now generally accepted as a fact by historians of the era, began when Hemings was in her teens.”
“Opinion: For students learning American history, what does just ‘the facts’ mean?,” Tampa Bay Times, May 21, 2021

“Thomas Jefferson was a primary author of the Declaration of Independence, the foundational document of the United States. He was also a slave owner who almost certainly fathered several children with a slave named Sally Hemings. He never freed her.”
Main Session:
Post Break Out Room Discussion
In what ways did the different descriptions of Sally Hemings carry different interpretations of her experiences as an enslaved woman?
For decades they hid Jefferson’s mistress. Now Monticello is making room for Sally Hemings.

A slave cannot be a mistress. twitter.com/krissah30/status/...
Politics

Why You Can't Ever Call an Enslaved Woman a "Mistress"

Sally Hemmings deserves better.

BY LINCOLN ANTHONY BLADES
FEBRUARY 27, 2017
Main Session:
Conclusion
The skills to become expert readers of historical news are the same skills to become expert readers of today's news.
Primary Source Skills

- Source: Consider who created a source as well as the circumstances of its creation and how these factors shaped the content.
- Analyze: Examine the content of the source, including embedded perspectives, themes, and messages about the past.
- Contextualize: Place the source in its time and place, and consider how these factors shaped the content.
- Corroborate: Verify the accuracy of the source's content or the typicality of its perspectives by examining other sources, both primary and secondary.
- Interpret: Apply the above skills to formulate and defend a historical argument about the past.
- See the explanations.
The Contemporary Context
Access Activities Here:

https://go.ncsu.edu/me
dialit

Make a copy in your own google drive to insert your responses
BREAKING: 5,000 People Dump Shoes In Front Of Nike Headquarters

Nike has been making Americans really mad by hiring football washout Colin Kaepernick to be the face of their "Just Do It" campaign. But we doubt anyone expected Americans to be this furious with the shoe
Nike Falls as Critics Fume on Social Media Over Kaepernick ‘Just Do It’ Ad Sparks Nike Boycott (CBS Bay Area, Sept 4, 2018)

Trump: Nike ‘getting absolutely killed’ with boycotts over Colin Kaepernick’s ‘Just Do It’ campaign (Washington Post, Sept 5, 2018)
BREAKING: 5,000 People Dump Shoes In Front Of Nike Headquarters

Nike has been making Americans really mad by hiring football washout Colin Kaepernick to be the face of their "Just Do It" campaign. But we doubt anyone expected Americans to be this furious with the shoe
Nike recycling program gives old shoes new life

Photo gallery: Nike Reuse-A-Shoe

By John Winrow
Advertiser Staff Writer

It was 19,867 and counting yesterday as people across Hawai'i donated their old shoes to help Mother Earth.

Folks were driving up to Niketown in Waikiki and dropping off boxes of old shoes and sneakers as Honolulu firefighters dumped blue recycling bins full of shoes into a huge pile in front of the store. It was the place where old shoes go to die — and then be reborn — for the fourth annual Nike Reuse-A-Shoe Campaign.

Gail Izumi of Millani, a student services coordinator at Wahiawa...
BRENTWOOD, CA — People Dump Shoes In Nike Headquarters

Nike has been making headlines recently for its controversial ad campaign featuring Colin Kaepernick. The brand seems to be this furious with the shoe
YouTube, Instagram and Snapchat are the most popular online platforms among teens. Fully 95% of teens have access to a smartphone, and 45% say they are online 'almost constantly'.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Platform</th>
<th>Say they use (%)</th>
<th>Say they use __ most often</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>YouTube</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instagram</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Snapchat</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facebook</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Twitter</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tumblr</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>&lt;1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reddit</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None of the above</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Figures in first column add to more than 100% because multiple responses were allowed. Question about most-used site was asked only of respondents who use multiple sites; results have been recalculated to include those who use only one site. Respondents who did not give an answer are not shown. Source: Survey conducted March 7-April 10, 2018. "Teens, Social Media & Technology 2018" PEW RESEARCH CENTER
Understanding Bias

- **Bias** is a tendency to believe that some people, ideas, etc., are better than others, which often results in treating some people unfairly.

