

Balance, Fairness & Bias Are Your Lenses Correct?



An Informed Electorate is The Bulwark of Democracy

Since January 2009 have your Federal Income taxes:



- A) Gone Down
- B) Stayed the Same
- C) Gone up

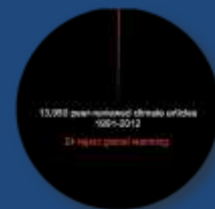
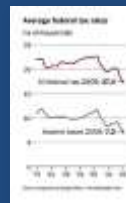
86 %

An Informed Electorate is The Bulwark of Democracy

Do you think that most scientists believe that:

- A) Climate change is occurring
- B) Views are evenly divided
- C) Climate change is not occurring **45%**

Misinformation and the Mid-term Election



www.worldpublicopinion.org / University of Maryland Study

Misinformation and the Election

“Do most scientists think that climate change is not occurring?”

(percent who agree with this statement)

People who rarely watch Fox News... 30%

Watch Fox once a week... **45%**

Watch Fox almost every day... **60%**

Misinformation and the Electorate



What the Public Sees



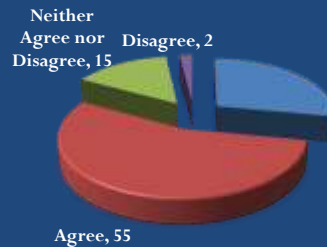
- 74% say news organizations tend to favor one side in dealing with political and social issues
- 50% believe the media has a liberal slant
- 22% believe the media has a conservative slant

The Pew Research Center for the People & the Press
 ~2009 survey
 Press Accuracy Ratings Hit Two-Decade Low

What's Students See "Most news outlets exhibit bias"



FALL 2013 REALITY CHECK



-Source:
 F2013 Reality Check Survey
 769 respondents



Three Questions Today:



- How do we know if a news report is fair?
- How do we know if a news outlet is biased?
- What's the difference between news media bias and audience bias?

What's the Difference Between Fairness and Balance?

You Know The Story...



What Was Missing?



"It all started with a cup of sugar and a sneeze."

-Alexander T. Wolf



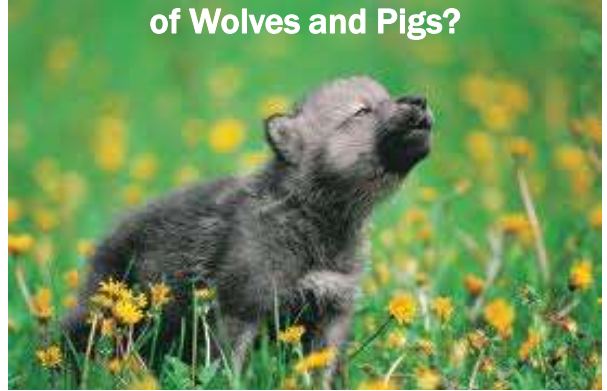
Fatal Sneezes and Temper Tantrums



What is Missing?



Seriously, What's the Balanced View of Wolves and Pigs?



Key Definitions

Main Entry: **'balance** 
 Pronunciation: \ˈbɑːləns(jə)
 Function: noun
 Etymology: Middle English, from Anglo-French, from Vulgar Latin **bālanctia*, from Late Latin *bālanct-*, *bālanct-* having two scapulae, from Latin *bā-* + *lanct-*, *lanct-* plate
 Date: 13th century

Balance: Equality between the totals of the two (or more) sides of the account. Balance is more technical; a quantitative measurement.

What Is Balance?

Obama, congressional leaders still deadlocked on shutdown

(Reuters) — President Barack Obama met with Republican and Democratic leaders in Congress on Wednesday to try to break a

After more than an hour of talks, House of Representatives Speaker

John Boehner said Obama refused to negotiate, while House Democratic Leader Nancy Pelosi and Senate Democratic Leader Harry Reid accused Republicans of trying to hold the president hostage over

Boehner said.

As hundreds of thousands of federal employees finally accept the

Republican-led House of

Representatives and the U.S.

Republicans have voted to

Obama and his Democrats

"The president reiterated a

Boehner said reporters are

asking for here is a discussion and fairness for the American people

under **Obamacare.**"

Reid said Democrats were willing to discuss any ways to tackle the

budget after a temporary funding bill is passed. "We're through

playing these little games," he said.

Can Balance Be the Opposite of Fairness?



Should Holocaust Deniers Get Equal Space?

Can Balance Be the Opposite of Fairness?

Amanpour Moral Equivalency.wmv

The Massacres in Bosnia

Is Balance the Same as Fairness?

ipcc
Working Group I Contribution to the Fourth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change

CLIMATE CHANGE 2013
The Physical Science Basis

Headline Statements from the Summary for Policymakers

Warming of the climate system is unequivocal, and since the 1950s, many of the observed changes are unprecedented over decades to millennia. The atmosphere and ocean have warmed, the amounts of snow and ice have diminished, sea level has risen, and the concentrations of greenhouse gases have increased.

