

Lecturer Alerts

This lecture is intended to be continued in a subsequent class section. The atmosphere envisioned is a seminar, with students (having read the examples ahead of time) working their way through Workbook examples with their teacher. The point is to begin developing their ability to deconstruct in real time.

After this lecture, students will be able to:

1. Begin to apply key lessons of News Literacy in real time to find or identify reliable information.
2. Use the IMVAIN test of source reliability on the fly.
3. Distinguish, on the fly, between direct and indirect evidence and even spot-check if conclusions are logical or not.
4. Begin to correctly use the terms “Transparency” and “Context” to judge the professionalism of news reporting.
5. Use the Deconstruction Workbook as a means to rehearse detailed and sophisticated judgment of news reports.

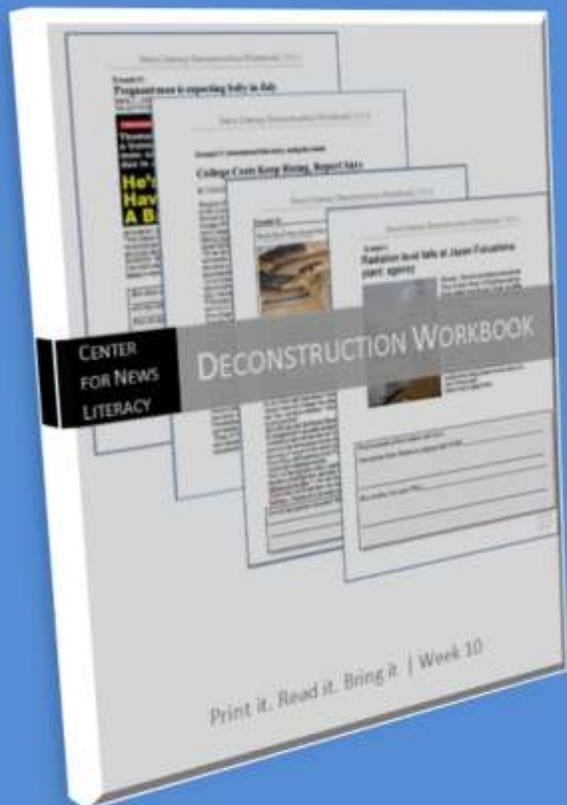
These are the capstone skills of this course, encompassing all 6 outcomes promised by the syllabus.

This slide intended for instructors as a focusing tool, but can be shared with students to prime them. Each lecture will include a slide like this with specific lecture outcomes that refer to course outcomes.

Here is what the syllabus declares students will be able to do if they successfully complete the course:

1. Analyze key elements of news reports - weighing evidence, evaluating sources, noting context and transparency - to judge reliability.
2. Distinguish between journalism, opinion journalism and unsupported bloviation.
3. Identify and distinguish between news media bias and audience bias.
4. Blend personal scholarship and course materials to write forcefully about journalism standards and practices, fairness and bias, First Amendment issues and their individual Fourth Estate rights and responsibilities.
5. Use examples from each day's news to demonstrate critical thinking about civic engagement.
6. Place the impact of social media and digital technologies in their historical context.

Reminder: Bring Deconstruction Workbook to Recitation, too



Print it.

Read it.

Bring it

Students need not only to bring this today, but also to the next class session

'Deconstructing' the News

Is Too Much Texting A Mental Illness?



How to Assess the Reliability of the News

(LECTURERS: More than is usually the case, you'll want to rehearse this with an eye on the time. This lecture is designed to be continued in our recitations. We like to conclude with the series of slides on the Pregnant man and then a deconstruction of the Texting report that opens the hour. Also, make arrangements to turn lecture hall lights back on at those times when students are reading.)

You'll want to have your Deconstruction Workbook out and ready today, as we'll be working from it.

ASK: I know what I think...but as a lecturer who is offended that students tear themselves away from my fascinating class to tend their cellphone, I may be victim to effects of cognitive dissonance...

But what do you think?

-Is too much texting a mental illness?

-Do you text excessively?

-How about your friends or family members?

-Do they have a texting mental illness?

(Show the video. It launches from next slide)



NEWSFELLOW: NEWS FELLOW: LINK (INSERT) VIDEO TO THIS SLIDE AND SELECT "START AUTOMATICALLY"
run-time 1:50

(After it runs)

ASK: What do you think of this?

How do you react? With disbelief or skepticism?

What more do you need to know?

Can you make a reasoned assessment of its reliability?

We are now at the nitty-gritty of News Literacy, taking news reports apart and examining the reliability of the information. We call it Deconstruction.

Using the Deconstruction Workbook you brought to class today, we will examine a series of stories piece-by-piece.

Does the headline match the story? Does the lead (summary paragraph) spell out the main points?

We'll look at the difference between verification, assertion and inference.

How's the evidence in each story? Is it direct or arm's-length?

Does the reporter "Open the Freezer?"

Does the reporter place this tiny report in its appropriate context so that you're neither lost in the forest nor hugging a lone anomalous tree?

Does the reporter provide transparency...admitting what the reporter doesn't know and why not and how the reporter found out the key points?

We will almost certainly not have time to do all the examples in the workbook. You'll keep working on these in recitation.



SLIDE: DECONSTRUCTING THE NEWS.

This week, we learn and practice a step-by-step process for pulling apart news stories of all kinds to assess their reliability.

Remember, that's the point of this course: not to make you a cynical smart-aleck, but to prepare you to lead your family, your workplace and your community by skillfully finding reliable information...information that is actionable.

The Deconstruction Work book includes a series of stories that illustrate the value of this deconstruction process.

We will almost certainly not have time to do all the examples in Lecture, so this process will continue in recitation.

Past students say this lesson sticks with them long after the final exam...annoys them...makes them read slower...deconstruct TV stories out loud instead of zoning out...to which we say YES!

A word to the wise: most of your grade on the final will rest on your ability to deconstruct with precision and sophistication, using all of the concepts, skills and vocabulary learned this semester.

Note the stories are not all perfect examples; they are the result of daily journalism like you will consume for the rest of your life.

In the next three slides I'm going to introduce to you the method by which you break a story down into its parts in order to judge its reliability.

We call this deconstruction.

A Deconstruction Worksheet

How to Judge Reliability

- 1) Summarize the main points: Does the headline and the lead support the main point(s)?
- 2) How close does the reporter come to opening the freezer? Is the evidence direct or arm's-length?



You can't do all eight steps of the deconstruction process on every story you read in your life. But when the topic really matters to you and you're getting ready to make decision or take action...you better be sure you're working from reliable information.

Here's how:

1. Summarize the main points of the story.

Do the headline and lede support the main point(s) of the story?

2. Assess the evidence supporting the main points of the story. Is Direct? Arm's-Length? How close did the reporter come to opening the freezer?

A Deconstruction Worksheet

How to Judge Reliability

- 3) Evaluate the reliability of the sources using I'M VA/IN
- 4) Does the reporter make his/her work transparent?
- 5) Does the reporter place the story in context?



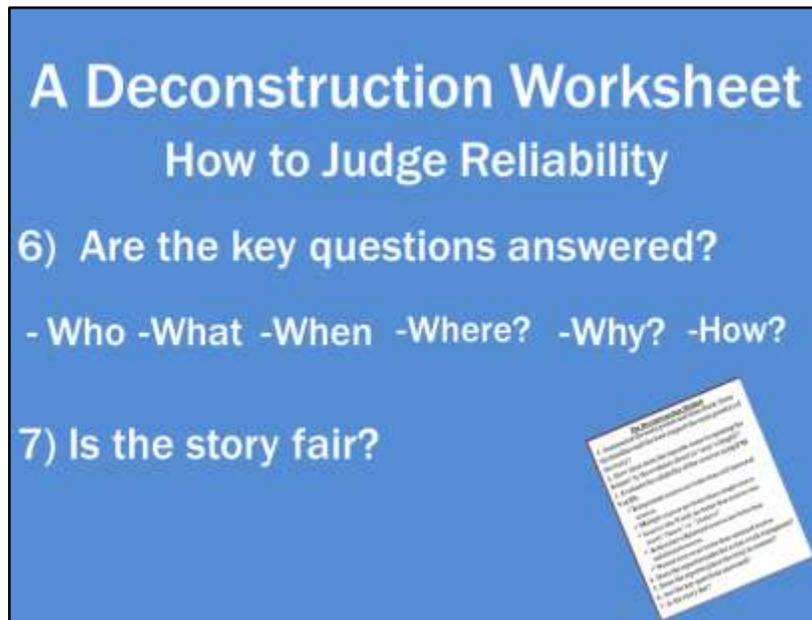
3. Are the sources reliable?

Are you reacting to them emotionally, or analyzing them intellectually?

(Remind them, the phrase is “better than” ...these are not absolutes)

4. Does the reporter make his or her work transparent? How does the reporter know what is being reported?

5. Does the reporter place the story in context?



(ANIMATION: who, what, when where, why, who all fade in, in succession.)

6. Are the key questions answered? (And what is left out.)

7. Is the story balanced? Should it be? Is it fair to the evidence and to key stakeholders?

When the information matters because you're going to make a decision, take action or share it with others...these questions matter.

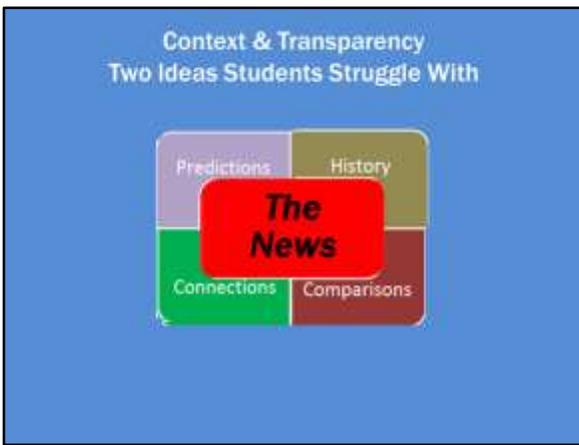
And The Whole Point Is....

What can a news consumer
Do with this information

Is it actionable?

Again, the point of this process is not to make you an insufferable smart-alek. It is to help you find reliable information to:

- Make a decision
- Take action
- Make a judgment
- Share (responsibly) with others



ANIMATION: Slide opens with Red Box “The News”.

With each click another of the types of context appears.

A set of facts about some event that happened today takes on much more meaning, accuracy even, when the writer gives you context, such as the HISTORY that led to the event, COMPARISON to similar events, CONNECTION between these players and outside parties, and responsible PREDICTIONS of what comes next.

With all context, today’s isolated event makes more sense.

Key Definitions

Main Entry: **con·text** 

Pronunciation: \ˈkän-,tekst\

Function: *noun*

Context: Facts that surround an event or elements of a news story and provide meaning or significance

Before we go step-by-step through deconstruction, I want to walk you through two concepts that bedevil undergraduates: Context & Transparency.

Here's a simple definition.

Let's look at some more examples.

