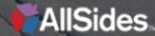


A background image showing a stack of newspapers. The top newspaper has the word "WORLD" visible, and another page below it shows the word "BUSINESS". A dark grey rectangular box is overlaid on the center of the image, containing the title text.

# 16 Types of Media Bias



By Julie Mastrine  
Director of Marketing and Media Bias Ratings, AllSides

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# About Media Bias

Journalism is tied to a set of ethical standards and values, including truth and accuracy, fairness and impartiality, and accountability. However, journalism today often strays from objective fact; the result is biased news. Bias isn't necessarily a bad thing, but hidden media bias misleads, manipulates and divides us. This is why AllSides provides hundreds of [media bias ratings](#), a [balanced newsfeed](#), the [AllSides Media Bias Chart™](#), and the [AllSides Fact Check Bias Chart™](#).

72 percent of Americans [believe](#) traditional news sources report [fake news](#), falsehoods, or content that is purposely misleading. With trust in media declining, media consumers must learn how to spot types of media bias.

This resource guide outlines 16 types of media bias, along with examples of their use in popular media outlets.

# 16 Types of Media Bias

## 1. Spin

Spin is vague, dramatic or sensational language. When journalists put a “spin” on a story, they push it away from objective, measurable facts. Spin is a form of media bias that clouds a reader’s view, preventing them from getting a precise take on what happened.

In the early 20th century, Public Relations and Advertising executives were referred to as “spin doctors.” They would use vague language and make unsupportable claims in order to promote a product, service or idea, downplaying any alternative views in order to make a sale. Increasingly, these tactics are appearing in journalism.

### Examples of Spin Words and Phrases

Emerge Refuse High-stakes Landmark Major Critical Offend Wary of offending Meaningful Monumental High-stakes	Serious Crucial Tirade Latest in a string of... Turn up the heat Decrying Stern talks Facing calls to... Even though Significant
--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

Sometimes the media uses spin words and phrase to **imply bad behavior**. These words are often used without providing hard facts, direct quotes, or witnessed behavior:

Finally Acknowledged Refusing to say Dodged	Surfaced Emerged Conceded Admission
------------------------------------------------------	----------------------------------------------

Came to light	Admit to
---------------	----------

To stir emotions, reports often include **colored, dramatic, or sensational words as a substitute for the word “said.”** For example:

Mocked Raged Bragged Fumed Lashed out Raged Incensed	Scoffed Frustration Erupted Rant Boasted Gloated
------------------------------------------------------------------------	-----------------------------------------------------------------

## Examples of Spin Media Bias

**BUSINESS  
INSIDER**

TECH | FINANCE | POLITICS | STRATEGY | LIFE | ALL

President Donald Trump gloated over mass layoffs at multiple news outlets on Saturday, tweeting that "many others will follow" and attributing the loss to "Fake News."

"Fake News and bad journalism have caused a big downturn. Sadly, many others will follow. The people want the Truth!" he tweeted.

*“Gloat” means “contemplate or dwell on one's own success or another's misfortune with smugness or malignant pleasure.” Is there evidence in Trump’s tweet to show he is being smug or taking pleasure in the layoffs, or is this a subjective interpretation? [Source: Insider](#) | [Insider bias rating](#)*

## The Washington Post

As he jetted to Paris last Friday, President Trump received a congratulatory phone call aboard Air Force One. British Prime Minister Theresa May was calling to celebrate the Republican Party's wins in the midterm elections — never mind that Democrats seized control of the House — but her appeal to the American president's vanity was met with an ornery outburst.

Trump berated May for Britain not doing enough, in his assessment, to contain Iran. He questioned her over Brexit and complained about the trade deals he sees as unfair with European countries. May has endured Trump's churlish temper before, but still her aides were shaken by his especially foul mood, according to U.S. and European officials briefed on the conversation.

*In this example of spin media bias, the Washington Post uses a variety of dramatic, sensationalist words to spin the story to make Trump appear emotional and unhinged. They also refer to the president's "vanity" without providing supporting evidence. [Source: Washington Post](#) | [Washington Post bias rating](#)*

---

## 2. Unsubstantiated Claims

Journalists sometimes make claims in their reporting without including evidence to back them up. This can occur in the headline of an article, or in the body.

Statements that appear to be fact, but do not include specific evidence, are a key indication of this type of media bias.



## Examples of Unsubstantiated Claims Media Bias



Socialist Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (D-NY) continued her longstanding pattern of not understanding how things work on Thursday, this time indicating that she does not know the difference between a media company and a political party.

*In this media bias instance, The Daily Wire references a "longstanding pattern," but does not back this up with evidence. Source: [The Daily Wire](#) | [Daily Wire bias rating](#)*



Sen. Kamala Harris (D-Calif.) condemned the violent attack on actor Jussie Smollett, calling it "an attempted modern day lynching."

"[Smollett] is one of the kindest, most gentle human beings I know. I'm praying for his quick recovery," the 2020 presidential candidate tweeted.

"This was an attempted modern day lynching. No one should have to fear for their life because of their sexuality or color of their skin. We must confront this hate."

