**Criteria for Using the Internet as an Academic Research Tool**
Prepared by the Honors 102 Class "Religion and Society" Spring 1998

**Sponsor**

Who sponsors the site? An individual? A group?

Is it an educational, governmental, nonprofit or commercial organization?

Is it an "official" or "authorized" site? (For example, is it the "official" Oprah Winfrey fan club? Or is it just a group of fans?)

Is it a "primary source," that is, a site describing its sponsoring organization (such as the home page for the Unification Church or the Vatican); or is it a "secondary source," that is a site about something else (such as the home page for an anti-cult organization investigating Unification Church, or scholars researching the Catholic Church)?

**Credibility**

Are articles credited to authors by name?

Can you contact the authors directly or through the site?

Are the articles written by a credible expert who is recognized in her or his field?

Are the authors' credentials listed on the site?

Is there evidence of an editorial board that oversees content?

Are references cited? Is a bibliography provided? Are articles or assertions documented?

Does the site use profanity, vulgarity, or nudity? (Obviously nudity on a site devoted to the artist Michelangelo might be appropriate.)

"Some clues that an Internet site is not credible are vague references, connections to sources that are known not to be credible, and any use of Elvis and aliens in the same sentence used as scientific proof."

**Access**

Is the site frequently updated? Updated within the last six months?

Is a working e-mail address provided? Try the e-mail and see if 1) you can get through and 2) if you can get a response

**Purpose**

What is the purpose of the site?
Is the purpose explicitly stated?
Is the purpose scientific? educational? entertainment? information? selling a product?