Deconstructing the News

The power of Context

However, behind the image of two-year-old Jingdan lies a tale not of intentional cruelty but, it seems, one of misplaced love and fear: his sister disappeared from the same spot just two weeks ago.

"I was afraid I would lose him too," their father, Chen Chuanliu, said today.



Animation: Click1=Photo, Click2= Headline, Click3= Excerpt

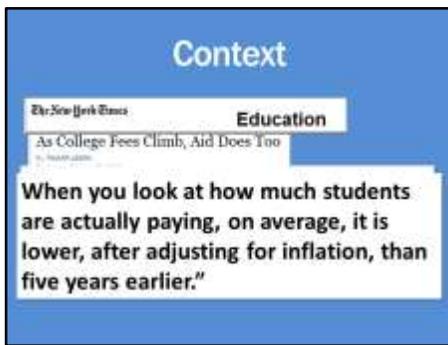
Click - You see a photo of a toddler chained to a tree. What do you think?

Click

Now what do you think?

Click:Reporter Tania Branigan in Beijing interviews the father, who says his daughter was abducted, so while he must work, he chains up the boy, Jingdan. that change how you see the photo? That is context, what you might call "The Rest of the Story." As a news consumer, if you don't look for context, you can miss the story.

<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-1248252/Chinese-boy-chained-lamp-post-dad.html>



(Animation: First headline, then scary data graph about costs rising, then graphs that show aid grew faster than costs for a net reduction in payouts by students. Text is included so you can read aloud.)

The headline starts your ulcer: college costs are rising. That college costs are rising is the kernel of news, a story that alerts...with multiple drivers: Change, Relevance, Proximity, Importance...

(click) But if you were a scientist studying the impact of that fact, you'd think about all the variables...Like t this fact about aid increasing. That's the context.

(click)...Which makes possible this analysis: Payouts have dropped for students.

Wow...Does context ever matter. If you had the fees data alone, it would be a very different story than this.

As College Fees Climb, Aid Does Too

By [TAMAR LEWIN](#)

As their state financing dwindled, four-year public universities increased their published tuition and fees almost 8 percent this year, to an average of \$7,605, according to the [College Board's](#) annual reports. When room and board are included, the average in-state student at a public university now pays \$16,140 a year.

At private nonprofit colleges and universities, tuition rose 4.5 percent to an average of \$27,293, or \$36,993 with room and board.

The good news in the 2010 "Trends in College Pricing" and "Trends in Student Aid" reports is that fast-rising tuition costs have been accompanied by a huge increase in financial aid, which helped keep down the actual amount students and families pay.

"In 2009-2010, students got \$28 billion in Pell grants, and that's \$10 billion more than the year before," said Sandy Baum, the economist who is the lead author of the reports. "When you look at how much students are actually paying, on average, it is lower, after adjusting for inflation, than five years earlier."

In the last five years, the report said, average published tuition and fees increased by about 24 percent at public four-year colleges and universities, 17 percent at private nonprofit four-year institutions, and 11 percent at public two-year colleges — but in each sector, the net inflation-adjusted price, taking into account both grants and federal tax benefits, decreased over the period.

Almost everybody has been helped by the federal government's increased spending on education, Ms. Baum said, either through Pell grants, which provide an average of \$3,600 for low-income students, or through tax credits, which go further up the income scale.

The increase in federal support this year was so large that unlike former years, government grants surpassed institutional grants.

"I think that's an aberration," Ms. Baum said. "Pell grants are unlikely to grow so rapidly in the coming years, and institutional grants are likely to grow, so I think the ratio will flip back."

This year, the report found, full-time students receive an average of about \$6,100 in grant aid and federal tax benefits at public four-year institutions, \$16,000 at private nonprofit institutions, and \$3,400 at public two-year colleges.

Key Definitions

Main Entry: **trans·par·en·cy** 🗨️
Pronunciation: \tran(t)s-'per-ən(t)-sē\
Function: *noun*
Inflected Form(s): *plural trans·par·en·cies*
Date: 1591

Transparency: The reporter specifies in the story what he or she *does not* know, and why it could not be learned; how they know what they do know; when the reporter pulls the curtain aside.

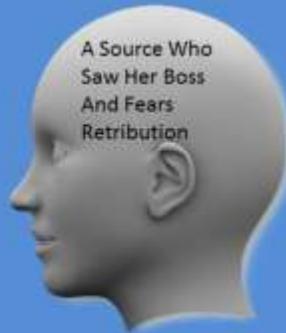
And now transparency. This is a word that has a lot of different connotations, depending on what you're talking about.

For the purposes of this course, there are two meanings to transparency.

1. Specifying in a story what you do not know or could not learn. For example: *"It could not be learned... He or she could not be reached for comment."*

2. Specifying how the reporter got the information. For example: *"In an interview at his front door, the suspect said...According to documents obtained by Channel 6 News..."*

TRANSPARENCY



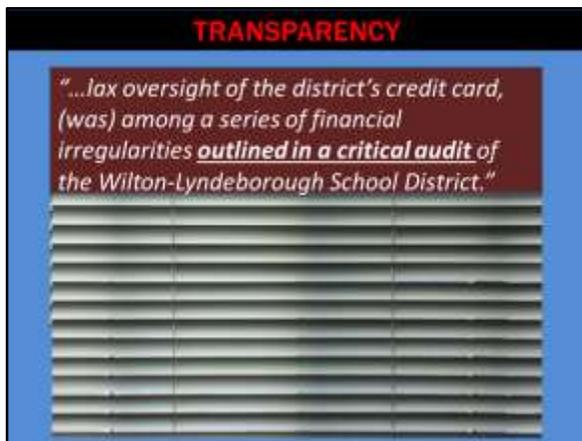
ANIMATION: This sequence is intended to show how transparency makes a source more trustworthy.

Click 1= A Source; Click2=A Source who Saw; Click 3= A source who saw her boss; Click4=A Source Who Saw Her Boss and Fears Retribution.

TRANSPARENCY, is what we call it when the reporter lets you see why she made certain decisions so that you may judge her work. In this case, an anonymous source is pretty fuzzy until you know it is a witness, a female, an employee and that she fears retribution.(click-click-click-click)

Ironically, transparency makes things LESS fuzzy.

Transparency is a journalist making it possible for you to see how she knows what she knows or why we don't know all that we wish we did know.



ANIMATION: On Click, Transparency header appears. Each additional click raises the blinds on the credit card statements that provided the details used in the report.

LECTURER: HERE'S ANOTHER VISUAL ATTEMPT AT SAME EXPLANATION

TRANSPARENCY is what we call it when the reporter lets you see the provenance of crucial information.

In this case, the serious charge of misuse of a government credit card is supported with copies of the credit card bills, showing the dubious meals and travel.

Ironically, transparency makes things LESS fuzzy. Transparency is a journalist making it possible for you to see how she knows what she knows or why we don't know all that we wish we did know.



Transparency has lots of analogies in your every day life: At the on-campus grill, the cooks make your omelets and cheeseburgers as you watch. Letting you see the process is supposed to make you feel better about the food. Fed Ex lets you log onto its website to see each stage in your package's progress from you to your Grandmother. Tracking the shipment lets you see the steps they took to deliver it.

That's what we mean by transparency in journalism: The journalist letting you see the steps taken to assemble the story.

[CLICK HERE TO SHOW QUOTES](#)

Here is a list of common statements by which journalists make their work transparent...open to the public:

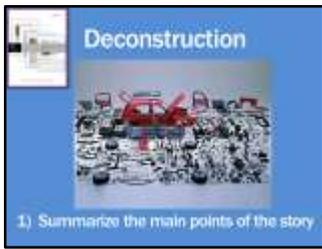
--Could not be reached

--Requested anonymity because she feared for her job.

--A reporter tried to contact the family at their home, but no one came to the door.

-The information could not be independently verified.

We'll circle back to this concept.



Let's start working our way through the Deconstruction workbook, step by step.

STEP 1: SUMMARIZE THE STORY

If your car is a Toyota, you want it to have a Toyota engine, Toyota brakes and Toyota steering wheel, not a shiny but mismatched part from a Chevy schoolbus.

Same goes for a reliable news report. If the Headline and Lead are not matched to the story, you should be concerned.

SO, Summarize for yourself the main points. This will get you out of automatic reading mode and into critical thinking mode.

A well-made, reliable story will have a headline and "lead" that match the facts.

One useful definition: The Lead is often the first paragraph and should generally give the main point of the story.

Sometimes the lead is delayed because the reporter uses an anecdote to set the scene or hook the reader. Even then, there is usually still one paragraph, a bit further into the story, which gives you a summary of the main points. A hyped-up headline or lead is a warning sign: this report is more interested in gathering an audience than delivering reliable information.



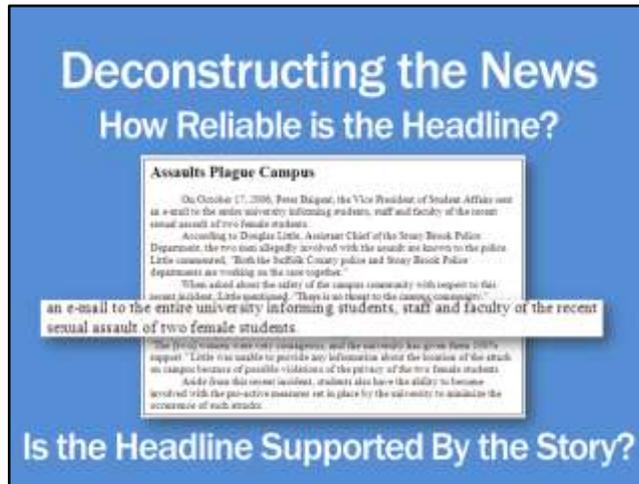
ANIMATION: SLIDE OPENS WITH SCARY CONTAMINATION HEADLINE. CLICK TO BRING UP STORY TEXT. MUCH LESS SCARY.

If your sister or mother were serving on the USS Ronald Reagan when the Navy deployed it to help Japanese citizens after the Fukushima nuclear reactor meltdown, this headline would strike terror in your household.

CLICK

Yet when you read the story, it was minor exposure that washes away with soap and water and equivalent to about one extra month's exposure to background radiation from rocks, the soil and the sun...

<http://www.cnn.com/2011/WORLD/asiapcf/03/14/japan.us.navy.radiation/index.html>



(Animation: Click a 2nd time to bring up pull quote)

Turn to page 1 in the workbook

Assaults Plague campus.

The words intended to make you stop and read a story are the Headline, the stuff in big letters, and the “lead,” a summary sentence that tells you what the story is about .

ASK: Does this headline accurately summarize the story?

(It does not. Discuss why it does not.)

Stony Brook enrollment is approximately 22,000. What rate of crime per 1,000 students would constitute a plague?

ASK: Is the campus “plagued?”

Is this reliable information?

Step 2:

Deconstructing the News

Assess the evidence supporting the main points of the story.



Direct Evidence?

Indirect Evidence?

Are The Inferences Logical?

