

**ANIMATION: CLICK1= SLIDE TITLE, WITH STREISAND SINGING "PEOPLE"
CLICK2= CASCADE OF IMAGES. NO FURTHER CLICK NEEDED
SET#1: DISAPPEARANCE OF HANNAH GRAHAM FROM**

UVA

SET #2: SECRET SERVICE FIASCO

SET #3: EBOLA

SET #4: RANDOM ANONYMOUS SOURCE

SET #5: BEYONCE'S DIVORCE RUMOR

When it comes to judging the credibility and reliability of news reports, you the news consumer have two main concerns: Evidence and Sources.

Last week we talked about evidence.

And its accumulation, which is the verification process that's essential to V.I.A.

We thought about the qualitative difference between Direct and Indirect evidence.

Today we think about the **people** who are quoted in a news report, who provide evidence.



**ANIMATON: CLICK1=CASCADES OF
OUTLET LOGOS. NO FURTHER CLICK
NEEDED**

Before we get started, let’s get solid on this distinction sometimes eludes students. An “Outlet” is the purveyor of news. A “Source” is an individual person interviewed or quoted in a news report. (Hammer it home.)

These are “sources”:



A student locked down inside a classroom told CNN by phone that the shooting began in the cafeteria.

Officer Kenneth Healey and three on-duty colleagues were posing for a picture when a hatchet-wielding man charged at them “unprovoked,” according to **Police Commissioner Bill Bratton**.



“We have to rethink how we address infection control,” **CDC Director Tom Frieden** said Monday.



“The statement of me dating a sex offender is totally untrue,” **family matriarch “Mama June” Shannon** said.

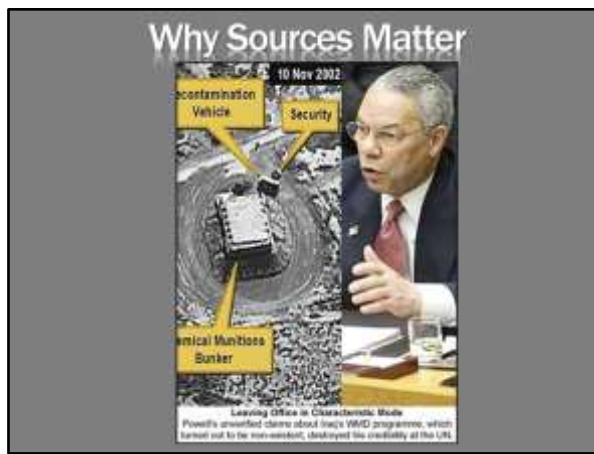
ANIMATION: CLICK1=FRIEDEN
CLICK2=MAMA JUNE
CLICK3=BRATTON
CLICK4=“A STUDENT”

This distinction often eludes students.
An “Outlet” is the purveyor of news.
A “Source” is a person interviewed in a news report.
(Lecturer: Hammer it home.)



(LECTURERS NEED TO MOVE SWIFTLY THROUGH THIS WMD MATERIAL TO LEAVE TIME FOR THE REST)

After 9/11/2001 and then in the months leading up to the March, 2003 invasion of Iraq by U.S. forces, the New York Times had scoop after scoop by star reporter Judith Miller, whose long work in the region gave her connections no one else had. The picture she painted was that Saddam Hussein had nuclear weapons and was ready to use them. For all the accusations that the Times is a Democratic Party organ, it's interesting to note she was delivering the same message as the Bush White House, which may be why few questioned the reports.



On February 5, 2003, U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell addressed the United Nations Security Council with evidence, he said, that Saddam Hussein had Weapons of Mass Destruction and that the invasion of Iraq would be the only way to stop Hussein from using them on the U.S. or other enemies. He is what you'd call a top-notch source and he was saying what the Times was reporting: Look Out. Iraq has WMD and will use them. By March The Times and CBS News reported their joint polling showed 55% of Americans supported an invasion of Iraq.

(Aside to lecturers, At that time, Bill Keller (now the Times' executive editor) was a columnist and wrote admiringly of Powell's performance:

"Senator John Kerry seemed to come down from the fence last week after Colin Powell's skillful parsing of the evidence.