*In late January 2019, actor Jussie Smollett claimed he was attacked by two men who hurled racial and homophobic slurs. The Hill refers to "the violent attack" without using the word "alleged" or "allegations." The incident was revealed to be a hoax created by Smollett himself. Source: [The Hill](#) | [The Hill bias rating](#)*

### The Washington Post

First, Sanders's complaint isn't that millionaires exist *per se*. After all, if America's household wealth were distributed evenly across the population, then every family of four would have a net worth of \$1.2 million. Sanders's critique is that the United States' super-rich are symptomatic of a system that churns out a small class of extremely wealthy people who rule over the vast remainder. Key

*This Washington Post columnist makes a claim about wealth distribution without noting where it came from. Who determined this number and how? Source: [Washington Post](#) | [Washington Post Bias rating](#)*



### 3. Opinion Statements Presented as Facts

Sometimes journalists use subjective language or statements under the guise of reporting objectively. Even when a media outlet presents an article as a factual, hard news piece, it may employ subjective statements or language.

A subjective statement is one that is based on **personal opinions, assumptions, beliefs, tastes, preferences, or interpretations**. It reflects how the writer views reality, what they presuppose to be the truth. It is a statement colored by their specific perspective or lens and cannot be verified using concrete facts and figures within the article.

There are objective modifiers — “blue” “old” “single-handedly” “statistically” “domestic” — for which the meaning can be verified. On the other hand, there are subjective modifiers — “suspicious,” “dangerous,” “extreme,” “dismissively,” “apparently” — which are a matter of interpretation.

Interpretation can present the same events as two very different incidents. A political protest in some people sat down in the middle of a street blocking traffic to draw attention to their cause can be described as “peaceful” and “productive,” or, others may describe it as “aggressive” and “disruptive.”

#### Words that signal subjective statements

Good/better/best Bad/worse/worst Is considered to be It's likely that Seemingly Dangerous	Extreme Suggests May mean that Would seem Could Possibly Apparently
----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

[Source: Butte College Critical Thinking Tipsheet](#)

An objective statement, on the other hand, is an observation of **observable facts**. It is not based on emotions or personal opinion and is based on empirical evidence — what is **quantifiable and measurable**.

It's important to note that an objective statement may not actually be *true*. The following statements are objective statements, but can be verified as true or false:

*Taipei 101 is the world's tallest building.*

*Five plus four equals ten.*

*There are nine planets in our solar system.*

Now, the first statement of fact is true (as of this writing); the other two are false. It is possible to verify the height of buildings and determine that Taipei 101 tops them all. It is possible to devise an experiment to demonstrate that five plus four does *not* equal ten or to use established criteria to determine whether Pluto is a planet.

[Source: Butte College Critical Thinking Tipsheet](#)

Editorial reviews by AllSides found that some media outlets blur the line between subjective statements and objective statements, leading to potential confusion for readers, in two key ways:

- Including subjective statements in their writing and not attributing them to a source. (see Omission of Source Attribution, page 16)
- Placing opinion or editorial content on the homepage next to hard news, or otherwise not clearly marking opinion content as “opinion.”

### Examples of Opinion Statements Presented as Fact

**Vox**

## **The EPA is lifting greenhouse gas limits on coal power plants**

The latest proposal won't stop the steady decline of the coal industry.

The sub-headline Vox uses is an opinion statement — some people likely believe the lifting of the gas limit will strengthen the coal industry — but Vox included this statement in a piece not labeled “Opinion.” Source: [Vox](#) | [Vox bias rating](#)

## SFGATE

Twitter banned or suspended several high-profile journalists Thursday evening, a move that further reveals the seemingly arbitrary decision-making of Elon Musk, a self-avowed “free speech absolutist.”

In this article about Twitter CEO Elon Musk banning reporters, we can detect that the journalist is providing their personal opinion that Musk is making “arbitrary” decisions by making note of the word “seemingly.” Whether or not Musk’s decisions are arbitrary is a matter of personal opinion and should be reserved for the opinion pages. Source: [SFGate](#) | [SFGate Rating](#)



Clinton was asked if she'd make a prediction on the 2020 election and said she joked, saying she'd save that insight for her upcoming book, "What Will Happen: A Book of Predictions: Hillary Clinton and Paul the Psychic Octopus."

Her appearance on the friendly show may be another sign that she intends on staying relevant prior to 2020.

In this article about Hillary Clinton’s appearance on "The Late Show With Stephen Colbert," the author makes an assumption about Clinton’s motives and jumps to a subjective conclusion. Source: [Fox News](#) | [Fox News bias rating](#)

---

## 4. Sensationalism/Emotionalism

Sensationalism is the presentation of information in a way that gives a shock or makes a deep impression. Often it gives readers a false sense of culmination, that all previous reporting has led to this ultimate story.

Sensationalist language is often dramatic, yet vague. It often involves hyperbole — at the expense of accuracy — or warping reality to mislead or provoke a strong reaction in the reader.

