INTERNET RESEARCH
EVALUATING QUALITY OF INFORMATION

When you use a search engine such as Google to locate articles and pages posted on the web, you must **EVALUATE THE QUALITY OF INFORMATION** you find before citing it in your assignment! Find answers to the following questions:

**Who wrote it?**

*Determine the ORIGIN and AUTHORITY of the information.*
- Consider the site’s source domain. The following are *generally* true, but not always!
  - .com = commercial (for profit) site
  - .org = not-for-profit site
  - .edu = educational site
  - .gov = government site
- Locate both the author of the article and the publisher of the site on which it’s posted. Scan the perimeter of the page (very top, very bottom, and side bars) to discover this, and/or truncate the URL until you reach the site’s home page.
- Determine the author’s credentials and decide if her background or education qualifies her to write on this topic.

**When was it posted?**

*Determine the TIMELINESS of the information.*
- Look on the perimeter of the page for an indicator regarding when the information was published. A notice of when the page was “Last updated” is best, but the copyright (©) date can also be used as a gauge.
- Take note if it appears that the site has not been updated in a long time. Consider if the information is current enough to be valid regarding the topic you’re investigating.

**Can I trust it?**

*Determine the ACCURACY and OBJECTIVITY of the information.*
- Consider the purpose and tone of the web page. For academic research, beware of sites put on the web to sell, entice, persuade, or disclose. Take caution if the site contains more opinion than fact, or makes use of emotional or exaggerated language.
- Look for footnotes or links that provide documentation for facts cited on the page.
- Visit “related links” or “additional sites” posted on the page and judge how reliable and reputable they are. If weblinks are well-organized and -annotated, that’s a good sign; if weblinks don’t work, that’s not-so-good!