Bias in the Media Mini-Lessons

OVERVIEW
Classroom facilitators should consider adding in Bias in the Media mini-lessons during the research portion of the curriculum to engage students in thinking about how to become media literate and aware of the various biases or lenses that media sources have. Included are four activities to consider using as mini-lessons when appropriate.

Explain to students what "bias" means and highlight that generally, they are looking for articles that are neutral, but bias may be okay as long as we identify it.

OBJECTIVES
By the end of this research process, students will have...
  • Analyzed media to determine its bias
  • Developed their thinking about how bias plays into the information they are receiving about the issues they care about

AGENDA
  • Defining Bias
  • Mini-Lesson: Exploring Bias In News Headlines
  • Mini-Lesson: Exploring Bias In News Stories
  • Mini-Lesson: Exploring Bias in Media Images
  • Mini-Lesson: Exploring Bias in Social Media

MATERIALS
  • Handouts of media stimulus materials

PREPARATION BEFORE CLASS
  □ Prepare handouts or a PowerPoint to demonstrate the media stimulus you choose to have students analyze
Framing: Explain that during the research process in Generation Citizen we are going to encounter different pieces of media from newspapers, magazines and videos, as well as speak with different people in the community who may have a bias in the way they think about our focus issue. Today we will explore the concept of bias and decide how we as a class will address the bias we encounter this semester.

DURING CLASS (varied)

Defining Bias

Stop and Jot: Ask students to write down what they believe the word bias means. Discuss definitions and ask students to combined parts of each definition to create a class definition. Highlight that generally, they are looking for articles that are as neutral as possible, but bias may be okay as long as we identify it.

Choose one or more of the activities below:

Mini-Lesson: Exploring Bias In News Headlines

Show students the article headlines below. Ask them to examine each and decide if the sources had different ways of presenting the issue.

Articles from 2012 – Jobs Report

163,000 Jobs Added in July: Unemployment Rate Rose to 8.3% - NPR
Wrong-Way Growth: Jobless Jumps in July as New Hiring Remains Slow – Fox News
US economy’s job engine revved up in July - NBC News
Job growth steps up, but jobless rate rises – Reuters

Debrief: Pose some or all of the questions below and leading the class in a discussion. Record main ideas on the board.

• How can a headline change your reaction to a story, without even having read the story?
• Is it possible for two different news sources to paint completely different pictures of the same story? What are some ways in which they do this?
• Why is it important to be on alert for bias in sources? What do you do if you find some?
• Why is it important to read multiple news sources?
• How can we present information in an unbiased way? How do we work against our own biases?
• Why is it important for the news to be unbiased? Is this possible?

Mini-Lesson: Exploring Bias In News Stories

Have students read the articles below. Ask them to examine each and circle, highlight, or underline and major differences they find between the two articles in how they are reporting on the same story.

Article 2: Minimum Wage Study: Effects of Seattle wage hike modest, may be overshadowed by strong economy, University of Washington Today

Debrief: Pose some or all of the questions below and leading the class in a discussion. Record main ideas on the board.

- What are some differences you noticed in the way these articles present information about the issue of minimum wage?
- Is it possible for two different news sources to paint completely different pictures of the same story? What are some ways in which they do this?
- Why is it important to be on alert for bias in sources? What do you do if you find some?
- Why is it important to read multiple news sources?
- How can we present information in an unbiased way? How do we work against our own biases?
- Why is it important for the news to be unbiased? Is this possible?

Mini-Lesson: Exploring Bias in Media Images

Show students the three images below. Ask them to examine each and decide if the sources had different ways of presenting the issue.

Debrief: Pose some or all of the questions below and leading the class in a discussion.
Record main ideas on the board.

- How can images or captions reveal a bias?
- How can a headline change your reaction to a story, without even having read the story?
- Is it possible for two different news sources to paint completely different pictures of the same story? What are some ways in which they do this?
- Why is it important to be on alert for bias in sources? What do you do if you find some?
- Why is it important to read multiple news sources?
- How can we present information in an unbiased way? How do we work against our own biases?
- Why is it important for the news to be unbiased? Is this possible?

**Mini-Lesson: Exploring Bias in Social Media**

Show students the link below on a screen and select an issue to explore comparing two Facebook walls. If your classroom does not have access to technology pass out the graphics below to students

**LINK TO BIAS IN SOCIAL MEDIA:** http://graphics.wsj.com/blue-feed-red-feed/
Debrief: Pose some or all of the questions below and leading the class in a discussion. Record main ideas on the board.

- What differences do you notice in the two Facebook walls?
- What role do social media providers play in promoting bias?
- How can we as individuals guard against the bias presented to us through social media filters?
- What are the implications for our larger society given social media filters?