In recent years, some media outlets have been criticised for overusing the term “breaking” or “breaking news,” which historically was reserved for stories of deep impact or wide-scale importance.

Many reporters increase the readability of their pieces using vivid verbs. But there are many verbs that are heavy with implications that can’t be objectively corroborated: “blast” “slam” “bury” “abuse” “destroy” “worry.”

### Words and phrases that signal sensationalism/emotionalism

Shocking Explosive Remarkable Slams Rips Forcing Chaotic	Warning Lashed out Embroided in... Onslaught Torrent of tweets Scathing Desperate Showdown
----------------------------------------------------------------------------	-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

### Examples of Sensationalism/Emotionalism Media Bias



**GOYANG, South Korea (AP)** — There will be plenty to gawk at Friday when North Korean leader Kim Jong Un walks south across the world's most heavily armed border and stands face-to-face with South Korean President Moon Jae-in. Two men who seemed on the verge of war months ago will take a pleasant walk, plant a commemorative tree, inspect an honor guard and belly-up to a lavish banquet.

“Gawk” means to stare open and stupidly. Does AP’s language treat this event as serious and diplomatic, or as entertainment? [Source: AP](#) | [AP bias rating](#)



**The skinny version:** There are more than a hundred Republican-held congressional districts across the country that have a narrower margin than 17. If seats that look like this one in Pennsylvania are toss-ups in November, it's going to be a bloodbath.

Here, BBC uses sensationalism in the form of hyperbole, as the election is unlikely to involve bloodshed in the literal sense. [Source: BBC](#) | [BBC bias rating](#)



Democrats continued to rage at President Trump over his income taxes and criticism of Rep. Ilhan Omar.

The Democrat-controlled House Ways and Means Committee set a 10-day deadline Saturday for Trump to cough up his tax returns—and threatened legal action if the administration refuses.

Omar has come under fire for remarks widely viewed as anti-Semitic, though some Democrats have tried to stand up for her. Ilhan in February suggested that lawmakers and activists who support Israel hold “allegiance to a foreign country.”

Pelosi, in Europe as Congress began a two-week recess, attempted to turn the Twitter battle in a patriotic direction, posting a photo of herself with two American service members.

“It is wrong for the President, as Commander-in-Chief, to fan the flames to make anyone less safe,” she scolded in a separate tweet.

But Pelosi couldn't keep Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (D-N.Y.) from setting off fresh waves of outrage with a defense of Omar that cited a famous quote about the Holocaust.



Trump goes after Ilhan Omar with 9/11 attack montage video

In this piece from the New York Post, the author uses multiple sensationalist phrases and emotional language to dramatize the “Twitter battle” it is describing. [Source: New York Post](#) | [New York Post bias rating](#)

## 5. Mudslinging/Ad Hominem

Mudslinging is a type of media bias when unfair or insulting things are said about someone in order to damage their reputation. Similarly, ad hominem (Latin for “to the person”) attacks are attacks on a person’s motive or character traits instead of the content of their argument or idea. Ad hominem attacks can be used overtly, or as a way to subtly discredit someone without having to engage with their argument.

### Examples of Mudslinging



CAMPUS FREE SPEECH

### **Bret Stephens Is Not a Bedbug. He's a Delicate Snowflake.**

The *New York Times* columnist emailed a professor to complain about a mean tweet—and cc'ed the provost.

*A Reason editor calls a New York Times columnist a "snowflake" after the columnist emailed a professor and his provost to complain about a tweet calling him a bedbug. [Source: Reason](#)*



*In March 2019, The Economist ran a piece describing political commentator and author Ben Shapiro as “alt-right.” Readers pointed out that Shapiro is Jewish (the alt-right is largely anti-Semitic) and has condemned the alt-right. The Economist issued a retraction and instead referred to Shapiro as a “radical conservative.”* [Source: Twitter](#)

---

## 6. Mind Reading

Mind reading occurs in journalism when a writer assumes they know what another person thinks, or thinks that the way they see the world reflects the way the world really is.

### Examples of Mind Reading



**(CNN)** — [Donald Trump's hatred of looking foolish and Democrats' conviction that they have a winning hand](#) is leaving the President with no way out of the stalemate over his border wall.



*We can't objectively measure that Trump hates looking foolish, because we can't read his mind or know what he is feeling. There is also no evidence provided to demonstrate that Democrats believe they have a winning hand. [Source: CNN](#) | [CNN bias rating](#)*

## NATIONAL REVIEW

Criticizing the president the other day, Joe Scarborough nonetheless conceded, “**Presidents are always working, whether on a golf course or behind a desk.**” But is that actually so? What, exactly, does President Obama do? He seems to learn everything from the papers — from the IRS scandal to the VA scandal to the mobilization of the Missouri National Guard. International events routinely take him by surprise. His professional activities include fundraising — **40 events this year so far** — and perfunctory addresses to the public. He goes through the presidential motions: meeting with officials and foreign dignitaries, holding press conferences, sitting for interviews, shipping MREs to endangered populations, ordering air strikes. But there is no passion behind these activities, no restless energy, no managerial competence, no sense of purpose or mission or strategy, none of the qualities associated with leadership in business, politics, and culture.

