Use and Abuse of Statistics

Due Date: May 4
Pages: ~5-7

Read Huff’s book *How to Lie with Statistics* and pay attention to the different sorts of ways statistics can be misused.

Next, find three examples in public discourse, the media or policy analysis (*from an ostensibly credible source*) where statistics are incorrectly or misleadingly portrayed. First, assess each example by identifying how it fits one of Huff’s descriptions of lying with statistics, or fits a misuse discussed in class or in one of the readings.

Second, discuss why the example is a misuse of statistics. Make clear how it violates an underlying principle of correct use.

Third, explain why the source may have misused the statistic in the manner it did, and remember that among the most common reasons are ignorance of proper use of statistics and intentional deceit. Explain the probable effect, intended or not, of the misuse of statistics.

Fourth, explain how the problem could be remedied. You should explain in detail how the study and the presentation could be done properly. *Be sure to include a copy of the media source with your essay.*

You can discuss all the examples in one essay, or each in a separate essay. As with all formal writing, your essay should have an introductory paragraph with a thesis statement that lays out your argument. You should also include in your introductory paragraph what you will do to make your argument in the rest of the paper. Finally, be sure to use the appropriate terms that you learned in class.