

The goal of this assignment is to help you to think critically about statements made in the media. This assignment will focus on political campaigns, but it's possible to apply this type of analysis to any claims made in the media. Another goal of this assignment is to give you experience locating primary source material. Because different students will select different claims to evaluate, no single resource will be highlighted, but in this case, it's the method of inquiry that's most important.

### Part 1: Media Claim

Choose a claim to evaluate. It's not especially important who makes the claim or where the claim is made. Do your best to transcribe the claim if it is not available in printed form. Include a copy of the claim with the assignment. It's also a good idea to get the claim from the type of media where you usually go to for election-related news and information.

Include the Who, What, Where, When of the quote.

Why did you choose this particular claim?

Is the claim positive or negative in nature?

Some examples of common sources of claims include:

Campaign Websites / Campaign Emails / Blog Posts

Campaign TV Ads / TV Pundit Interviews / Talk Shows (O'Reilly Factor or The Daily Show or whatever)

Radio Talk Shows / Campaign Ads

### Part 2: Evaluation or Analysis

Identify an evaluation or analysis of the claim from Part 1. This evaluation or analysis can be supportive or critical, but should take a position on the validity of the original claim and provide evidence to support the position. The evaluation or analysis should also be from a different source than the original claim, but can be from the same type of media. Also include a transcription or copy of the evaluation or analysis.

Include the Who, What, Where, When of the evaluation or analysis.

Briefly summarize the evaluation or analysis.

Can you detect any bias in the evaluation or analysis, and if so, what do you think is driving that bias?

### Part 3: The Truth is Out There

Track down primary source material that either supports or refutes the original claim and accompanying analysis. Write a paragraph outlining the steps you took to locate the primary source material and any difficulties you encountered in doing so. Include a copy of the primary source material.

### Part 4: Introspection

Write about your experiences over the course of the assignment and how they have (or haven't) changed your view of a particular type of media coverage on elections.

Questions to consider:

Do you think that many people research claims made in the media? Why or Why Not?

Were there any differences between the information presented in the claim, evaluation or analysis, and the primary source material? If so, what were they? Was the claim taken out of context, a mischaracterization, an exaggeration, an outright lie?

Is doing this type of research too difficult for most people to undertake? If so, what are the barriers preventing the average person from performing this sort of inquiry, and how can these barriers be broken down?