Criteria for Evaluating On-line Sources

Name: ________________________________ Section __________

Putting documents on-line is easy, cheap, unregulated, and unmonitored. Therein lies the rationale for evaluating carefully whatever you find on-line. When using the Internet for serious academic research, the burden is on you, the scholar, to establish the validity, authorship, timeliness, and integrity of what you find. Documents can easily be copied and falsified, or copied with omissions and errors—both intentional and accidental.

In this assignment, you are restricted to using sources (print or on-line) produced by scholars or by reputable academic institutions. To determine and demonstrate the credibility, accuracy, and integrity of the online source you propose to use, complete the following exercise, sign the statement below, and submit this with your assignment along with printouts of the web-page itself. You may also consult Easy Writer, pp. 184-191. Your TA will comment on its viability for this assignment.

Title of Web Source: ________________________________________________________________

Authority/Credibility

___ A scholar, university, or academic organization is responsible for the intellectual content of the web page or the page is affiliated or sponsored by a university or publically funded research institution (hint: the URL ends in .edu, .gov, or .org)
___ The author has a PhD or other appropriate credentials and/or is affiliated with an accredited research institution, museum, or other academic agency
___ The author provides contact information
___ Aside from this webpage, either the document itself or the scholar has been published elsewhere

Accuracy

___ The author provides supporting evidence from credible sources
___ Other scholars have cited this author’s work
___ The page does not contain many grammar or spelling errors, and does not have other suspicious information or organization
___ The content of this page is peer reviewed—that is, it is subject to the review of fellow scholars or experts in this field and is accountable to these reviewers for correct information

Audience/Agenda

___ The text was written for a scholarly audience (undergraduate or graduate students, faculty, or independent scholars)
___ The author’s goals and objectives are not to lobby, raise money, garner support for a privately funded institution or agenda, sell a point of a view or a product
The purpose of the text is to inform and explain, not to advertise or persuade. The page does not express opinions, but rather documented facts. There are no advertisements on the pages.

Currency

- If it is a secondary source, the information in the document is not outdated and was published within the last 20 years
- If it is a reproduction of a primary document, it properly cites the original document
- The webpage was produced or updated within the last five years
- The site’s other links are active and demonstrate use by a scholarly audience

“I have evaluated this proposed on-line source and determined that it is an appropriate and credible scholarly source.”

Student Signature: ___________________________ Date: ____________.