

ESTUDOS E ANÁLISES DE CONJUNTURA

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*Political News and Analysis Sources beyond
the Mainstream and Legacy American Media*

WAYNE SELCHER



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OBSERVATÓRIO POLÍTICO
DOS ESTADOS UNIDOS



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E TECNOLOGIA PARA ESTUDOS
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First in a Series of Articles on the Political News and Information Flow in the United States Today

By Wayne A. Selcher¹ [[Estudos e Análises](#)] [[Media](#)] [[Mídia](#)]

The news media landscape in the United States is being thoroughly shaken by technological, business, and socio-political forces, with major changes still underway and future directions not yet clear. The traditional, long-dominant media (often called the “legacy media”) is being successfully challenged by newer online sources of political information and analysis. In 2021, this author suggested some [online sources](#) for following and analyzing American politics and foreign policy, and in 2024 provided information about where to find reliable data and reports on the 2024 presidential election campaign. Researchers interested in international relations and American foreign policy may wish to consult his annotated guide, the [WWW Virtual Library: International Affairs Resources](#).

Although those compilations are still valid for academic research purposes, this current series offers an in-depth examination of the nature, availability, and public use of American media now, building upon, updating, and broadening those previous collections of online resources. This first article of the series will suggest and describe some largely cost-free news and political analysis sources beyond the mainstream and legacy media that are proving useful for credible information, insights, and leads for academic specialists on the United States.

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An Academic Researcher’s Guide to Online Political News and Analysis

The widely recommended and referenced sources below are mostly free to use and provide an overview and classification of the full range of actors, perspectives, opinions, and policy options now at play in the tumultuous national dialogue. With a few exceptions, think tanks will not be included. To cover costs, some formerly free sites are now beginning to require paid subscriptions, and many free sites offer increased quality content for those who do subscribe. Most of the influential organizations and commentators, including those listed here, appear on multiple platforms, with different content on each, so be careful to look for those options. When taken as a whole, these sources will introduce you to nearly the full spectrum of online news and analysis outlets in the country’s political conversation, by name, location, and political content. Most offer free newsletters and announcements of new features and studies, so be attentive to those options, even on for-payment sites. “Short form” news is increasingly the presentation style, but the academic researcher should prefer the “long form” style because it is usually more in-depth, thorough, and nuanced.

Assessing News Reliability and Media Bias: Tools and Challenges

[Fact-checking](#) and content moderation have become more controversial, less-respected, and less-used during this second Trump administration. Citing “alternative facts,” Republicans have pushed back against those practices, contending that the results have been consistently biased against them. This position, taken for their own partisan advantage, ignores or condones Trump’s long-standing troublesome relationship with inconvenient facts. Apart from the often-expressed partisan criticisms and Trump’s overt pressure against critical media and his repeated attacks on journalists, there is a lively technical [methodological debate](#) about how accurately to detect and measure bias and misinformation in the news. These are two separate categories analytically. [Reliability](#) of news reporting has received serious academic study, as well as what practical difference fact-checking or reliability data actually makes, or not, in changing either general public opinion or opinions of individuals with strong beliefs. This is particularly

an issue in [social media](#), where [outrage](#) drives engagement and most shares are made without reading the full content or even understanding it if they do. Regarding the effectiveness of debunking, one [study](#) confirmed, *“Participants showed significantly more distrust toward journalists who corrected false claims than toward those who confirmed true claims.”*

Americans have shown considerable growing difficulty in distinguishing facts from political opinion, especially since 2015, which means that there is [serious disagreement](#) even about what constitutes a “fact,” especially in contentious topics. Professor [Jeffery J. Mondak](#) expressed the net effect on the political culture: *“As partisan political views grow more polarized, Democrats and Republicans both tend to construct an alternate reality in which they report that their side has marshalled the facts and the other side merely has opinions.”* To examine such highly problematic issues systematically, Harvard’s Kennedy School publishes the [Misinformation Review](#) academic journal.

Here we will assess only the online means now available to the public. A good start for the researcher can be made with the “[reader beware](#)” critical [media literacy](#) guidelines that most university libraries develop and teach, such as at the [University of Michigan](#). Established fact-checking sites still include [Rumor Guard](#), [News Literacy Project](#), [AFP Fact Check](#), [Snopes](#), [Media Bias/Fact Check](#), [PolitiFact](#), and [FactCheck.org](#). Also worth some use are the fact-check sections of [Reuters](#), [AP News](#), [USA Today](#), and [Poynter](#). The New York Times maintains a detailed [fact-checking](#) site. These services and professionals are under strong pressures and tensions from political polarization, and many have suffered staff and budget reductions.

In a sort of point-counterpoint battle, the [Media Research Center](#) features criticism of the left-wing media and popular culture, while [Media Matters for America](#) critiques right-wing news media and reporting. Both offer free e-mail newsletters. The Media Research Center is actively and effectively [communicating](#) to the White House the results of its monitoring of media for any consistent liberal bias. There are several divisions beyond [MRC](#) per se: [News Busters](#), [MRC Video](#), and [Free Speech America](#).

[Ad Fontes Media](#) produces news content ratings of political bias, based on the leanings of a [large number](#) of websites, using a team of trained persons who evaluate the political content typical of each source, within a shared methodology. As

the CEO of the company [warns](#), “*Many people don’t realize that other people read and watch completely different things than they do, and those different media outlets reinforce different beliefs and present different facts.*” In its mission to “*improve the media landscape,*” AdFontes covers TV, print, and internet. Features include a constantly-updated interactive and highly useful monthly [media bias chart](#), an [explanation](#) of their methodology, a newsletter, and [a blog](#) that shows how differently the same event is covered by various major media.

