For the third step of source evaluation, we discussed thinking critically about sources. In this last step, we will learn how to think critically about our own biases and perspectives through reflective practice. Reflective practice will help us be aware of our biases and develop habits that are crucial for learning, decision-making, and personal growth. Here is what we can do. The first practice is to Pierce the Filter Bubble: The Filter Bubble describes a situation when algorithms of search engines or social media personalize our online experience. They tend to push the content based on what we already know and believe. So, over time, we may live in an information habitat that surrounds us with similar views and shelters us from opposing beliefs. To get out of the filter bubble, we have to intentionally search for different perspectives rather than rely on the information delivered to us. We can use relatively neutral search terms such as “pros and cons of solar energy” to find articles discussing both sides. Comparatively, if we search for “the benefits of solar energy,” we are more likely to find articles that are reporting positive aspects and miss the articles like this one from the National Geographic How Green Are Those Solar Panels, Really?. When the search results lead us to the positive side of the story, we can add negative keywords such as concerns, disadvantages, drawbacks, challenges, or negative effects to get to the other side of the story. Conversely, When the search results lead us to the negative side, we can add positive keywords such as benefits, advantages, developments, or positive impacts to find the other side of the story. We can also ask opposite questions. For example, if many articles are mentioning that solar energy is sustainable, renewable, green, clean, etc., we can further investigate by asking a different question “how sustainable is it?” or “is it really green?” The second practice is to examine our own biases, and ask “have I brought my own biases into source evaluation? have I weighed the reasons from both sides?” Bias is a natural part of the human condition but it can be detrimental to our judgments and decision-making. We tend to search for, interpret, favor, and recall information that affirms our beliefs or hypotheses. This is called Confirmation Bias. We tend to perceive people who are of our ethnicity, religion, socioeconomic status, or profession more positively than those who are different from us, which is called Similarity Bias. Anchoring Bias is the tendency to rely too heavily on an "anchor," one piece of information over another when making decisions. Usually, we anchor into the first piece of information or the dominant side to an issue. When doing online searches, we need to be aware of the anchoring bias formed from reading the first article we find or from the dominating perspective we encounter, which is perhaps because they are more available or because the search term we use retrieves many articles with the same views. Remember we looked into whether screen time is bad for kids? When we put the phrase “screen time bad for kids” into the search engine, we first find the article What Does Too Much Screen Time Do to Kids' Brains? which informs us of the adverse impact of screen time on pre-teens and teenagers. When we scroll down, we will find other articles talking about the negative effects of screen time listed as top results. We may form the anchoring bias that screen time is bad for kids. To break this anchoring bias, we need to browse further down the search result list to identify different perspectives. You may then find the article “Is Screen Time Really Bad for Kids?” from New York Times, and Why not all screen time is the same for children from BBC. We can use a relatively neutral search term such as “screen time and kids” to find articles possibly examining different aspects of the issue or add positive search terms such as benefit to get the other side of the story. As we mentioned in the previous video, lateral reading, consulting multiple sources with different perspectives can help us limit biases and form more objective points of view. In addition, using neutral search terms can help us reduce biased search results or broaden the search scope. For example, we can search for “population growth” instead of “overpopulation” to avoid negative implications and reduce the biased results, and “climate change” instead of “global warming” to get more neutral and broader search results. For the third aspect of reflective practice, we need to climb down the ladder of inference. Human beings have a mental tendency of jumping up “the ladder of inference.” From observing and selecting the information available to forming beliefs, we may not be consciously aware but we tend to take leaps of abstraction and jump to conclusions. We can climb down the ladder of inference by asking “Have I added personal or cultural meaning to understand the content? Are my assumptions or prior knowledge questionable? Have I come to the conclusion too quickly?” For example, if I am being asked “do you support the raise of the federal minimum wage, from $7.25 per hour to $15 per hour?”, I may quickly form my opinions and say Yes. Let’s put it into slow-motion and examine what happened in my mind. I have an abundance of information related to this topic that is accumulated from my prior experience or knowledge that I get from classes, the news, social media, etc. When asked this question, my mind works quickly to select related data. My personal experience as a part-time worker at a local store comes in. So, my interpretation is that I will have more income and every worker who has a minimum wage will benefit from it as well. So, it makes sense that I support the increase in the federal minimum wage to $15. My belief in this opinion is reinforced when I read the article Raising the federal minimum wage to $15 by 2025 would lift the pay of 32 million workers, especially since the article explained its impact on poverty and inequality. confirmation bias and anchoring bias can easily form at this moment. However, the ladder of inference concept inspires us to take a step back and notice that I have added my own meaning to understand this issue. Is my assumption that every worker who has a minimum wage will benefit from it correct? My further research finds the article $15 Minimum Wage Would Cut Employment, Reduce Poverty, mentions “a nonpartisan study says raising the minimum wage would cost 1.4 million jobs” but it will lift 900,000 people above the poverty line. So, I probably need to do more research and weigh the evidence from both sides. Lastly, it is important to take positive actions and practice what we learn. Throughout the 4-step strategy for source evaluation, we talked about checking sources to get our first impression, investigating more with the CRAAP test, using our critical thinking to assess the content and arguments, and reading laterally to gather multiple perspectives. In this video, we worked on developing reflective practices to examine our biases and assumptions, pierce filter bubbles, and climb down the ladder of inference. But we cannot really master these skills until we put them into practice in our everyday life. Next time, when we read a tweet, can we ask where the information comes from and if the opinion is supported by evidence? When we watch a youtube video, can we ask have we created a filter bubble that shelters us from different views? When we put keywords into a search engine, can we use relatively neutral search terms to limit bias, or can we try different keywords to get perspectives from a different side? When we need to draw a conclusion, can we take a step back to examine our own assumptions? When we need to form our beliefs and make critical decisions, can we keep an open mind? Can we realize the disruptive nature of a simple fact and suspend our judgment until we see the big picture? Hopefully, this reflective practice will help us develop habits that are crucial for learning, decision-making, and personal growth.