

**Crisis Group.** Access: <http://www.crisisgroup.org/>.

Crisis Group is the project of the International Crisis Group, an independent, not for profit, non-governmental organization working to prevent conflict worldwide. The organization is based in Brussels, with additional advocacy offices in Washington, D.C., New York, London, and Moscow. Crisis Group is well placed, with 120 analysts in more than 50 countries.

The homepage has an easy to navigate toolbar. Visitors can select either Reports, with a drop-down box listing 55 to 60 countries from A (Afghanistan) to Z (Zimbabwe) or Programs, which lists continents. The programs are wider in scope than the reports. For example, the program for Africa has separate categories for Horn of Africa, Central Africa, West Africa, and Southern Africa. Each report or program contains a brief introductory survey to the geographical entity under discussion, op-eds and interviews (from sources such as *The International Herald Tribune*, *Le Monde Diplomatique*, and *Boston Globe*), and reports and briefings. Each file describes various ongoing crises in the specific area and advocates strategies for eventual conflict resolution. Also listed on the toolbar is the option Thematic Issues. Islamism, Violence and Reform, for example, has links to articles such as The Impact of the Bali Bombing, Iran: The Struggle for the Revolution's Soul, and The Algerian Crisis: Not Over Yet.

The Crisis Group also maintains their Crisis Watch database, through which the researcher can follow developments in conflict situations on a monthly basis going back to September 2003. Users can tailor a search to Afghanistan 2003 and find information from the Associated

Press (regarding the expansion of NATO's mission) and *The Economist* (Here's Your New Constitution). Resources and Links allows the searcher to access Web sites from the African Union, United Nations, and World Bank, et al. The International Crisis Group updates its site on a monthly basis.

It is important to note that the International Crisis Group is an advocacy organization, and as such, does not always seek to provide dispassionate analyses. For example, the site advocates international military intervention (on the part of NATO) in Darfur, Somalia, because it considers the recent deployment of African Union troops there to be ineffective. That is not to say that the organization is not transparent. It lists its Board of Directors on its site and also provides a financial statement. Generally speaking, this site will be very helpful for undergraduate students in political science. In this regard it is an ideal international supplement to CQ Researcher.

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**Media Matters For America.** Access: <http://mediamatters.org/>.

Bias, bias, bias. Can news ever be free of opinion? If so, should it be? These are questions for a longer discussion, but as media consumers we can and should ask to what extent news and commentary is biased and/or misleading. Mediamatters.org would like to help by monitoring, analyzing and correcting conservative misinformation in the U.S. media.

This site fulfills its stated agenda insofar as it focuses on the media's promotion of the messages and opinions of conservative politicians. Taking the form of brief articles, content emphasizes instances of political bias disguised as objective journalism. The site also provides numerous examples of demonstrably false assertions by news anchors, commentators, and pundits. Evidence is often in the form of quotes from news sources or the

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concise results of content analyses or surveys based on keyword search results from reliable aggregators.

Scrupulously documented, this site makes independent verification of its analyses possible by linking to original stories and documents in lieu of traditional citation. It is moderately effective in the visual presentation of quantitative data.

With a well-organized layout, the site's navigation features make finding analysis of media content, people, programs, and outlets easy. Items of related interest are included as links following feature stories, and search boxes (including an advanced search option) increase the navigability of the site. Content dates back to May 2004, when the site was founded.

Produced by the nonprofit Media Matters for America, this site describes its mission largely in terms of providing media content to counteract the conservative agenda: [mediamatters.org] works daily to notify activists, journalists, pundits, and the general public about instances of misinformation, providing them with the resources to rebut false claims and to take direct action against offending media institutions. Part of the site is dedicated to pushing its content to bloggers, and another section describes opportunities for activism and offers information on communicating directly with various media.

Given its stated agenda, one would rightly assume this site to be biased against the conservative agenda. It succeeds as a media resource by making this bias explicit and by avoiding the inaccuracy it strives to reveal in other media. While a visitor to mediamatters.org will likely find reproducible evidence of conservative bias and misinformation in media content, one should consider this site neither a scholarly resource nor an objective one. Users should treat it as a media Web site aimed at a popular audience. *Jeremy Donald, Trinity University, jdonald@trinity.edu*

**Perpetual Art Machine.** Access: <http://www.perpetualartmachine.com/>.

Not quite a year old, the Perpetual Art Machine (PAM) provides us with an opportunity to look into the world of video art

being created around the world. Billed as a community for video artists, curators, writers, theorists, educators, collectors, and enthusiasts, PAM is more than a Web site. It is also a traveling art installation, recently having traveled the United States and Europe, allowing participants to interact with the video art available on PAM.

The collection in PAM has grown rapidly in its short life span. It showcases work that is often difficult to see, unless you live in a region of the world where screenings of this work are regularly shown.

One can peruse the PAM video gallery and find some of the most interesting work being created today in the world of video art. Select an artist from the PAM collection and the video will stream on your computer at home, in the office, or at school.

An excellent resource for college students involved in the study or creation of art videos and media, PAM provides access to a growing collection of work through its database. One can view the work for free without having to be a member. Membership is also free and provides members with the opportunity to chat in forums and discuss contemporary issues in art and culture. One can also look at schedules of exhibitions around the world from members of the Perpetual Art Machine.

The PAM site has some navigational issues, which they are addressing, but it is hard to imagine any of these issues will be easily made because PAM is operating on a zero budget.

Handling all these new software developments does have a huge downside and that is the Web site is bound by many API and programming rules, says PAM cocreator Chris Borkowski.

You will need to install QuickTime and also PAM is best viewed using Internet Explorer 6+ for windows or Firefox 1.5 for Mac and PC.

PAM, although still in its infancy, has made a name for itself in the art world and has no signs of stopping. The artists/creators/visionaries are Chris Borkowski, Aaron Miller, Raphaela Shirley, and Lee Wells. *Mark McBride, New York State College of Ceramics at Alfred University, mcbride@alfred.edu* ✍