[All Sides](#) operates under the mission to “*free people from filter bubbles so they can better understand the world — and each other.*” They display “*the day’s top news stories from the Left, Center, and Right of the political spectrum — side-by-side so you can see the full picture.*” The over 1400 news sources and writers profiled by All Sides represent an unusually inclusive catalog of American news providers and individual commentators. Their detailed and exhaustive [Media Bias Ratings](#) for American news outlets and public intellectuals allow you to better comprehend and judge the treatment of an issue or topic by the various political groups. There are also charts and [explanations](#) about the biases or general tendencies of [key fact checkers](#), influencers on the [X platform](#), and [news aggregators](#). You can take a [Topics and Issues](#) approach. A [Red Blue Translator](#) explains common phrases in current partisan usage, and a [Perspectives blog](#) discusses news bias. The [Misinformation Watch](#) tracks this constant and contentious problem. A quiz allows you to identify your own personal [value biases](#) on policy issues that may affect how you select and interpret news and to place your own position into the national spectrum.

[Ground News](#) has the purpose of allowing you to “*easily compare how a news story is covered by thousands of sources across the political spectrum... You can see visually who’s talking about a story and who’s completely ignoring it.*” Topics trending in the current national dialogue are spotlighted. Note the unusual [Blindspot](#) feed, highlighting stories that receive virtually no coverage from one side or the other of the political spectrum. Considerable content is available cost-free, but a modest [subscription fee](#) provides more content and utility if you wish to pursue the news coverage and slant subject in depth. A free Ground News [Bias Checker](#) browser extension, to use as you peruse news websites, will show you “*what other sources*

are reporting on that story so you can compare coverage.”

[News Guard](#) bills itself as “*the global leader in information reliability.*” Their full services are geared mainly toward journalism and business professions and require a paid subscription, but this site posts useful free reports on misinformation and about news coverage of major issues. A free “reality check” [newsletter](#) is available. Their monthly [Reality Gap Index](#) is “*the nation’s first ongoing measurement of Americans’ propensity to believe the top false claims circulating online each month.*” The free [News Guard](#) extension for web browsers allows you to see website reliability ratings as you browse news and commentary sites of a wide variety, with a free trial and a low subscription fee. Over 35,000 sites are in the corresponding database. “*Each site receives a trust score of 0-100, an overall rating level ranging from ‘High Credibility’ to ‘Proceed with Caution,’ and a thorough Nutrition Label report detailing the site’s ownership and financing, content, credibility practices, transparency practices, and history.*”

[The Flip Side](#), with a bridging-building purpose and a cross-partisan team, provides a regular newsletter of selected digital clippings, to show how Left, Right, and Center approach the same issue from different angles. Features include a special Sunday edition in more depth and an online community discussion forum for members, with a unique “*ranking algorithm to reward thoughtfulness and bipartisanship, rather than trolling or click-bait.*” Requires a paid subscription but offers a free trial.

[Lead Stories](#) focuses since 2015 on “*trending stories, images, videos and posts that contain false information in order to fact check them as quickly as possible,*” with the quite appropriate motto that “*Just because it’s trending doesn’t mean it’s true.*” Liberal misinformation is highlighted in a [Blue Feed](#), and conservative misinformation in a [Red Feed](#), plus a special [deep-fakes section](#). News items in several different languages and world regions are evaluated.

[Indicator](#), new in 2025, intends to be “*your essential guide to understanding and investigating digital deception,*” by providing “*the knowledge and skills to navigate a chaotic digital landscape filled with scams, search engine and social media manipulation, disinformation, trolling, mobile app abuse, spyware, AI slop and more.*” The site requires a paid subscription for its many services beyond its free weekly newsletter but may prove to be of great use for the serious scholar of online American news media.

Some groundbreaking work is being done by information specialists on using Artificial Intelligence to rate news bias with large-scale automated methodologies. In the U.S., the University of Pennsylvania has developed a quite sophisticated [media bias detector](#) that does an important service by going [beyond mere fact-checking](#) to examine individual articles and narratives, through the use of a Large Language Model and human judgement. By deliberate selection and the omission of certain facts, actors, or voices, *“it is trivially easy to mislead a reader without saying anything that is outright false... Although we agree that lies are indeed a problem, we believe that merely biased information is far more pervasive.”* This online and [ongoing program](#) examines many aspects of the major media outlets to identify the inevitable biases, such as in choice of coverage, interpretation of facts, recurring factual statements, political tone, and more, in the light of their current and recent reporting. The program’s [purpose](#) and [methodology](#) are fully explained, and an article by the development team recounts the innovative project’s [development history](#). This facility is part of the [Penn Media Accountability Project](#), which also includes a [Mapping the \(Political\) Information Ecosystem](#) dashboard, with four interactive charts about different aspects of news consumption in the U.S. There is also a [YouTube politics](#) feature that is well worth incorporating into research on video trends in the U.S. media.

[RageCheck](#) is decidedly not a fact, truth, or bias checker, but deserves mention here. It responds instead to the online tendency to manipulate and to provoke anger to increase visitor engagement. The site uses AI analysis of rhetoric with a *“free tool that analyzes online content for linguistic patterns commonly associated with manipulative framing—the kind of language designed to provoke emotional reactions rather than inform.”*

Resources for Journalism, Press Freedom, and News Literacy

The [American Press Institute](#) aspires to help form *“an inclusive democracy and society, where communities have the news and information they need to make decisions and thrive.”* Their work is focused mainly toward the journalism profession and newsrooms in a practical way, but also provides information and analysis that are of interest to academics studying mass media and political communication in the U.S.

[Bellingcat](#) is an “*independent investigative collective of researchers, investigators and citizen journalists brought together by a passion for open-source research.*” They serve the journalist community and the interested public with “*tools and resources for our audience to think critically about sources they find online.*” In addition to [investigative reports](#) on current issues, they post [practical guides](#), such as an [investigative toolkit](#) for serious open source research, and an [users guide](#) to social media.

The [Free Speech Center](#) at Middle Tennessee State University is “*a nonpartisan, nonprofit public policy center dedicated to building understanding of the five freedoms of the First Amendment.*” The Center posts news and analysis about issues concerning the five assurances of freedom of speech, press, religion, assembly, and petition guaranteed by the First Amendment of the Constitution, and has a useful [list of organizations](#) active in that issue.

