

News Literacy Lecturer's Background Pack

Lecture Title: Evaluating Sources

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1. Gubernatorial Election.

Andrew Cuomo (Democratic; Alliance: Independence)

<http://www.andrewcuomo.com/>

Carl Paladino (Republican; Alliance: Conservative)

<http://www.paladinoforthepeople.com/>

Howie Hawkins (Green)

<http://www.howiehawkins.com/2010>

Warren Redlich (Libertarian)

<http://wredlich.com/ny/>

Kristin Davis (Anti-Prohibition)

<http://www.kristindavis2010.com/>

Charles Barron (Freedom)

<http://www.freedompartynys.com/candidate/charles-barron>

Jimmy McMillan (Rent is Too Damn High)

<http://jimmymcmillan.org/>

<http://www.rentistoodamnhigh.org/id85.html>

5. Mark Felt, "Deep Throat"

Short Bio.

(This is compiled from the wikipedia article - http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/W._Mark_Felt)

Mark Felt (1913-2008) spent the majority of his career working for the FBI. He is probably best known as being the informant who supplied vital information used by Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein, referred to by the code name "Deep Throat" (from the popular pornographic movies - I know, I don't get it either) in their reporting on the Watergate break-in. That reporting and subsequent investigations eventually led to the impeachment of President Richard Nixon. Though many speculated that Felt was Deep Throat, this was not known for sure until it was

revealed in a 2005 Vanity Fair article written by John O'Connor (an attorney acting on Mr. Felt's behalf).

Felt grew up and went to highschool in Twin Falls, Idaho, and then got his BA at the University of Idaho. He earned his law degree from George Washington University Law School in 1940, and after a brief stint working for the Federal Trade Commission, began working for the FBI in 1942. His early career in the FBI saw him moving all around the country. His assignments included the Espionage Division during WWII, feeding disinformation to the Germans, vetting workers at the Hanford plutonium plant near Richland, Wash., and investigating organized crime activity in Reno, Las Vegas, and Kansas City.

In 1960's, Felt returned to Washington D.C., taking high-level jobs in the Training and Inspection divisions of the FBI. He was appointed Deputy Associate Director of the FBI by J. Edgar Hoover in 1971. When Hoover died in 1972, L. Patrick Gray was appointed acting director of the FBI by Nixon. Associate Director Clyde Tolson resigned, and Felt was promoted to Associate Director (essentially the number 2 person in the FBI, immediately below the director).

Hoover's death saw the first of several controversies that Felt would be involved in over the next few years. When it was found that many of Hoover's files had been destroyed by the FBI after his death, Felt was the highest level FBI official to publicly admit knowledge of the destruction of the files. Both he and Hoover's long-time secretary stated on the record to a 1975 House of Rep's investigative committee that the files were destroyed on Gray's direction, or at least his approval. Gray denied any knowledge of the files or their destruction.

During the early 1970's, Felt was also implicated in a controversial investigation of members of the radical group know as "the Weather Underground." Felt ordered warrantless searches of the homes of several suspected members. The case against these members was eventually thrown out because of illegal activities by the FBI, and Felt publicly stated in 1976 that any subordinate agents were merely following orders, and that he had authorized the activities. Felt also asserted that FBI Director Gray authorized the illegal activities in question as well, an assertion that Gray denied. In 1978, Felt, Gray, and Edward Miller were charged by a federal grand jury with conspiracy to violate the constitutional rights of American citizens. The charges against Gray were dropped in 1980, and later that year Felt and Miller were found guilty and fined \$5,000 and \$3,500 respectively. Felt appealed, and was pardoned by President Ronald Reagan in 1981 before the appeal process finished. Through all of this, Felt maintained that he did what he believed was in the best interest of national security and would do it again.

On June 17, 1972, the Democratic National Committee office at the Watergate Hotel was broken into. The FBI was called in on the investigation since the burglars apprehended at the scene were found with wire-tapping equipment (and wire-tapping is a crime investigated by the FBI). As Associate Director, Felt had access to virtually all of the materials pertaining to the investigation. Bob Woodward contacted Felt (the two had been acquaintances since 1970 and Felt had been an anonymous source for Woodward on several articles since then) for information on the investigation. Felt provided Woodward with a deep well of information, including the lead that E. Howard Hunt (who worked for President Nixon) was involved in organizing the

break-in. Woodward's source was initially known as "My Friend" and the name "Deep Throat" was brought about by Washington Post editor Howard Simons.

The Whitehouse tried to pressure the FBI to slow down the investigation into the Watergate Burglaries (since they were behind them). Patrick Gray was appointed permanent (as opposed to "acting") Director of the FBI in February of 1973, but had to resign less than two months later when it was revealed that he had destroyed a file in E. Howard Hunt's Whitehouse safe. Felt was an obvious choice for his replacement, but Nixon appointed William Ruckelshaus instead. Whitehouse tapes reveal that the Nixon administration knew that Felt was leaking information to Woodward, but could not openly retaliate out of fear that Felt would go public with even more information. Mark Felt retired from the FBI after 31 years of service in June, 1973.

