Bias in the News

What do you already know about bias?

What is BIAS anyway?
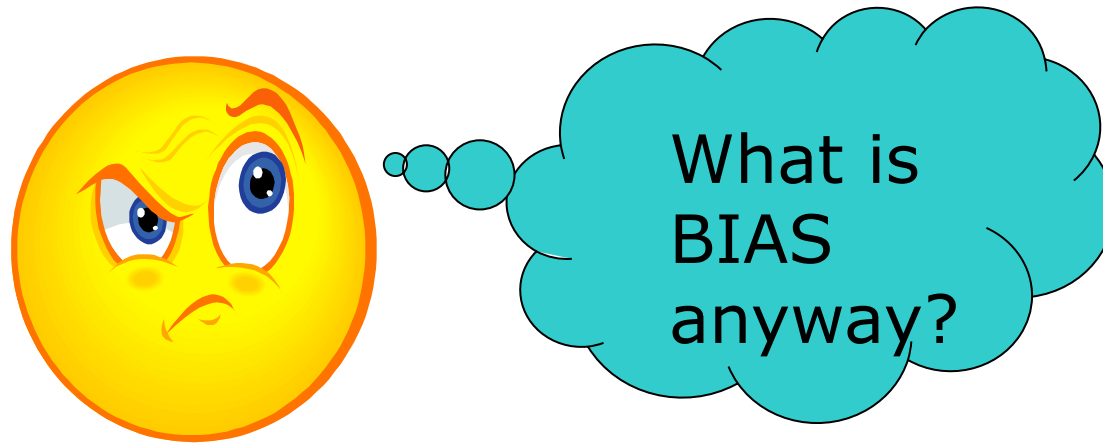
Favoring one side, position, or belief – being partial, prejudiced,

Bias vs. Propaganda

Bias ...

is prejudice; a judgment or an opinion formed without evidence.

Propaganda ...

 is an effort to influence people's opinions; to win them to a certain side or view

What is biased language and what is not?

Not biased, just an objective observation
> Frank *spends very little mone*y.

Biased favorably:
> Frank is *thrifty.*

Biased unfavorably:
> Frank is a *cheapskate*.

Can bias be found in the news?

Consider these two sentences in a news story:

1. "A crowd of more than 900 attended the protest."

2. "Fewer than 1,000 showed up to protest."

How could you say this in a neutral (unbiased) way?

How to Detect Bias in the News

○ Every news story is affected by:

thoughts

opinions

background

of these people:

interviewer

reporter

photographer

editor

How to Detect Bias in the News

- Bias isn't always on purpose – sometimes it just "creeps in"!

- By looking for it, you can spot bias and become a better journalist and a better reader.

Let's Look at Bias through …

1. Omission
2. Placement
3. Photos
4. Names and titles
5. Statistics
6. Word Choice & Tone
7. Source Control

1. Bias through Omission

- Sometimes, certain facts or details will be cut out of a story, and others will be included.

- This can change how readers or viewers think about the story.

- Make sure to read several different sources to get the full story!

1. Bias through Omission

A news story can be written about people booing during a speech.

- "The president's remarks were greeted by loud jeers."
- "A small handful of people disagreed with the president's remarks."

http://media.cnsnews.com/resources/53412.jpg

2. Bias through Placement

○ Usually, the stories that are chosen to be put first are seen as more important.

○ Stories in the back of the paper or at the end of the news broadcast are seen as less important.

2. Bias through placement

○ For example, if a story about the disaster in Samoa is on the front page of the paper, it will be seen as more important.

○ If the story about Samoa is buried at the back of the paper, it will be seen as less important.

http://amhist.ist.unomaha.edu/module_files/Collage%20of%20Headlines.jpg
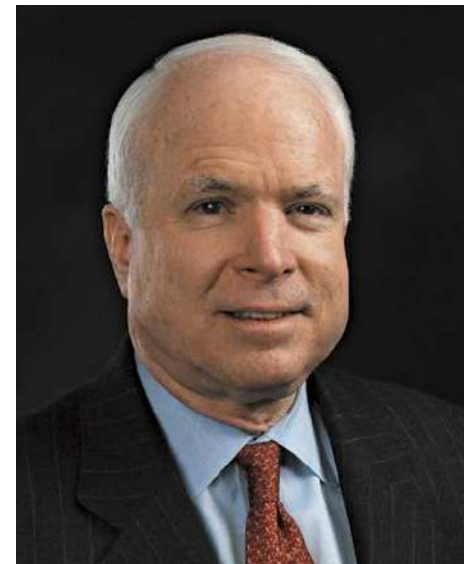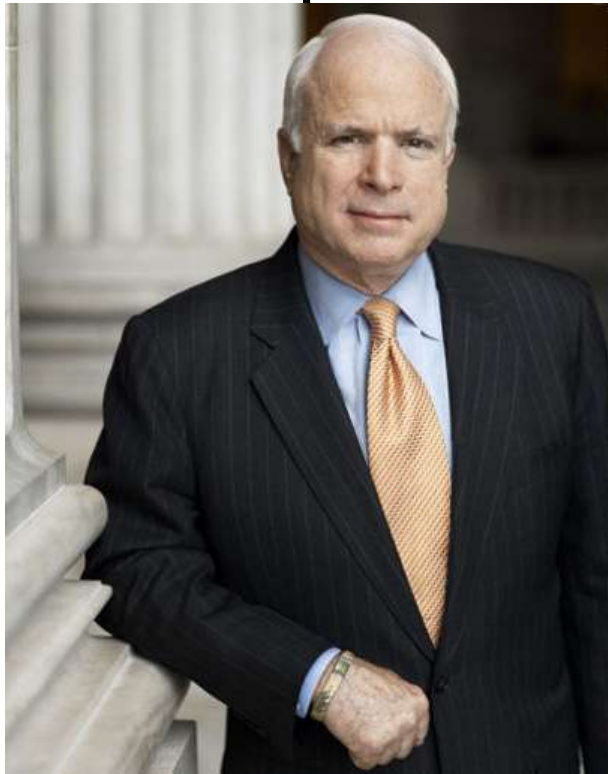
3. Bias through Pictures