The [Knight First Amendment Institute](#), at Columbia University, “*defends the freedoms of speech and the press in the digital age through strategic litigation, research, policy advocacy, and public education. Our aim is to promote a system of free expression that is open and inclusive, that broadens and elevates public discourse, and that fosters creativity, accountability, and effective self-government.*” Covers many First Amendment issues before the courts.

The [Freedom of the Press Foundation](#) offers tools, technology, and digital training for journalists, and advocates for a free press to support the public’s right to know, including investigations of [government secrecy](#) and through their [U.S. Press Freedom Tracker](#).

[Poynter](#), a major professional reference for journalists, works to strengthen local newsrooms through training programs. The organization provides [news and commentary](#) about the news flow, news usage, and the news media, emphasizing professional ethics, public trust, and fact-checking. They have established an [AI Innovation Lab](#) to promote “*AI literacy, ethics and training*” for journalists and the public. Their educational [First Amendment Academy](#) features “*15 interactive, self-guided courses covering the five freedoms protected by the First Amendment — religion, speech, press, assembly and petition — as well as 25 short quizzes.*”

[Nieman Lab](#), from Harvard University, is “*an attempt to help journalism figure out its future in an Internet age*” by promoting innovation that improves journalism. Posts stories, reports, a monthly newsletter, and a magazine ([Nieman Reports](#)), all very useful to academics who follow the American news media.

The [Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism](#) at Oxford University is “*dedicated to exploring the future of journalism worldwide*” and posts much material about journalism and news in the U.S. Their [Digital News Report 2025](#) places the situation of the [U.S. media](#) clearly within a global setting.

The [Freedom Forum](#) operates with the educational goal of fostering “*an America where everyone knows, values and defends the freedoms of religion, speech, press, assembly and petition.*” They post a [First Amendment Article Library](#) and conduct an annual public opinion survey about “[Where America Stands](#)” on the First Amendment.

[Reporters Without Borders](#) is a global organization based in France that “*defends the right of every human being to have access to free and reliable information.*” They are best known for their annual [World Press Freedom Index](#), which in 2025 ranked the U.S. globally at number 57 for freedom of the press, an historic low in their timeline since 2013, when the U.S. ranked at number 37. (Brazil in 2025 ranked at number 63, “*climbing 47 places since 2022.*”)

The [News Literacy Project](#) is a “*nonpartisan nonprofit building a national movement to ensure that all students are skilled in news literacy before high school graduation, giving them the knowledge and ability to participate in civic society as well-informed, critical thinkers.*” Their website provides a good example of what is being done in the U.S. to promote a more thoughtful approach to the news, including practical [free resources](#) for public use.

The [Columbia Journalism Review](#) from Columbia University has been a standard publication in the profession for decades. Their highly regarded reporting focuses on the situation of and current challenges to the journalism profession and news broadcasting.

The [Knight Center for Journalism in the Americas](#) at the University of Texas in Austin is recognized as “a global leader in training and outreach for journalists, with more than 20 years of experience helping strengthen journalism and press freedom in Latin America and the Caribbean.” The Center publishes the [LaAm Journalism Review](#).

Through a Different Lens: International Perspectives on American Politics and Government

Journalistic reports in English originating outside of the United States often have a different take and a broader perspective on the flow of events and their meaning, as contrasted with the American media that is currently immersed in a quite polarized and precarious social, political, and business environment. These outlets do not feel the pressure to take a pre-set partisan stance and are of particular interest to American government and foreign policy academic specialists, for consistent quality reporting and keen insights. Most of these offer some free content or informative newsletters but may require a paid subscription for full access. The Economist is especially perceptive and thoughtful, including the subscribers-only newsletters such as “Checks and Balance” and “The U.S. in Brief”. [The Wire](#), from India, carries insightful commentaries about the U.S. The London School of Economics and Political Science posts a blog, [USAPP](#), about U.S. politics and policy.

The BBC	Agence France-Presse (AFP)	Reuters
The Guardian	France 24	Channel News Asia
Canadian Broadcasting Corporation	Le Monde Diplomatique (France)	Mexico News Daily
The Globe and Mail (Canada)	Radio France International	Folha de S. Paulo (Brazil)
MSN Canada	Deutsche Welle (Germany)	NHK World (Japan)
The Economist	El País (Spain)	Al Jazeera (Middle East)

[Project Syndicate](#) “produces and delivers original, high-quality commentaries to a global audience,” with many editorial commentaries on American politics, economics, and foreign policy as seen by discerning observers from abroad.

[Watching America](#) allows you to “*discover what the world thinks about U.S.*,” with English-language translations of world-wide foreign press commentary about the United States and its foreign policy.

Key Resources for Non-Partisan Analysis, Data, and Investigative Journalism

General Political Analysis

[Semafor](#) has a global presence and calls itself “*the world’s first news platform designed to meet the moment we are in.*” The news and analysis coverage in its [email briefings](#) is first-rate and very highly recommended, particularly in Semafor Washington, DC and Americana. Topical sections include [Media](#), [Politics](#), [Business](#), and [Security](#).

The [Annenberg Public Policy Center](#), of the University of Pennsylvania, provides data and analysis on the role of communication and media in politics, among other topics, such as high-quality [classroom](#) materials and [civics education](#).

[The Hill](#) is a widely cited publication, influential in Washington, that “*serves to connect the players, define the issues and engage Washington’s decision makers in the debate.*”

[The Conversation](#) delivers “*academic rigor, journalistic flair*” in a wide range of topics, including U.S. politics, government, and society — “*trustworthy and informative articles written by academic experts for the general public and edited by our team of journalists.*”

[PsyPost](#), while focusing on the broad scope of psychology, posts summary results of academic studies on political psychology as it affects U.S. politics, with links to the original articles. A newsletter allows you to follow recent additions.

[POLITICO](#) is a major news operation widely used by U.S. academics, public administrators, and businesspersons because of its non-partisan style and depth and breadth of reporting on political actors, events, policies, and trends. [Playbook](#) is well worth your attention: “*The unofficial guide to official Washington, every morning and weekday afternoons.*” A paid [POLITICO Pro](#) option is available for more complete coverage.