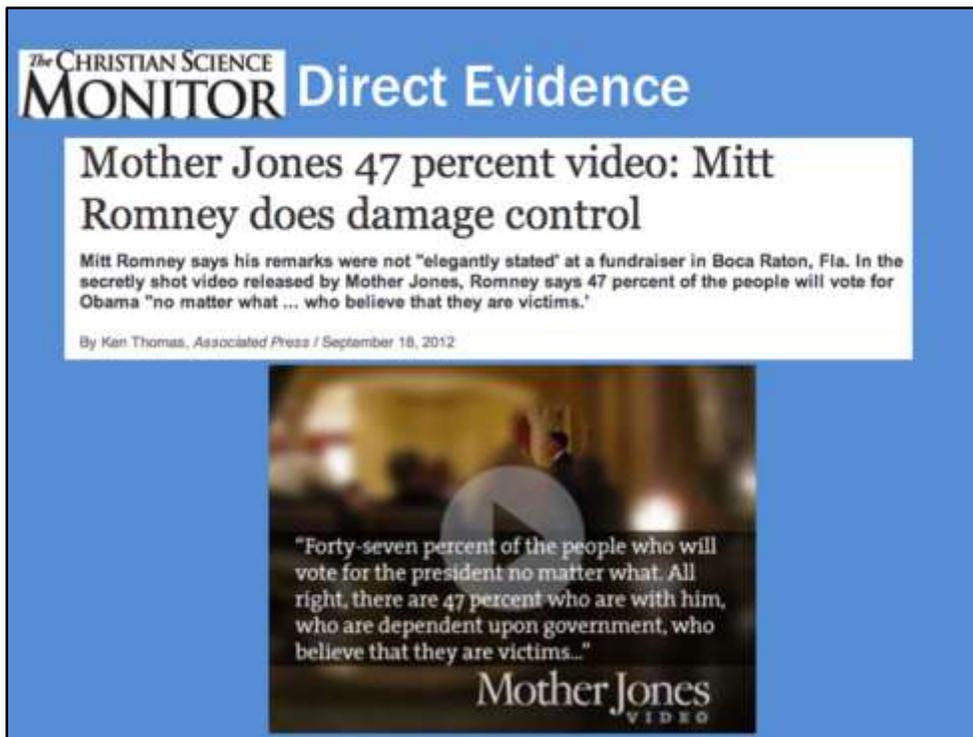
Did The Reporter Open the Freezer?

In the lecture on Truth and Verification, we talked about the importance of judging the quality of the evidence for yourself.

Is it direct or indirect?

Are assertions going about naked, with no evidence to give them dignity?

When it comes to really serious reports that affect a person's freedom, the outcome of an election, the future of a business, you want to pay attention to the evidence a journalist has collected. Does it support the conclusions that are suggested?



(NOTE: Example is not in Deconstruction Workbook)

When Mother Jones Magazine reported in September that Governor Romney had slammed Obama supporters as “dependent upon government” and unwilling to take responsibility for their circumstances, what evidence did Mother Jones’ reporter offer? A leaked video of a Florida fund-raiser provides direct evidence.

<http://www.csmonitor.com/USA/Latest-News-Wires/2012/0918/Mother-Jones-47-percent-video-Mitt-Romney-does-damage-control>

Step 2:
Deconstructing the News

An Agent, a Immigrant, and a Demand for Sex

The 16-minute recording, which the woman first took to The New York Times and then to the Queens district attorney, suggests the vast power of low-level immigration law enforcers, and a growing

Money, not sex, is the more common currency of corruption in immigration, but according to Congressional testimony in 2006 by Michael Maxwell, former director of the agency's internal investigations, more than 3,000 backlogged complaints of employee misconduct had gone uninvestigated for lack of staff, including 528 involving criminal allegations.

Evidence: Did the reporter open the freezer?

(Animation: First click brings up graph about the audio recording. 2nd click, indirect evidence in the form of background information that describes other examples of this kind of behavior by INS agents.)

Workbook Page 3

In this example from the workbook, a serious charge is made against an Immigration agent. (Don't click yet, but each click brings up another)

ASK: Where is the evidence? What kind is it?

ASK: How close did the reporter come to opening the freezer

Let students bring this out:

1. On the tape, the 16-minute recording.
2. Confirmed in congressional testimony by a named official, Michael Maxwell.
3. Statistics re: complaints back up point 3,000 pending misconduct complaints.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2008/03/21/nyregion/21immigrant.html>

Did the reporter open the freezer?

Los Angeles Times

California suppressed consultant's report on inmate suicides



SACRAMENTO — Gov. Jerry Brown has pointed to reams of documents to make the case in court and on the stump that California's prison crisis is over, and inmates are receiving good care.

But there is at least one document the administration wanted to hide.

New court filings reveal that the state suppressed a report from its own consultant warning that California's prison suicide-watch practices encouraged inmate deaths.



Workbook Page 4

In this example from the workbook, the reporter reveals that California Gov. Jerry Brown, who campaigned on a claim that he had solved the prison crisis, hid a report that contradicted the Gov's statement. The state itself commissioned this report from an expert investigator, who found that the prison system's way of dealing with prisoners with high suicide risk (e.g. special confinement under dingy conditions) actually increased their risk of suicide. By withholding this report, the state was attempting to sweep the problem under the rug and make it look like they solved the problem, yet in reality they were probably making things worse. How did the reporter open the freezer? (By showing and citing the report.)

<http://articles.latimes.com/2013/feb/28/local/la-me-ff-prisons-20130228>



(Animation: Mildly creepy...Question mark on a meat-hook swings out)

DID THE REPORTER OPEN THE FREEZER?

You recall the story of the New Orleans reporter who flinched from examining the freezer in the Convention Center that was supposed to be full of murder victims... and got the story wrong.

This course asks the question...How close does the reporter come to "opening the freezer?" as a way to think about whether the story is based on direct or arm's-length evidence.

Just because a story relies on arm's-length evidence does not mean it is a weak story.

Often, that is the only evidence available.

But the news consumer should remember to stop and think when the story rests on eyewitnesses, when it rests on second-hand information.

What's the Evidence That Sen. Gillibrand Will Run for President?

DAILY NEWS

Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand suddenly on the short list of potential presidential candidates for 2016

Democrat is raising her profile after speech to delegates at Charlotte convention and fund-raising efforts for fellow politicians

Comments (65)

BY KENNETH LOVETT / NEW YORK DAILY NEWS

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 14, 2012, 9:25 PM



Direct Evidence?
Indirect Evidence?
Inference?

Workbook Page 15

In this example from the workbook, there's no direct evidence at all. She has raised money for other candidates.

She spoke at the Democratic Convention

She says she's not running and wants Sec. of State Hillary Clinton to run.

A political science professor says he has heard her name mentioned (hearsay)

The reporter infers from these pieces of evidence that she is gearing up.

He does not mention that this is a common pattern for people preparing a bid.

He does not mention that this is also a common pattern for Senators from safe districts: raise unnecessary campaign funds and then curry favor by giving it to candidates who face a tough race.

Which leads to the next part of evidence analysis: has the evidence been used to support a valid inference?

<http://www.nydailynews.com/news/politics/gillibrand-short-list-2016-presidential-contenders-article-1.1183451>

Test Inferences for Soundness

Main Entry: **ev·i·dence** 🗨️

Pronunciation: \ 'e-və-dən(t)s, -və-,den(t)s \

Function: *noun*

Date: 14th century

Main Entry: **in·fer·ence** 🗨️

Pronunciation: \ 'in-f(ə-)rən(t)s, -fərn(t)s \

Function: *noun*

Date: 1594

Evidence: Information that proves or disproves something

Inference: Taking information that is accepted as true and then drawing a conclusion that may or may not be valid

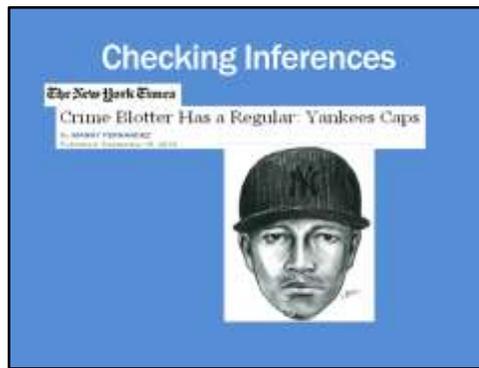
Evidence is information that proves or disproves something

Inference is an assertion that suggests a conclusion or relationship. To be sound, the assumptions must be accurate AND the connections must be carefully made.

Otherwise...you're on thin ice.

Aka: Correlation does not equal causation.

Aka: Post Hoc, Ergo Propter Hoc: Latin for "*after this, therefore because (on account) of this*" commonly referred to as a *logical fallacy* .



Now let's read Workbook **Page 5**

ASK: What kind of evidence does the reporter collect? (Direct or arm's-length)

With that evidence:

- Can you conclude Yankees hat cause criminal behavior?
- Can you conclude all criminals wear Yankees hats?
- Can you conclude dumb criminals, the ones who get caught, wear Yankees hats?

What phrase have you learned about this common trap people fall into when they assume they have all the right facts? (Correlation does not equal causation...flawed inference.)

I think you could call that a context problem, by the way. If you don't have the whole picture, you may draw a faulty inference.

And if you conclude from this that all inference is flawed...you're ignoring the fact that most criminal investigation and scientific endeavor relies at least in part on Inductive reasoning built on sturdy three-part inferences like this: All Men are Mortal; Socrates is a Man; Socrates is Mortal.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2010/09/16/nyregion/16caps.html>



Now let's look at Workbook **Page 8** : Pulling all-nighters can lower GPA.

(Click brings up quote with data)

“Certainly the evidence is out there showing that short sleep duration absolutely interferes with concentration....” says one source...and then there's this study (CLICK NOW)

But does that mean all-nighters equate to lower grades?

Is that the only conclusion you can make from the evidence that was collected?

OR...are lower-GPA students more likely to pull all nighters.

Or...what are other possible conclusions?

Solid evidence is one thing.

Inductive reasoning, however, is dangerous if you don't understand Fallacy: which is the study of

common thinking errors such as confusing correlation for causation.

http://www.usatoday.com/tech/science/discoveries/2007-12-14-all-nighters-gpa_N.htm



Because most stories rely on interviews, news consumers looking for reliable information need to evaluate sources.

TO REITERATE A KEY POINT...In the past, some students have mistakenly applied an all-or-nothing standard. Any source who failed just one of the sourcing guidelines was ruled unreliable.

It's rarely that clear, which is why we have given you five rules for weighing sources.

Remember how important that word "BETTER" is. It's not absolute. It's relative.

If someone's an eye-witness, odds are good they are also a participant. That doesn't mean they're unreliable, but it does suggest you proceed carefully.

If someone's authoritative about a company, they're likely an employee, investor or competitor and therefore self-interested. But if the information they provide is verifiable, they may be a reliable source.

The point is, you're smart enough to take all this into account and make a nuanced judgment of reliability.

