Essential Skills 2 & 3: Evaluating Websites (Information Competence)[1]

Your name _____

The site URL _____

How do you know if an online source is reliable? For every online source you use for this assignment, complete a typed sheet that answers the questions below:

A. Evaluate the site's authority

1. To what domain does this site belong? (.com, .org., .edu…) What does the domain tell you about the site's authority and credibility, if anything? Remember that even .edu websites can be strongly biased!

2. What type of site is this? A personal Web page? A blog? An informative page (for whom)? A political interest group? An NGO? A marketing page? (Examine it carefully.)

3. Who constructed the page? Why was it constructed?

4. What are the site's credentials, particularly as they relate to your assignment?

B. Evaluate the site's authenticity (*Hint:* Check the SIDEBAR and bottom of the page.)

5. Do the sources cited on this site seem to be well-documented and accurate? How do you know?

6. When was the site created? Last revised?

7. Who are the intended audiences? How do you know?

C. Evaluate the site's sponsors and purposes (*Hint:* Go to the site's home page. Try checking the domain name owner.)

8. What are the site's purposes? To promote an idea or an organization, for example? (We all have our axes to grind.)

9. Who sponsors or publishes the page (see 3, above)? Is there an "about us" link? If so, you can learn more there about sponsors.

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[1] We are indebted to the librarians from the Grossmont and Sweetwater Union High School Districts in San Diego County who designed this activity.

10. What issues are discussed? (Check the page, and its links, several times.)

11. What appears to be the ideology (values, beliefs) of the sponsors? Are opposing points of view presented?

12. What do the links to the site tell you about its ideology and purposes?

13. Is there a list of references on the site? What does this list tell you?

D. Consider your confidence in citing this online site as a source

14. Does the site have the information you are looking for?

15. How will you present this source in your paper? *Note:* You'll need to tell the readers something about the site's purposes and ideologies. See *Student Handout 1.9c: "Essential Skill 4:* Academic Arguments—Supporting Claims and Using Evidence from Sources."

16. Here are some sample citations from reliable sources, sources that are created and perpetuated to make arguments that reflect the sponsors' ideologies (beliefs and values):

   • Human Rights Watch (<http://www.hrw.org>), "dedicated to protecting individual human rights worldwide," argues that environmental activists in Haiti are often arrested and tortured.

   • Community-based health care is crucial to the success of a project, according to the website, Partners in Health, which sponsors health projects in Haiti and Russia (<http://www.pih.org/home.html>).