[Real Clear Politics](#) is very useful for scholars because it covers a wide range of news and views across the political spectrum, “*to present our audience with informed viewpoints spanning the ideological spectrum in ways that help facilitate meaningful discourse on governance, campaigns, elections, and public policy.*”

[ProPublica](#) is a widely cited “*independent, non-profit newsroom that produces investigative journalism in the public interest... shining a light on abuses of power and betrayals of public trust.*”

Axios works under a pledge of political neutrality and serves up reliable and often-short form news and analysis for politics and several key fields of business. They offer many free [newsletters](#) tailored to those audiences, as well as a paid [Pro version](#) for several industries.

[SCOTUS Blog](#) is a commonly referenced authority for information and analysis about the U.S. Supreme Court and the federal courts, with weekly newsletters.

The [Supreme Court Database](#), from Washington University Law School, describes itself as “*the definitive source for researchers, students, journalists, and citizens interested in the U.S. Supreme Court. The Database contains over two hundred pieces of information about each case decided by the Court between the 1791 and 2024 terms.*” The site includes a comprehensive user’s guide and code books for the data.

[Courthouse News Service](#) will be valuable for those who track legal issues and trends in the United States, with its “*focus on the law, cases, major rulings, trials, arguments and opinions within the state and federal courts.*”

The [Brennan Center for Justice](#) is a highly regarded independent institution at the New York University School of Law and posts insightful analysis of current and general legal issues in politics and government, with suggested solutions.

[Roll Call](#), “*the premier source of timely news, objective facts and analysis, and coverage of elections and the politics of legislation,*” covers Congress closely and is widely used by those in Washington who need to know the facts, trends, and dynamics in the national capital.

[Silver Bulletin](#), by Nate Silver, formerly at the Washington Post’s 538, offers quality “*essays and analysis about elections, media, sports, poker, and all the other things I care about.*” His

Poll of Polls charts represent an average of many public opinion polls on a topic or politician, not just a single poll.

[USA Facts](#) provides reliable data and facts-based information about the United States from standard sources, including in its political and governmental aspects, often presented through graphs and charts.

[Statista](#) is a source of trustworthy cost-free statistics on many aspects of the United States, as well as on many countries and industries, although full access requires a paid subscription.

The [Archive of Political Emails](#) “collects emails from political candidates, elected officials, PACs, non-profits, NGOs and others shaping the political debate.”

[Lawfare Media](#) is a “non-profit multimedia publication dedicated to ‘Hard National Security Choices.’ We provide non-partisan, timely analysis of thorny legal and policy issues through our written, audio, and other content... areas of coverage range from national security law, threats to democracy, cybersecurity, executive powers, content moderation, domestic extremism, and foreign policy, among many others.”

The [American Presidency Project](#) at the University of California at Santa Barbara provides free and searchable access to their very large archive of documents from and about the American presidency, striving to be “recognized as the authoritative, non-partisan on-line source for presidential public documents.” Orientation to the database and best search methods is provided for users.

The [Budget Lab](#) at Yale University is an extensively-cited “non-partisan policy research center dedicated to providing in-depth analysis of federal policy proposals for the American economy... particularly focusing on the long-term effects of proposed policies on the economy, the income distribution, and recipients.”

[Intrigue Media](#) offers thoughtful and objective analysis of issues in American foreign policy and global affairs generally, including with a free newsletter.

Elections, Campaigns, and Voting

The [Cook Political Report](#), highly recommended, is “an independent, non-partisan newsletter that analyzes elections and campaigns for the US House of Representatives, US Senate,

Governors and President as well as American political trends.”

[Sabato’s Crystal Ball](#), from the University of Virginia, is a very useful scholarly reference source to follow “*presidential elections, along with every race for the U.S. Senate, House of Representatives, and state governor,*” as well as “*analysis of trends in American politics and elections.*”

[Ballotpedia](#), extensively used, posts a wide range of “*unbiased information to educate and inspire American voters.*” Particularly helpful for electoral statistics and big picture trends.

The [U.S. Elections Atlas](#) provides “*results of U.S. Presidential Elections to the world community. Data is collected from many official sources and presented here in one convenient location.*” Congressional and gubernatorial election results are also included, and “*high-level data and maps (state, national) as well as the county and congressional-district maps*” are free. Paid membership provides access to much more detailed data.

The [University of Florida Election Lab](#), composed of a team at that university, provides various forms of data on U.S. elections at all levels down to the precincts.

Other reliable sources for U.S. election information and statistics include the [MIT Election Lab](#), [Vote Hub](#), [American National Election Studies](#), and [The Downballot Ultimate Data Guide](#).

Public Opinion Polling

[Gallup](#) is a very well-regarded polling organization, providing abundant survey data and analysis on a wide range of U.S. public opinion and attitude topics. They are one of the best organizations for information about U.S. public opinion on American foreign policy and international matters. The free Front Page newsletter and release alerts will keep you up to date on their products.

[Pew Research](#) is excellent for reliable public opinion and attitude surveys, with thoughtful analysis, on a very wide range of topics. They have a dedicated [News Habits and Media](#) section, among many others. Their latest [Religious Landscape Study](#) (2025) surveyed “*more than 35,000 Americans in all 50 states about their religious affiliations, beliefs and practices along with their social and political views and demographic characteristics.*” Sign up for the free weekly [The Briefing](#) newsletter,

a data-based summary “*that rounds up what’s happened and what’s coming in the news and information world.*” Other [newsletters](#) are available as well.

[Morning Consult](#) posts data-based reports using “*high-frequency political polling data to provide vital insights on U.S. political news with topics such as election tracking, hot-button culture war issues, congressional politics, leader approval ratings and much more.*” It offers free summaries, but paid subscription is required for full access to data and in-depth reports.

The [AP-NORC Center](#) is a public opinion polling-focused partnership between the Associated Press and the University of Chicago that “*taps into the power of social science research and the highest-quality journalism to bring key information to people across the nation and throughout the world,*” covering a [wide range](#) of topics.

