Project Proposal | Team Salsa!

1. Project

Title:

- Spot Bias

Members:

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2. Learning Topic / Plan

Journalism students will use our software to develop skills and knowledge of Journalistic Objectivity. Collaboratively analyzing media publications like newspaper articles, videos, and social media posts the students will detect different kind of bias and implicitly learn how to avoid such.

3. Background assumptions

- Platform will be used by university journalism students and their professors with constant access to the internet.
- The class is a blended course that mixes in-class lectures with online collaborative learning projects in the form of weekly homework assignments.
- The professor will provide the publications to be analyzed.
- The class has around 20 students.
- The class takes place in a country with full freedom of speech.

4. Why collaborate?

Allowing students to be part of an (online) discourse community encourages them to question and negotiate meanings, intentions, and effects of publications. The students identify publication parts and aspects worth questioning and discuss the same article using similar parlance via expected channels. In sharing the common public goal of seeking to elucidate areas of bias in media publications, potential flaws in Journalistic Objectivity about the reported topic is debated through both, individual research and group discussion, allowing for collaborative knowledge construction to occur amongst students.

Since the platform design allows linking a student's notes to others' note in a mind-map-like fashion (expressing one's opinion, providing evidence, (dis-)agreeing, etc.), understanding of the given statements and their relation to Journalistic Objectivity is improved when implications of an idea are explored. Students partake in active learning, doing their own research and coming to their own conclusions through constructive-argument and knowledge-building discourse, placing the responsibility of knowledge creation on the students themselves. Working with others in such a knowledge community allows for idea improvement based on multiple perspectives on a given debated-topic and how to analyze bias in it.

In the end, since there is no certain, objective truth regarding the world and its state, knowledge of Journalistic Objectivity does not advance towards a final state but improves existing ideas and generates new ones.

5. Scenario and First Visual Draft

1. The professor posts an article.

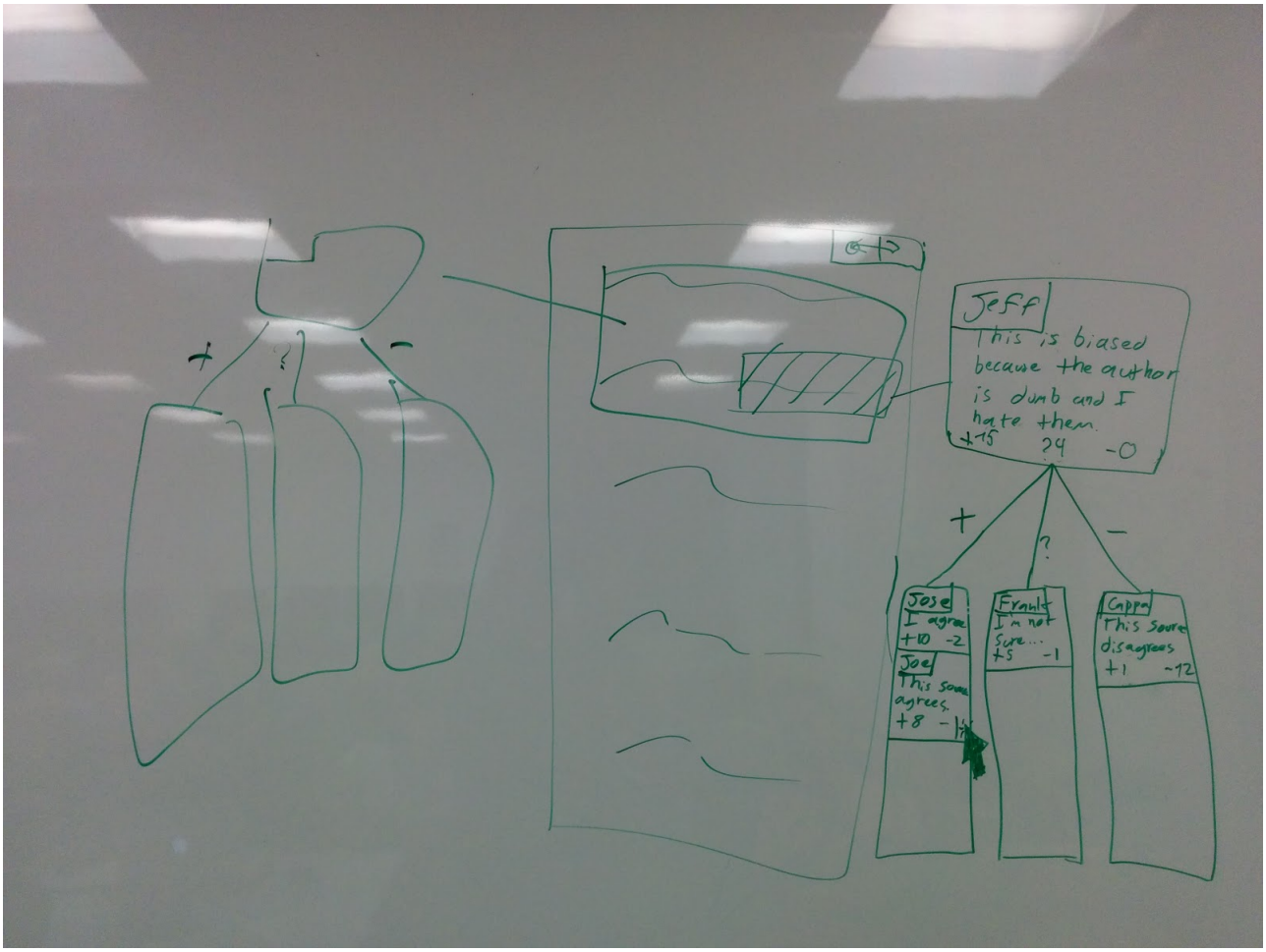
2. The first time any student reads the article, the highlights and notes are turned off, so their initial read is unbiased by the amount and intensity of highlights.