Each of the last three decades has been successively warmer at the Earth's surface than any preceding decade since 1850. In the Northern Hemisphere, 1983–2012 was the 10th warmest 30-year period of the last 1400 years.

Green warming dominates the increase in energy stored in the climate system, accounting for more than 90% of the energy accumulated between 1971 and 2010 (high confidence). It is virtually certain that the upper ocean (0–700 m) warmed from 1971 to 2010, and it likely warmed between the 1870s and 1971.

Over the last two decades, the Greenland and Antarctic ice sheets have been losing mass, glaciers have continued to shrink almost worldwide, and Arctic sea ice and Northern Hemisphere spring snow cover have continued to decrease in extent (high confidence).

“Think Twice”

A Silent Minute to Absorb the Material

Key Definitions

Main Entry: **fair** 
 Pronunciation: /fɛr/
 Function: adjective
 Etymology: Middle English *fager*, *fair*, from Old English *fæger*, akin to Old High German *fager* beautiful
 Date: before 12th century

Fairness: Marked by impartiality and honesty. Free from self-interest, prejudice, or favoritism. Being fair to *the evidence*.

Finding Fairness:

- Fair play
- Fair language
- Fair presentation

Fair play:

- Obvious effort to include relevant perspectives
- People, Organizations get to respond to negative charges

Fair Play?

Hurricane Katrina and the "Two-Photo Controversy"



A young boy pulls through chest deep flood water after Hurricane Katrina in New Orleans on Tuesday, Aug. 29, 2005. Flood waters continue to rise in New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina did extensive damage when it

RECOMMENDED NEWS PHOTOS - Recommended Photo
 Recommended Photo
 Recommended Photo

RECOMMENDED NEWS PHOTOS - Recommended Photo
 Recommended Photo
 Recommended Photo

RELATED
 • Hurricane Relief, at a Glance at The High Line
 • Hurricane & Tropical Storms

Language Landmarks

- “Right-to-Life” vs. “Anti-Abortion”
- “Pro-Choice” vs. “Pro-Abortion”
- “Ruthless” vs. “Tough”
- “Admitted” vs. “Said”
- “Gay Marriage” vs. “Marriage Equality”

Fair language?

THE NEW YORK TIMES
Partial shutdown clips Obama's wings

Republicans stage latest political theater

Fox News Says It's Not a 'Shutdown,' It's a 'Slimdown'

MSNBC's Ed Schultz calls Glenn Beck fans 'dumbass' while pitching Obamacare

30

Fair Presentation:

- Avoids prejudicial photos
- Presents photos and other visuals that are appropriate to the report

Fair Presentation:



Fair, Unfair, or Biased?



School Bus Aide Busted Dealing Methadone

busted.wmv

What is Bias?

Main Entry: **ˈbi-əs** 
 Pronunciation: \ˈbi-əs\
 Function: *noun*
 Etymology: Middle French *biais*
 Date: 1530

Bias: A predisposition that distorts your ability to fairly weigh the evidence and prevents you from reaching a fair or accurate judgment.

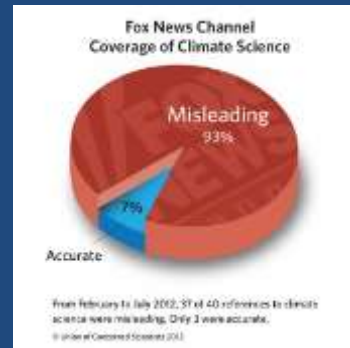
How to Spot Bias

- Look for evidence of a pattern of unfairness over time
- Compare a variety of news outlets especially to search for a bias by omission
- Take note of the self-interest of those alleging bias

The News Literacy Definition:

Bias:
a pattern of unfairness

Bias is a *Pattern*



Common Flaws in “Bias” Claims:

“The news media is biased.”
(Generalizations are, generally, unprovable.☹)

“Editorials determine the angle taken by print reporters.”

(Reporting routinely contradicts editorial page assertions.)

“TV reporters follow the lead of the talk show hosts on their network.”

(Reporting routinely contradicts talk show assertions.)

News Judgment or Bias?

Is heavy news coverage of same-sex marriage legislation evidence of bias?



News Judgment or Bias?



Opinion or Bias?