The [Chicago Council on Global Affairs](#) conducts public opinion polls on issues in American foreign policy, as well as posting its own analyses.

[YouGov](#) (“*an international online research data and analytics technology group*”) is a frequently referenced polling organization, covering a broad range of topics of interest in American society. Note their handy newsletter, [The Surveyor](#).

[Ipsos](#) is “*one of the world’s leading market research companies,*” and publishes many reliable polls and reports on American politics and society.

The [Reuters Polling Explorer](#) provides ongoing data on a wide variety of topics, as “*an interactive tool featuring over 18 months of Ipsos/Reuters polling data and counting. Based on 200,000+ interviews, data collection began in January 2012 and continuously polls between 2,000 and 3,000 people a week.*”

The [Roper iPoll](#), from the Roper Center at Cornell University, is a search facility to find polling questions and datasets from the Roper Poll’s huge databank.

The monthly [Harvard CAPS-Harris Poll](#) is an excellent ongoing source on the mood of the American public, as is the annual [Harvard Youth Poll](#), for that segment of the population.

[FiftyPlusOne](#) “*is a website devoted to political polling and elections. We gather every poll released in the U.S., process the data into intuitive and insightful interactive journalism, and*

make the data available to researchers, journalists, and anyone else that uses polling data in their businesses.” Some data available cost-free.

[Populace](#) sponsors “private opinion” surveys with a distinctive methodology using a “*new science of individuality that provides us with an unprecedented understanding of individuals on their own terms.*” Anonymous, individualized, in-depth responses “*designed to protect privacy and reduce social desirability bias*” provide insights into the public’s actual views on key social issues in extensive reports from [2022](#), [2024](#), [2025](#), and beyond.

[Voice of the People](#), a non-partisan organization in partnership with the University of Maryland, maps out and publishes survey-based reports on the “*more than 250 policy positions on a wide range of issues supported by majorities of both Republicans & Democrats.*”

[Bright Line Watch](#), a multi-university organization, tracks the health of American democracy over time through surveys of American political scientists, “*to monitor democratic practices, their resilience, and potential threats.*” Site features ongoing graphs and analysis of survey results since 2017, with resultant ratings by experts and the public, including results by political party.

For those interested in the major role of religion and faith in American society and politics, an indispensable option is the [Public Religion Research Institute](#), “*a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization dedicated to conducting independent research and driving conversations at the intersection of religion, culture, and politics.*” PRRI posts many extensively-used and meticulous polls and [reports](#), including on [Christian nationalism](#). Outstanding survey-based products include the [Census of American Religion](#) and the [American Values Survey](#). A free news alert signup keeps you informed of their latest releases.

It should be noted that [Real Clear Politics](#), although not a polling organization, compiles and averages the results of many [public opinion polls](#), with an archive, so you can “*gain valuable insights into the evolving political landscape and stay ahead of the latest trends.*”

Tracking State and Local Governments: Specialized News and Analysis Tools

Specialized search facilities are available to those who wish to follow state, local, and community news, including official business and issues of federalism, as it originates directly from those places instead of through the national media. A lot occurs in state and local governments, and surveys show consistently that Americans trust their local news outlets far more than the national ones. Yet, as an October 2025 Northwestern University annual report on the [State of Local News](#) documents, truly local news is [struggling](#), as more local newspapers close and *“the number of news desert counties – areas that lack consistent local reporting – has grown steadily.”*

[Governing](#) magazine is directed toward public administrators but is a practical guide for keeping up with state, local, and federalism issues.

[U.S. Local Media by County](#), from William & Mary University, *“displays an interactive map showing a collection of newspapers, TV broadcasts, and radio stations on a per-county level,”* with links to the media. Useful for those who want to see how local news media around the country are covering a story, since over 14,000 media sources are indexed and accessible, including their social media presence. A [worldwide version](#) is also offered.

[Local Search America](#) allows you to *“discover, analyze, and monitor local information across America with our suite of three research tools. From breaking news to local government, from universities to your town’s TV stations – discover American communities in a different way.”*

[Find Your News](#) is a search facility focusing on community-level, nonprofit, independent newsrooms *“that are producing fact-based, public service journalism.”*

[States Newsroom](#) is *“the nation’s largest state-focused nonprofit news organization, with reporting from every capital.”* Includes [Stateline](#), which covers *“the big challenges and policy trends that cross state borders”* and [News from the States](#).

[Bolts](#) *“covers the nuts and bolts of power and political change, from the local up... the places, people, and policies that shape public policy,”* focusing on local and state issues and elections, power centers, and especially on *“criminal justice and policing, and voting rights and democracy.”*

[Google News](#) and [Bing News](#) allow users to set location preferences, thus accessing news from that local area. Calishat, an online search expert, provides [some tips](#) on how to access this information.

Key Political News and Information Sources Across the American Ideological Spectrum

Purevpn offers a clearly-presented listing, description, and tabular analysis of the [13 Most Unbiased News Sources to Read in 2026](#), those with “*minimal opinion*,” along with other major ones that exhibit consistent partisanship or ideological tendencies, thus covering the spectrum of “*centrist, left-wing, and right-wing sources*.” For a more detailed inventory across the board, the public relations firm PR Lab lists and describes the [100 Top Media Outlets for News Coverage in 2025](#), “*chosen for credibility, pickup potential, and real-world impact*.”

Several worthy centrist sites are not mentioned in either of these surveys. [1440's daily newsletter](#) is widely regarded as a facts-based reporting option, producing brief curated summaries and explainers without opinion slants, a role that [its CEO](#) called being the “*connective tissue in the industry*.” [News Nation](#) tends to cover the spectrum, while [Breaking Points](#) is a recent independent centrist video enterprise. [Punchbowl News](#) is excellent for its reliable coverage of the Washington power structure, especially the Congress, with the motto “*Power, People, Politics*.” [Tangle](#) provides a broad selection of news and information, with views, opinions, and summaries from across the political spectrum, plus the site's own thoughtful perspectives. [NOTUS](#) (News of the United States) is based in Washington, D.C., and covers government and politics, including campaigns and elections, in the capital and throughout the U.S., with a [Perspectives](#) section “*for analysis, ideas and narratives*.” NOTUS has hired numerous quality journalists who left the *Washington Post* after its [severe decline](#).

