Project II – Manufacturing Consent

November 10, 2018

Erik Beckwith, Vikas Singh, Ed Wise, Jay Yu

The 2016 American presidential election was unprecedented in the use of technology, social media, and mass communication all articulating a narrative that has, to some, perpetuated a socio-political preferential bias towards a particular presidential candidate. To Noam Chomsky and Edward Herman, these remunerations are defined as “Manufacturing Consent” or the "effective and powerful ideological institutions that carry out a system-supportive propaganda function ". Our project hopes to elucidate this proposition and determine the statistical rationalities to support their condemning report.

We have various methods in illustrating such geo-political phenomena namely using news sources and Twitter. In the Chomskian scheme, these news sources may represent the ideological institutions that disseminate propaganda-like narratives while Twitter may represent the voice of the people, a dialectical counterpoint to the former. We would then use the 2016 election results to qualify our findings and examine how effective the parameters of manufacturing consent are in reigning in the opinions of the affected populace. In short:

1. Define a list of “buzzwords” that would detail political leanings in a region
2. Web scrape local and municipal media sources with the buzzwords in mind
3. Use Tweepy on Twitter to similarly find these buzzwords
4. Analyze the data using frequency count and VADER
5. Map out the aggregated data onto a map using leaf.ly and layer the different buzzwords with a heatmap function and/or frequency counts
6. Layer on the election results and compare the three map data
7. Host the findings using Flask