

# CONSTRUCTING MEDIA BIAS

## LESSON PLAN





**Overview:** Students will work together to create a news story using a series of possible options for each of the components of an article. In their groups, students will also be given different “priorities” for their stories to inform their decision-making. Students will reflect on the construction of news stories and how that can influence bias in the media.

**Goal:** Students will be able to understand why different groups of individuals, such as journalists and reporters, can use the same factual information, but generate different stories. Students will reflect on the decisions made and factors in play that can lead to the construction of media bias.

**Time:** 45 minutes

## Materials:

[Constructing Media Bias PowerPoint](#)

[Constructing Media Bias Handout: Attachment 1](#)

[Constructing Media Bias Handout: Attachment 2](#)

[Constructing Media Bias Handout: Attachment 3](#)

[Constructing Media Bias Handout: Attachment 4](#)

[Constructing Media Bias Handout: Attachment 5](#)

[Constructing Media Bias Handout: Attachment 6](#)

## Notes for Instruction:

- Students must be placed in even-numbered groups to conduct the small-group discussion activity accurately.
- This is not an exercise for students to determine if a piece of news is credible or reliable. The central aim of the lesson is to have students understand how the news and media are constructed, and where bias plays a role in the construction of it.
- You will be screen sharing the prepared PowerPoint the entire session.

## Instructional Outline:

### Introduction (7 minutes)

- Students will answer a bellringer question to introduce themselves to the session. They will review the agenda and goals, and reaffirm their commitment to the community guidelines for virtual engagement.

### Small Group Story Creation (15 minutes)

- Students will be split into small groups and take on the role of a team of journalists at a news organization.
- Students will write a story for “publication” and decide what information to include according to their editor’s priority.

### Small Group Sharing and Discussion (15 minutes)

- Students will be paired with another small group that had an opposing editor’s priority.
- Students will share their stories, compare them, and discuss the influence of the editor’s demands on their stories.

### Reflection (7 minutes)

- Students will reflect on the activity, and consider the influences of bias on their consumption of news and media.

**Procedures:**

<b>TIME</b>	<b>PROCEDURES</b>	<b>VIRTUAL INSTRUCTIONS AND MATERIALS</b>
Before the session begins	Send the Zoom link to all students; log in before the class begins and have links prepared. Make sure all links are viewable and editable by everyone who has the link.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Have your prepared PowerPoint open.</li><li>• Screenshare SLIDE 1 of the PowerPoint.</li><li>• Set your view to “gallery view” so you can accurately take attendance of your session.</li></ul>
4 minutes	Conduct a bellringer activity. Ask students to answer the following two questions in a private chat to you: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Where do you get your current events information and news from?</li><li>• Why do you choose this as your source of information and news?</li></ul> Once students have answered, share a few responses aloud. Inform students that in this session, they will be thinking about how news and media are constructed, and thus, presented to you.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Once a critical mass of students has been reached, click to SLIDE 2.</li><li>• Receive all student answers privately through the chat function.</li></ul>
2 minutes	Introduce students to the goals of the session: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• To discuss how stories are created and how information is presented to you through the media;</li><li>• To begin to recognize some factors that are at play when journalists and reporters construct their stories; and</li><li>• To reflect on how these factors contribute to media bias.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Click to SLIDE 3.</li></ul>
2 minutes	Preview the agenda of the session to students: <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Introduce the goals of the session</li><li>2. Review community rules for online engagement</li><li>3. Become journalists and write a story for publication!</li><li>4. Share your story with another group</li><li>5. Reflect on how information is constructed and how that relates to media bias</li></ol>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Click to SLIDE 4.</li></ul>
2 minutes	Remind your students of the community guidelines they have set up for virtual engagement, using the ones they have created in a session prior to this one.  Instruct students to use the “thumbs up” reaction button at the bottom of the screen to affirm their commitment to the guidelines.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Click to SLIDE 5.</li><li>• Make sure your view is on “gallery view” so you can see every student’s reaction and commitment to the guidelines.</li></ul>

3 minutes	<p>Explain the task ahead for students:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>You will be placed into small breakout groups and will take on the role of a team of journalists at a news organization.</li> <li>You and your team are tasked with writing a story for publication. To do this, you must make judgments about what information to include and what to leave out according to the priority of your editor, which will be assigned to you in your small groups.</li> <li>For your article, you must have a title, exposition, quote 1, quote 2, and commentary.</li> <li>The information you will be using to construct your story will be given to you in your breakout groups, and you may only choose one piece of information for each of the five necessary components.</li> </ul> <p>Tell students they will have 7-10 minutes to complete the assigned task with their small groups. Check for understanding of the task instructions.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Click to SLIDE 6.</li> <li>Make sure to model how participants will be highlighting the documents with their choices on a sample document.</li> <li>Share these instructions in the chat function to “Everyone” (they will be able to see these in their breakout groups).</li> <li>Have students respond using the yes/no function under the “Participants” tab to make sure everyone understands the task instructions.</li> </ul>
7-10 minutes	<p>Remind students of facilitator guidelines:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Help the group stay on task.</li> <li>Make sure all members have an equal chance to participate and all are heard from.</li> <li>Make sure one or two members do not dominate the discussion.</li> <li>Make sure the group achieves the objectives in the time available.</li> </ol> <p>Make sure all students are in their breakout rooms.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Click to and use SLIDE 7 to have all of your breakout group document links easily accessible.</li> <li>Copy breakout group links <u>and</u> facilitator guidelines into the chat function to “Everyone.”</li> <li>Send reminders to breakout groups with <b>5 minutes</b> and <b>2 minutes</b> remaining.</li> <li>Check on breakout groups during the 7-10 minutes and ensure that they are working.</li> <li>Have the documents open on your computer to check their progress.</li> </ul>
7-10 minutes	<p>When the time allotted has expired and all groups have returned from their first breakout groups, inform them that they will now be paired up with another group who had an opposing priority. They will also have <b>7 minutes</b> to have this discussion:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Appoint a facilitator.</li> <li>Both groups should read their stories aloud. Then, they should discuss the differences in their choices as well as the impressions they had of the other story.</li> <li>Discuss the following two questions: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In what ways did the editor’s demands influence your decisions?</li> <li>How did those demands account for the different impressions left by the two stories?</li> </ol> </li> </ul> <p>Make sure all students enter their breakout rooms.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Click to SLIDE 8.</li> <li>Put students into breakout groups, paired as such: GROUPS 1-2, 3-4, and 5-6.</li> <li>Send reminders to breakout groups with 5 minutes and 2 minutes remaining.</li> <li>Check on breakout groups during the 7-10 minutes and ensure that they are working.</li> </ul>
5-7 minutes	<p>As a whole group, conduct a reflection on the following questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Besides your editor’s priority, were there any other factors you considered when constructing your story?</li> <li>How do these factors contribute to the bias we encounter when we read the news and engage with media?</li> <li>If you were writing this story yourself and without an editor’s priority to consider, would you have done anything differently?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Bring students back from breakout groups.</li> <li>Click to SLIDE 9.</li> </ul>