Republicans and Democrats follow and base their intra-party conversations on, within, and about very different information sources, resulting in quite distinct internal and public dialogues about what matters and what is happening. This sharp partisan contrast in points of reference is seen even at the level of mentions of dissimilar online sources in official Congressional

newsletters to constituents. As Professor [Lindsey Cormack](#) has noted, “*Congressional Republicans are very good at communications, not only in how they stay on message and devise catchy terms, but also in how they make use of ‘owned’ media outlets far more often Democrats.*” [Democratic](#) politicians have been weak in their [social media](#) presence relative to Republicans, especially regarding strategy, messaging (form and content), and engagement with constituents.

As of early 2026, the Right is [more dynamic](#) and effective online, with energy buoyed by a sense of being on a winning streak in the successful offensive against the “liberal managerial state,” “wokeness,” and the social groups that created and support them. Beyond the many blogs of Republican politicians, there is a huge number of [podcasters on the Right](#), for example, many of whom have a highly devoted following.

The Left is still trying to reorganize and redefine itself after the [major defeat](#) of its message at the polls in November 2024 and Trump’s radical reform campaign that has followed. However, [certain voices](#) on the Left, concerned about autocracy and the health of democracy in the face of Trump’s attacks on critical media and higher education, have rallied, are boosting [different media platforms](#) (such as [Courier](#)), and produce some interesting insights that may form the basis for the future of progressivism.

The numerous examples from both camps, cited below, mix many types of sources and platforms for delivery, which is the typical situation faced by an American who seeks out diverse points of view in the changing media landscape. Most seriously competitive influencers appear on multiple platforms, to maximize their outreach to a variety of devices and viewer preferences. Traditional media (newspapers, television, radio, magazines) mixes with alternative media (podcasts, blogs, news websites), as well as the production of think tanks.

The Conservative and Right-Wing Media Ecosystem and Trump’s Digital Presence

[TheRighting](#) is “*geared mainly for mainstreamers and progressives who are interested in the viewpoints of right-wing media.*” It aggregates material from many right-wing outlets (over a dozen headlines daily) and produces some original [news reports](#), along with a newsletter and reports about the usership of

conservative news outlets, including podcasts. Also posted are the [top 20](#) right-wing websites by audience size (monthly), right-wing site [traffic reports](#), reports on [podcasts](#), and notes about which sites [Trump links to](#) in his posts. There are guides to [right wing media](#), [conservative media](#) personalities, the [liberal media](#), and [right-wing outlets](#) that have ceased publication since 2018. This work is beneficial for anyone who wants to learn about and peruse the growing body and popularity of online American conservative media. At the moment, there is no equivalent news and analysis aggregation website tracking liberal media.

Axios provides a [MAGA media map](#), current as of November 2024, and featuring those who are “*younger, more visual, less established in Washington, and lean more toward MAGA conservative principles over traditional Republican ideals.*” Thoughtco.com lists and describes the [Top 10 Conservative Educational and Advocacy Web Sites](#) as of May 2025. [Rumble](#) and [Gettr](#) are major and popular locations and aggregators for conservative and right-wing political videos that the media-savvy academic should be aware of.

[Influence Watch](#), from the conservative Capital Research Center, furnishes reliable and detailed public “*information on over 15,000 public policy influencers on demand,*” as thorough profiles of political actors (individuals, organizations, and institutions), social movements, funding sources, and policies.

President Donald Trump makes [very frequent](#) and hyperbolic use of all forms of social media, and especially of his own [Truth Social](#) platform and the [X platform](#), including to announce important decisions, ultimatums, policy swings, and the achievements of his administration. His fans follow him closely and love his brash, confrontational, norm-defying, and ranting style, including the many satirical [AI videos](#) and [fake images](#) portraying him as a hero, in a provocative practice called “[trolling](#),” to attack and anger his opponents. This tactic plays well to the growing trend toward politics as superficial performance and entertainment, that features ridicule, emotion, and sensationalism that devalue serious thought about policies and their effects. Many of his statements are of dubious veracity and insulting in tone and are often designed to attack critics in petty and personal terms and to justify his unconventional actions. Trump’s use of social media in this populist and personalistic fashion has succeeded in re-defining presidential messaging toward a style

that would have been considered by most of the public as outrageous and degrading of the office a decade earlier.

Archives of his postings are found at [Trump's Truth](#) and [Roll Call](#). The [Trump Media](#) firm is majority-owned by the Donald J. Trump Revocable Trust and was formed in February 2021, after he was barred from major social media platforms following the January 6 attack on the U.S. Capitol by his supporters. Its slogan is “*our mission is to end Big Tech’s assault on free speech by opening up the Internet and giving people their voices back.*” It administers Truth Social and a [Truth+ streaming service](#) (“*Make TV Great Again*”) on several platforms, as a “*home to pro-freedom news networks like Newsmax, Real America’s Voice, OAN, and more—as well as a large library of top-tier non-woke TV shows and movies.*”

The [White House](#) maintains an unprecedented wall-to-wall and assertive online presence on all possible platforms, continually and rapidly updated as events unfold. Democratic statements and actions are swiftly rebutted, often with a largely-visual [social media](#) storm of doubtful claims and allegations. The White House communications staff skillfully attempts to dominate the news cycle (through agenda setting) and to distract attention from inconvenient topics. The major conservative and alternative outlets, including some individual MAGA influencers, have full [press credential](#) status at briefings, in contrast to the more liberal lineup under former President Joe Biden. Nor, under Biden, were certain journalists barred, humiliated, and prohibited from asking questions or entering public buildings, as is the case with the Pentagon under Secretary of Defense Hegseth. The [White House Wire](#) presents news from the perspective of the administration. An official mobile [news app](#) is available for instant notifications, termed “*unparalleled access*” to the administration. Official social media account contents from his first term are [archived online](#) at the Donald J. Trump Presidential Library.