- **Explicit bias** refers to attitudes and beliefs (positive or negative) that we consciously or deliberately hold and express about a person or group. Explicit and implicit biases can sometimes contradict each other.

- **Implicit bias** includes attitudes and beliefs (positive or negative) about other people, ideas, issues, or institutions that occur outside of our conscious awareness and control, which affect our opinions and behavior. Everyone has implicit biases—even people who try to remain objective (e.g., judges and journalists)—that they have developed over a lifetime. However, people can work to combat and change these biases.

- **Confirmation bias**, or the selective collection of evidence, is our subconscious tendency to seek and interpret information and other evidence in ways that affirm our existing beliefs, ideas, expectations, and/or hypotheses. Therefore, confirmation bias is both affected by and feeds our implicit biases. It can be most entrenched around beliefs and ideas that we are strongly attached to or that provoke a strong emotional response.
'Fake News' Named Collins Dictionary's Official Word of the Year
Top 5 Fake Election Stories by Facebook Engagement
(three months before election)

“Pope Francis Shocks World, Endorses Donald Trump for President, Releases Statement” (960,000, Ending the Fed)

“WikiLeaks CONFIRMS Hillary Sold Weapons to ISIS... Then Drops Another BOMBSHELL! Breaking News” (789,000, The Political Insider)

“IT’S OVER: Hillary’s ISIS Email Just Leaked & It’s Worse Than Anyone Could Have Imagined” (754,000, Ending the Fed)

“Just Read the Law: Hillary Is Disqualified From Holding Any Federal Office” (701,000, Ending the Fed)

“FBI Agent Suspected In Hillary Email Leaks Found Dead in Apparent Murder-Suicide” (567,000, Denver Guardian)

Engagement refers to the total number of shares, reactions, and comments for a piece of content on Facebook. Source: Facebook data via BuzzSumo
### Most Commented Web Content in 2019

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PUBLISHER</th>
<th>HEADLINE</th>
<th>FB COMMENTS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>WWW1.CBN.COM</td>
<td>A Sad and Evil Day: New York Legalizes Abortion Up to Baby's Birth Day on Anniversary of Roe v. Wade</td>
<td>1,129,222</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TMZ.COM</td>
<td>Beverly Hills, 90210' Star Luke Perry Dead at 52 After 'Massive' Stroke</td>
<td>640,815</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CBSNEWS.COM</td>
<td>Trump backs push for Bible classes in schools</td>
<td>621,254</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HUFFINGTONPOST.COM</td>
<td>Viral Video Shows MAGA Hat-Wearing Teens Harassing Native American Vietnam Veteran</td>
<td>585,939</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DAILYWIRE.COM</td>
<td>HORROR: New York Set To Legalize Abortion Up to Birth</td>
<td>469,924</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CONSERVATIVETEA.RS.COM</td>
<td>Henry Winkler Dead at 77 – A Huge Trump Supporter and Lifelong Gun Lover</td>
<td>457,825</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIFENEWS.COM</td>
<td>New York Senate Passes Bill Legalizing Abortions Up to Birth I LifeNews.com</td>
<td>396,146</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INFORMATIONLIBERATION.COM</td>
<td>HATE HOAX: Native American Activist Approached Chanting Covington Catholic Teens, Got In Their Face</td>
<td>384,296</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NEONNETTLE.COM</td>
<td>Democrats Pass Bill to Fund College for Illegal Immigrants with Taxpayer Money</td>
<td>370,311</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIFENEWS.COM</td>
<td>You Can't Give a Lethal Injection to Murderers in New York, But You Can Give One to an Unborn Baby I LifeNews.com</td>
<td>368,444</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FOXNEWS.COM</td>
<td>Dems to strike 'so help me God' from oath taken in front of key House committee, draft shows</td>
<td>368,031</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USATODAY.COM</td>
<td>New Jersey to require schools to teach LGBT history</td>
<td>353,499</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNILAD.CO.UK</td>
<td>Woman Smears Menstrual Blood On Face To Show Periods Are 'Beautiful and Powerful'</td>
<td>344,752</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SCARYMOMMY.COM</td>
<td>Gillette's New Ad On Toxic Masculinity Is Breathtaking — And Necessary</td>
<td>341,080</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