*How do we know that Obama doesn't have passion or sense of purpose? Here, the National Review writer assumes they know what is going on in Obama's head. [Source: National Review](#) | [National Review bias rating](#)*

## Vox

One of the most pertinent moments in Neeson's follow-up interview with Roberts came when he confidently asserted that “this was 40 years ago” and stated that he isn't racist.

Despite Neeson also saying that he worked to get rid of his racist feelings, his reminder that decades have passed since this incident might be interpreted as a declaration that racism and bias are problems that go away with time. If that were true, racism wouldn't exist today.

*Vox is upfront about the fact that they are interpreting what Neeson said, yet this interpretation ran in a piece labeled objective news — not a piece in the Opinion section. Despite being overt about interpreting, by drifting away from what Neeson actually said, Vox is mind reading. [Source: Vox](#) | [Vox bias rating](#)*

## 7. Slant

Slant occurs when journalists tell only part of a story. It can include cherry-picking information or data to support one side. Slant prevents readers from getting the full story, and narrows the scope of our understanding.

### Examples of Slant



Ocasio-Cortez has been portrayed as one of the leaders of the progressive wing in the Democratic Party. She, along with Sanders, has received intense criticism for policy proposals like the "Green New Deal."

*In the above example, Fox News notes that Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez's policy proposals have received "intense criticism." While this is true, it is only one side of the picture, as the Green New Deal was well received by other groups. Source: [Fox News](#) | [Fox News bias rating](#)*

---

## 8. Flawed Logic

Flawed logic or faulty reasoning is a way to misrepresent people's opinions or to arrive at conclusions that are not justified by the given evidence. Flawed logic can involve jumping to conclusions or arriving at a conclusion that doesn't follow from the premise.

### Examples of Flawed Logic



Two-time failed Democratic presidential candidate Hillary Clinton snubbed Melania Trump during George H.W. Bush's funeral on Wednesday, refusing to shake her hand or wave at the First Lady after the other former presidents and their wives did.

Melania shook hands with former President Barack Obama, Michelle Obama, and former President Bill Clinton as she then waved in the direction of Hillary and former President Jimmy Carter – only to receive a wave back from Carter and an awkward and bitter nod back from Hillary.

*Here, the Daily Wire interprets a video to draw conclusions that aren't clearly supported by the available evidence. The video shows Melania did not extend her hand to shake, but it could be because Clinton was too far away to reach, or perhaps there was no particular reason at all. By jumping to conclusions that this amounted to a "snub" or was the result of "bitterness" instead of limitations of physical reality or some other reason, The Daily Wire is engaging in flawed logic. Source: The Daily Wire | [The Daily Wire bias rating](#)*

---

## 9. Bias by Omission

Bias by omission is a type of media bias in which media outlets choose not to cover certain stories, omit information that would support an alternative viewpoint, or omit voices and perspectives on the other side.

Media outlets sometimes omit stories in order to serve a political agenda. Sometimes, a story will only be covered by media outlets on a certain side of the political spectrum. Bias by omission also occurs when a reporter does not interview both sides of a story — for instance, interviewing only supporters of a bill, and not including perspectives against it.

### Examples of Bias by Omission



CNN previously reported on the FBI's hate crime statistics released last November, which showed the number of hate crimes reported to the bureau rose about 17% in 2017 compared to 2016. 2017 is the latest year for which those statistics are available.

It was the third-straight year that hate crime incidents rose.

*In a piece titled, "Hate crimes are rising, regardless of Jussie Smollett's case. Here's why," CNN claims that hate crime incidents rose for three years, but omits information that may lead the reader to different conclusions. According to [the FBI's website](#), reports of hate crime incidents rose from previous years, but so did the number of agencies reporting, "with approximately 1,000 additional agencies contributing information." This makes it unclear as to whether hate crimes are actually on the rise, as the headline claims, or simply appear to be because more agencies are reporting. [Source article](#) | [CNN bias rating](#)*

---

## 10. Omission of Source Attribution

An informative, balanced article should provide the background or context of a story, including naming sources (publishing "on-the-record" information).

Sometimes, reporters will mention "immigration opponents" or "supporters of the bill" without identifying who these sources are.

It is sometimes useful or necessary to use unnamed sources, because insider information is only available if the reporter agrees to keep their identity secret. But responsible journalists should be aware and make it clear that they are offering second-hand information on sensitive matters. This fact doesn't necessarily make the statements false, but it does make them less than reliable.

### **Examples of Omission of Source Attribution**



Critics say the Montgomery, Alabama-based SPLC, whose founder, Morris Dees, and president, Richard Cohen, were ousted earlier this year—allegedly for employee abuse—treats all opposition to illegal or legal immigration, open borders, and multiculturalism as hate, and all political expression of those views as hate speech. The SPLC also has a record of promoting hate crime hoaxes, the critics say, as well as ignoring bias incidents against white people and Jews targeted on university campuses by Islamist and anti-Israel groups.