Conservative and Right-Wing Sources for News and Commentary

The Right is known for counter-elite messages that challenge and refute the narrative that was dominant until recently, but it is not homogenous, as was made clear by [disagreements](#) among key speakers [within MAGA](#) during the [Turning Point USA's AmericaFest](#) convention in December 2025. Commonly



used and referenced sources in the conversation within the Right include these:

One America News Network	Bannon’s War Room	Megyn Kelly	Tim Pool
Fox News	The Free Press	Candace Owens	Matt Walsh
Newsmax	The Dispatch	Ben Shapiro	Mark Levin
Turning Point USA	Human Events	Rod Dreher’s Diary	Dan Bongino
The American Mind	The American Conservative	Brilyn Hollyhand	Margo Martin
The Daily Wire	The Post Millennial	Laura Loomer	Insider Wire
Patriot News Alerts	The Gateway Pundit	Nick Shirley	Libs of TikTok
Blaze Media	The National Pulse	Nick Sortor	Infowars
Real America’s Voice	The Benny Show	Tucker Carlson	Curtis Yarvin
The Daily Caller	The Joe Rogan Experience	Rod Dreher’s Diary	
Breitbart News Network	Patrick Bet-David	Nick Fuentes	
The Heritage Foundation	End Wokeness	The Federalist	

Liberal and Left-Wing Sources for News and Commentary

Much of the long-established mainstream press is widely seen as tilting toward the liberal side, but the Left is not homogenous, as is quite evident in the Democratic Party’s [turmoil](#) during the second Trump administration. Other commonly used and referenced sources in the conversation within the Left include these:

The Brookings Institution	The Argument	Common Dreams	Mediaite
Truth and Accountability Project	Meidas Touch	Urban Institute	Slate
Center for American Progress	Meidas Plus	The Nation	Wired
The Bulwark	The Contrarian	Daily Kos	Vox
The Atlantic	The Daily Beast	Jim Acosta Show	AlterNet
The New Republic	Democracy Docket	Talking Points Memo	HuffPost
The American Prospect	Crooked Media	Brian Tyler Cohen	
Center on Budget and Policy Priorities	The Fulcrum	Politics Girl	
Searchlight Institute	The Intercept	Don Lemon	

Quality Video Newscasts and Documentaries for Political and Policy Research

Among the millions of videos on YouTube are some valuable news sites and documentaries about American politics, economics, and foreign policy. One must select carefully, because the vast majority of the popular videos on this platform are posted for entertainment purposes rather than serious academic use, with a growing admixture of AI-generated content. Some of the AI videos are designed to give the false appearance of being legitimate news sources or interviews. The tech blog UMA Technology offers a [thoughtful guide](#) on how to judge the credibility and reliability of YouTube political channels, for critical thinking and analytical skills. As a general rule, personality-driven channels by single individuals tend to advocate a consistent ideological point of view and some emotionally laden content to promote viewer ratings. For ongoing academic relevance, prefer noteworthy professional organization sources, such as the YouTube channels of the [PBS Newshour](#), [Fox News](#), [CNN](#), [NBC News](#), [CBS News](#), the [Associated Press](#), and [Bloomberg Television](#). As mentioned earlier, [BBC News](#), [Deutsche Welle News](#), and [Al Jazeera English](#) are some trustworthy foreign media outlets that offer some perspectives from outside the U.S.

Documentaries by reliable organizations are particularly worthwhile, such as the Public Broadcasting System's long-running [Frontline](#) series and its [American Experience](#) series. Also excellent on YouTube are the award-winning PBS documentaries on American history by [Ken Burns](#), such as [The American Revolution](#). Of particular current interest is the 2025 Frontline series documenting Donald Trump's return to the presidency and his subsequent rapid expansion of the power of that office, with significant resistance from the court system, featuring interviews of Trump allies, opponents, and expert analysts. Ten [extended interviews](#) of these persons are available as separate videos.

1. [Trump's Comeback](#)
2. [Trump's Power & the Rule of Law](#)
3. [Trump's Trade War](#)

Another recent documentary to consider is “[Bodyguard of Lies](#)” (2025), which “*exposes how U.S. officials wove a complex web of deception during the 20-year war in Afghanistan.*” (Pay-to-view, on Paramount Plus)

Quality Blogs of Academic Research Interest

Quality blogs are worthwhile places for ideas and data to spark, inform, or direct your research. Many are written by university professors and thoughtful political commentators. The two main platforms useful to academics are [Substack](#) and [Bluesky](#), but Instagram, X, Spotify, and YouTube are also commonly used. Many of the thousands of blogs today are ephemeral, but those below should be around for a while. Most of these writers are on several different platforms, often with different content, so keep that in mind as you browse.

[Adam Bonica](#), Professor of Political Science at Stanford, on “*money in politics, campaigns and elections, ideology, the courts, and inequality*”
[Civic Tracker](#) “*Follow presidential actions, Supreme Court decisions, and social media — all in real time*”

[The Good in Us](#) By Mary L. Trump, President Trump’s niece and a clinical psychologist

[On Data and Democracy](#) “*Data-driven insights illuminating the challenges and potential paths forward for American democracy*”

[Drezner’s World](#) “*About international relations, American politics, political economy, the marketplace of ideas, and popular culture*”

[The Status Kuo](#) “*Accessible political and legal analysis with a dose of humor*”

[Public Notice](#) “*Independent, incisive coverage of US politics and media*”

[Graphs about Religion](#) (Ryan Burge) Notes about religion and social change in the U. S. from a Washington University professor

[Strength in Numbers](#) “*Independent, data-driven analysis of politics, public opinion, and elections*”

[Tusk](#) “*Understanding U.S. political parties, who they nominate, how, and why*”

[Robert Reich](#) “*Daily newsletter exposing where power lies — and how it’s used and abused*”

[Paul Krugman](#) Observations on economics from a professor, Nobel laureate, and former columnist, NY Times

[Blue Blaze](#) “*International relations and US foreign policy, off the main trail*”