Step 3:

Evaluate Sources

- 1) **I**ndependent Sources Are **Better** Than Self-Interested Sources
- 2) **M**ultiple Sources Are **Better** Than Single Sources
- 3) Sources Who **V**erify Are **Better** Than Sources Who Assert
- 4) **A**uthoritative/**I**nformed Sources Are **Better** Than Uninformed Sources
- 5) **N**amed Sources Are **Better** Than Unnamed Sources

(Mnemonic Device: **I'M VAIN**)

(ANIMATION: Each bullet point comes in (quickly) on the click. Instead of fading in, they fly in, just to keep the students awake.)

Just a reminder.

Here's how we evaluate sources in News Literacy.

Deconstructing the News
Evaluate Sources Using IMVAIN
Independence vs. Self-Interest



Brooklyn
Eyewitness "Certain" Kimani Gray Was Unarmed When Police Shot Him
By Ryan Devereaux Wint, Mar 13 2018 at 11:57 AM
Categories: Brooklyn

"After the anti-crime sergeant and police officer told the suspect to show his hands, which was heard by witnesses, Gray produced a revolver and pointed it at the officers, who fired a total of 11 rounds, striking Gray several times," Paul J. Browne, the chief spokesman for the Police Department, said.



Tishana King claims to have watched the entire scene unfold from her window. She told the *Daily News* she is "certain [Gray] didn't have anything in his hands" when he was shot.

ANIMATION: CLICK1 = UNDERLINES PAUL BROWNE AND HIS AFFILIATION

CLICK2 = UNDERLINES CITIZEN GRAY

On March 9th, 16 year old Kimani Gray was shot by police in Brooklyn. Riots erupted at a vigil for the teen, after a witness and several family members and friends say Kimani was unarmed. Paul J. Browne, chief spokesperson for the police department, however, says Gray produced a revolver. The police department has released photos of the revolver found at the scene.

How do you rate each source on the basis of Independence? Browne's self-interest is that he is paid by the NYPD.

We don't know Ms. Gray's self-interest

Deconstructing the News

Evaluate Sources Using IMVAIN

Multiple
aka Corroboration



ANIMATION: CLICK1= BRINGS UP SLIDE FROM SOURCES LECTURE, MULTIPLE SOURCES IN NYT VIDEO

Just a reminder from the Sources lecture, the strength of the New York Times story on the Blackwater shooting case was that it used so many different sources, with so many different perspectives on what happened.

That's what the M in IMVAIN pushes you to ask is "Who Else Sez So?"

Sources Asserting vs. Verifying

ALJAZEERA

PLO officials call for Arafat inquiry

Executive committee member says Arafat's poisoning by polonium was a crime "committed by a state".

A report by Swiss experts, obtained by Al Jazeera, showed that Arafat's exhumed remains contained 13 times the natural levels of the highly radioactive isotope, polonium-210.

"The [test] results proved Arafat was poisoned by polonium, and this substance is created by states, not people, meaning that the crime was committed by a state," said **Yusef Abu Yusef**, a member of the PLO's executive committee.

Qasbi **Abul Karim**, another member of the PLO's executive committee, told Al Jazeera the report may prompt the committee to push for an "independent and internationally credible investigation into this crime". "Only Israelis have the means and the motives in order to commit this crime. This is a wonderful and a crime that makes the Israeli's responsible."

*Abul Karim asserted that everything he said to ensure that Arafat was not at the time being made his language component, was not told by our website." **Gissin** **Gissin** **Abul Karim**, in reference to a 2003-2004 Israeli siege of the president's Executive headquarters. "His instructions were to take every precaution to avoid Israel being accused of Arafat's death," said **Gissin**, who served as **Sharon's** spokesman.

**ANIMATION: CLICK1= YUSEF SAYING POLONIUM IS ONLY OWNED BY STATES
CLICK2= AL-KARIM SAYING IT HAS TO BE ISRAEL
CLICK3= GISSIN SAYS THE POLICY WAS THE OPPOSITE:
PROTECT ARAFAT**

In November of 2004, PLO Leader Yasser Arafat died of unknown causes. His mysterious death has been the cause of speculation that has now risen in response to a new report.

On November 6, an Al Jazeera report surfaced that quotes a Swiss expert saying the exhumed body of Yasser Arafat contained high levels of Polonium-210, a radioactive isotope that is a powerful poison. (Though not a sneaky one, as it leaves behind an unmistakable radiation signature.)

Let's think about these three sources quoted in Al Jazeera's report.

Are they asserting or do they verify, and how does that (and their other traits) affect your rating of their reliability?

Does Yusef verify his statement that Polonium is never owned by individuals?

Does al-Karim verify his statement that only Israel has the means and motives?

Does Gissin verify his statement that Israel's security forces were under strict orders to avoid killing Arafat?

(Your correspondent would say no. All three make very specific statements, but provide no evidentiary basis. Upon some further research, note that there are quasi-industrial, non-state, uses of Polonium, that Russia is the major producer and that the Lancet article on Arafat's remains may or may not be challenged by a Russian report.)

<http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2013/11/plo-calls-international-arafat-inquiry-2013117133621879133.html>

Trustworthy Anonymous Sources
Are Offered to You With:

Transparency
Characterization
Corroboration

Anonymous sources present a number of challenges.

It's tempting to discount everything they say. They're not accountable for what they say and it's nearly impossible for a reader to judge if a nameless person is authoritative.

On the other hand, whistleblowers have exposed a great deal of dangerous, illegal or embarrassing behavior by government officials, corporate leaders and religious leaders.

So, other than trusting the reporter's judgment, what can you do?

Ask yourself these questions.

- Why is the person anonymous?
- Has the reporter offered information to demonstrate the person is informed?
- Is there any indication the person is self-interested?
- Does the source assert or verify?
- Is there any independent confirmation of what the source is saying? (Corroboration)

Anonymous Sources

Transparent enough?

Characterized enough?

The Washington Post

Benghazi attack may cloud Clinton's legacy

Ahead of the hearing, State Department officials provided new details about the attack while asserting that there had been no way to predict or prevent the sustained assault.

"The lethality and the number of armed people is unprecedented. There had been no attack like that anywhere in Libya — Tripoli, Benghazi or elsewhere — in the time we had been there," said one official who spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss events still being investigated. "It would be very, very hard to find a precedent for an attack like that in recent diplomatic history."

Los Angeles Times

Town hall awaits Obama and Romney

Obama ranks somewhere between Clinton and Bush on the empathy scale. He can be more focused when speaking directly to a voter, rather than a camera. As a candidate on the trail in 2008, he showed himself able, if not exactly gifted, when it came to listening and connecting.

Still, the same problem that tanked his first debate performance could dog his second. He is still a sitting president who practices the art of the stern-winded answer, as well as a former law professor who has found it hard to shake his academic demeanor.

"When he is on during a town hall, he can be very on and engaged," said a person close to the Obama campaign who asked not to be identified while talking about the president's challenges. "The risk is the same tendency to give professional responses. He has to show he connects."

(NOTE: Example is not in Deconstruction Workbook)

These are two examples of anonymous or unnamed sources in the news. The "good" example on the left is from a story in the Washington Post about the attack in Benghazi, Libya. A State Department official is giving information to the reporter on background because the event is still being investigated. The information may be self-serving, but at least you know why the source is not named.

The "bad" example on the right is from a story in the LA Times about how the two candidates are preparing for the town-hall style debate format. The "person close to the Obama campaign" is giving an insider's judgment of Obama's ability to perform in this debate format. Why did the LA Times not release the source's name? Because it seems like that person asked to not be identified "while talking about the president's challenges." In other words, the LA Times is not holding the Obama campaign accountable. If people working for the campaign are "on the record" while saying good things but insist on being "off the record" when they are pointing out "the president's challenges," then that means the LA Times is giving the campaign broad cover to be able to talk about some things openly but with no accountability. Is there a legitimate journalistic reason to withhold this source's name?

Step 4:

Deconstructing the News

Does the reporter make his or her work transparent?



Working through the Deconstruction steps, we're now at #4: DOES THE REPORTER MAKE HIS OR HER WORK TRANSPARENT?

In the prior lecture we described the scientific method, which includes publication of research findings with detailed data, methodology, etc and encouraging other scientists to review it.

In journalism, one form of peer review is called transparency: telling how you know what you know and why you don't know what you don't know. Think of it as a behind-the-scenes tour...the reporter showing you how the information was gathered...or why it was not available.. This allows you to judge their work, just like you'd judge the findings of a scientist. If someone else could go find the same material, the story is reliable.

Key Definitions

Main Entry: **trans·par·en·cy** 🗨️
Pronunciation: \tran(t)s-'per-ən(t)-sē\
Function: *noun*
Inflected Form(s): *plural* **trans·par·en·cies**
Date: 1591

Transparency: The reporter specifies in the story what he or she *does not* know, and why it could not be learned; how they know what they do know; when the reporter pulls the curtain aside.

Definition of transparent: Specifying in a story what you do not know or could not learn. For example: It could not be learned. He or she could not be reached for comment.

Deconstructing the News

What is the example of transparency?



National Public Radio Reports from Basra

STEP 5: DOES THE REPORTER MAKE HIS OR HER WORK TRANSPARENT?

Here is an NPR report from Basra, (Iraq)

Listen for examples of transparency

Example: NPR report from Basra. Listen for the statements of what it cannot verify or know with certainty.

(Next slide launches audio, a really good example of real-time transparency in which she says what she doesn't know.)



Npr_basra.wmv

NEWSFELLOW: NEWS FELLOW: LINK
(INSERT) VIDEO TO THIS SLIDE AND SELECT
“START AUTOMATICALLY”

Runtime 2:40

Transparency

Teen rape trial shines unwelcome spotlight on Ohio town, football team
By **Chelsea J. Carter**, CNN
updated 10:27 PM EDT, Tue March 12, 2013

CNN Justice



Both boys have been identified by a judge in court, by defense attorneys and in newspapers and other media reports.

CNN is not identifying the girl, who also is a juvenile, in accordance with its policy not to release the names of alleged rape victims.

Animation: The Transparency example is hidden until you click for it.

Workbook Page 12

Transparency is how a journalist shows you what he or she doesn't know or can't say. In this case, the CNN explains where and how the alleged perpetrators and victims were identified elsewhere, and why they were not being identified by CNN in this article.

<http://www.cnn.com/2013/03/12/justice/ohio-steubenville-case/>

Deconstructing the News

Corrections are Institutional Transparency

The New York Times

Corrections

FRONT PAGE

An article on Saturday about the political donations of Paul Singer, a hedge fund manager, described inaccurately the source of significant contributions to the National Republican Senatorial Committee, the singer and others affiliated with his firm, Elliott Management, are collectively the top source of contributions to the committee, according to the Center for Responsive Politics, which collates campaign finance data. The hedge fund itself is not the committee's biggest source of money. (Under campaign finance rules, the firm cannot make such contributions.)

An article on Thursday about the perils of prescribing psychiatric drugs to young children misquoted, in one instance, the name of a Louisiana town that is home to a facility where anti has been issued off several such drugs. As the headline correctly noted, they live in Opelousas, not Opelous.