*In this paragraph, the Epoch Times repeatedly states "critics say" without attributing the views to anyone specific. [Source: The Epoch Times](#) | [The Epoch Times bias rating](#)*

## **The New York Times**

WASHINGTON — Some of Robert S. Mueller III's investigators have told associates that Attorney General William P. Barr failed to adequately portray the findings of their inquiry and that they were more troubling for President Trump than Mr. Barr indicated, according to government officials and others familiar with their simmering frustrations.

*In a piece about the Mueller investigation, The New York Times never names the investigators, officials or associates mentioned. [Source article](#) | [The New York Times bias rating](#)*

---

## 11. Bias by Story Choice and Placement

Story and viewpoint placement can reveal media bias by showing which stories or viewpoints the editor finds most important.

### **Bias by story choice**

This is when a media outlet's bias is revealed by which stories the outlet chooses to cover or to omit. For example, an outlet that chooses to cover the topic of climate change frequently can reveal a different political leaning than an outlet that chooses to cover stories about gun laws. The implication is that the outlet's editors and writers find certain topics more notable, meaningful, or important than others, which can tune us into the outlet's political bias or partisan agenda. Bias by story choice is closely linked to [media bias by omission](#) and [slant](#).

### **Bias by story placement**

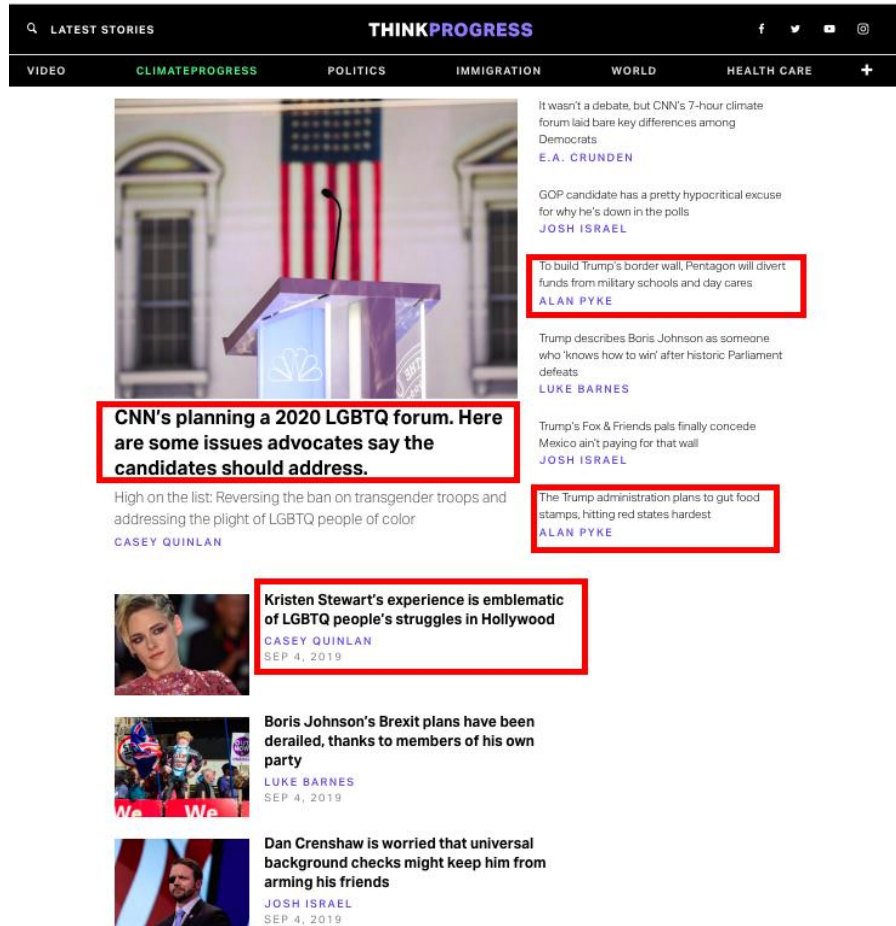
The stories that a media outlet features "above the fold" or prominently on its homepage and in print show which stories they really want you to read, even if you read nothing else on the site or in the publication. Many people will quickly scan a homepage or read only a headline, so the stories that are featured first can reveal what the editor hopes you take away or keep top of mind from that day.

### **Bias by viewpoint placement**

This can often be seen in political stories. A balanced piece of journalism will include perspectives from both the left and the right in equal measure. If a story only features viewpoints from left-leaning sources and commentators, or includes them near the top of the story/in the first few paragraphs, and does not include right-leaning viewpoints, or buries them at the end of a story, this is an example of bias by viewpoint.

