

A LESSON PLAN for secondary
education students

DETECTING AND DECODING BIAS IN THE MEDIA



LESSON PLAN



Objectives: By the end of this lesson, students will be able to:

- Analyze news sources and determine the biases represented in them
- Understand the different forms of bias
- Communicate respectfully and critically and question the perspectives represented in online sources



Duration: 1 hour and 40 minutes



Material: The material that you will need are:

- The images found in the lesson plan
- The infographic "3 Types of Media Bias"

INTRODUCTION

We live in an era of technological advances where we work, learn, communicate, get informed, and have fun online. Regardless of age, people nowadays tend to interact with devices, gadgets, and a variety of media almost all day. At the same time, many agree that we live in a **post-truth era** where non-factual and subjective perspectives increasingly impact our beliefs, thoughts and perception of reality. **Negative and biased beliefs** of specific groups of people (e.g. people of colour, homeless, disabled, women, refugees, migrants, etc.) form part of the information we come across online.

Additionally, the wealth of information that we now have access to demands constant **critical questioning**. The internet offers articles to confirm even the most absurd viewpoints and theories, even if they are not supported by any factual evidence. Our own **unconscious biases** drive us to seek out information that confirms our already held beliefs and the contributions of people who agree with our ideas. In combination, these circumstances can make it very hard for us to find and sufficiently back up **factual information** and to tell truths from **fake news**.

Instructors must actively involve students in becoming aware of and to critically think about their own biases and the biased perspectives of media sources. The resulting ability to reflect on bias forms an important part of media literacy and enables students to **navigate today's media landscape** without being misled.



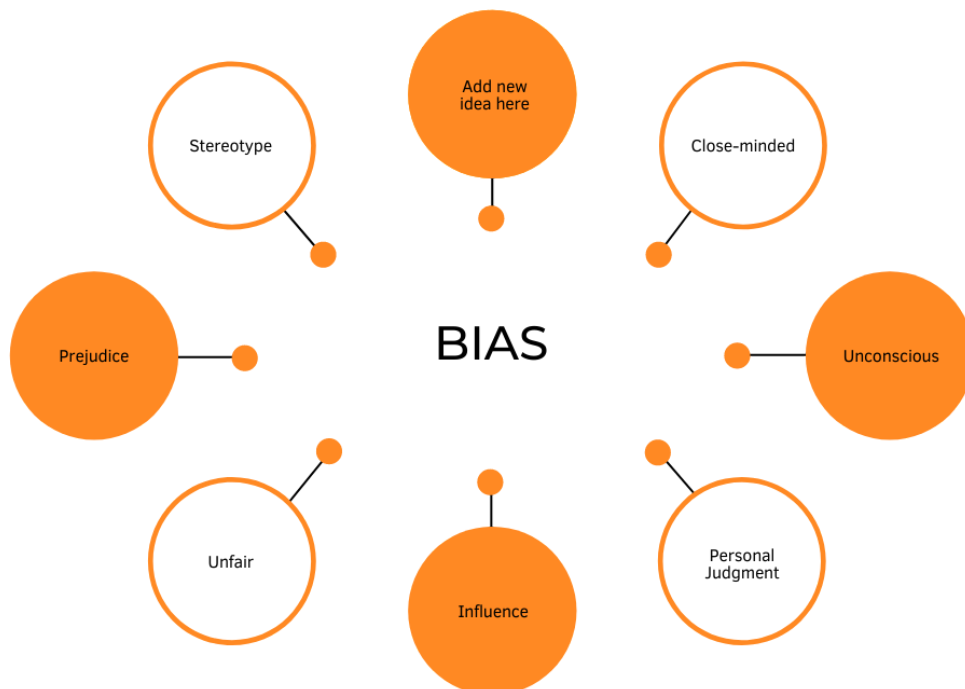
STEP 1



Duration: 30 minutes

- Create groups of 4-5 students each.
- Hand a piece of paper with 'bias' written in the center to each group of students.
- Ask each group to define the word **bias**, and create a mindmap around the word 'bias' with related terms that come to mind.
- After students have written down their initial definition and thoughts, give them some minutes to search different definitions of 'bias', or 'bias on the media' online
- Give students some minutes to rework their mind map and definition based on their findings online.
- Let each group briefly present their findings.
- Create a shared definition of bias with the whole class. For this, one group can be randomly chosen to write their definition on the blackboard. Then the entire class discusses what needs to be added to or changed about this initial definition until everyone is happy with the end result.