[Democracy Index](#) “*Unflinching journalism in defense of democracy*”

[Civil Discourse](#) “*The legal knowledge & analysis you need to be an advocate for democracy*”

[Letters from an American](#) “*A newsletter about the history behind today’s politics*”

[Good Authority](#) “*Political scientists draw on their expertise and the discipline’s research to provide in-depth analysis, illuminate the news, and inform the political conversation*”

[Good Politics/Bad Politics](#) “*Newsletter about government and elections in the US*”

[Jay Van Bavel](#) Insights from a Professor of Psychology and Director of NYU Center for Conflict & Cooperation

[One First](#) Aims “*to make the Supreme Court’s rulings, procedures, and history more accessible to all*”

[Law Dork](#) “*The Supreme Court, law, politics, and more*”

[Lawrence Lessig](#) Thoughts on law, ethics, and democracy from a leading professor at Harvard Law School

[Leah Litman](#) Constitutional law issues examined by a University of Michigan School of Law professor

[Liberal Currents](#) “*Writers of diverse perspectives who share an unflinching commitment to freedom, pluralism, and democracy*”

[Conrad Hackett](#) From a demographer at Pew Research, on social and political matters

[The Steady State](#) By “*veterans of the U.S. National Security Community concerned about the future of our nation*”

[Crash Course with Casey Burgat](#) “*The civics class we never got, but desperately need*”

[The Watch](#) “*Reporting and commentary on civil liberties and the criminal justice system*”

[Kosar on Congress and Governance](#) “*My takes on Congress and governance*”

[Steve’s Notes on Congressional Politics](#) “*Insightful briefs on the politics of the U.S. Congress*”

[Polls and Votes](#) “*Polls in Perspective, Votes in Context*”

[Can We Still Govern?](#) “*Can modern states, and the US state in particular, still govern amidst an increasingly fractured public and anti-democratic tendencies?*”

[DCinbox Insights](#) “*Tracks how members of Congress communicate with constituents by highlighting what’s emphasized, what’s shifting, and what those changes reveal about emerging political narratives*”

[The Liberal Patriot](#) “*Political and policy analysis from the vital center*”

[The Ezra Klein Show](#) “*Real conversations. Ideas that matter. So many book recommendations*”

[The David Pakman Show](#) “*One of the most watched independent progressive programs in the country*”

[The Rachel Maddow Show](#) From one of the contemporary icons of the American Left

[US Politics: A Brazilian Lens](#) “*News, analysis, and insights through a Brazilian Americanist’s perspective*”

Several Audio Podcasts of Academic Interest

[The Politics Lab](#)

[The Daily Blast](#)

[Pod Save America](#)

[Not Another Politics Podcast](#)

[Amicus](#)

[True Anon](#)

[Left, Right, & Center](#)

[Understanding Congress](#)

[Politics in Question](#)

Conclusion

News sources beyond the mainstream and traditional American media operate within the digital fragmentation and ideological polarization of the broad contemporary U.S. information landscape, public distrust of expertise and the media, still-growing partisan division, and questioning of the nation’s basic institutions and values. Pressing future concerns for those academics who depend on the online media for information will include increased misinformation, deliberate deception, challenges to press freedom, online robots, and the rise of AI-driven content and dissemination. Within this setting, the academic researcher should adopt a critical, multi-sourced approach that moves well beyond reliance on the long-traditional gatekeepers of information.

The resources profiled here are essential tools for accessing and assessing the range of alternative views and therefore provide a more complete perspective on the broad national discourse in American politics. With careful techniques, researchers can more accurately identify biases, track information and misinformation, and understand the full spectrum of opinion shaping the highly animated national political conversation today.

Future articles of this series will build upon this foundation to sort out the current socio-political context of the political news flow in the United States, major technological and market factors in

political news and information production and distribution, the news consumption patterns of the public, and their effects on the evolving political dialogue and on the news industry.

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More from this author at OPEU

[Informe OPEU](#) “Comparing the United States in Global Context: The ‘State of the Nation’ Project and Other Perspectives,” 4/18/25 [Portuguese version [available here](#), translated by Wayne Selcher, with final review and editing by Tatiana Teixeira]

[Informe OPEU](#) “Perspectives on the 2024 Presidential Election and its Immediate Aftermath,” 4/16/25 [Portuguese version [available here](#), translated by Tatiana Teixeira]

[Informe OPEU](#) “Trump, MAGA, and the United States Face the November 2024 Presidential Election and Beyond,” 10/10/24 [Portuguese version [available here](#), translated by Wayne Selcher]

[Informe OPEU](#) “A Profile of Trump Voters: The Demographics of his MAGA Enthusiasts and Their Relationship to Him,” 9/18/24 [Portuguese version [available here](#), translated by Gabriel Moura and Wayne Selcher]

[Informe OPEU](#) “A Profile of Trump Voters: Values and Policy Preferences,” 8/23/24 [Portuguese version [available here](#), translated by [Tatiana Teixeira](#), Post-doctoral researcher (INCT-INEU) and editor of OPEU]

[Informe OPEU](#) “The Appeal of Donald J. Trump,” 6/24/24 [Portuguese version [available here](#), translated by [Tatiana Teixeira](#), Post-doctoral researcher (INCT-INEU) and editor of OPEU]

[Book review](#) “Eric Hoffer’s ‘The True Believer: Thoughts on the Nature of Mass Movements’,” 3/11/24 [Portuguese version [available here](#), translated by [Andressa Mendes](#), PhD candidate at San Tiago Dantas]

International Relations Program (Unesp, Unicamp, PUC-SP), Brazil]
[Estudos e Análises](#) “American Political Culture in Transition: The Erosion of Consensus and Democratic Norms,” 2/29/24
[Estudos e Análises](#) “Is the United States ‘Exceptional’?,” 8/3/21
[Publicity](#) “Virtual Library: The Ultimate Online Research Guide,” 4/26/21
[Informe OPEU](#) “Suggested Cost-Free Online Sources for U.S. Politics and Foreign Policy,” 6/2/21

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