### **Examples of Bias by Story Choice and Placement**





*In this screenshot of ThinkProgress' homepage taken at 1 p.m. EST on Sept. 6, 2019, the media outlet chooses to prominently display coverage of LGBT issues and cuts to welfare and schools programs. In the next screenshot of The Epoch Times homepage taken at the same time on the same day, the outlet privileges very different stories.*

*(Continued on next page)*





The Truth About Comey's Trump Tower Meeting

show more >

## FEATURED

**SUGGESTED**  
Epoch Times Statement in Response to NBC Facebook Stories  
BY STEPHEN GREGORY

**SUGGESTED**  
Why NBC, MSNBC's Reporting on The Epoch Times Is Textbook Fake News  
BY JASPER FARKERT

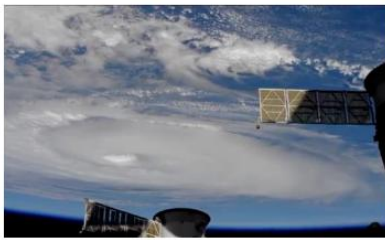
**SUGGESTED**  
China Is Using Fentanyl as 'Chemical Warfare,' Experts Say  
BY BOWEN XIAO

**SUGGESTED**  
Opinion: Is Huawei Now Spying in the Cloud?  
BY JAMES GORRIE

**SUGGESTED**  
US Companies Outperform Global Peers in Valuation  
BY EMEL AKAN

**SUGGESTED**  
Teen Trapped for Years in Foster Care: There Was No Need to Take Me Away  
BY PETR SVAB

**SUGGESTED**  
US, Poland Sign Joint Agreement on 5G Technology Cooperation  
BY BOWEN XIAO



BY ZACHARY STIEBER

## Hurricane Dorian Makes Landfall in North Carolina

Hurricane Dorian's eye made landfall in the United States for the first time, moving onto Cape Hatteras on ...

### HONG KONG PROTESTS

• US and EU Officials Speak Out Against Arrests of Hong Kong Activists

• US Commission on China Warns Hong Kong Government Against Declaring Emergency to Resolve Crisis

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### TOP NEWS

ICE Arrests Nearly 40 Illegal Immigrants Suspected of Violating Human Rights

NEW BY JANITA KAN



Jeanine Pirro Confirms She Was Suspended From Fox News

THR BY MASOUMA HAQ



Colonizing the Mind: How Beijing Snuck Into Africa Through TV and Film



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33 Key Questions for Robert Mueller



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### TRUMP PRESIDENCY

US Imposes Record \$4.5 Million Fine on Michigan State University Over Nassar Scandal



BY BOWEN XIAO

Trump Says 'Close to 500 Miles of Wall' Will Be Completed Before End of 2020



BY VENUS UPADHAYAYA

Trump Says This Map Vindicates His Claim About Hurricane Dorian



BY ZACHARY STIEBER

Flynn Turns Tables on Prosecutors in Major Legal Blitz



BY IVAN PENTCHOUKOV

show more >



Taken at the same time on the same day as the screenshot above, The Epoch Times chooses to prominently feature stories about a hurricane, the arrest of illegal immigrants, Hong Kong activists, and the building of the border wall. Notice that ThinkProgress' headline on the border wall focuses on diverting funds from schools and daycares, while the Epoch Times headline focuses on the wall's completion.

## 12. Subjective Qualifying Adjectives

Journalists can reveal bias when they include subjective, [qualifying adjectives](#) in front of specific words or phrases. Qualifying adjectives are words that characterize or attribute specific properties to a noun. When a journalist uses qualifying adjectives, they are suggesting a way for you to think about or interpret the issue, instead of just giving you the facts and letting you make judgements for yourself. This can manipulate your view. Subjective qualifiers are closely related to [spin words and phrases](#), because they obscure the objective truth and insert subjectivity.

For example, a journalist who writes that a politician made a "serious allegation" is interpreting the weight of that allegation for you. An unbiased piece of writing would simply tell you what the allegation is, and allow you to make your own judgment call as to whether it is serious or not.

In opinion pieces, subjective adjectives are okay; they become a problem when they are inserted outside of the opinion pages and into hard news pieces.

Sometimes, the use of an adjective may be warranted, but journalists have to be careful in exercising their judgment. For instance, it may be warranted to call a Supreme Court ruling that overturned a major law a "landmark case." But often, adjectives are included in ways that not everyone may agree with; for instance, people who are in favor of limiting abortion would likely not agree with a journalist who characterizes new laws restricting the act as a "disturbing trend." Therefore, it's important to be aware of subjective qualifiers and adjectives so that you can be on alert and then decide for yourself whether it should be accepted or not. It is important to notice, question and challenge adjectives that journalists use.

### Examples of Subjective Qualifying Adjectives

disturbing rise serious accusations troubling trend sharp rise sinister warning critical bill	extreme law baseless claim debunked theory ( <i>this phrase could coincide with <u>bias by omission</u>, if the journalist doesn't include information for you to determine why the theory is false.</i> )	awkward flaw offensive statement harsh rebuke extremist group far-right/far-left organization
--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------



POLITICS

## Rep. Madison Cawthorn Issues Sinister Warning To Anyone Opposing Him

The extremist Republican ranted about liberals trying to make people "sexless," then threatened people who "stand in the way."



