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Fighting Infobesity: Creating A Healthy News Diet

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NUTRITION INFORMATION

We live in a continuous news culture where the average consumer must learn how to deal with information overload. We have plenty of information, but not all of it contributes to a healthy, balanced news diet. In addition to snacking on morning news and grabbing afternoon sound bites, there's misinformation and fake news, packaged and sold in confusing ways. How can we get the news we need to become informed and engaged?

In this activity, students are tasked with (a) placing a range of media sources on a grid whose axes are reliability and type of sources, and (b) articulating their reasoning and evidence for situating the sources where they did. The list of sources given for this exercise should be varied and present multiple perspectives and information genres that are open for debate or are ambiguous. Students will marinate on the format, authority, and context in which sources are produced and disseminated. This is a highly versatile activity; most features can be modified for any palette or cooking time.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

- Students will practice techniques for evaluating the credibility of news stories.
- Students will reflect on their reactions

to stories and practice identifying and distinguishing between their emotional responses and logical analyses of the items.

- Students will learn the value of information and sources from multiple perspectives.
- Students will become credible, trustworthy publishers in the digital age (sharing news).

COOKING TIME

This activity takes 20–30 minutes, or cook to taste.

NUMBER SERVED

25–30

DIETARY GUIDELINES

ACRL Frames

- Authority is Constructed and Contextual
- Searching as Strategic Exploration
- Information Creation as a Process

INGREDIENTS AND EQUIPMENT

- large whiteboard
- markers
- tape
- erasers
- Fake News Handout for students

(see <https://perma.cc/577S-T3AA>)

- Reliability of Media Grid (see Image A)
- 10–15 media sources (recommended serving for balanced news diet)
- computer or smartphone per student pair

Suggested ingredients:

- Fake News Media Source List #2 (<https://perma.cc/4CKY-XLSP>; provides media sources with variable reliability e.g. CNN, BuzzFeed, etc.)

PREPARATION

- Draw Reliability of Media Grid on the whiteboard. The grid should be large enough for media sources and multiple student groups.
- Print and cut out media sources logos in color.

COOKING METHOD

1. Working in pairs, students will be given 2–3 media source logos.
2. Using the computer or smartphone, each pair explores the media source and picks one article to evaluate applying the RADAR (Rationale, Authority, Date, Accuracy, Relevance) framework.
3. Students then place the logos on the whiteboard grid using tape.

4. Students will explain media source placement on the grid. Have students compare media source placement across groups, consider the source's audience and author, and discuss the visual appearance and features of each media source.



William H. Hannon Library (@Imulibrary). 2017. "Students are debating the reliability of various media outlets like Occupy Democrats, The Blaze, and BuzzFeed. #LMUTeachIn." Instagram photo, January 20, 2017. https://www.instagram.com/p/BPf-rv_Bg9L/.

ALLERGY WARNING

Remind students to critically look at the source's authority and format, instead of political leanings, to promote civil discourse (and avoid discussion going up in flames).

CHEF'S NOTES

- Time management is crucial for this recipe.
- Provide the same media sources to different student pairs for comparative tasting.

- Substitute any media sources for additional flavoring (e.g., *The Onion*, *Daily Mail*, etc.).
- This recipe can be flavored to meet specific tastes. For example, you can use media sources specific to STEM, ethnic studies, etc. (e.g., *The Root*, *IFL Science*, *WebMD*, etc.).
- A suggested pairing for this activity includes student self-reflections on their own media diets using Vanessa Otero's media chart.

NOTES

Mandalios, Jane. "RADAR: An Approach for Helping Students Evaluate Internet Sources," *Journal of Information Science* 39, no. 4 (2013): 470–78. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0165551513478889>.

Otero, Vanessa. "High Resolution File Formats for Full Chart and Blank Versions of News Quality Chart." *All Generalizations Are False* (blog). January 23, 2017. <https://web.archive.org/web/20180129080206/http://www.allgeneralizationsarefalse.com/high-resolution-file-formats-for-full-chart-and-blank-versions-of-news-quality-chart/>.