- Some photos can make the subject look serious, attractive, healthy, etc. and other photos can be really unflattering and make them look silly, ugly, sick, etc.
- The images of someone in the news can influence how we think about them.
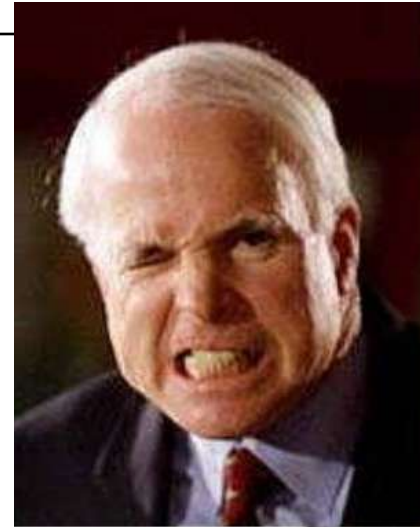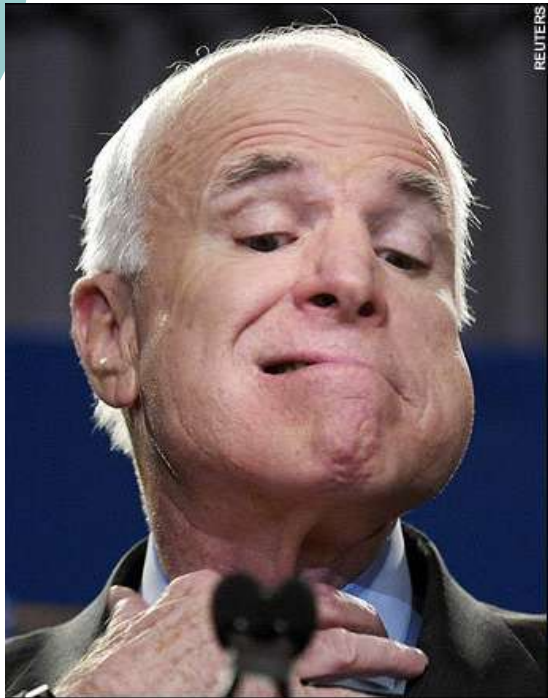
3. Bias through pictures

Compare these…

3. Bias through pictures

...to these!

4. Bias through Names and Titles

○ The way a person is described or labeled can influence how we think about them.

4. Bias through Names and Titles

- "John Doe, an <u>ex-con</u>, is now running for office."
- "John Doe, who was convicted 20 years ago for a minor offense, is now running for office."

http://choosethecross.com/wp-content/uploads/2007/08/convict.png

5. Bias through Statistics

○ Numbers and statistics can be altered to change the way we think about them.

5. Bias through Statistics

- "The fundraiser for the school earned <u>only</u> $1,100."
- "The school's successful fundraiser raised <u>over</u> $1,000."

http://confettidreams.files.wordpress.com/2009/08/saving-money-clip-art.jpg

6. Bias through Word Choice

- The words and tone the journalist uses can influence the story.
- Using positive or negative words can change how we feel about the news story.
- We can also be influenced by a news broadcaster's tone of voice.

6. Bias through Word Choice

- "The politician presented his <u>well-thought out</u> and <u>intelligent</u> plan to Congress."

- "The politician presented his <u>shoddy</u> and <u>disorganized</u> plan to Congress."

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Here are hockey game coverage headlines from the two home towns of the opposing teams:

The Denver Post

red wings 5, avalanche 3
Injurybegins Avs' tumble

The Detroit News

Red Wings 5, Avalanche 3
Wings are **too much** for Avalanche

Article 1: http://www.denverpost.com/Stories/0,1413,36%257E24761%257E1247763,00.html?search=filter
Article 2: http://www.detnews.com/2003/wings/0303/15/sports-109480.htm

http://school.mapleshade.org/ravizius/period7/Crossley-Joshua/red-wings.jpg

7. Bias through Controlling the Source

- Where does the story originate?
- Who is the source of the story?
- Whose point of view are you hearing or reading?

7. Bias through Controlling the Source

Sources are important! You cannot always trust information from all sources.

Now find some biases!

1. Bias through Omission (leaving stuff out)

2. Bias through Placement (in the front or the back of the paper?)

3. Bias through pictures (do they look good or bad?)

4. Bias through Names (how do they label people?)

5. Bias through Statistics (do they mess around with the numbers?)

6. Bias through Word Choice (positive or negative words?)

Resources for this PPT

http://www.umich.edu/~newsbias/index.html

http://www.mediaawareness.ca/english/teachers/media_literacy/index.cfm
• "How to Detect Bias in the News | Handout."
Media Awareness Network | Réseauéducationmédias. 6 Mar. 2008
<http://www.mediaawareness.ca/english/resources/educational/handouts/broadcast_news/bw_bias_in_the_news.cfm>.

http://www.vnv.org.au/site/images/images/10reasonsveggo-animals.jpg

http://www.huntinglegends.com/wp-content/uploads/image/clipart_people_019.gif