Evaluating Web Sources

Pretty much anyone can put anything up on the net so you should evaluate your web sources to make sure that they provide reliable information. As a general rule, the websites of newspapers and magazines, federal or state agencies or government offices, and well-known national organizations can be considered good sources. Undocumented information on somebody’s homepage is usually not a good source. Note too that most periodicals have a small amount of bias: for example, *Time* and *Newsweek* are slightly conservative, *The National Review* and *The New Republic* are very conservative, and *The Village Voice* is very liberal. The same can be true of organizations such as NOW and the ACLU (liberal) or the Family Research Council (conservative). Finally, many private organizations have an agenda or a goal: PETA advocates animal rights; NORML wants to reform the marijuana laws. You can use information from such sources (as long as they are not too biased), but such information tends to be less convincing than information from sources that are more objective.

For Today: Send me an email that evaluates two of the web sources for your paper. You should include the following information and answer the following questions:

1) Include the URL of the site (the web address beginning http://). You can cut and paste this into your e-mail message. If you don’t know how to do this, just ask me.

2) Answer these questions, giving reasons for your answers:

- Is the website a reliable source?
- Does the website have a bias or agenda?
- Is the information in the site primarily factual or does it consist largely of emotional appeals?

This assignment is worth up to 10 points. You don’t need to finish it before the end of class today. I’ll accept it anytime up until midnight on Wednesday.