By Lee Moran

11/05/2021 05:16am EDT | Updated November 5, 2021

Rep. [Madison Cawthorn](#) (R-N.C.) raised eyebrows with a wild rant about the left and a warning about what will happen to anyone who disagrees with the right's agenda during a frothy interview on the far-right network OAN this week.

*HuffPost's headline includes the phrases "sinister warning" and "extremist Republican." It goes on to note the politician's "wild rant" in a "frothy interview" and calls a competing network "far-right." These qualifying adjectives encourage the reader to think a certain way. A more neutral piece would have told the reader what Cawthorn said without telling the reader how to interpret it. [Source article](#) | [HuffPost bias rating](#)*

---

## 13. Word Choice

Words and phrases are loaded with political implications. The words or phrases a media outlet uses can reveal their perspective or ideology.

Liberals and conservatives often strongly disagree about the best way to describe hot-button issues. For example, a liberal journalist who favors abortion access may call it "*reproductive healthcare*," or refer to supporters as "*pro-choice*." Meanwhile, a conservative journalist would likely not use these terms — to them, this language

softens an immoral or unjustifiable act. Instead, they may call people who favor abortion access "*pro-abortion*" rather than "*pro-choice*."

Word choice can also reveal how journalists see the very same event very differently. For instance, one journalist may call an incident of civil unrest a "*racial justice protest*" to focus the readers' attention on the protesters' policy angles and advocacy; meanwhile, another journalist calls it a "*riot*" to focus readers' attention on looting and property destruction that occurred.

Words and their meanings are often shifting in the political landscape. The very same words and phrases can mean different things to different people. AllSides offers a [Red Blue Translator](#) to help readers understand how people on the left and right think and feel differently about the same words and phrases.

## Examples of Polarizing Word Choices

pro-choice   anti-choice pro-abortion   anti-abortion gun rights   gun control riot   protest illegal immigrants   migrants	illegal alien   asylum-seeking migrants woman   birthing person voting rights   voting security sex reassignment surgery   gender-affirming care <a href="#">critical race theory</a>   anti-racist education
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**As 'Don't Say Gay' and similar bills  
take hold, LGBTQ youths feel they're  
'getting crushed'**



EDUCATION · Published March 17, 2022 7:00pm EDT

**Polls show Americans support FL  
education bill after ABC News poll  
declares unpopular when omitting key  
detail**

An outlet on the left calls [Florida's controversial Parental Rights in Education law](#) the "Don't Say Gay" bill, using language favored by opponents, while an outlet on the right calls the same bill the "FL education bill," signaling a supportive view.

[USA Today source article](#) | [USA TODAY media bias rating](#)  
[Fox News source article](#) | [Fox News media bias rating](#)

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## 14. Photo Bias

Photos can be used to shape the perception, emotions or takeaway a reader will have regarding a person or event. Sometimes a photo can give a hostile or favorable impression of the subject.

For example, a media outlet may use a photo of an event or rally that was taken at the very beginning of the event to give the impression that attendance was low. Or, they may only publish photos of conflict or a police presence at an event to make it seem violent and chaotic. Reporters may choose an image of a favored politician looking strong, determined or stately during a speech; if they disfavor him, they may choose a photo of him appearing to yell or look troubled during the same speech.

### Examples of Photo Bias



Obama appears stern or angry — with his hand raised, brows furrowed, and mouth wide, it looks like maybe he’s yelling. The implication is that the news about the Obamacare ruling is something that would enrage Obama. [Source article](#) | [The Blaze bias rating](#)

IMPEACHMENT 23 HOURS AGO

## The Nunes Crew Is Neck-Deep in the Ukraine Scandal

Several of the congressman’s current and former staffers have surfaced in connection with the controversy.



MATT COHEN

Fellow

[Bio](#)



J. Scott Applewhite/AP

With a tense mouth, shifty eyes and head cocked to one side, Nunes looks guilty. The sensationalism in the headline aids in giving this impression (“neck-deep” in “scandal.”) [Source article](#) | [Mother Jones bias rating](#)



## Adam Schiff Got Caught Celebrating Impeachment at a Swanky Steak House



Katie Pavlich | @KatiePavlich | Posted: Dec 18, 2019 11:15 AM

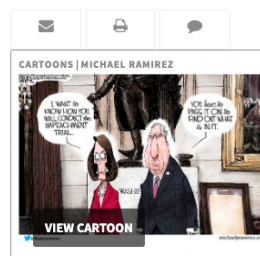
Share (627)

Tweet



Source: AP Photo/J. Scott Applewhite

House Intelligence Committee Chairman Adam Schiff, who has been driving impeachment against President Trump for months, went out for steak last night ahead of today's full House vote. Apparently, they're celebrating.



Most Popular



House Votes to (Finally) Release Articles of Impeachment, One Democrat Defects



The Perpetual Intersectional

*With his lips pursed and eyes darting to the side, in this photo Schiff looks guilty. The headline stating that he “got caught celebrating” also implies that he was doing something he shouldn’t be doing. Whether or not he was actually celebrating impeachment at this dinner is up for debate, but if you judged Townhall’s article by the photo, you may conclude he was.* [Source article](#) | [Townhall bias rating](#)

## America’s Biggest Children’s Hospital To Stop ‘Gender-Affirming Therapies’ For Kids

By Leif Le Mahieu • Mar 7, 2022 DailyWire.com



Photo by Loren Elliott/Getty Images.