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

To Lead Is to Negotiate



Politics | Updated October 3, 2013, 9:10 a.m. ET
GOP Begins Search for Broad Deal on Budget

By JAMES HOGAN and PHILIP EICHOFF | [Comment](#)
 President Obama's budget proposal is a bold, comprehensive effort to address the nation's long-term fiscal challenges. It is a landmark achievement that will help to reduce the deficit and create jobs. The plan is a bold and comprehensive effort to address the nation's long-term fiscal challenges. It is a landmark achievement that will help to reduce the deficit and create jobs. The plan is a bold and comprehensive effort to address the nation's long-term fiscal challenges. It is a landmark achievement that will help to reduce the deficit and create jobs.

Bias or Something Else?



“Why Aren’t More Women Dying in Chicago?”

News Judgment or Racism?



LaToya Figueroa and Natalee Holloway:
 Differences in Coverage

Pivot Point

Every other row
Pivots to the row behind
To discuss in groups of four

Bias in the News



A Pattern of Unfairness?

Obama's War Against Fox News



"What I think is fair to say about Fox — and certainly it's the way we view it — is that it really is more a wing of the Republican Party," said Anita Kumar, White House communications director, on CNN.

"It's astounding the White House cannot distinguish between news and opinion programming," Clemente said. "It seems self-serving on their part."



As for Dunn's complaint about Fox News' coverage of the Obama campaign, a study by the Pew Research Center showed that 40 percent of Fox News stories on Obama in the last six weeks of the campaign were negative. Similarly, 40 percent of Fox News' stories on Obama's Republican opponent, Sen. John McCain, were negative.

Journalism's Critics Claim A Monopoly On Trustworthy Optics



What Do You Think?

**Is Individual Objectivity Realistic?
Is Organizational Objectivity More Realistic?**



**Journalists submit to the discipline of
Verification, a newsroom system of
aggressive peer review and a code of
ethics that defines Independence,
and demands transparency-based
Accountability.**

Conclusions

Are there examples of unfair news stories?

Absolutely

Is unfairness an automatic sign of bias?

No

Can a news outlet exhibit bias?

Yes, but it's easier to allege than to prove

Is the *perception* of bias as dangerous as bias itself?

Yes

Cognitive Dissonance



Media Bias



Audience Bias

You (Really) Want The Truth?



Codered.wmv

The stronger the emotion,
The more likely bias will be charged:



- Politics
- Race and Gender
- Social Issues
- Religion

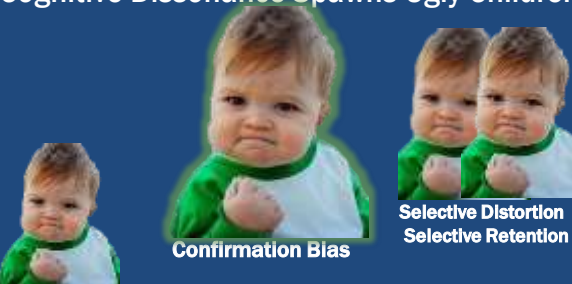
What are your biases?



“Project
Implicit”
Homework
Step #1



Cognitive Dissonance Spawns Ugly Children




Confirmation Bias

Selective Distortion
Selective Retention

Source Misattribution

Watch the Cognitive Dissonance video [then](#) do "Project Implicit" homework




Today's Key Lessons :

- ✓ Bias is a Pattern. Not an event.
- ✓ Your Mind May Not Be Open, After All.

After this lecture, students will be able to:

1. Distinguish Balance from Fairness and news media bias from audience bias.
2. Explain why unexamined public acceptance of charges of news media bias might be unhealthy in a democracy.
3. Use specific events and examples to illustrate news media bias and audience bias.
4. Explain the difference between news judgment (a professional mindset characterized by attention to drivers, mission and market in selecting stories) and news media bias (unethical pursuit of political or social goals)

These skills relate to course outcomes 3 & 4



hus endeth the Lesson

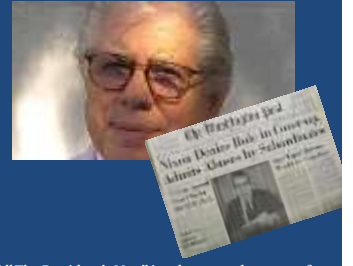


Housekeeping, Announcements & Notes

Extra Credit Opportunity:
An Evening With Watergate Reporter

Carl Bernstein

October 15
SAC Auditorium
Doors Open 7:45 p.m.
Tickets, Free, SAC Box
Office
News Literacy students and
Journalism students only.



To receive extra credit, you'll watch "All The President's Men" in advance and answer a few simple questions about the film and Bernstein's talk.

Digital Resource Center Extensions:

Whenever possible, we provide digital materials for use outside class to encourage solo work by students and accommodate a wider range of learning styles.

Extending [this](#) lecture:

Available in multiple languages. Project Implicit offers an anonymous way for students to probe their implicit biases as a way to understand cognitive dissonance.



Glasstrailer.wmv

Shattered Glass Viewings:

Available on Blackboard, on Netflix, and online.

