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— Gao Xingjian,
Winner of the 2000 Nobel Prize for Literature



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ADVERTISER INDEX

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[Apr 2009](#)
[Mar 2009](#)
[Feb 2009](#)
[Jan 2009](#)

OUTSTANDING
ACADEMIC
TITLES

[About OAT](#)
[2005 OAT List](#)
[2006 OAT List](#)
[2007 OAT List](#)
[2008 OAT List](#)

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Top Tips for Using CRO
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Information for Advertisers
Information for Publishers
Information for Subscribers
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ProCon.org. Internet Resource. Reviewed in 2009apr
CHOICE.

<http://www.procon.org/>

[Visited Jan'09] The nonpartisan, nonprofit ProCon.org has the following mission statement: "Promoting education, critical thinking, and informed citizenship by presenting controversial issues in a straightforward, nonpartisan primarily pro-con format." It does this by offering a free family of Web sites, each one focusing on a different topic. The 16 topics include the 2008 Election, the Death Penalty, Illegal Immigration, Israeli-Palestinian Conflict, and US-Iraq. The Web site's editors decide on a topic, formulate questions designed to produce clearly pro or con answers, and solicit responses to the questions from the public, experts, and organizations. They then apply a Theoretical Credibility Ranking to rank responses on a scale of one star (lowest credibility) to five stars (highest credibility). The Organization/VIP/Other category is ranked as the least credible, whereas US government reports are ranked as most credible. The details of this system are well documented on the site, as are its limitations.

Each topic is divided into specific subtopics; e.g., the Death Penalty site is subdivided according to Moral and Ethical Issues, Religious Views, and Legal Considerations. In terms of content, *ProCon.org* is like a very simplified version of *CQ Researcher* (CH, Sep'06, 44-0046). An RSS feed is available to report updates, and lesson plans are offered for teachers at all levels. Pros of this resource include its ease of use, content, and organization, which are quite good for a free resource. Sites are balanced and well documented, offering source documents, maps, and time lines. Cons are that the content seems optimized for a high school audience, and is constructed almost entirely from short, paragraph-long quotes. Although one of the site's stated goals is to illustrate the complexity of controversial issues, the content appears in danger of feeding ever-shortening attention spans. **Summing Up:** Recommended. General audience. -- J. A. Knapp, Penn State Altoona

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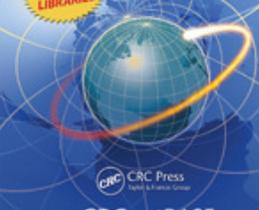


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