

## **Alien Babies and Angelina Jolie: Evaluating Sources Using Tabloids with a Taste of News Literacy**

*Description: The following activity is meant to demonstrate the concepts of authorship and authority to first year writing students. Students will use their prior knowledge and everyday experiences with subpar information to draw parallels between evaluating academic and popular sources.*

**Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education** Frame(s): [Authority is Constructed and Contextual](#)

### **STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES**

- A. Students will be able to define evaluation criteria for evaluating information.
- B. Students will be able to clarify the terminology we use when evaluating info and discuss what they mean/why they're important.
- C. Students will be able to apply evaluation criteria to their information need.

**AUDIENCE:** Gen Ed

**ESTIMATED CLASSROOM TIME:** 50-60 minutes

**PREPARATION:** Gather several print drugstore checkout line tabloids (the crazier the better) and/or consider curating a list articles from online tabloids (e.g., [Weekly World News](#), [National Enquirer](#), [Globe](#), etc.).

### **OUTLINE:**

- I. **Group Think / Pair / Share:** We all know instinctively that tabloids are not good sources of information; in fact, we laugh about how crazy they are when we see them in the checkout line. Look through the tabloids you have in front of you and identify three specific reasons that we find them laughable, unbelievable, and untrustworthy. Be as specific as possible.
  - A. As students talk, record answers on the board.
- II. **Group Think / Pair / Share:** Imagine you're your favorite celebrity.
  - A. How would you refute erroneous gossip that is published about you (responses like: Find other info out there that contradicts it).
  - B. What journalistic guidelines would you want in place and why? (**Warning:** Some answers may veer off topic—be prepared to steer the conversation back to what matters).
- III. **Discussion:** So, what makes information “good?” Alternatively, what makes news “good?”
  - A. As students talk, map answers to board - bad information vs. evaluation criteria.
    1. Point out that (1) the students have good instincts—they know a “bad source” when they see it, and their criteria maps to criteria by “professionals” (ours is based on critical thinking theorists Paul & Elder), and (2) the things they identified could be applied to any info source
    2. Ask, why is it important to think critically about sources, especially in current times?
    3. Pass out your library's “Evaluating Information” checklist and compare.