

Recitation 05 - You Be the Editor

OBJECTIVE

Class will break into groups of five or six and be given a list of stories that they will then decide how to display on the front page of a mock newspaper, *Stony Brook World*.

Organization

1. Take attendance
2. Collect "News Drivers" homework

News Quiz

<TEXT GOES HERE>

1. Question 1
 - a) comments

Recap Lecture

What is News?

Definition: News is information about a subject of public interest that is shared by an independent news organization accountable for its work, which is subject to the journalistic process of verification.

Why do we need it? It **alerts**, **diverts** and **connects** us.

How editors choose stories and their play

1. Editorial judgment (What else is news today?)
2. Audience (Who is our target reader/viewer/user?)
3. Profit and competition (Circulation model, professional pride, etc ...)
4. Universal News Drivers

News Drivers

WHO?

- **Prominence** (it's news because of who is involved)

WHAT?

- **Importance** (News and topics with great implications)

- **Human interest** (People stories, may be more poignant than important)
- **Conflict** (Clashes of people, institutions or ideas)
- **Change** (Progress, regress)
- **Peculiarity** (Unusualness – Man Bites Dog)

WHERE?

- **Proximity** (How close to home? The local news driver)

WHEN?

- **Immediacy** (Breaking news)
- **Timeliness** (Context: what else is news - makes the story's timing good; commemoration: looking back – anniversaries, memorials, etc.)

HOW MANY?

- **Magnitude** (How many? Stories driven by surprising numbers)

WHY (should you care)?

- **Relevance** (How wide is the story's impact and audience?)

Review Assignments

Good News/Bad News (An optional assignment. Directions included in case you use it)

Students, and instructors, often complain this assignment is simplistic and obviously designed only to check up on students' news reading. So, it's important to confront that and challenge students to be more reflective, looking for news that is likely to be polarizing. With that list of stories, think about the four factors: news drivers, professional judgment; audience demands, competition for scoops and compare that analysis to an emotional "good.bad" reaction. The point of the exercise is to start thinking a little about our own biases, AND to dig through some other news sites just to see what you find.

"Media Debates" chapter 10

The tension between using professional judgment about what is news and the commercial pressure to have ratings, hits or increased circulation and advertising can be a more elaborate discussion based on the reading. ("Deciding What is News,") which students were supposed to read and write about prior to class. We can make the discussion about whether market forces or an editor's judgment should decide what is news. This is a good prelude to their in class workshop and it's a good time to introduce the Newsroom leader's archetypal defense of Paris Hilton-type stories mixed with the important stuff:

"If you don't get 'em in the tent, they can't love the circus."

Other discussion points:

- What do we mean by sensationalism? Is there too much of it?
- Is there too much negative news?

The readings from Media Debates, though useful in terms of exposing the students to academic and professional understandings of the questions at hand, are a bit on the dry. It serves to reinforce

points made in lecture, but little else (and with an activity planned in this recitation that directly addresses issues raised in both lecture and this reading, the reading seems redundant).

Class Exercise

You Be the Editor

Hand out the news budget to teams. Each needs to pick the four or five stories on the front page of their newspaper.

- **Discuss** how a real news meeting is conducted.
- **Appoint** an editor in chief or group leader, break into groups and determine front pages. When time is up, that person will show page and explain decisions. Leave each page up so comparisons can be made.

IMPORTANT: BRING COMPLETED COPIES TO DEAN FOR NEXT WEEK'S SLIDE SHOW.

Some instructors suggest turning it into some kind of competition, where some students act as judges and decide on a winner based on who gives the most compelling explanations and justifications for their front pages (we might even ask the judges "which of these papers would you buy?" as a means of choosing a winner). Winners could receive extra credit points on their participation grade. Either way, make sure your best pages get to Dean for next week's lecture.

(alternate)

A few days before class, identify group leaders with some artistic or design ability and encourage them to review the stories and bring clipped-out photos or headline words to illustrate the stories, plus glue or tape, so as to assemble a page on the template.

To add another wrinkle, each of the four groups can be given an audience and a business model: student, staid homeowner, subway fare. Students need a brief primer on why it matters if their paper is sold on the newsstand or by subscription.

List of Stories (which we encourage you to update/localize)

1. Your reporter learns exclusively that Adele has chosen Stony Brook to be the kickoff site for a worldwide tour and learns that tickets will go on sale next week.
2. Female faculty members file a landmark sex discrimination suit against the university, alleging that they get paid significantly less than their male counterparts. As evidence, they present the first comparative list of salaries, department by department.
3. The 6-year-old daughter of a popular administrator is reported missing from the campus day-care facility. Police fear a kidnapping and put out an alert for the public's help. The administrator currently is embroiled in a bitter custody battle with her husband.
4. Two dozen homeless people are arrested after they are discovered behind the campus power plant. Advocates say it points to the growing problem of the homeless this winter throughout Suffolk County.
5. A sophomore on campus, who is holding down two jobs, wins \$5 million in the New York State lottery and announces that she will treat her entire dorm floor to spring break in the Bahamas.

6. President Barack Obama vetoes legislation that would double the interest rates on student loans. GOP nominees Rick Santorum and Mitt Romney join Ron Paul in criticizing Obama for giving freeloading students a big gift instead of a needed lesson in the cost of education.
7. Six students are arrested following a sit-in by several hundred students at the SAC cafeteria to protest what students say are high food prices and unusually long lines that prevent them from getting lunch.
8. The undefeated Stony Brook baseball team plays its heart out to win a spot in the NCAA tournament.
9. Two students are killed by a drunk driver while walking along a stretch of unlit road on campus. Students have complained about the stretch for years.
10. A high-level campus administrator has been allowed to quietly retire after several male students reported that he made repeated and unwanted sexual advances. The students say they have complained for months and were told not to go to the police because the university was investigating the matter.

Announcements

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