INTERNATIONAL

An article on Monday about the release of secret tapes showing that the former leader of the Roman Catholic Church in Belgium urged a man sexually abused by a bishop to keep silent for a year, until the bishop could review, misnamed the given name of the abuser. The retired bishop, who is the victim's uncle, is Roger Vanhulst, not Robert.

NATIONAL

An article last Friday about the effort of Defense Secretary Robert M. Gates to reduce the number of generals and admirals in the United States military described inaccurately the method used to calculate retirement benefits to the military. Pensions are based on base pay — not on full pay, which can include extra money to cover, for example, the cost of food and housing.

BUSINESS DAY

An article on Wednesday about a new computer memory technology called the nanotube mis-

stated the expected capacity of advanced flash storage chips by 2014. It is 170 billion bits per square centimeter, not per square inch.

THE ARTS

An article on Tuesday about a dispute over whether a box of negatives bought in a garage sale are last work of Ansel Adams or at least partly the work of another photographer, Earl Brooks, misnamed part of a comment by Arnold Forster, a lawyer for the man who bought the negatives. When told that an expert who originally attributed the negatives to Adams had changed his

mind after viewing some photographs by Brooks, Mr. Forster said that "without possession of the negatives, there is no evidence that Earl Brooks created the negative from which the press went wild." He did not say "without possession of the negative of the negative."

CROSSWORD

The crossword puzzle on Tuesday gave an erroneous clue for 5 Across, seeking the answer "ESTER" for the father's book of Esther. The clue was incorrect because Esther is not the "only" book in the Bible that does not mention God. Neither does the King of Solomon.

Errors and Comments:
nytimes@nytimes.com or call
1-888-NYT-NEWS
(1-888-488-6881)

Editorials: letters@nytimes.com
or fax (212) 556-3632.
Public Editor: Sheldon Chaitin (not affiliated
with a response or concerned about

the paper's journalistic integrity) can
reach The Times's public editor, Art
Dorosen, at public@nytimes.com
or call (212) 556-7632.

Newspaper Delivery:
customerservice@nytimes.com or call
1-800-NYT-TUES
(1-800-488-4837)

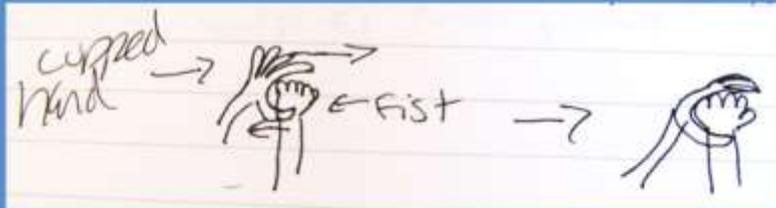
STEP 5: DOES THE REPORTER MAKE HIS OR HER WORK TRANSPARENT?

Point of this is that corrections are institutional transparency: here's what we got wrong.

Step 5:

Deconstructing the News

Does the reporter place the story in context?



Students have been known to remember how to think about context by flashing the News Literacy gang sign and even by drawing it on their exams...

It shows the context (hand shaped like a C – for Context) wrapped around the kernel of news (other hand). It's a way to remember the news is still the heart of the story, but it's a stronger story with context supporting and explaining the news.



(This example is better suited to Recitation, but it's very effective if you decide to take time in lecture)

Circling back to the idea we introduced at the beginning of lecture: Context

Let's see....Two counties is 3% of the 62...but %10 percent of the car thefts?

How many of you drive to school or have a car? Well, according to the Federal Bureau of Investigation's Uniform Crime Reports, a motor vehicle is stolen in the United States every 26.4 seconds. (Look at watch, wait 26 seconds, say "There goes one now!")

The FBI also calculates the odds of a vehicle being stolen were 1 in 207 in the latest study. So...how many cars in the lot west of here?

Furthermore, the odds are highest in urban areas like this Tri-state area....And I thought you should know that more than one in ten of the cars stolen in all 62 counties of New York State are stolen right here on Long Island...

How are you commuters feeling?... Can you remember if you locked your car?

If you leave, though, you'll miss this context...The car theft rate is the highest in the Western U.S., almost a full third higher than the US average. And the theft rate for the Northeast is about half the US average. And the car theft rate for Long Island? It's about one third the U.S. average. ...But, but, but...what about "*more than one in ten of the cars stolen in all 62 counties of New York State are stolen right here on Long Island*"?

That is true, but while Long Island accounts for about 15 percent of the state's population, it only sees about a tenth of the car thefts, so car theft is rare on Long Island, relative to almost anywhere in the country...

Step 6:
Deconstructing the News
Are the key questions answered?

Who — THE BRONX, N.Y. (PIX11)— Fire officials want to know what sparked a fast-moving fire in Ederwald early Sunday morning that killed the landlord of a three-family home.

What — Police identify the victim as Al "Junior" Allen, a 60-something, Army veteran; he died at Montefiore North Hospital. His 27-year-old daughter is being treated at Jacobi Hospital, doctors listing her in critical condition.

When — Authorities say the fire broke out around 5-15 in Allen's basement apartment at 1129 E. 225 St. and was difficult to contain. Firefighters finally got things under control an hour-and-half later. Three of them sustained minor injuries.

Where — According to a report in the Sunday Daily News, Allen was well-regarded in the neighborhood. People say he was deeply involved with his church, where he provided kids with toys and volunteered in the food pantry.

Why — ?

How —

In addition to serving as a superintendent for his own home, neighbors say he'd work on houses in the block, where he was often seen sitting outside listening to old-school soul music.

(Animation: 7 Clicks: Who, What, When Where and then Why and How are unanswered)

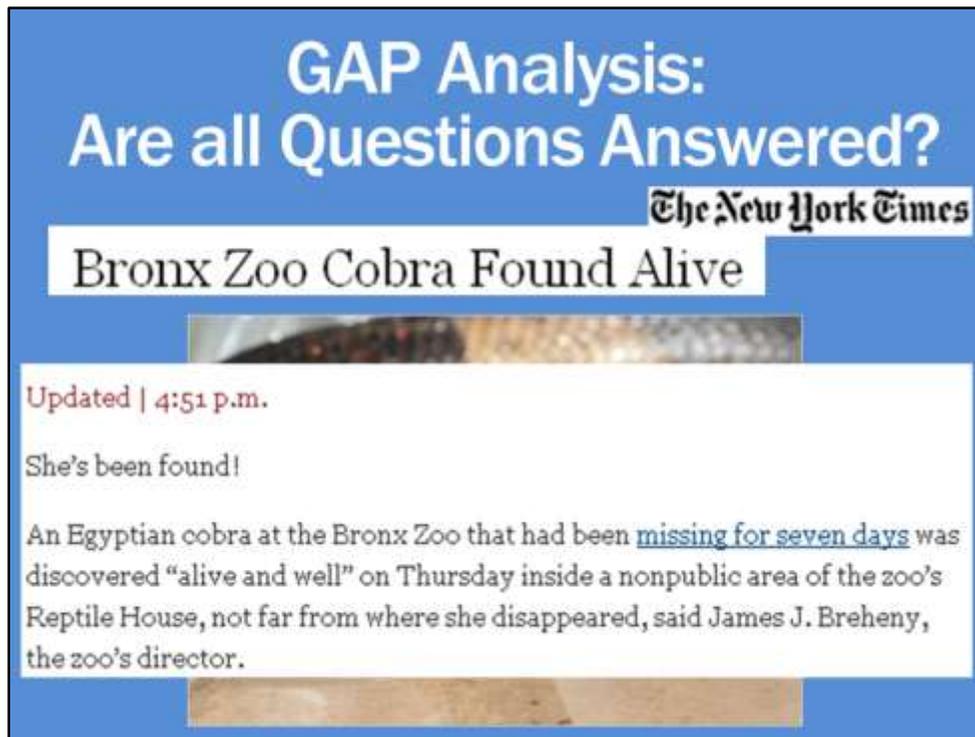
One way to stay focused is to ask...are the key questions all answered?

Who, What, When, Where, Why and How are certainly a starting point.

Pay attention to questions that tug at you as you are watching or reading.

Perhaps Most important...What's missing?

Gaps should either be explained (transparency) or you need to pay attention to them in judging a story.



(Animation: Click will bring up the lead of the story)

ASK: Is there anything missing from this story?

ASK: What habit might that gap analysis reinforce? (checking to see questions are answered)

Follow the News, Check Multiple Outlets

<http://cityroom.blogs.nytimes.com/2011/03/31/bronx-zoo-cobra-found-alive/>

Step 7: Deconstructing the News

Are people and their ideas fairly presented?
Is fair language used?

Angels We Have Heard On Harleys

More Than 30,000 Roar With The Gift-giving Spirit

December 9, 1996 By JOSE LAMBHET Staff Writer

SUNRISE - The burly, Harley-riding bikers seemed unlikely Santas.

But the oil-dirty folks with unkempt hair and tattooed arms were filled with the Christmas spirit on Sunday as they roared into Markham Park, more than 30,000 strong, to donate toys to the less fortunate.

The bikers, including members of the infamous Outlaws gang, surrendered donations of tiny stuffed animals, bicycles and Nintendo games to off-duty police officers who had volunteered to work in the eighth annual Christmas Toys in the Sun Run.

Balance vs. Fairness is a complicated question we covered at length in Lecture, so today we'll just remind you that on the exam you're going to be asked to tell the difference between a story that should be mathematically **BALANCED** in its treatment of all parties or **FAIR** to the evidence. **ASK: Which is which?**

(Balanced when the truth is yet unknown or there is a real lack of consensus. Fair when the evidence is overwhelming, regardless of those who wish it were not so.)

Fairness also pertains to the way a story is presented.

Under what circumstance is this photo of Romney an example of fair presentation?

And The Whole Point Is....

What can a news consumer
Do with this information

Is it actionable?

Again, the point of this process is not to make you an insufferable smart-alek. It is to help you find reliable information to:

- Make a decision
- Take action
- Make a judgment
- Share (responsibly) with others

Deconstructing the News

Case Study: The pregnant man story



Pregnant man is expecting baby in July

BY COMBINED NEWS SERVICES

Thomas Beatie, who's expecting a girl, tells his story in a first-person account published in "The Advocate" magazine, that also includes a picture of him while he was 22 weeks pregnant.

pregnant.

Beatie, legally a male, lives with his wife, Nancy. He claims to have stopped taking his testosterone injections to get pregnant. "Sterilization is not a requirement for sex reassignment, so I decided to have chest reconstruction and testosterone therapy, but kept my reproductive rights," he wrote in the story for the gay and lesbian magazine.

"How does it feel to be a pregnant man? Incredible," he adds. "Despite the fact that my belly is growing with a new life inside me, I am stable and confident being the man that I am."

Assess reliability by Evaluating Sources & Evidence

This is NOT in the Workbook for Lecture any longer

: The Pregnant Man.

The original story was in The Advocate, a magazine we might not have known much about.