What do you notice?
7 types of mis- and disinformation

- **Fabricated Content**: New content that is 100% false, designed to deceive and do harm.
- **Manipulated Content**: When genuine information or imagery is manipulated to deceive.
- **Imposter Content**: When genuine sources are impersonated.
- **False Context**: When genuine content is shared with false contextual information.
- **Misleading Content**: Misleading use of information to frame an issue or individual.
- **False Connection**: When headlines, visuals, or captions don’t support the content.
- **Satire or Parody**: No intention to cause harm but has potential to fool.

FIRSTDRAFT
IVANKA TRUMP
MARCI FISHER FOOTW
Edison, NJ
Made in China
TARIFF EXEMPT
WRONG
FAK
FOOTWEAR
BREAKING: “Tens of thousands” of fraudulent Clinton votes found in Ohio warehouse

By admin1 - September 30, 2016  46021  0
Ballot boxes being delivered to Sheldon Heath community centre ready for voting in the General Election
Reports are emerging that ‘hundreds of thousands’ of fraudulent ballot boxes have been found at a downtown Columbus, Ohio warehouse, and the votes are all pre-checked for Hillary Clinton and other Democratic Party candidates.

Randal Prince, a Columbus-area electrical worker, performs routine checks of the company’s wiring and electrical systems when he stumbled across a dozen black, sealed ballot boxes filled with thousands of Franklin County votes for Hillary Clinton and other Democratic Party candidates.

“We really go into this building. It’s really used for short-term storage by a commercial plumber,” Prince said.

So when Prince, a Trump supporter, saw several black boxes in an otherwise empty room, he went to investigate. What he found could be evidence of an alleged election fraud operation designed to deliver Clinton the crucial swing state.

Prince shared his findings with the FBI, and local election officials investigate.

Early voting does not begin in Ohio until October 12, so no votes have officially been cast in the Buckeye State. However, inside these boxes were what are now described as “potentially tens of thousands of votes” for Hillary Clinton.

An affiliate in Ohio passed along a replica of the documents found in the boxes:

OFFICIAL GENERAL ELECTION BALLOT

Instructions to Voter:

* The vote is completed by the voter by placing the marked ballots in the slot at the bottom of the ballot. Do not mark both the two candidates for the same office. Vote for no one in the “Write In” or “Other” lines. Do not mark both candidates for the same office.

* If you want the vote to go to the candidate you have in mind, the correct party will be shown.

* The vote for a write-in candidate completely counts the vote and it will be counted in the correct party.
MAY 21, 2016 / 12.00 P.M
STOP ISLAMIZATION OF TEXAS
Hosted by Heart of Texas

Saturday, May 21 at 12 PM
Islamic Da'wah Center 201 Travis St, Houston, TX 77002

United Muslims of America shared their event.
Sponsored •
It's been only a month since Library of Islamic Knowledge at the center in Houston is open

SAVE ISLAMIC KNOWLEDGE
May 21 at 12:00 PM, Houston TX

MAY 21
Sat 12 PM - Islamic Da'wah Center 201 Travis St, Houston TX
42 people interested - 18 people going
Issues Associated with Social Media and Fake News

- Industrialization
- Amplification
- Polarization
What’s incredible is that all of these services are so young.
Media Literacy and the Social Studies

“Essential skills for active citizenship in our democracy”

Media literacy models a constructivist approach to document-based analysis that asks the students to apply key content to a focused and complex analysis of messages, meaning, authorship, audience, representations and reality (NCSS Position Statement)
Reflection

“At present, we worry that democracy is threatened by the ease at which disinformation about civic issues is allowed to spread and flourish.”


