

JRN 101B/ 103G: News Literacy/ FALL 2010
Recitation: Evaluating Sources

I. Organization

- News Quiz

II. Discuss the reading *Elements of Journalism*, Chapter 4: "Journalism of Verification". What surprised them about the ideas in this chapter. If they had been asked a year ago how to define journalism, would verification have been the first word? If not, what would?

III. News Log #3 written assignment: Follow a Story over Time

Go around the room. What stories did they follow? Which outlets? How did they go about tracking that coverage? How did the story change? What if it did NOT? Why was that?

IV. RECAP the "Evaluating Sources" Lecture

Five rules:

- i. Independent is better than self-interested
- ii. Multiple sources are better than singular
- iii. Sources who verify are superior to those who assert
- iv. Authoritative sources are better than Uninformed sources
- v. Named sources are better than Anonymous sources

Ask for questions about self-interest or any other topics and revisit Context and Transparency. Students struggle with those terms.

Shirley Sherrod video is the classic context example. Without the rest of the tape, you can be 180 degrees wrong. Without knowing her history (she wound up helping the white farmer save his farm and he is a friend) you'd misunderstand the story she was telling.

Transparency (until we get deeper into it in the next lecture) is What We Know and How We Know it. What We Don't Know, And Why Not... It is drawing back the curtain on the process to let readers see how a news report is assembled.

V. "What Kind of Source Are You?" exercise.

Students are to arrive at class having printed and then filled out the "What Kind of Source Are You" Madlib. You can read through it a little to lighten up the room and then have students pair off and swap Madlibs. Their job is to work through their partner's madlib and evaluate them as a source, using the source evaluation rules. Once they've done that, Ask students to share their findings and whether they were surprised by their partner's evaluation of their proper weight as a source.

VI. ANDERSON COOPER

- Students were assigned to read Cooper's chapter in preparation for class
- Recap key points from the Truth & Verification Lecture
 - i. provisional truth
 - ii. direct and indirect evidence
 - iii. sourcing guidelines (You might write these on the board since you'll have students, on their own, trace the steps Cooper took in verifying the story)
 1. Named sources better than unnamed
 2. Authoritative sources better than uninformed
 3. Independent sources better than self-interested
 4. Sources who verify are better than sources who assert
 5. Multiple sources are better than a single source
- Give students 15 minutes to go through on their own the steps Cooper takes to verify the story.
- Then go step by step with the class and review the 8 steps he took to try and verify his story about the kidnapped children:
 1. Hires local reporter, reads press accounts
 2. Goes to police
 3. Goes to aunt
 4. Interviews resort manager
 5. Finds "kidnapper"/motorcycle driver
 6. Finds hospital administrator
 7. Takes photo to 2nd hospital and morgue
 8. Goes to mass grave.

In each case, identify whether:

- Information gathered is direct or indirect, and;
- Has Cooper enough information at that point to write a story saying she is dead.
- If not, what can be written?

Assignments: Custom by lecture, but remind students that all lectures' students are to turn in their *Shattered Glass* written assignment Friday. AND...Adam Penenberg, the reporter who washed out Stephen Glass, will speak on Nov. 30.