Intro to Critical Thinking

Week 3 Class

Weeks 1 & 2 Summaries

Critical Thinking is the ability to think clearly and rationally by evaluating several different sources of information objectively to make informed decisions.

- Critical Thinking helps you make the best decisions for you and others.

- It is valued by individuals, organizations and businesses likely leading to your views being accepted and your recommended action steps being executed and may lead to better pay, bonuses, and/ awards.

- We learned that everyone one of us has biases towards how we see world and how we filter information based on our life experiences to date. Understanding our own biases and purposely seeking out data and information counter to those biases is key to making an informed decision

Critical Thinking requires an open mind and being receptive to different perspectives.

Weeks 1 & 2 Summaries

- We saw a Critical Thinking example where the headlines of a story, while true, was misleading as to what was the real story

- We saw how you can be directed by an article to focus on a scary issue (shark attack) which may be very improbable compared to things we do (like running to the car in a thunderstorm or even biking on a road) that may have similar negative outcomes (injury or death) with higher likelihood of occurrence.

- We talked about where you get your information and the potential quality and bias of that information

- We talked about politicians and why they might have biases

- We looked at how media (TV, Internet, newspapers) has some bias and the more biased it is either left or right, the information becomes more misleading (either by purposely omitting key information and/or by lying to you. Consider using the charts from last week to choose sources of information and purposely choose some sources that are moderately biased in opposite directions to get differing perspectives.

Seeking out good quality data and information from multiple sources having different perspectives is critical. Don't believe everything you see, hear, read but reject bad information not due its bias but due to poor quality based on all the information
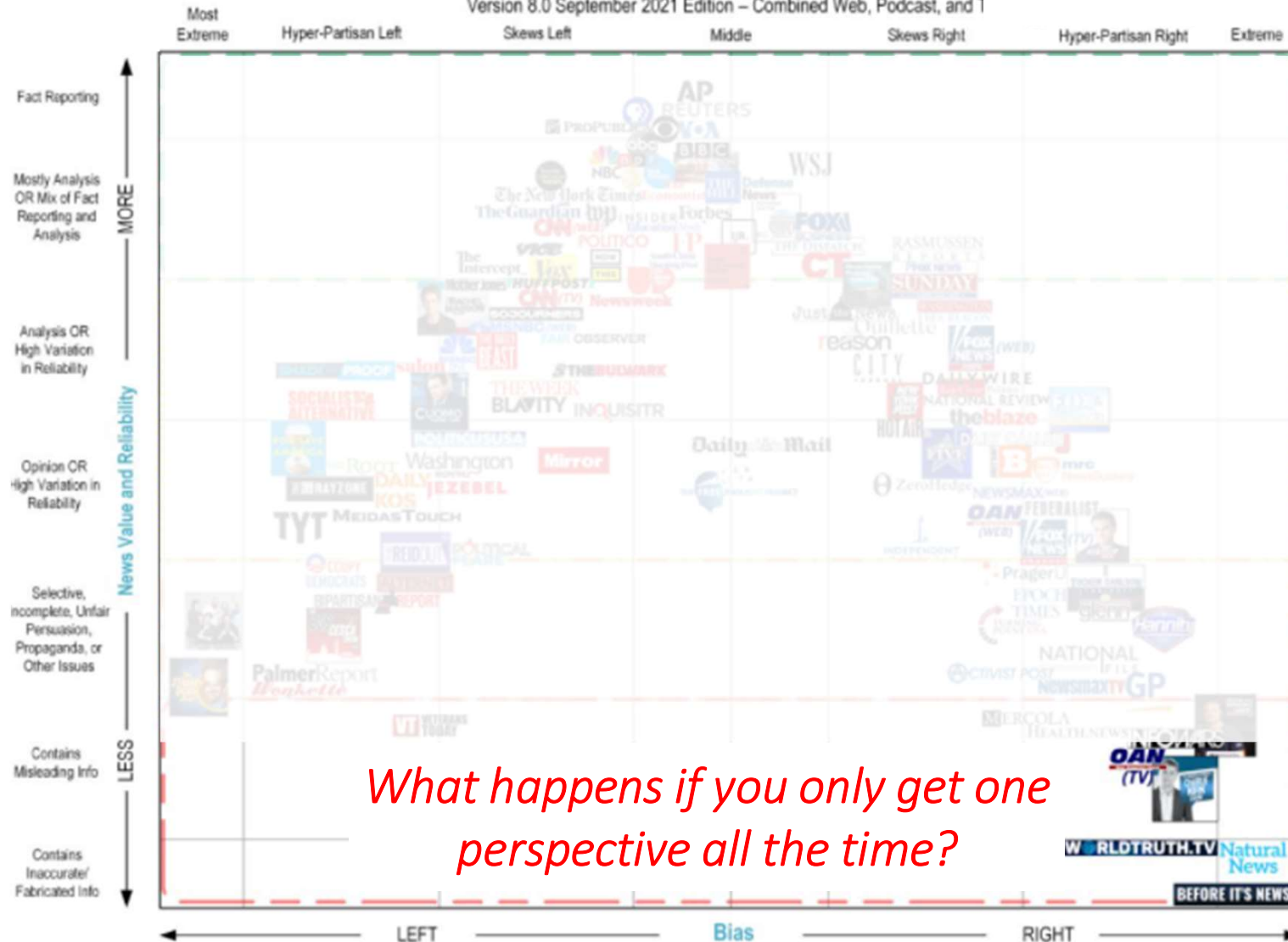
Weeks 1 & 2 Summaries

Lastly, we discussed a Critical Thinking example…. Should we wear masks to protect ourselves and others from COVID and if so under what conditions should we?

• Recall the large list of articles that were found and some of the science behind viruses, droplets and droplet nuclei, and all stuff that is floating in the air around us right now and that we will breathe in about 34,000,000 particles of stuff just during this class today!