Mindmap example:



STEP 2



Duration: 20 minutes

Ask your students the following questions:

- What do you think are some signs of biased perspectives in on- or offline media and posts?
- Have you ever come across biased perspectives or news? When and where? What did the information/article look like? In what way was it biased?
- Why do you think this happened?
- In which other ways can news be biased? Create a list on the blackboard with forms of bias that the students can think of off the top of their heads. (e.g cultural bias, in-group bias, information bias, unconscious bias, stereotyping).
- Why is bias problematic when it comes to news? (e.g most people watch the news to learn something, and they expect news to be unbiased, news affects the public opinion, biased opinions can form biased stereotypes).
- In what ways can authors, writers, producers, etc. promote biased views and what are the effects of this? (by using inflammatory language, making claims for a specific group of people, providing evidence that tells only one side of the story). You can find more information [here](#).
- What do we need to have in mind when we encounter biased views?

STEP 3



Duration: 40 minutes

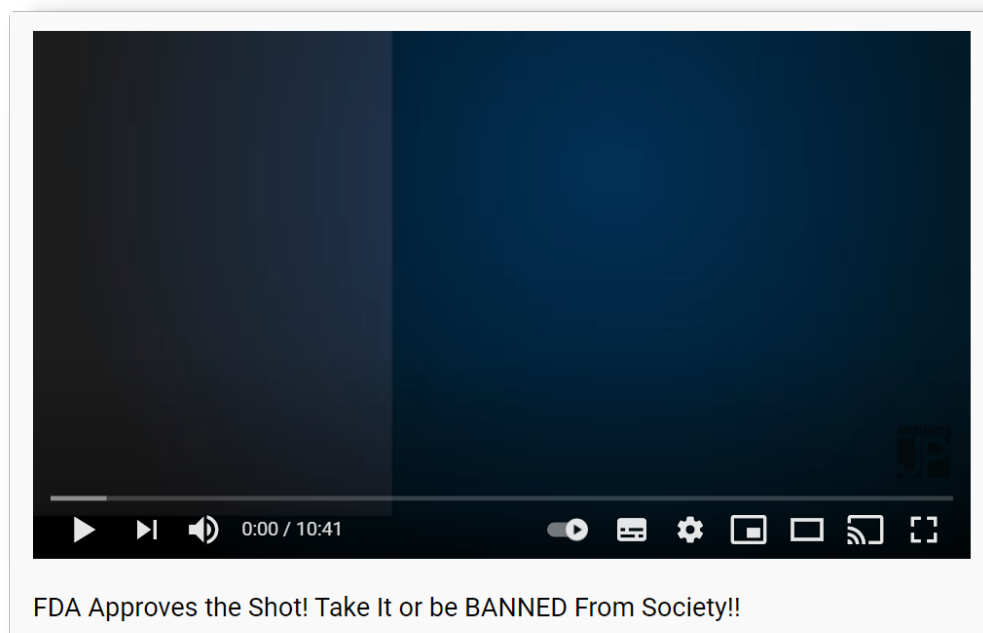
- Hand your students the infographic “3 Forms of Media Bias”. Explain to them that these are not the only forms of media bias there are, but forms that can be discovered through trigger words.
- Ask your students to find examples for each of the three media biases listed online (Every group for one bias respectively). Let them present their examples to the class and discuss: Is the example biased or not? In what way? Are headlines and single words enough to determine bias?

▶ To help them understand better, the **different forms of bias**, you can watch some of the videos below:

- [Confirmation Bias in 5 Minutes](#)
- [Bias Definition: What is Bias?](#)
- [12 Cognitive Biases Explained](#)
- [3 kinds of bias that shape your worldview](#)
- [You're being manipulated and don't even know it](#)

ALTERNATIVE

- Hand your students the examples of articles and video titles below.
- Let them determine which of them are biased based on the infographic.
- Ask them to underline “biased words” in the headlines.
- Each group presents an example to the class and all students discuss: Is the example biased or not? In what way? Are headlines and single words enough to determine bias?



[Video: "FDA Approves the Shot. Take it or be BANNED from Society."](#)

Ex-race bar says silencing of debate has done devastating harm to Britain

AT LAST! A MAN WHO DARES TO TELL TRUTH ABOUT RACE

Blonde who's comforting Clarkson



Blonde who's comforting Clarkson

By James Slack
Political Editor

BRITAIN'S leading race expert, who has been silenced for years, has at last spoken out. The former Conservative MP, who has been silenced for years, has at last spoken out. The former Conservative MP, who has been silenced for years, has at last spoken out.

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A white world, once more

• A storm bearing heavy snow and fierce winds pounded southern Minnesota, including much of the metro area.



MIGRANTS SPARK HOUSING CRISIS

By James Slack
Political Editor

Now EU tells Britain to build more homes as open borders send population soaring

BRITAIN has been ordered by Brussels to build more houses – to cope with all the EU immigrants.

The European Commission warned the UK is heading for an 'acute' housing crisis caused by massive population growth.

It admitted that first-time buyers were being hit particularly hard and the situation could worsen, with official projections saying the UK needs at least 100,000 houses a year just, rather than the current 70,000.

Changing the clampdown in the EU for stricter border controls to ease demand, the Commission has ordered Britain to take further steps to boost housing supply.

