CRITERIA FOR EVALUATING WEB SITES

❖ Accuracy
✓ Did the information come from a reliable source? How would you verify the information presented? Are there references/citations that can be checked to verify the accuracy of the information? a bibliography?
✓ Is the information consistent with other sources you’ve read on the topic?
✓ Are there editors and fact-checkers for the source? Is contact information provided for them?

❖ Authority/Credibility
✓ Who is the author/producer of the information?
✓ Is any information offered about the author/producer/sponsor in the form of an “About,” page or FAQ?
✓ Is the producer a scholarly organization or association? An educational institution? Government agency?
✓ What are the credentials or background of the author/producer of the information?
✓ Is the relationship between the sponsor/host for the page and the author/producer clear? What is the nature of the relationship?
✓ Based on what you can gather, how does the nature/mission/reputation of the sponsor and author impact the credibility of the information?

❖ Objectivity
✓ Does the author present the information as fact, opinion/conjecture or scholarly research? If the later, is the research methodology clear and appropriate to subject field? Are there citations?
✓ Is equal time given to varying viewpoints on the topic?
✓ To what extent is the information presented to sway the opinion of the audience?
✓ If a particular group sponsors the resource, does the organization have a particular “agenda”?
✓ Is there any advertising on the page?
✓ What is the domain of the website?
  ▪ .net = personal website; objectivity very suspect; sources of information rarely if ever cited
  ▪ .com = commercial enterprise/for profit; objectivity may be suspect; sources of information rarely if ever cited
  ▪ .org = non-profit organization; objectivity is clear to the cause being promoted, however responsibility and accountability for information provided is higher; sources of information provided is usually cited
  ▪ .edu = educational institution; responsibility, accountability, credibility, authority higher for information provided as institutional and individual reputations are at stake; sources of information almost always cited
  ▪ .gov = government agencies; responsibility, accountability, credibility, authority higher for information provided as institutional and individual reputations are at stake; sources of information almost always cited; in most cases, these websites are the definitive source for the information provided

❖ Timeliness
✓ Is the information regularly updated? Is there a date listed of the last update?

❖ Coverage
✓ Is the information complete or abridged? If abridged, who is the editor (s)?

❖ Relevance/Appropriateness
✓ For what audience has this information been written? General? Academic? Professional?