

University of North Alabama

UNA Scholarly Repository

Faculty Publications

Collier Library

3-2020

Sweet and Savory: Separating Fact from Fiction

Jennifer L. Pate

University of North Alabama, jpate1@una.edu

Derek Malone

University of North Alabama, dmalone3@una.edu

Follow this and additional works at: <https://ir.una.edu/libfacpub>



Part of the [Information Literacy Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Pate, J. L., & Malone, D. (2020). Sweet and Savory: Separating Fact from Fiction. *The Critical Thinking About Sources Cookbook*, 117-118. Retrieved from <https://ir.una.edu/libfacpub/9>

This Book Chapter is brought to you for free and open access by the Collier Library at UNA Scholarly Repository. It has been accepted for inclusion in Faculty Publications by an authorized administrator of UNA Scholarly Repository. For more information, please contact jpate1@una.edu.

Sweet and Savory: Separating Fact from Fiction

Jennifer Pate, Assistant Professor, Scholarly Communications & Instructional Services Librarian, University of North Alabama, jpate1@una.edu; Derek Malone, University Librarian, Associate Professor, University of North Alabama, dmalone3@una.edu

NUTRITION INFORMATION

Too many information diets are overpopulated with junk. This information junk combined with a lack of critical-thinking skills can make digesting news, world events, and other content difficult. This recipe is intended to assist the consumer of information cuisine to get back on track with healthy habits. The intention is to expose those unhealthy lifestyle choices that we are predisposed to make, challenge the habits, and balance the diet through adding quality ingredients and enhanced preparation skills to our practices in the future.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

- The students will be able to identify information concepts and resources in order to critically evaluate information presented from various sources.
- The students will approach new information with skepticism and will apply critical-thinking skills in order to make sound judgments about the quality of their sources.

DIETARY GUIDELINES

ACRL Frames:

- Authority is Constructed and Contextual
- Information Has Value

COOKING TIME

40–50 minutes for activities and discussion

NUMBER SERVED

10 to 30 students

INGREDIENTS AND EQUIPMENT

See the Notes section for links to the following resources:

- A website for analysis (we used a site dedicated to the Staten Island Ferry Disaster, which never occurred)
- Stanford History Education Group Evaluating Evidence activity
- Stanford History Education Group Home Page Analysis activity
- *New York Times* game, A Quick Puzzle to Check Your Problem Solving

You will also need computers for students and a projector.

COOKING METHOD

1. *Mise en place*/prep: The Staten Island Ferry Disaster. We kickstart our information prep by looking at a website dedicated to a maritime disaster that never occurred. The Staten Island Ferry Disaster website claims to be about the memorial dedicated to those who died when an

octopus dragged a ferry under the water, killing everyone on board (<http://www.sioctopusdisaster.com/home.html>). How can something that looks so real have such a wild, fantastic story? Why haven't they heard of this maritime disaster that claimed the lives of so many? Students will seek to legitimize the story using the reasoning and information presented on the website. Few students will seek outside validation for this information, which, when the truth is revealed, makes them begin to see how false information can be manipulated to look like facts.

2. Seasonings: Socially shared image as information. This exercise is adopted and modified from the Stanford History Education Group "Evaluating Evidence." Now it's time to season the knowledge the students gained in the first exercise and give them a chance to try implementing information skepticism. To do this, we show them an image of a flower that was found on the social media site Imgur. The caption states that the flower, which has unusual characteristics, has been altered by nuclear spill effects in Japan. Students are divided into small groups (2–4 students) to discuss if they believe the image is real or fake. They are asked not to look

for any online verification of the picture's origins and accuracy of information. In a post-group evaluation, we discuss as a class the reasons that the image could be considered good or poor information. This necessary ingredient helps relay the importance of verifying socially shared information before passing it along and helps relay that negative consequences that result from socially shared misinformation.

3. Protein: Web ads. This exercise is adopted and modified from the Stanford History Education Group "Home Page Analysis." Students are bombarded with ads every day, from social media to television. Because every click of the remote control or every post on social media is being tracked and monetized, the main ingredient is to have students focus on advertisements. The students are presented with a handout of a webpage screenshot and are instructed to identify which items are advertisements and which are actual news stories and recording their reasoning. We discuss the results as a class and include discussion of where we may encounter advertisements, sponsorships, and promoted content, what influence these ads have on our information consumption, and how our social media curates ads based upon previous searches.
4. Sauce: Confirmation bias: A Sweet Numbers Game. Sauce can make the dish, and this one is absolutely outstanding. We pair the students to play a "Guess my Sequence Rule" game to illustrate confirmation

bias by utilizing a *New York Times* Upshot game titled "A Quick Puzzle to Test Your Problem Solving." Students are paired in twos and given limited information about a sequence of numbers. They are then permitted a minimum of five guesses in an attempt to determine what the rule is to build the sequence. The heart of the game is not math, it is information science, as the tendency of nearly every participant is to guess sequences that mirror the original shared information. Each pair is asked how confident they are in their assumption of the sequence rule before exposing the rule itself. Most groups fail this exercise because they try only to replicate the initial sequence instead of testing various number combinations.

CHEF'S NOTES

This recipe is a critical-thinking class that we teach during EN 111. It is part of a greater dining experience that also includes a library orientation for FYE courses and two information literacy sessions during EN 112.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

We use a brief survey before and after our course visits. The survey has the same focus and similar questions focused on how the participants regard their own abilities at evaluating and using information. These critical-thinking exercises obviously encourage skepticism; thus, we are looking for differences in the rating of abilities for information usage and misinformation perception before and after instruction.

NOTES

"Evaluating Evidence." Stanford History Education Group, 2018. <https://sheg.stanford.edu/civic-online-reasoning/evaluating-evidence>.

"Home Page Analysis." Stanford History Education Group, 2018. <https://sheg.stanford.edu/civic-online-reasoning/home-page-analysis>.

Leonhardt, David. "A Quick Puzzle to Test Your Problem Solving." *The New York Times*, July 2, 2015, sec. The Upshot. <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2015/07/03/upshot/a-quick-puzzle-to-test-your-problem-solving.html>.

"Staten Island Ferry Disaster Memorial Museum." Staten Island Ferry Disaster Memorial Museum, 2018. <http://sioctopusdisaster.com/home.html>.