• Recall that articles were sought out that were written that had differing perspectives and sometimes differing conclusions.

• Recall that the date of the articles makes a difference when something new is occurring and the science and data hasn't caught up yet.

• Recall that while the preponderance of data from many reputable scientists and organizations suggesting that masks are effective both for the wearer and others in helping prevent getting COVID, there are a lot of factors that make it more of less important to wear in various situations.

Critical thinking is not blindly accepting recommendations but understanding the why behind the recommendations and under what circumstances

Any questions or comments regarding our last two classes?

The Media Bias Chart ®

Version 8.0 September 2021 Edition – Combined Web, Podcast, and T

| Most Extreme | Hyper-Partisan Left | Skews Left | Middle | Skews Right | Hyper-Partisan Right | Extreme |

News Value and Reliability

- Fact Reporting
- Mostly Analysis OR Mix of Fact Reporting and Analysis
- Analysis OR High Variation in Reliability
- Opinion OR High Variation in Reliability
- Selective, Incomplete, Unfair Persuasion, Propaganda, or Other Issues
- Contains Misleading Info
- Contains Inaccurate/ Fabricated Info

MORE ↑ / ↓ LESS

What happens if you only get one perspective all the time?

← LEFT — **Bias** — RIGHT →

Propaganda

Propaganda is the term for information of an especially biased or misleading nature, used to promote or publicize a particular political cause or point of view trying to influence you to adopt that cause or view.

Propaganda uses arguments which typically have psychological effects but are frequently logically invalid.

Some propaganda techniques include:

Appeal to fear
Appeal to prejudice
Beautiful people
Big lie
Black-and-white fallacy
Cherry picking
Demonizing the enemy
Disinformation
Exaggeration

False accusations
Flag-waving
Gaslighting
Guilt by association
Half-truth
Intentional vagueness
Labeling
Loaded language
Lying and deception
Managing the news
Minimization

Name-calling
Non sequitur
Oversimplification
Quotes out of context
Rationalization
Red herring
Scapegoating
Slogans
Smears
Stereotyping or labeling

How important is free press towards Critical Thinking?

Russia's "special military operation" in Ukraine

Putin stated among other things that he is launching a "special military operation" in Ukraine to prevent the West (e.g. US, NATO) from using Ukraine as a springboard for invading and destroying Russia and to stop Ukrainian atrocities against the Russian speaking people in the Ukraine.

A very high percentage of the Russian people believe he is doing the right thing. Protesting in Russia seems limited.

Your thoughts?

Is Putin right to invade the Ukraine?

From Vladimir Putin's statements, Russia's State controlled media, and the average Russian's perspective....

This is a "Special Military exercise to de-Nazify and de-arm Ukraine." "Everything is going to plan."

This was needed to prevent:
- *"Ukraine from being a spearhead for US & West to invade Russia"*
- *"killing of Russian speaking people in Donbas"*

"Ukraine is killing their own women and children and blaming it on the Russians" The West and Ukrainians are lying when they say or show pictures and video that suggest we (Russians) are the ones doing this.

Russia insists it's only targeting military installations.

From Ukraine and US perspectives:

- *Ukraine a sovereign country.*

- *Ukraine is a free democracy with a legitimately elected leader*

- *A country imposing it's will forcibility against another country's government and people in that sovereign country's borders is at "war" with that country.*

- *Targeting civilians, particularly women and children, is a "war crime".*

- *Russia is "at war" with Ukraine, destroying billions of $ in infrastructure, hospitals, schools and homes and is targeting and killing civilians including women and children to get Ukraine to surrender and bend to the Russian's will.*

(Note: This is a West view but with free press.)

So...

1. Is Putin right to wage war in Ukraine? Why or why not?
2. Is Putin likely guilty of war crimes? Why or why not?
3. Why do Russian people support this war?

Propaganda is particularly effective when differing perspectives are eliminated

• Critical thinking requires access to valid information from different perspectives.

• Denying access to valid and pertinent information effectively eliminates the ability to think critically

•A recent Russian law puts a violator in prison for up to 15 years for publishing "knowingly false information" about the Russian Military and its operations. What is "knowingly false information"? Who determines?

• Remember, we frequently view the world and filter information based our life experiences. If the only thing you ever heard all your life was that the USA was a very evil, decadent, and immoral place who plans to attack you to take your land and belongings and possibly kill you…what would you think?

The Nazis effectively used propaganda to win the support of millions of Germans to facilitate persecution, a world war, and ultimately genocide of ~6 million Jews.

Putin's propaganda appears to be effective in getting support from the Russian citizens.

China and North Korea are some of the other countries who control information coming into their countries and all their media. How do you think their citizens view others? What are the implications of that.

How important is free press towards Critical Thinking?

While we may not like all extremists broadcasting their rhetoric, the nice thing we have access to a <u>lot</u> of information allowing us to be able to Critically Think about things and draw our own informed conclusions!

Keep in mind...

If you only seek out information that matches with your gut feel influenced by your biases, you may be doing the very same thing to yourself as the Russian, Chinese, and North Korean governments are doing to their people...

You are denying yourself the ability to Think Critically and come to good, sound conclusions by restricting differing perspectives and possibly feeding yourself propaganda

Course Summary

Critical Thinking is the ability to think clearly and rationally by evaluating several different sources of information objectively to make informed decisions.

• In order to Think Critically, one must have access to and collect good quality data & information.

• Use sources of information that are respected and reliable and be aware of their biases.

• Seek out information and data from multiple sources with differing perspectives (and biases) to make sure you are seeing the whole picture before drawing any conclusions

Critical Thinking is not blindly accepting recommendations but understanding the why behind the recommendations and under what circumstances