Simplified Rating Methodology for Beginners

Note: The CART Platform allows students to rate articles through both a "Simple Rating Version" and a "Full Rating Version." The Simple Rating Version has one rating slider for Reliability and one rating slider for Bias. The Full Rating Version has four rating sliders for Reliability (three factors plus one for overall Reliability) and four rating sliders for Bias (three factors plus one for overall Bias).

The instructions below are for the Simple Rating Version and can be helpful for anyone working with the Media Bias Chart for the first time.

If you are rating news articles on the Media Bias Chart for the first time, these simplified rating methodology instructions will help get you oriented to what you will be looking for and considering. As you get more familiar with the Media Bias Chart and consider more news articles, you will naturally ask yourself questions about why something should be rated higher or lower, or more left or right on the chart. When you start asking those questions, you will be ready to move on to the full rating methodology.

You will see that the Media Bias Chart has two axes: the vertical axis is for reliability and the horizontal axis is for left-to-right political bias. It is really the "Media Reliability and Bias Chart."

Let's begin with Reliability:

News articles can be good for many reasons and bad for many reasons. Determining reliability is not just a matter of whether something is fake or real.

On the Media Bias Chart, the Reliability categories generally describe characteristics of news articles that cause us to rank them high, middle, or low in our classification system. To start, get familiar with the descriptions of each category and why they are high, middle, and low.

The categories, from top to bottom, are as follows:

1) **Original fact reporting:** The highest ranked kinds of stories are the work product of real journalists. Journalists find out facts about stories from the most direct sources possible, often uncovering things that would be impossible for the public to find out about otherwise. When a news article is about that original reporting (meaning the person/people who wrote it were the ones who first discovered the news), that is ranked highest because other types of news articles lower on the chart would not exist without it
2) **Fact reporting:** These kinds of stories mostly present a series of facts, such as the who, what, when, where, and why of a story. These can include stories that are not original reporting but which re-report the original reporting of others.
3) **Complex Analysis or Mix of Fact Reporting and Analysis:**

       a. **Complex Analysis**: These kinds of stories provide *thorough* explanation and context about news events and are full of factual information. They tend to be longer news articles

       b. **Mix of Fact Reporting and Analysis:** These kinds of stories are a mix of fact reporting (described above) and analysis (described below)

4) **Analysis:** These kinds of stories provide *a moderate amount* of explanation and context. The difference between "complex analysis" and "analysis" is that "complex analysis" articles are typically longer and provide more facts.

5) **Opinion; Fair Persuasion:** These kinds of stories try to convince the reader of a particular point of view, but generally remain fair.

6) **Selective or Incomplete; Unfair Persuasion:** These kinds of stories leave out important facts, the presence of which would make the story come across differently. They also use unfair rhetorical tactics such as bringing up irrelevant or untimely points.

7) **Propaganda and/or Misleading:** Propaganda, under our definition, can be thought of as an extreme form of opinion or agenda-pushing. It does not have to be initiated by a government to be considered propaganda. Misleading is self-explanatory. Articles in this category can be one or the other, or both

8) **Contains Inaccurate/Fabricated Info:** Inaccurate means incorrect or wrong, and fabricated means made-up. An article does not have to be completely inaccurate or fabricated to fall in this category; it just has to *contain* it.

To rate an article for Reliability, read the entire article paying attention to each part of it, including the headline, the graphic(s), and each of the sentences. Take in every possible context clue you can, based on your existing knowledge. Then, go over each of the categories and determine which one you think describes the article best and move the Reliability slider to place it there.

Next, let's discuss Bias

When reading the article and assessing it for Reliability, you may or may not have noticed that the article seemed biased to you. If you thought it was very biased, that may have caused you to rate it somewhat low on the Reliability scale. That is ok; Reliability and Bias are often correlated, but not always. In our methodology, we want to take the extra step about considering bias separately to determine its degree.

In this simplified rating methodology, first consider the left-to-right categories themselves. These are:
- Most Extreme Left
- Hyper-Partisan Left
- Skews Left
- Neutral (minimal or balanced)
- Skews Right
- Hyper Partisan Right
- Most Extreme Right

These category definitions assume you have some reference level of understanding of what constitutes "left" and "right" in contemporary US politics, and what is more or less extreme by comparison. If you have some basic understanding of these concepts, you can rate an article for bias simply based on your personal experiences and beliefs.

If you believe you can make an educated guess about where to rate an article for bias, move the Bias slider to the appropriate spot. If you don't think you can make an educated guess, do not rate the article for bias. Over time, your classroom discussions and experience reading and rating more articles will allow to you develop a basis for rating articles in the future.

The main factors you need to consider to rate bias are:

1) Political Position (whether the article advocates for one)
2) Language (how the article refers to political issues or opponents)
3) Comparison (to other articles you have read)

Your reasoning for rating an article for bias should revolve around these considerations. When you move to the full rating methodology, you will consider each one of these factors individually.

<u>Summary of Simplified Rating Methodology:</u>

1) **Read and understand the descriptions of the Reliability and Bias Categories**
2) **Read the entire article, including the headline and graphic**
3) **Rate for Reliability**
4) **Rate for Bias**