*With his arms outreached and supporters cheering, Texas Gov. Greg Abbott appears*



triumphant in this photo. The article explains that a pediatric hospital in Texas announced it will stop performing “gender-confirming therapies” for children, following a directive from Abbott for the state to investigate whether such procedures on kids constituted child abuse. The implication of the headline and photo is that this is a victory. [Source article](#) | [The Daily Wire bias rating](#)

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## 15. Negativity Bias

Negativity bias refers to a type of bias in which reporters emphasize bad or negative news, or frame events in a negative light.

"If it bleeds, it leads" is a common media adage referring to negativity bias. Stories about death, violence, turmoil, struggle, and hardship tend to get spotlighted in the press, because these types of stories tend to get more attention and elicit more shock, outrage, fear, and cause us to become glued to the news, wanting to hear more.

### Examples of Negativity Bias

*The New York Times*

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#### ***‘I Had to Go Back’: Over 55, and Not Retired After All***

After leaving the labor force in unusual numbers early in the pandemic, Americans approaching retirement age are back on the job at previous levels.

*This story frames labor force participation as a negative thing. However, if labor force participation remained low for a long time, that would also be written up as bad news.* [Source article](#) | [New York Times bias rating](#)

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## 16. Elite v. Populist Bias

Elite bias is when journalists defer to the beliefs, viewpoints, and perspectives of people who are part of society's most prestigious, credentialed institutions — such as academic institutions, government agencies, business executives, or nonprofit organizations. Populist bias, on the other hand, is a bias in which the journalist defers

to the perspectives, beliefs, or viewpoints of those who are outside of or who dissent from prestigious institutions — such as "man on the street" stories, small business owners, less prestigious institutions, and people who live outside of major urban centers.

Elite/populist bias has a geographic component in the U.S. Because major institutions of power are concentrated in American coastal cities (which tend to vote blue), there can exist conflicting values, perspectives, and ideologies among “coastal elites” and “rural/middle America” (which tends to vote red). The extent to which journalists emphasize the perspectives of urbanites versus people living in small town/rural areas can show elite or populist bias, and thus, political bias.

### Examples of Elite v. Populist Bias



The [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention updated its masking guidance](#) Tuesday, recommending that everyone, whether they are vaccinated or not, wear a mask indoors in places where the coronavirus is spreading widely. The change was met with relief from experts who said masking up again is essential to combat the [highly contagious delta variant](#).

"We know masks work, and they work against every variant that this virus has produced," said Ali Mokdad, a professor of global health at the University of Washington. "If we use them, they will save lives, save livelihoods and prevent us from shutting down our economy."

**Elite Bias:** This article emphasizes the guidance and perspectives of major government agencies and professors at elite universities. [Source article](#) | [NBC News bias rating](#)

*“The FDA turned a blind eye or colluded with unbelievable harms revealed in the Pfizer documents, so the FDA can’t be trusted. The CDC can’t be trusted. Basically, you can expect more and more disorienting narratives of confusing public events, more and more ‘It’s monkeypox, it’s smallpox, it’s tuberculosis,’ to make you feel off kilter and panicked right up until November.”*

**Populist Bias:** In this opinion piece, journalist Naomi Wolf pushes back against elite government agencies, saying they can't be trusted. [Source article](#) | [The Epoch Times bias rating](#)

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## Some Final Notes on Bias

**Everyone is biased.** It is part of human nature to have perspectives, preferences, prejudices, leanings, and partialities. But sometimes, bias — especially media bias — can become invisible to us. This is why AllSides provides hundreds of [media bias ratings](#) and a [media bias chart](#).

We are all biased toward things that show us in the right. We are biased toward information that confirms our existing beliefs. We are biased toward the people or information that supports us, makes us look good, and affirms our judgments and virtues. And we are biased toward the more moral choice of action — at least, that which seems moral to us.

Journalism as a profession is biased toward vibrant communication, timeliness, and providing audiences with a sense of the current moment — whether or not that sense is politically slanted. Editors are biased toward strong narrative, stunning photographs, pithy quotes, and powerful prose. Every aspiring journalist has encountered media bias — sometimes the hard way. If they stay in the profession, often it will be because they have incorporated the biases of their editor.

**But sometimes, bias can manipulate and blind us. It can put important information and perspectives in the shadows and prevent us from getting the whole view.** For this reason, there is not a single type of media bias that can’t, and

shouldn't occasionally, be isolated and examined. This is just as true for journalists as it is for their audiences.

Good reporting can shed valuable light on our biases — good and bad. By learning how to spot media bias, how it works, and how it might blind us, we can avoid being fooled by media bias and fake news. We can learn to identify and appreciate different perspectives — and ultimately, come to a more wholesome view.

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Our mission is to free people from filter bubbles so they can better understand the world — and each other.

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