3. The student then turns highlights on, and goes over the article again. When the student discovers a part they find biased they have two options:
    - If there are existing highlights in the section they can add to those notes.
    - If there are no existing highlights in the section they can create a highlight and write a note explaining their objection.

4. Students link their notes to other people's notes, agreeing, questioning, or disagreeing.
    - An agreeing note gives a supporting argument, or supporting source
    - A questioning note questions the note, but does not provide an argument or source
    - A disagreeing note gives a disagreeing argument, or disagreeing source

This is the basic screen showing a newspaper article to be analyzed, tow overlapping highlightings (one over the whole first paragraph and the other one over the last couple words

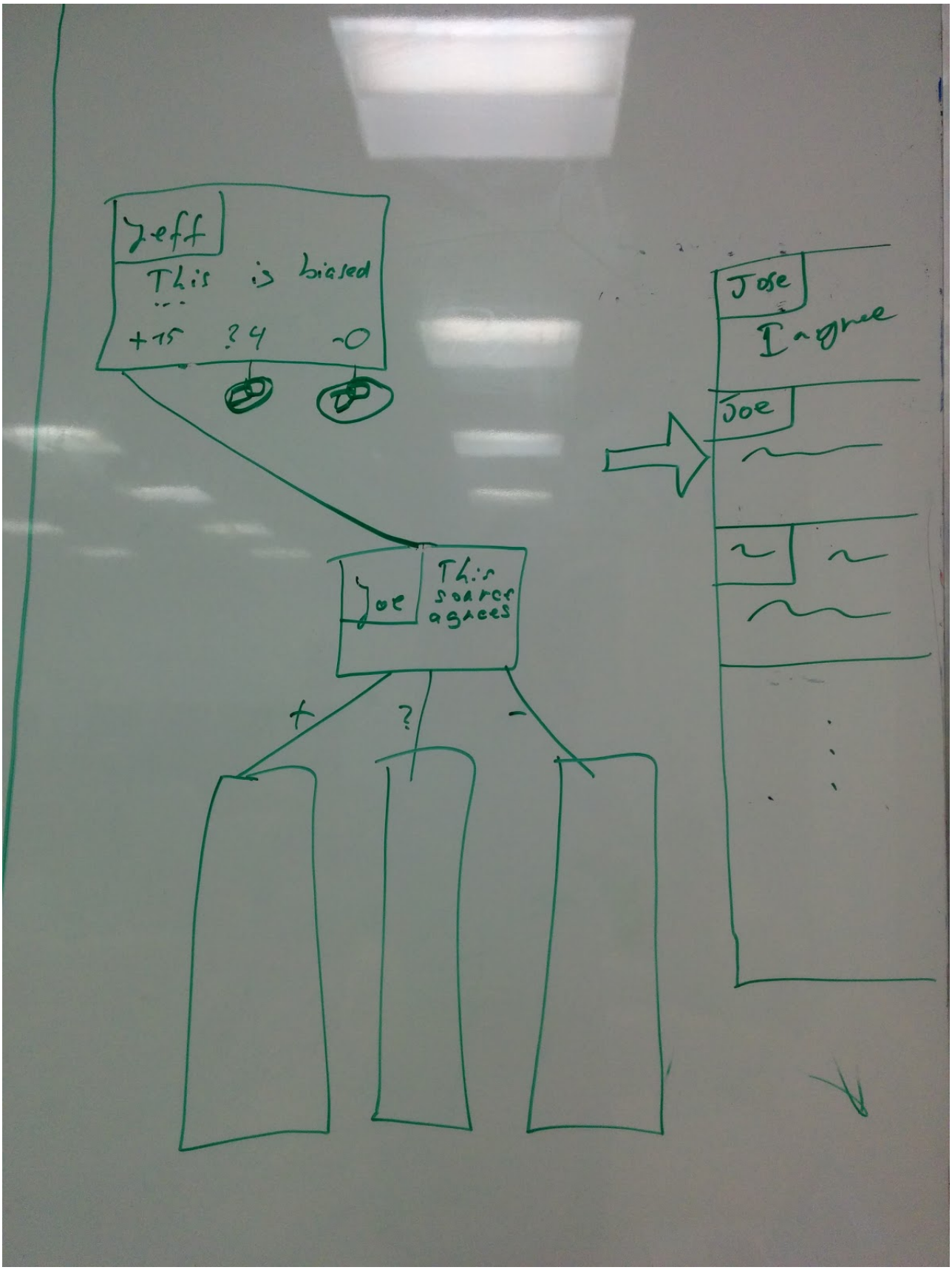
of this paragraph), as well as note from a user Jeff linked to the second highlighting (Anchored Discussion). The statements and sources that support Jeff's note are under the plus symbol. The notes under the question mark question Jeff's statement. Finally the notes under the minus sign express disagreement with Jeff's objection. All notes directly linked to Jeff's statement are sorted by highest rated in their respective boxes (Agreeing, Questioning, Disagreeing), showing the supposedly strongest arguments at the top.