ASK: What would it take for you to believe this story?

Deconstructing the News

Case Study: The pregnant man story

March 26, 2008

Thomas Beatie, a married man who used to be a woman, is pregnant with a baby girl

"A transgender man can be pregnant because he has the same organs as a woman," Dr Masterson said on the ABC Good Morning America show.

Some of the Beaties' neighbours in Bend voiced scepticism about the pregnancy claim. One resident, Josh Love, told ABC: "I couldn't say that he looks pregnant. I can stick my stomach out and almost make it look like that. I think it's kind of bizarre. I don't know if I believe it or not."

The Advocate said it had confirmed the story with Mr Beatie's doctor.

Do These Sources Help?

Look at this March 27th story: it has more detail.

Story says he is expecting baby in July. Several more sources are cited...Are they reliable?

ASK: Why or why not.

How would you check it further?

With medical records?

What evidence shows that this is or is not a hoax?

This report relies heavily on the Advocate's story. Is that a reliable source?

Deconstructing the News

Case Study: The pregnant man story



Does This Sonogram Help?

Now we've got a Sonogram.
Does the sonogram have weight?
What kind of evidence is it?

Deconstructing the News

Case Study: The pregnant man story

'Pregnant man' Thomas Beatie gives birth to baby girl

James Davis of New York

The pregnant man who conceived a child after a gender-reassignment operation has apparently given birth to a healthy baby girl.

'She's really cute, really pretty,' a source told ABC News.

Thomas Beatie, 34, told People magazine that he had given birth at a hospital in Bend, Oregon on Sunday. 'The only thing different about me is that I can't breathe my baby. But a lot of mothers don't,' he said, adding that he planned to publish a book about the experience this autumn.

The bearded Mr Beatie was born a girl and named Tracy.



Do Baby Photos Help?

How about the picture of him holding the baby?

What kind of evidence is that?

Is this an example of provisional truth?

What changed over time?

What kind of new evidence emerged?

(lecturer see BackgroundPak. Beatie has had three children now and 10 years of hormone treatment apparently did not prevent pregnancy. Beatie is a “top-only” transgendered person: Kept reproductive organs, but had breasts removed and took hormones for 10 years to get bear, male features, etc.)

Deconstructing the News



How reliable?

Now let's go back to the example we started with, the clip from ABC News saying that there is an epidemic of texting and it's an illness.

As you watch, keep a list of the evidence and of the sources.



Texting.wmv

NEWSFELLOW: NEWS FELLOW: LINK (INSERT)
VIDEO TO THIS SLIDE AND SELECT "START
AUTOMATICALLY"



(Animation: Slide opens with phone and mad texter. Each following clip brings up another source and then the final click is the study)

ASK: Evidence?

Sources?

(Three Vox Pop interviews.

Excerpts from a study.)

The apparent starting point is a study reported on in the American Journal of Psychiatry.

THAT would be an expert or informed source.

A Deconstruction Worksheet

How to Judge Reliability

- 1) Summarize the main points: Does the headline and the lead support the main point(s)?
- 2) How close does the reporter come to opening the freezer? Is the evidence direct or arm's-length?

You can't do all eight steps of the deconstruction process on every story you read in your life.

But when the topic really matters to you and you're getting ready to make decision or take action...you better be sure you're working from reliable information.

Here's how:

1. Summarize the main points of the story.

Do the headline and lede support the main point(s) of the story?

2. Assess the evidence supporting the main points of the story. Is Direct? arm's-length? How close did the reporter come to opening the freezer?

A Deconstruction Worksheet

How to Judge Reliability

- 3) Evaluate the reliability of the sources using I'M VA/IN
- 4) Does the reporter make his/her work transparent?
- 5) Does the reporter place the story in context?

3. Are the sources reliable? (Are you reacting to them, or analyzing them?)

4. Does the reporter make his or her work transparent? How does the reporter know what is being reported?

5. Does the reporter place the story in context?

A Deconstruction Worksheet

How to Judge Reliability

6) Are the key questions answered?

- Who -What -When -Where? -Why? -How?

7) Is the story fair?

(ANIMATION: who, what, when where, why, who all fade in, in succession.)

6. Are the key questions answered? (And what is left out.)

7. Is the story balanced? Should it be? Is it fair to the evidence and to key stakeholders?

When the information matters because you're going to make a decision, take action or share it with others...these questions matter.

And the Whole Point Is... Is it actionable?

Can you reach a conclusion?

Can you take an action?

Can you make a judgment?

Can you share this information?

Again...WHAT'S THE POINT? THE SEARCH
FOR RELIABLE INFORMATION

Oh...and a good grade on the final, which is
all deconstruction.

Assignments:

1. Bring Deconstruction Workbook to Recitation
2. Writing assignment: “Deconstructing the Washington Post’s report on Walter Reed Hospital”

Note, they are to bring the Deconstruction Guide to Recitation, as well.



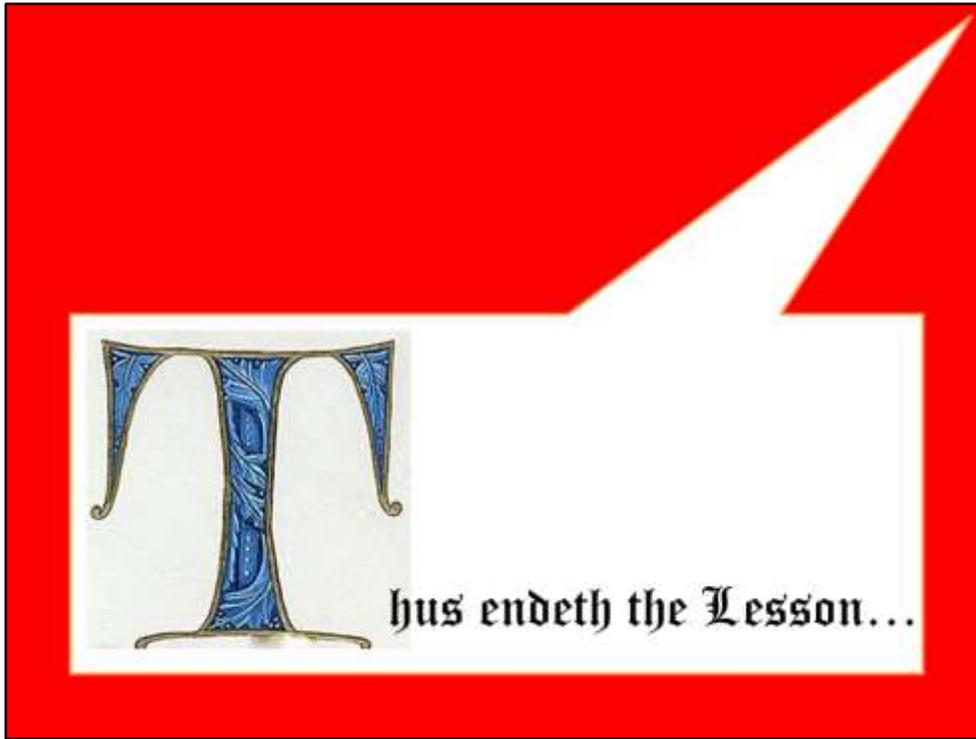
Housekeeping, Announcements & Notes

Countdown To Test #2

Held in Recitation,
Emphasizes Lectures 7-11,
(Fairness & Bias through
Deconstructing TV News)
Same format: 10 questions, 100
points possible.



Lecturer should know the date of the Test #2 recitations in her/his lecture.



All slides after this are optional or familiar slides from past years.

Example 4

Afghan investigator: US burning of Qurans was intentional



afreep.com

Quran-burning an accident, U.S. tells Afghanistan

KABUL, Afghanistan -- The U.S. apologized Tuesday for the burning of Muslim holy books that had been pulled from the shelves of a television center (later) adjoining a major base in eastern Afghanistan because they contained extremist messages or inscriptions.

The White House echoed military officials in saying that the burning of Qurans and other Islamic reading material that had been tossed in a pile of garbage was an accident.

In the workbook, look at **Example 4**.

These reports are built on the findings of two official inquiries by government officials

ASK: Use the I'M VA/IN analysis to think about what we've learned about weighing sources.

Let's have a volunteer

This one is tricky. Why? What makes these stories hard to assess and compare?

<http://www.reuters.com/article/2011/03/16/us-japan-quake-level-idUSTRE72F9K720110316>



(Animation: Don't click yet)

Turn to **example 3** In your workbook and read the story you find there. We're going to use it several times, so read it well.

ASK: What is the main point of this story?

Where did you find it? (In the 5th and 6th paragraphs.)

This is an example of a delayed lead.

Sometimes a reporter uses an anecdote to begin the story but then you should find a summary paragraph (journalists call it the Nut of the Story or Nut Graph) that tells you what the main points of the story are.

Deconstructing the News

How to Assess Source Authority

Experts Had Long Criticized Potential Weakness in Design of Stricken Reactor

By TOM ZELLER Jr.



“Not banning them might be the end of nuclear power,” said Mr. Lochbaum, a nuclear engineer who spent 17 years working in nuclear facilities, including three that used the G.E. design.

Is the Source Authoritative? Independent?
Why or Why Not?

(Animation: click brings up GE Engineer)

Let's review Example 10.

ASK: Use the I'M VA/IN analysis.

How Much Weight do you give this source: None, Little, Some, A Great Deal

Why?

Is the story reliable?

What other problem do you see.

(Reporter is utterly opaque about graph after graph of context. How does he know these things. Where could we verify them?)

<http://www.nytimes.com/2011/03/16/world/asia/16contain.html>

Deconstructing the News

How to Weigh Sources

Accused G.I. 'Snapped' Under Strain, Official Says

By ERIC SCHMITT and WILLIAM YARDLEY

"When it all comes out, it will be a combination of stress, alcohol and domestic issues — he just snapped," said the official, who has been briefed on the investigation and who spoke on the condition of anonymity because the soldier has not yet been formally charged. His comments drew from accounts of the sergeant's state of mind from two other soldiers with whom he illicitly drank alcohol on the night of the shootings, the official said, and those soldiers face disciplinary action.

Verification or Assertion?

(Animation: click brings up the friend's quotes)

Please turn to Example 11

ASK: What kind of source is Mr. Browne, the soldier's lawyer?

How about the official?

Do they assert or verify?

Is this report a reliable description of the situation?

What examples of context and transparency do you find. How do they help you assess reliability of this report?

If we apply the three part test of anonymous sources (Transparency, Characterization, Corroboration) how does this one stack up?

<http://www.nytimes.com/2012/03/16/world/asia/suspect-in-afghan-attack-snapped-us-official-says.html>

Accused G.I. 'Snapped' Under Strain, Official Says

By ERIC SCHMITT and WILLIAM YARDLEY

WASHINGTON — The American staff sergeant suspected of killing 16 Afghan villagers had been drinking alcohol — a violation of military rules in combat zones — and suffering from the stress related to his fourth combat tour and tensions with his wife about the deployments on the night of the massacre, a senior American official said Thursday.

