

Undervisningsplan/

Syllabus

Title of the module:

Source reliability and credibility: Interdisciplinary perspectives with focus on digital media (For Librarians and Information Specialists)

Level: Bachelor

Semester: 5.

B-module, Fall 2009

ECTS omfang

15 ECTS

Teachers: Professor Birger Hjørland

Contents:

The term "source criticism" is mainly understood as referring to methods developed in the fields of philology and history. However the problem of selecting and evaluating the reliability and creditability of information sources is a general problem for users in all domains. It is increasingly becoming relevant for library and information specialists to help users to evaluate information sources as well as to teach and make self-help materials available to users. The development of digital media reinforces this need.

- Introduction to relevant concepts.
- Source criticism as a concept and method in editorial philology and history
- Norms for the selecting of information sources in other domains (including "evidence based medicine" and the associated norms of meta-analysis).
- The selection of information sources as a general philosophical problem (How different theories of knowledge relate to this problem).
- Introduction to "Rules of thumb" and "the "checklist approach" as well as their critics.
- Wikipedia as a case study.
- How source reliability and credibility are dealt with in scholarly publication systems: Peer review, book reviews, critical editions etc.
- The social psychology of using information: Seeking "friends", avoiding "enemies". How do people from different theoretical positions evaluate papers from own and other positions?
- The role of library and information specialists (and information institutions) in helping the user's to get valid information.

Educational objectives

- To be able to identify, characterize, understand and discuss principles of source evaluation in different fields

- To be familiar with interdisciplinary concepts and research contributing to source evaluation
- To be able to discover and evaluate different kinds of bias in information sources
- To develop an identity as library and information professional in relation to source criticism.

Forms of teaching and working:

Class teaching, group work, student presentations.

Form of examination:

Written thesis (12 pages + 5 per student in groups) with external examination (7-point scale)

Criteria for evaluation

Marks are given on the basis of which the educational objectives have been fulfilled (as described in the “EXECUTIVE ORDER ON GRADING SCALE”, [HTTP://WWW.AU.DK/DA/REGLER/2007/BEK262](http://www.au.dk/da/regler/2007/bek262)).

Grade 12:

For an excellent performance displaying a high level of command of all aspects of the relevant material, with no or only a few minor weaknesses.

The student is able to account for core concepts and theoretical issues in source criticism in an independent way with a high degree of certainty.

The student is able to discuss and critically reflects upon texts about source criticism.

The student is able to discuss and evaluate methodological implications related to the use of information sources in a convincingly manner.

Grade 7

For a good performance displaying good command of the relevant material but also some weaknesses.

The student is able to account for core concepts and theoretical issues in source criticism with a reasonable amount of certainty.

The student is able to discuss texts about source criticism or texts which contain empirical studies of certain information sources.

The student is able to discuss and evaluate methodological issues related to source criticism with varied degrees of certainty.

Grade 2:

For a performance meeting only the minimum requirements for acceptance.

The student is able to account for basic knowledge related to concepts and theoretical issues in source criticism.

The student shows basic knowledge of texts about source criticism.

The student is able to discuss and evaluate methodological issues related to source criticism in an elementary way.

Examination requirements (approximately 600 pages in total) include:

Chesney, T. (2006). An empirical examination of Wikipedia's credibility. *First Monday*, 11(11), URL: http://firstmonday.org/issues/issue11_11/chesney/index.html

Encyclopedia Britannica (2006). Fatally Flawed. Refuting the recent study on encyclopedic accuracy by the journal *Nature*. http://corporate.britannica.com/britannica_nature_response.pdf
Nature's response March 23, 2006: http://www.nature.com/press_releases/Britannica_response.pdf

Fritch, J. W., & Cromwell, R. L. (2001). Evaluating Internet resources: Identity, affiliation, and cognitive authority in a networked world. *Journal of the American Society for Information Science and Technology*, 52, 499-507.

[Hjørland, B. et al.] (2008). Source criticism. Wikipedia. The free encyclopedia. Retrieved 2009-05-12 fra: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Source_criticism

Giles, J. (2005). Special Report: Internet encyclopaedias go head to head. *Nature*, 438, 900-901. Available: <http://www.nature.com/nature/journal/v438/n7070/full/438900a.html> Supplementary information: <http://www.nature.com/nature/journal/v438/n7070/extref/438900a-s1.doc>

Meola, M (2004). Chucking the checklist: A contextual approach to teaching undergraduates web-site evaluation. *Portal: Libraries and the Academy*, 4(3), 331-344. Downloaded 2008-10-23 from: http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/portal_libraries_and_the_academy/v004/4.3meola.pdf

Savolainen, R. (2007). Media credibility and cognitive authority. The case of seeking orienting information. *Information Research*, 12(3) paper 319. Available at <http://InformationR.net/ir/12-3/paper319.html>

Schultz-Hart, S., Frey, D., Lüthgens, C. & Moscovici, S. (2000). Biased Information Search in Group Decision Making. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 78(4), 655-669.

Skov, Annette (2000). Kvalitetsvurdering af web-sider. (Revideret 2007). <http://vip.db.dk/tutorials/Kvalitet/default.htm>

Tucker, William H. (1994). Facts and fiction in the discovery of Sir Cyril Burt's flaws. *Journal of the History of the Behavioral Sciences*, 30, 335-347.