Evaluating Sources

How you evaluate a source depends on the purpose of your research. Consider how the given source might inform your research and if it provides the most appropriate information for your purpose.

**Purpose**
- What is the intended purpose? (to inform, to argue, to persuade, etc)
- What information or methods are used to achieve the intended purpose?
- Is the author successful in achieving their purpose? How or how not?

**Audience**
- For whom is the source intended? How can you tell?
- What is the purpose or scope of the publication in which the source appears?
- Is this a scholarly or popular source?
- Is the language difficult to understand? (If so, you may wish to gather more background information or sources written for a general audience.)

**Relevance**
- Is the content appropriate for your purpose?
- What does the source add to an understanding of your topic?
- How does the source relate to other information you’ve found? Are there unique aspects to this source?
- How does the source relate to your ideas or arguments?
- Is there a list of references? It may point you to other relevant sources.

**Authorship**
- What are the authors credentials or background in this area?
- Has the author written other sources on this same topic?

**Bias**
Almost all sources have some degree of bias, but well-reasoned arguments consider multiple viewpoints.
- Is the information primarily fact or opinion?
- Does the author present multiple sides of issues?
- Is the information supposed by evidence of some kind? What is that evidence?
Currency

Some research topics will require more up-to-date information than others. For example, research on social movements might be historical (civil rights) or current (#BlackLivesMatter).

- When was the source published?
- Do your topic necessitate current information?