"When it all comes out, it will be a combination of stress, alcohol and domestic issues — he just snapped," said the official, who has been briefed on the investigation and who spoke on the condition of anonymity because the soldier has not yet been formally charged. His comments drew from accounts of the sergeant's state of mind from two other soldiers with whom he illicitly drank alcohol on the night of the shootings, the official said, and those soldiers face disciplinary action. As new details emerged about possible reasons behind the shootings, a lawyer who said he had been retained by the sergeant's family told CNN on Friday that the suspect was being flown to Fort Leavenworth, Kan., from the detention site in Kuwait he was moved to on Wednesday.

The sergeant's sudden transfer from Kuwait to the United States is the result of a behind-the-scenes diplomatic uproar with Kuwait, which learned of the sergeant's move to an American base on Kuwaiti territory from news reports before the United States government could alert the Kuwaitis about it, the senior American official said.

"When they learned about it, the Kuwaitis blew a gasket and wanted him out of there," the official said.

The lawyer, John Henry Browne, held a news conference in Seattle on Thursday and also spoke to some reporters individually. He told The Associated Press that the day before the massacre, a friend of the sergeant had lost a leg in an explosion. That could not be independently confirmed.

The comments by the lawyer, and the account by the American official, confirmed by a senior official at the Pentagon, are the most detailed descriptions so far of the state of the sergeant, a 38-year-old married father of two who was on his first combat tour in Afghanistan but his fourth over all, including three in Iraq, since he enlisted in 2001.

"There will be questions raised about his emotional and mental stability for a fourth deployment," the American official said.

The Army still has not named the soldier, but on Thursday a lawyer who said he had been retained by his family offered some information and questioned some of the American official's claims.

Mr. Browne said it was "nonsense" that there were exceptional marital tensions. "I know that is not true," he said at a news conference at his office Thursday night in Seattle.

Mr. Browne added that the inaccuracy of the claim made him "suspicious" of the suggestion that alcohol and stress contributed, though he noted that virtually anyone at a remote base in Afghanistan would be under stress.

The soldier and his wife had "a very healthy marriage," Mr. Browne said. Their two children are 3 and 4 years old.

A decorated soldier who grew up in the Midwest, the man enlisted within a week of the terrorist attacks of 2001, he said.

"He felt it was his duty to stand up for the United States," said Mr. Browne, who has handled many high-profile cases in the Northwest, including the recent defense of the teenage fugitive known as the Barefoot Bandit, Colton Harris-Moore.

Mr. Browne, who said he met with "a very large group of family members" on Wednesday and spoke with the soldier by telephone on Thursday, said the man had "been decorated many, many times. He's been to Iraq twice. He was injured twice and he was deployed back to Afghanistan. He is a career military man."

He added, "He was injured in Iraq in two places on his body, so he wasn't certain he was healthy enough to go back, physically."

Mr. Browne said the soldier suffered a concussion during a vehicle rollover accident caused by a roadside bomb. He also lost part of a foot in another episode.

He confirmed that the soldier, part of the Third Stryker Brigade, Second Infantry, had served three tours in Iraq with that unit.

He declined to say whether the sergeant might have psychological or mental health issues, and he also would not say whether the soldier had confessed. Mr. Browne said he would wait for the government to release the man's name.

Mr. Browne criticized anonymous reports from government officials, calling them baseless.

"The government is going to want to blame this on an individual rather than blame it on the war," he said.

Mr. Browne said that his client had been based at Joint Base Lewis-McChord, just south of Tacoma, Wash., for his entire career. He said that many but not all of his family members had moved from the Midwest to western Washington. He said the soldier had done "blue collar" work in the Midwest before he enlisted. The soldier's wife had "a very good job," he said, noting that he was being paid, not working on the case pro bono.

Mr. Browne told The A.P. that the sergeant's family said he had "never said anything antagonistic about Muslims."

The sergeant has refused to speak to investigators, invoking his right to a lawyer shortly after he surrendered on returning to his base after the shootings.

The soldier's wife and children have been moved from their home to Joint Base Lewis-McChord for their protection in anticipation of the release of the sergeant's name, the American official said. Concern for their safety was among the reasons for initially withholding the sergeant's identity, the official said.

Eric Schmitt reported from Washington, D.C., and William Yardley from Seattle.

This article has been revised to reflect the following correction:

Correction: March 17, 2012

An article on Friday about the American staff sergeant suspected of killing 16 Afghan villagers misstated the details of the relocation of the sergeant's family. They moved from their home onto Joint Base Lewis-McChord; their home was not located at the base. And because of an editing error, the article misstated at one point the number of times the soldier served in Iraq. It is three, not two.

Deconstructing the News

How to Assess Source Reliability

The New York Times

Criticism and Questions Over Plan to Move Macy's Thanksgiving Parade Out of Times Sq.

By NOAH ROSENBERG
Published: March 9, 2011

But some critics are skeptical. A community leader who spoke on the condition of anonymity to preserve his publicly neutral stance, said he was at a meeting with Macy's representatives last year, at which the retailer "threatened to move the parade to another city," unless the route changes were agreed upon.

How Do You Weigh the Anonymous Source?

Let's read Example 9

ASK: Would you give this source:

- No weight
- Little weight
- Some weight
- A great deal of weight

Why?

Is this a reliable story? What could you conclude from it?

<http://www.nytimes.com/2011/03/09/nyregion/09parade.html>

Does the Headline Match the Story?

Japan to officially celebrate end of US occupation after WWII

THE VOICE OF RUSSIA

Japan will officially celebrate the end of the US occupation of the country for the first time since the end of the Second World War. The government will use the forthcoming event to galvanize a campaign to revise the post-war constitution.

Prime Minister Shinzo Abe told the MPs earlier today that the growing number of young people today is unaware that there was a seven-year long period after the war when Japan was deprived of sovereignty.

The US officially ended its occupation of Japan on April 28th 1952, when the San Francisco Peace Treaty between Tokyo and most of those who formed part of the anti-Nazi Allied Nations took effect.

Voice of Russia, TASS

http://english.ruvr.ru/2013_03_12/Japan-to-officially-celebrate-end-of-US-occupation-after-WWII/

Asserting vs. Verifying

US jobless rate drops to 7.8% in September

October 06, 2012 | [Market Watch](#)

THIS STORY APPEARED IN [The Boston Globe](#)

Jack Welch
@jack_welch

Unbelievable jobs numbers...these Chicago guys will do anything...can't debate so change numbers

Boston
Globe

John E. Silvia, chief economist for Wells Fargo & Co. in Charlotte, N.C., said he finds the employer survey numbers to be more reliable, but that he does not see evidence of a conspiracy in Friday's report.

He said he suspected September's rise in part-time employment was due to college students returning to school and taking part-time jobs.

The question that has confounded many economists, he said, is whether the sluggish rate of job growth that the nation has experienced for the last three years is now the "new normal."

"Things are getting better, the economy is continuing to improve and people are getting jobs," Silvia said. "The challenge we all have is the economy's just not growing the way we had expected."

(NOTE: Example is not in Deconstruction Workbook)

When the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics released the September report showing unemployment had fallen below 8%, Former General Electric CEO Jack Welch Tweeted that Obama's administration had ordered the numbers faked in order to improve the President's standing with voters.

Anything in that tweet to support the statement?

Is it an assertion or is it verified?

The Boston Globe interviewed Wells Fargo Bank's economist John E. Silvia, who follows these reports. He looked at the numbers and says that they are accurate.

Do we see any verification of his statement?

This is why we have a five-part test of source reliability (IMVA/IN).

While neither verifies, there is a difference in the authoritativeness of these two sources. Remember authority is not general, but specific to the facts at hand.

Who is more authoritative as to the federal system of calculating the unemployment rate?

[Http://articles.boston.com/2012-10-06/business/34279350_1_jobless-rate-unemployment-figures-job-growth](http://articles.boston.com/2012-10-06/business/34279350_1_jobless-rate-unemployment-figures-job-growth)

Here is Silvia's paper:

https://www.wellsfargo.com/downloads/pdf/com/research/special_reports/Unemployment_Rate_Debate_10122012.pdf

And here's a radio interview with Silvia:

<http://www.marketwatch.com/story/jobless-rate-down-due-to-new-hires-not-dropouts-2012-10-05>

Find the Context

McClatchy-Marist poll shows Obama tumbling in voters' eyes

At least some of the president's fall to Earth lies in the fact that voters no longer see him in the context of an election. He has to stand alone in the eyes of voters again and doesn't benefit from the comparison with Republican rival Mitt Romney.

Another factor in the president's decline is anxiety about the economy and the country.

The national survey, conducted four months after Obama was re-elected with 51 percent of the popular vote, found 45 percent of voters approving of the way he's handling his job and 48 percent disapproving.

figure and in the driver's seat. During the election, it was him versus Romney. Now it's him versus people's expectations for the country."

Obama still outpaces Congress by a large margin.

Animations: Click five times to bring up the various examples of context

Workbook Page 9

This story is all about context. The story gives us Obama's latest poll numbers and then provides the context that helps explain the numbers. The big focus of the article is that Obama has his lowest job approval rating in a year.

Some context for Obama's falling numbers from a year ago.

1. Obama won the election with 51% of the popular vote. Now only 45% approve of his job so far. He has lost some of his supporters approval.
2. His numbers were better a year ago, but that was when people were just comparing him to Mitt Romney.
3. The poll found a rising anxiety about the economy and the country (62% said we are heading in the wrong direction). The story added further context that jobs numbers have improved and the stock market is at record highs, which allows us to question whether the anxiety over the economy is justified.
4. Instead of against Romney, people now judge Obama against the expectations they have for the country. This could mean the deadlock in Congress is having an effect on his job approval.
5. Though the numbers are lower, to keep this in perspective, Obama's numbers are still better the Congress' Approval Rating. 48% approved of Obama. 26% approve of the congressional Republicans. And of just Republican polled, 50% approved/45% disapproved of congressional Republican – showing internal strife.

Read more here: <http://www.mcclatchydc.com/2013/03/11/185487/mcclatchy-marist-poll-shows-obama.html##storylink=cpy>

More important than merely recognizing context is this: What does the provided context do, or help shape, our understanding of the news event at the heart of the story? Context is important information provided by the journalist because it changes, clarifies, the meaning of something to further inform the news consumer.

<http://www.mcclatchydc.com/2013/03/11/185487/mcclatchy-marist-poll-shows-obama.html#>



(Not in Workbook)

The Governor suspends a public official and demands his resignation.

Governor says the official MISLED officials about his actual residence.

Governor says Manzo reported he lived in Patterson.

Governor says on "Real Housewives of New Jersey," Manzo is shown at a home in Franklin Lakes.

ASK:

Using the concepts from Lecture 7, should this story be balanced (equivalent weight and time given to each side) or Fair to the evidence (reflective of the accepted truth)?

What is missing from this story?

(Public records, independent sources, Transparency about the provenance of the Manzo quote.)

http://www.nypost.com/p/news/local/gov_rips_housewives_hubby_uwTjSjBpiA4JgkORE6RxJI

Deconstructing the News

How Transparent is the Story?