(Figure 1)

When a user clicks on a sub-note (like Joe's note under Jeff's in Figure 1), he or she sees the screen shown in Figure 2. This screen is intentionally similar to the part of the screen showing Jeff's note in the center (Figure 1). Just like with Jeff's note in Figure 1 we see which people wrote arguments or found sources supporting, questioning, or disagreeing with Joe's argument (which is itself agreeing with Jeff's note).

The bar on the right in Figure 2 shows other notes in the same box as the currently regarded and highlights which of the notes is currently centered.


Jeff
This is biased
+15 ?4 -0
Jose
I agree
Joe
Joe
This source agrees
+
?
-

(Figure 2)

6. Plan

Schedule

- 11/18: Finalize background assumptions and initial scenario
- 11/20: Develop Prototype 1
- 11/25: Evaluate Prototype 1 amd create Prototype 2
    - Collecting data (pilot)
    - Collect subjects
    - Observe them in action and take notes
    - Interview subjects
- 12/2: Collect data of subjects using the re-engineered task and environment.
- 12/4: Re-engineer Prototype 2 resulting in the final design for this project

Technology

We will use one or multiple collaborative online platform(s) that provide(s) version control and task management, to engineer our project. Probably it will be GitHub with LaTeX or Google Drive and some task management tool like Trello or Pivotal Tracker.

Any goal not achieved in class on the given date will be finished outside of the classroom, within a teamspace. We will employ Facebook group chat messenger and Facebook group forum postings for coordination and communication purposes.

7. Motivation and Viability

Not only will Spot Bias be an effective learning platform for Jounalism majors, students from other disciplines such as Political Science, Pyschology, and Economics can use the platform to practice and expand their critical reading skills. In the scope of this project, Spot Bias will help students detect and analyze bias in the ever-growing number of publications released online. The collaborative learning eanvironment allows to construct broaght and hands-on knowledge of the complex and multi-facetted, constantly redefining concept of Journalistic Objectivity.

Team Salsa is confident that Spot Bias can be developed with an efficient and intuitive user experience that will enable students on the platform to effectively broadcast ideas and take in new ones, emerging from the collaborative effort.

Building on the concepts of efficient annotating tools like Google Drive, successful 2D multi-level exploring tools like Google Maps, as well as the concept of mind-maps and anchored discussions, we know that all these concepts were already realized as web-apps and are therefore technically doable. Our project will just combine and adjust the required concepts of all these areas and is therefore technically doable as well.