We reluctant hawks may disagree among ourselves about the most compelling logic for war -- protecting America, relieving oppressed Iraqis or reforming the Middle East -- but we generally agree that the logic for standing pat does not hold. Much as we might wish the administration had orchestrated events so the inspectors had a year instead of three months, much as we deplore the arrogance and binary moralism, much as we worry about all the things that could go wrong, we are hard pressed to see an alternative that is not built on wishful thinking. "

Why Sources Matter



U.S. Invades Iraq to Capture WMD

More than 130,000 Iraqis have died in the conflict that begun with the “Shock and Awe” bombings on March 19, 2003. Over the last 8 years, more than 4,400 U.S. soldiers were killed and 31,827 were wounded in action.

Why Sources Matter

Search m

Conflict in Iraq msnbc.com

CIA's final report: No WMD found in Iraq

Recommends freeing detainees held for weapons knowledge

Tweet 0

Recommend 21

Discussion Related

Associated Press
updated 4/25/2005 9:24:44 PM ET. Share | Print | Font: A/A + -

WASHINGTON — In his final word, the CIA's top weapons inspector in Iraq said Monday that the hunt for weapons of mass destruction has "gone as far as feasible" and has found nothing, closing an investigation into the purported programs of Saddam Hussein that were used to justify the 2003 invasion.



No WMD were found.



Animation: On click, NY magazine clip fades away and apology appears.

What, people began to ask, were we doing in Iraq?
How did the Times get it so wrong?

On May 26, 2004, the New York Times published a lengthy description of what the paper got wrong and how that happened.

It boiled down to sources, as New York Magazine pointed out.

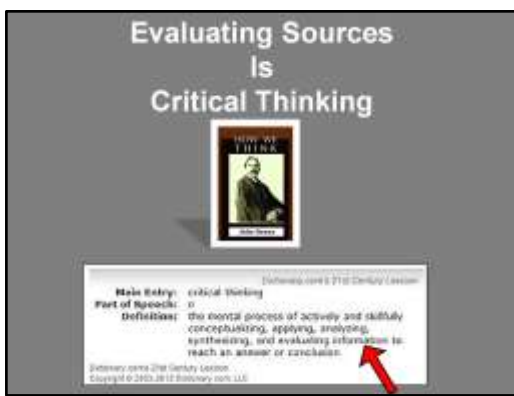
Anonymous sources, whose personal interests, it turns out, made them poor partners in a disinterested search for the truth,

CLICK TO BRING UP TIMES APOLOGY

There were people in our government and elsewhere who had set out to hoodwink the press. But a careful news consumer armed with the ability to evaluate sources for themselves...might not have trusted the New York Times' reporting because so much of it was based on un-named sources providing unverified, uncorroborated material.

Easy to say in hindsight.

To improve your foresight we introduce today an advanced vocabulary that brings clarity and nuance to your critical analysis of the sources who are the basis for so many news reports.



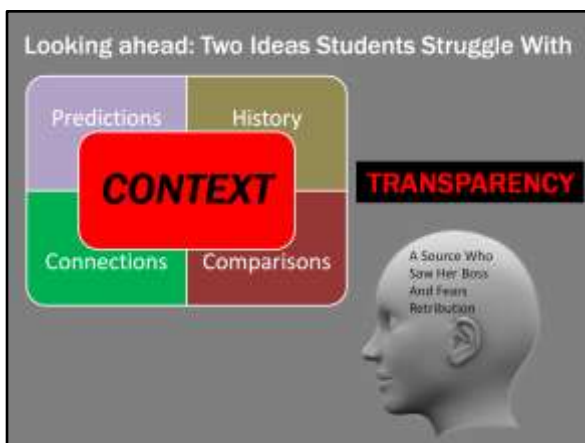
One of the reasons you're in this course is because Stony Brook, and any other school worth its salt, makes a big deal about training you to think critically.

The phrase gets slung around a lot, so as we plunge into this part of the course, let's remind ourselves what that means.

The American Educator, Scholar and Psychologist John Dewey coined the phrase, Critical Thinking. Here's what he meant: Critical Thinking is an **ACTIVE** process by which you methodically test a statement or argument. One key way is by evaluating **WHO SAYS**.