 **NBCNEWS.com**

Who has a better pension: Romney or Obama?

By Jeff Cox, CNBC.com
October 16, 2012, 9:55 am

When it comes to the presidential candidates' pensions, size matters in more ways than one.

Retirement packages sparked one of a series of confrontations during the Tuesday debate between President Obama and Republican challenger Mitt Romney.

The exchange took place during a discussion of China policy, with the president accusing the former Massachusetts governor of hypocrisy when it came to tough talk against the nation that boasts the world's second-largest economy.

Illinois is infamous for its lavish pension plan for former lawmakers. A Freedom of Information Act request for Obama's pension amount submitted Wednesday to the General Assembly Retirement System of Illinois was not immediately answered, nor was a call to the Obama campaign.

In one of the debate's lighter moments, Obama countered, "I don't look at my pension. It's not as big as yours so it doesn't take as long. I don't check it that often."

The remarks sparked some audience laughter — and yet another Romney rebuke.

"Let me give you some advice: Look at your pension. You also have investments in Chinese companies, you also have investments outside the United States," he said.

On that score, Romney is likely correct.

(NOTE: Example not in Workbook)
In this NBC report on the pensions that await President Obama and Governor Romney once they retire, NBC reporter Jeff Cox lets you know why he doesn't have details of the size of either pension, nor the investments held. He shows you the steps he took, which is a hallmark of professional journalism: Anyone could retrace the reporter's steps, which means the reporter is confident in the information he has put out there.

Does the Headline Match the Story?

Columbia Students Are Obsessed With Nutella, Consuming Up To 100 Pounds A Day (UPDATE)

HUFF POST COLLEGE



Columbia University students are obsessed with Nutella.

How obsessed? Columbia College Student Council representative Peter Robinson told the Columbia Spectator and The New York Times that according to Vicki Dunn, the executive director of university dining services, **in the first three to four days after Nutella was added to the dining hall selection, demand was extraordinarily high, with students enjoying a large amount in that short initial period. The actual cost was only around \$2,500, and quickly dropped to \$400 per week for dining halls that serve some 5,600 students, seven days a week at three campus locations. Happily, the media attention to Nutella-gate has cut down on the amount people have been taking in recent days.**

But there's a darker side to this Nutella allegedly taken to stealing to feed their...

Since the spread was first introduced on Feb. 14, containers at the student-run dining hall have been filling up cups, jars and soup containers with Nutella in Columbia's dining hall, according to The New York Times.

This is an example from recent news. The title almost leads you to believe that an individual student is consuming 100 pounds, but even the claim that all of the students together are consuming 100 pounds is an exaggeration.

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/03/07/columbia-nutella_n_2831584.html

Does the Headline Match the Story?

Dad Arrested After 2-Year-Old Texas Girl Dies Following Spanking



Nicholas Williams was arrested last week after police say he spanked his 2-year-old daughter so hard that she died, MyFoxAustin reports.

According to the arrest affidavit, police and paramedics responded to a 911 call made by a woman saying that the child was not breathing at a residence in Austin, Texas, on May 23.

When police arrived, they found Williams and his daughter.

The officer began performing CPR on the child. But an hour later, after being pronounced dead.

An autopsy was performed on the girl the next day. The deputy medical examiner noticed several bruises on the victim's head, face, back, buttocks, chest and arms. The injuries were greatest in the head and buttocks region according to the arrest affidavit. The preliminary cause of death was ruled to be blunt force injuries.

Williams was charged with injury to a child, a first-degree felony.

This man obviously did not just “spank” his child.

<http://www.foxnews.com/us/2011/05/30/2-year-old-texas-girl-dies-spanking/?intcmp=obnetwork>

Deconstructing the News

Where is the Lead?

The New York Times

Dope Tests in Ice Fishing? No, Beer Doesn't Count



There, an official from the United States Anti-Doping Agency ordered them to provide urine samples for a surprise test to detect steroids and growth hormones — drugs not normally associated with the quiet solitude of ice fishing.

WAUSAU, Wis. — The ice fishermen spent a week on the frozen lake, and on the last day, after emptying perch and bluegill from their buckets and scrubbing bait from their hands, several winners of the World Ice Fishing Championship were ushered into their rooms in the Plaza Hotel.

2nd Paragraph

Anecdote: 1st
Paragraph

With doping a rampant problem throughout sports, drug testing has arrived at the most unlikely places, including the chilly Big Eau Pleine Reservoir, where competitors hide fish in their pockets and prize patience over power.

Lead: 4th Paragraph

This story about drug testing in ice fishing competitions opens with an anecdote from the World Ice Fishing Championship in Wisconsin, and doesn't get to the lead until about the 4th paragraph.

What does opening with an anecdote do to the story?
How can we nevertheless identify the lead within this story?

ASK: What is the main point of this story?

Where did you find it?

This is an example of a delayed lead.

Sometimes a reporter uses an anecdote to begin the story but then you should find a summary paragraph (journalists call it the Nut of the Story or Nut Graph) that tells you what the main points of the story are.

http://www.nytimes.com/2013/02/24/sports/ice-fishermen-not-immune-to-dopings-reach.html?_r=0

Deconstructing the News: Inference

Romney seeks advantage on Libya issue after debate

By Tom Ichniowski, CNN
Updated 12:25 PM EDT, Wed October 17, 2012



Tuesday night saw Obama bring the desired energy sought by worried Democrats after his lackluster performance in the first debate two weeks ago in Denver.

This time, a forceful Obama defended his policies and challenged Romney on shifting positions on key issues while arguing his Republican rival's proposals would favor the wealthy if elected on November 6.

Romney repeatedly attacked Obama's record, saying millions of unemployed people and a sluggish economic recovery showed the president's policies had failed.

Romney repeatedly attacked Obama's record, saying millions of unemployed people and a sluggish economic recovery showed the president's policies had failed.

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(NOTE: Example not in Deconstruction Workbook)

This is an inference that Romney made about Obama's performance as a president based on a weak economic recovery.

ASK: What conclusions can you draw from the fact that there are millions of people who are unemployed and the economy is still struggling, three years after Obama took office?

<http://www.cnn.com/2012/10/17/politics/campaign-debate/index.html>

Deconstructing the News
How to Weigh Sources

VOICE

Brooklyn
Eyewitness "Certain" Kimani Gray Was Unarmed When Police Shot Him
By Ryan Devereaux West, Mar. 15 2015 at 11:57 AM
Catherine Brundage



"After the anti-crime sergeant and police officer told the suspect to show his hands, which was heard by witnesses, Gray produced a revolver and pointed it at the officers, who fired a total of 11 rounds, striking Gray several times," Paul J. Browne, the chief spokesman for the Police Department, said.

VS.

Tishana King claims to have watched the entire scene unfold from her window. She told the *Daily News* she is "certain [Gray] didn't have anything in his hands" when he was shot.



Verification or Assertion?

On March 9th, 16 year old Kimani Gray was shot by police in Brooklyn. Riots erupted at a vigil for the teen, after a witness and several family members and friends say Kimani was unarmed. Paul J. Browne, chief spokesperson for the police department, however, says Gray produced a revolver. The police department has released photos of the revolver found at the scene.

Asserting vs. Verifying

New York Soda Size Limit Statute Barred by State Judge

Bloomberg

"The loopholes in this rule effectively defeat the stated purpose," Tingling wrote. "It is arbitrary and capricious because it applies to some but not all food establishments in the city, it excludes other beverages that have significantly higher concentrations of sugar sweeteners and/or calories on specific grounds and the loopholes inherent in the rule, including but not limited to no limitations on refills, defeat and/or serve to gut the purpose of the rule."

Chris Gindlesperger, a spokesman for the American Beverage Association in [Washington](#), one of the plaintiffs, had said the ban would have cost local bottlers and distributors at least \$790,000 combined to retool, remold, re-label and restock.

Today, his group said in a statement that the ruling "provides a sigh of relief to New Yorkers and thousands of small businesses in New York City that would have been harmed by this arbitrary and unpopular ban."

In NYC, Mayor Bloomberg has been a proponent of limiting the size of sugary beverages to 16 ounces. Representatives of beverage makers and restaurants object to this restriction. In this story, the writer has gathered quotes several representatives on both sides of the issue. Here we have two quotations on the same side of the issue. One is supported by reasoning, the other is not.

<http://www.bloomberg.com/news/2013-03-11/new-york-city-soda-size-limitations-barred-by-state-court-judge.html>

Anonymous Source



US intel sees missile movement in North Korea

US intelligence has seen missile and launch components move to the east coast of North Korea in the 'last few days', a US official with direct knowledge of the information tells CNN's Barbara Starr.

The movements are consistent with that of a Musadan missile, the official said. The Musadan missile has a 2,500 mile range and can threaten South Korea, Japan, Guam and southeast Asia.

The US is looking for a hidden North Korean east coast launch site or mobile launchers, the official said, which are of concern because a launch from the east coast would go over Japan.

The official said it is believed such a missile launch would be a "test" launch rather than a targeted strike. That is because it appears the North Koreans have only moved components so far. The U.S. is waiting to see if North Korea issues a notice to its airmen and mariners to stay out of the region.

Is there transparency? Characterization?
Corroboration?

The unnamed source is characterized as “a US official with direct knowledge of the information.” However, her/his anonymity is not explained, so transparency is lacking. And we don’t have any other sources or evidence to support what this official says.

<http://security.blogs.cnn.com/2013/04/04/us-intel-sees-missile-movement-in-north-korea/>



(NOTE: Example not in Workbook)

Animation: Slide opens with the Vanity Fair cover story on Obama, written by best-selling author Michael Lewis.

2nd Click replaces that with New York Magazine's article revealing that Lewis agreed to let the White House strike quotes it did not want in the article.

Michael Lewis, a top U.S. journalist, spent months observing President Barack Obama to write this article for Vanity Fair magazine. It describes how Obama makes decisions, how he handles the job, the kinds of things he says and does. Lewis is a fine writer and reporter, so readers felt they got a rare peek at their President.

But shortly after the article was published, New York Magazine learned that in exchange for close-range access to Obama, Lewis gave the White House Press Office the right to approve the quotes Lewis selected from those months of interviews. If they looked it over and didn't like the quote, he had to leave it out.

This process, known as quote approval, has become controversial this year as readers have learned that The New York Times and other major news organizations have begun to submit to such rules.

If you were told this as you were reading Lewis' report, that would be an example of transparency...the journalist telling you how he got the story. But in this case, it leaked out after the fact.

How does that make you feel about Mr. Lewis' ability to write what he has learned, independent of pressure from the White House?

Deconstruct this story

Evaluate the reliability of sources using the IM/VAIN.

Does the reporter open the freezer?



Workbook Page 12:

Here's a simple deconstruction: A report that blames a girl's suicide on bullies

Follow all the steps, but especially the two we've highlighted: Source Evaluation and Evidence. What can you conclude from this report?