-Do you agree? Why/why not? What do you recommend should be done?
Media Teaching Strategies

**Skills based –**
- Read laterally
- Visit the “about us” page first
- Look for “paid content”
- Use reverse image search
- “Digital forensics”

**Content based –**
- Media as “cultural text”
- Discourse analysis
- Examining historic examples
6 WAYS TO EVALUATE INFORMATION

**E**vidence
- Do the facts hold up?
  - Look for information you can verify.
    - Names
    - Numbers
    - Places
    - Documents

**S**ource
- Who made this, and can I trust them?
  - Trace who has touched the story.
    - Authors
    - Publishers
    - Funders
    - Aggregators
    - Social media users

**C**ontext
- What's the big picture?
  - Consider if this is the whole story and weigh other forces surrounding it.
    - Current events
    - Cultural trends
    - Political goals
    - Financial pressures

**A**udience
- Who is the intended audience?
  - Look for attempts to appeal to specific groups or types of people.
    - Image choices
    - Presentation techniques
    - Language
    - Content

**P**urpose
- Why was this made?
  - Look for clues to the motivation.
    - The publisher's mission
    - Persuasive language or images
    - Moneymaking tactics
    - Stated or unstated agendas
    - Calls to action

**E**xecution
- How is this information presented?
  - Consider how the way it's made affects the impact.
    - Style
    - Grammar
    - Tone
    - Image choices
    - Placement and layout
Believe it or not, this is a shark on the freeway in Houston, Texas.

#HurricaneHarvy
Minimum Wage

● [https://www.minimumwage.com/](https://www.minimumwage.com/)
Reflection

- What are your recommendations for engaging students in media literacy education?
The professionalization of news journalism

Future historian would find… “For he would find facts distorted, occurrences misrepresented, men malign’d or lauded…according to the political views of the journal he was perusing. He would find intolerance and prejudice soiling the pages under his hand where he turned. He would find that in the main, rant and declamation, frothy philippics and gross personal abuse, stood for argument; and that but few traces of calm and dispassionate reasoning could be found” - George F. Parsons (1868)
Modern News Journalism

- Emergence of the AP: Wire service to provide foreign coverage
- Muckraking and investigative journalism
- Professionalization: Journalism schools and National Press Club
- Journalism ethics: truth, objectivity, and social responsibility
Yellow Journalism
Muckraking and investigative journalism
Rise of African American Press

A newsboy sells The Chicago Defender, 1942
Henry Luce founded Time (1923)
Professionalization and journalism ethics

“The year 1908 points to a change in the field, a time when journalism professionalism becomes officially established by formal university instruction and organization. This year marks the beginning of university schools and departments of journalism” (Winfield, p 1)
Press as the “Fourth Estate”
Standards and Ethics

core purpose

The core purpose of The New York Times is to enhance society by creating, collecting and distributing high-quality news and information. Producing content of the highest quality and integrity is the basis for our reputation and the means by which we fulfill the public trust and our customers’ expectations.

Fairness

The goal of The New York Times is to cover the news as impartially as possible — “without favor,” in the words of Adolph Ochs, our patriarch — and to treat readers, news sources, advertisers and others fairly and openly, and to be seen to be doing so. The reputation of The Times rests upon such perceptions, and so do the professional reputations of its staff. Thus The Times and members of its news department and editorial page staff share a responsibility for avoiding conflicts of interest or an appearance of a conflict.
SEVEN STANDARDS OF Quality Journalism

Multiple Credible Sources
- People in a position to know relevant facts and details, including eyewitnesses, officials, and experts.

Avoidance of Bias
- Presenting the facts and necessary context in a dispassionate manner.

Verification
- The process of checking and confirming all facts and details in a report.

Balance
- Representing multiple sides of the issue, event or controversy — but without giving undue weight or legitimacy to one side or point of view.

Documentation
- Reports, studies, data, videos, photos, and audio recordings.

Context
- Presenting the facts in a way that makes their meaning clear, fair, and accurate.

Fairness
- Treating sources and subjects with appropriate respect, and giving subjects a chance to share their points of view or respond to any assertions or allegations about them.
How Journalists Minimize Bias

Journalists discuss the idea of bias and explain the processes they follow to combat bias in their reporting.

The best thing we can do is one.