Housekeeping, Announcements & Notes



Purpose of this slide is to plant a seed ahead of time. If you think it's confusing, it might be best NOT to use it.

ANIMATION: Slide opens with Context graphic. On Click, Transparency header appears. Four more clicks add details about the source, making her take shape.

Looking ahead to next week, two words I want to introduce that you'll be expected to understand.

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, connections between these players and outside parties, plus responsible predictions of what comes next. With all context, today's isolated event makes more sense. **THAT** is context.

(Click) The second term is **TRANSPARENCY**, which 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.

After this lecture, students will be able to:

1. Articulate the difference between a news outlet and a news Source.
2. Use the "I.M.V.A.I.N." criteria to evaluate sources in news stories.
3. Justify reasons for differential ratings of sources' credibility based on IMVAIN analysis.
4. Use specific examples to illustrate the difference between a source who asserts and one who verifies.
5. Use a three-part test to judge the reliability of anonymous sources.

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.

Last week's Quick Quiz

#1. Direct Evidence: Photos, Video, Audio, Documents, Eyewitnesses.

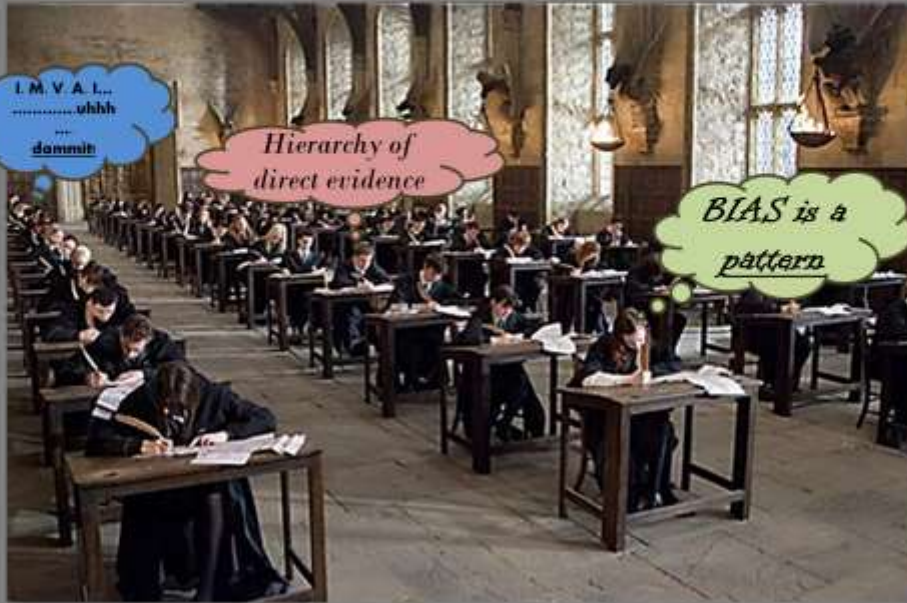
Indirect Evidence: Accounts from Official spokespersons; (i.e. Lawyer, Press Secretary, Written Press Release); Expert reconstructions; Hearsay Testimony (Second-Hand or more); Computer models; Inferences From Evidence.

#2. Supply the missing word that fills both gaps in this definition: "Scientific truth is a statement of probability proportional to the evidence. It will change over time as the evidence changes."

Your questions and comments ...