The demand for more building is contained in a report into Britain's housing market, which was quietly slipped out on Wednesday.

In an exclusive Daily Mail interview, Cabinet Minister Chris (Chagling) – who uncovered the report – said the nature and character of Britain would be changed for ever if we agree to concede over the country in an open-ended deal in the referendum debate.

Labour's shadow Europe minister (labelled a 'voter worried about immigration a 'homeless racist'.

A senior Tory backbencher called on Hold to stop the vicious personal attacks on Brexit campaigners.

David Cameron cast doubt on whether Boris Johnson really was an 'Out supporter'.

The PM insisted he was proud to be a 'Brexit sceptic'.

And a Daily Mail poll gave the Remain camp an 11-point lead.

The housing revelations follow the news that there are now 11 million EU workers

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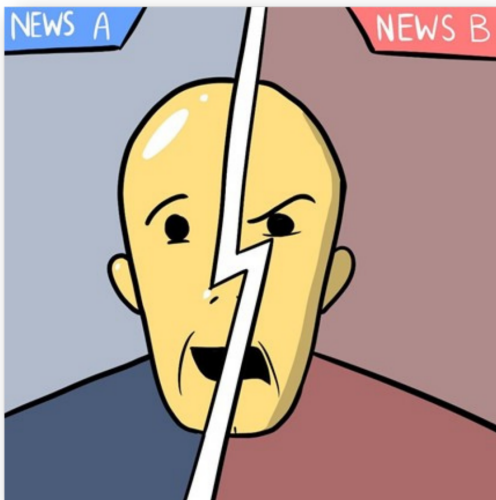
STEP 4



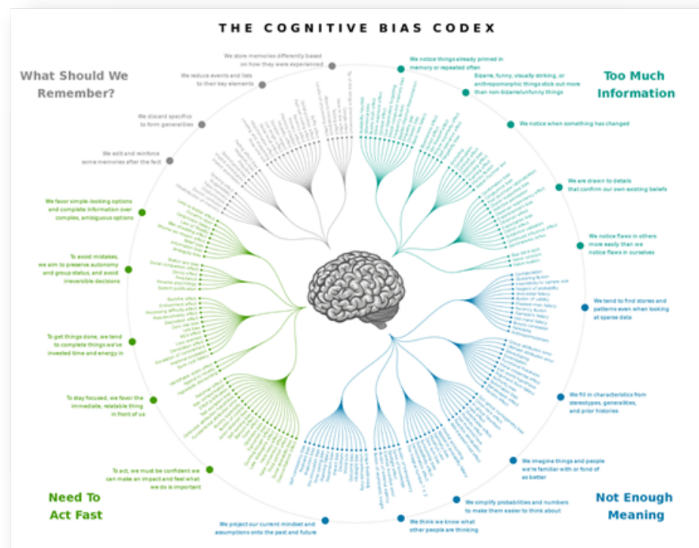
Duration: 10 minutes for questions

- Give students time to comprehend the theory and activities.
- Ask them if they have any additional questions.
- Ask them to choose a specific group of people (refugees, women, etc.) or topic (politics, education, etc.).
- For a week they will follow various news sources for this specific group of people or topic by collecting some opposing views and opinions.
- After one week, they will present the findings to their classmates by having in mind all the things they have learned through this lesson.

Additional Material



Source: <https://thecord.ca/how-media-bias-effects-reader-perception/>



source: The Cognitive Bias Codex - 180+ biases, designed by John Manoogian III (jm3).png;
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=69756809>

3 Types of Media Bias

source: AllSlides.com

1: Spin

- Vague, dramatic or sensational language is used to promote a product, service or idea to downplay or discredit alternative views.

Words & Phrases:

Emerge	Turn up the heat	Facing calls to...
Serious	Critical	Meaningful
Refuse	Decrying	Even though
Crucial	Offend	Monumental
High-stakes	Stern talks	Significant
Tirade	Offensive	Landmark

Words & Phrases to imply „bad behavior“ and sensationalize information:

Surfaced	Mocked	Lashed out
Conceded	Raged	Gloated
Admit to	Bragged	Rant
Dodged	Fumed	Erupted

2: Opinion Statements Presented as Facts

- Subjective language or statements which are based on the author's opinions, assumptions, beliefs, tastes, preferences or interpretations are used to portray a situation.

Words & Phrases:

Good/Better/Best	Bad/Worse/Worst
Considered to be...	It's likely that...
Seemingly	Dangerous
Extreme	Suggest
Apparently	Possibly

3: Sensationalism/Emotionalism

- Subjective language or statements which are based on the author's opinions, assumptions, beliefs, tastes, preferences or interpretations are used to portray a situation.

Words & Phrases:

Shocking	Explosive
Remarkable	Slams
Showdown	Rips
Chaotic	Warning
Onslaught	Desperate