Political Objectivity in the Media

Grade Post-Secondary Duration 2 Class periods

Overview: Students will be introduced to the concept of political objectivity in the context of media analysis. They will evaluate articles written by media sources often accused of political bias. Students will need to create a Zazna account and post their information for the instructor to evaluate.

Objectives	• Choose two web articles, one written by Fox News and one written by CNN. The two articles must be written about the same topic, issue, individual, group, or event. • Identify and highlight sections of the text that may be considered outside the bounds of political objectivity. • Speculate possible motives are incentives for media companies to engage in editorialized news presentation.
Materials	1. Students must have home or library access to a computer with internet.
Procedures	1. The instructor will introduce the concept of political objectivity in the media in the context of journalistic ethics to the class. The instructor will explain that profit driven mass media has historically engaged in editorialized news presentation that results in political bias. The instructor will inquire the class to speculate possible motives or incentives for this trend. The discussion should be guided to draw some general conclusion based on the student's responses. 2. The instructor will inform the class of contemporary news sources accused of participating in political bias. It should be explained that historically the accusations for Fox News are that of a Republican agenda and the accusations for CNN are that of a Democratic agenda. Examples should be provided for Fox News Network and CNN. The examples should illustrate different tactics the news industry uses. The instructor should specify the decisions a news industry makes. They make decisions on how to present the story, who to interview, and which questions to ask. The instructor should ask the class to speculate how these decisions can affect the political objectivity of the news corporation. 3. The students will be asked to complete a homework assignment before the next class. They will create a Zazna account and browse for two news articles written about the same topic, issue, individual, group, or event. One article needs to be written by Fox News and the other needs to be written by CNN. The students should post their articles on Zazna.com. They will use Zazna to specifically highlight text that can possibly be considered political bias. The students will be required to type a 3 page paper to be turned in before the next

class.

Assessment	After students have completed their research they will be asked to complete a three page response paper. The students should reference the text they highlighted in Zanza and explain why the text could be considered political bias. The students should construct arguments as to why the text is political bias. Their arguments should include more than the highlighted text itself. The paper should reference the articles presentation, what content was included, what content was excluded, who was interviewed, and what questions were asked. The paper should also include how the decisions in two articles are different. A comparison should be made at all mentioned analytical levels. The student should then provide some possible explanations, incentives, and motives the news companies have for these decisions to conclude their paper.
Evaluation	**5 points:** The student created a Zazna account and successfully posted two articles about the same issue, topic, individual, group, or event on Zazna.com. **5 points:** The students accurately highlighted text that could be argued to be political bias. **5 points:** The student referenced their highlighted text in their 3 page paper and constructed accurate and convincing arguments as to why the text could be considered political bias. **5 points:** The student accurately compared the differences between their two articles, citing specific decisions that the two news corporations made about how to write their articles and considered why those decisions were made. **5 points:** The student provided possible explanations for why the two news corporations arrived upon different decisions regarding the presentation and content of the articles.