Felt denied that he was Deep Throat, despite frequent public speculation that he was, until 2005. It is believed that his decision to reveal this was motivated by his family, who were interested in reaping the financial benefits of book deals and selling the rights to his story. Felt acquiesced, and the above mentioned Vanity Fair article was published with his consent. Felt died in his sleep in Santa Rosa, CA in 2008 at the age of 95.

12. FROM THE EDITORS; The Times and Iraq

<http://www.nytimes.com/2004/05/26/world/from-the-editors-the-times-and-iraq.html>

Short Summary.

The editors of the New York Times are admitting that, during the prelude to war and into the early stages of the occupation, much of the Times' news coverage was faulty. As the editors point out, "In some cases, information that was controversial then, and seems questionable now, was insufficiently qualified or allowed to stand unchallenged. Looking back, we wish we had been more aggressive in re-examining the claims as new evidence emerged -- or failed to emerge." Many of these claims had originally been made by Iraqis who were bent on regime change, and were backed up by American officials who also wished to intervene in Iraq - both biased sources.

This situation was made possible by editors who were eager to rush scoops into the paper, therefore failing to challenge reporters. Furthermore, the aforementioned bias of the Iraqi claimants was not taken into account. News stories of the "dire" situation in Iraq was given prominent coverage in the paper, while evidence contradicting these accounts were buried or non-existent. Finally, the editors admitted that much of the information provided by informants was not verified by the Times.

13. Public Editor Response to NYTimes Special Note on Iraq Pre-War Coverage

<http://query.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage.html?res=9C06E7DC1E3EF933A05756C0A9629C8B63&pagewanted=1>

Short Summary.

In this piece, the public editor is reflecting on the Times' flawed journalism in regards to the presence of WMDs in Iraq in the weeks/months leading up to the war. He admits that front-page stories often played up the possibility that Hussain was acquiring or possessed WMDs, while burying contradictory accounts in the back pages of the paper. Furthermore, writers often relied on government sources that were inserting their own agenda into news coverage. The editor admits that the failure was institutional, not individual. The editor noted several "journalistic imperatives" that led to this faulty coverage:

- a) the desire for scoops;
- b) "front-page syndrome", where writers vie for front-page bylines by trumpeting their stories;
- c) "hit-and-run journalism", where there is a failure to revisit and re-examine past stories and assertions;
- d) coddling sources, protecting them from exposure or unfriendly reporting by colleagues
- e) end-run editing, where "reporters who raised substantive questions about certain stories were not heeded. Worse, some with substantial knowledge of the subject at hand seem not to have been given the chance to express reservations."

Adam L. Penenberg, slated as our Nov. 30 "My Life As" speaker is a journalism professor and assistant director of the Business and Economic Program at New York University. A contributing writer to *Fast Company*, he has also written for *Inc.*, *Forbes*, *The New York Times*, *Slate*, *Wired*, *Economist*, *Playboy* and *Mother Jones*. A former senior editor at *Forbes* and reporter for *Forbes.com*, Penenberg garnered national attention in 1998 for unmasking serial fabricator Stephen Glass of *The New Republic*. Penenberg's story was a watershed for online investigative journalism and is portrayed in the film "Shattered Glass" (Steve Zahn plays Penenberg).

His first book, *Spooked: Espionage in Corporate America* (Perseus Books, 2000), was excerpted in the *Sunday New York Times Magazine* and received a starred review in *Publishers Weekly*. His second, *Tragic Indifference: One Man's Battle With the Auto Industry Over the Dangers of SUVs* (HarperBusiness, 2003) was optioned for the movies by Michael Douglas and excerpted in *USA Today*. Reviewers called it "gripping" (*Mother Jones*) "dramatic" (*Boston Globe*), "stinging," "comprehensive" and "disturbing" (*Publishers Weekly*), a book that has a "narrative with rich, detailed characters" (*San Francisco Chronicle*) and "offers a comprehensive look at a notorious corporate scandal and a courtroom drama and investigation that ends in triumph for the many victims" (*Booklist*). His latest book is *Viral Loop: From Facebook to Twitter, How Today's Smartest Businesses Grow Themselves* (Hyperion, 2009) has been excerpted in *Fast Company* and *TechCrunch* in the U.S. and in *Wired* magazine in the UK.

A journalism professor at New York University, Penenberg is the assistant director of the Business & Economic Program, heads the department's ethics committee—he wrote the department's journalism handbook for students, which received unanimous faculty approval and the ethics pledge, which all students must sign—and teaches multimedia, magazine writing, and hard news and investigative reporting to graduate and undergraduate students. In addition to the Today Show, he has appeared on CNN's "American Morning" and "Money Line," ABC World News and News Now, FoxNews, MSNBC, CNBC, and NPR and been quoted about media and technology in the *Washington Post*, *Christian Science Monitor*, *Wired News*, *Ad Age*, *Marketwatch*, *Politico*, etc.