**Final Project**

This will be a scaled-up and more rigorous versions of the kind of projects you’ve already done. Here, the object under consideration would not just a single concept, but some entire project/study performed by a government, corporation, or association.

Goal: The goal would be to find major examples of statistical bias in some socially significant issue, and cognitive bias in the presentations of that issue.   Groups would then re-work as much of this material as they feasibly can, and present to the class.

The Final Project will synthesize all the main themes of the course:  Hunt down examples of statistical/cognitive bias, and generate ways to address the problems and re-present the information more effectively.  In preparation for brainstorming, I ask that everyone skim through our readings again, and look over the sources on bias we have explored.

We plan on sorting out groups (two per team) tomorrow, and general thoughts about project directions. We'll let you use some class time so that each group can refine its ideas further, and then brainstorm with the class as a whole. By the end of class, we aim to have groups mostly in place, with each group having a *direction* for the Final Project.

Stage 0 Preliminary Brainstorming (During Break)

Stage 1 (First Class Back) Topic Specification and Preliminary Research.  Each group should have it basic topic area chosen, and some "lay of the land" research accomplished (meaning a working set of references).  You should have some simple graphs/tables/charts to show, which give people a sense of the kinds of things you will be looking out.  There is no expectation that you are making your own graphics yet.    Ideally you have sets of competing data, or alternate interpretations of similar data.   Your task will be to identify and sort through as much bias (statistical and cognitive) as you can.   A large part of your goal in these projects is to "desensationalize" the topic.  That term is a mouthful, but it captures the spirit of the task.  Your core questions regarding your specific topic (and what your fellow students will help you think about) is WHAT parameters/concepts tend to be the most sensationalized/distorted, and HOW can one attempt to identify and correct for this?

Stage 2 (Two Weeks Later) Preliminary Report.  Though preliminary in name, it should AIM to be as close to the final report as possible.  You should think of your audience as your fellow students, who might hear strongly divergent information on a topic:  you are attempting to sift out as much BS as possible for them.  In some cases it may be related to an actual decision they might face in the future.  Depending on the topic, you may present anything ranging from a decision matrix (what are the real choices here?), to an actual conclusion/recommendation.  There is leeway here given the nature of the topic/data, but you must present SOME kind of clear conclusion:  there must be SOME kernel of discovery pulled out of all the muck.

Stage 3 (Three Weeks Later) Final Presentation.  You should have used feedback from the class to revise/update the presentation.  Depending on feedback, the revisions/additions may be minor to significant.  THERE IS NO SHAME IN NEEDING TO DO SIGNIFICANT REVISION.  Professional researchers sometimes make great leaps after an initially poor outing of an idea/proposal.  Different groups will progress at different rates for a variety of reasons.  Our primary goal is to make sure you have TIME to do a significant revision if necessary.

HISTORICAL APPROACH

- NRA and politicians feedback loop, originally moderate

- global comparisons also

- different explanations