Test #2

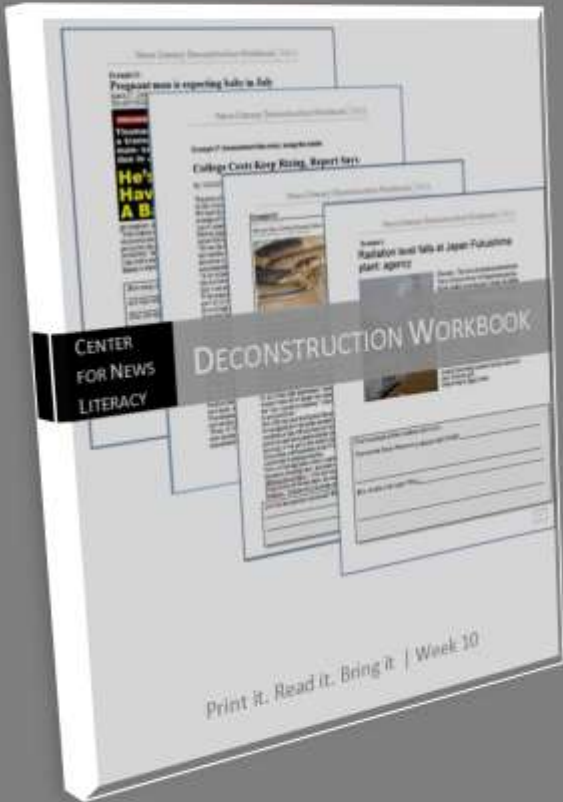
Covering Lectures Since the last Test
Will be held in recitation week of Nov. 17



ANIMATION: AUTOMATIC

**AFTER A HALF-SECOND, THOUGHT-BUBBLES
RISE OVER HOGWARTS STUDENTS TAKING THEIR
O.W.L. EXAMS**

Reminder: Bring Deconstruction Workbook to Next Lecture



Print it.

Read it.

Bring it

It will be posted on Blackboard and you need to print it out, READ IT, and bring it to class next week. Next week's class is crucial preparation for the final exam and you will get very little out of it if you do not read the news article examples in the workbook BEFORE class...

Common sense source evaluation:

- ✓ Who is this source?
- ✓ How would this person know?
- ✓ Does anyone corroborate?
- ✓ Does this person verify or assert?
- ✓ Do they have a dog in the fight?

(Don't copy these. Wait for the mnemonic device)

ANIMATION: EACH QUESTION COMES UP WITH A CLICK

Don't write these down...just think about what they mean, because in a few minutes we'll give you a much easier way to remember the ideas.

So put down your pens and think with me for a minute to make sure you understand the big concepts.

(CLICK TO NEXT SLIDE)



NEWS FELLOW: LINK THE NAMED VIDEO TO THIS SLIDE

Here's a report on whether cell phones interfere with safe operation of an airliner...or not.

As you watch, think about the sources.

Says Who?

Cellonplane.wmv

NEWS FELLOW: LINK THE NAMED VIDEO TO THIS SLIDE

AFTER VIDEO RUNS, ASK:

For each source, what did you notice?

Who is this source?

How would this person know?

Does anyone corroborate?

Does this person verify or assert?

Do they have a dog in the fight?

Evaluating sources systematically

“I’M VAIN”

Independent Sources Are Better Than Self-Interested Sources

Multiple Sources Are Better Than Single Sources

Sources Who **V**erify Are Better Than Sources Who Assert

Authoritative/**I**nformed Sources Are Better Than Uninformed Sources

Named Sources Are Better Than Unnamed Sources

(ANIMATION: On Click the general questions fade and the Mnemonic, IMVAIN fades in.

For the purposes of this course, here’s how we’ll methodically evaluate sources who show up in news stories.

Independent vs. Self-interested

Multiple vs. Lone or Sole source

Verifies vs. Asserts

Authoritative/Informed vs. Uninformed

Named vs. Unnamed

In past semesters, students have memorized the 5 strongest characteristics with this mnemonic device: I’M VAIN

These are straightforward ideas. Let’s see what happens out in the messy real world.

“Think Twice”

A Silent Minute to Absorb the Material

ANIMATION: Click once to start the fade-out, fade-in, which takes one minute

At Stony Brook, we’ve become interested in the effects of silence in the classroom.

At summer workshops in 2013, we began breaking up intensive lecture or discussion sessions with a minute of silence. It made participants uncomfortable the first time, but over the course of a few days they became quite enthusiastic about pausing every so often to let ideas sink in or to simply reflect. We find it works well to ask a question and then call for a minute of silence.

This slide is built to fade to black and then come back, all in one minute

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/education/educationnews/8841649/Silence-is-golden-how-keeping-quiet-in-the-classroom-can-boost-results.html>

<http://www.ascd.org/publications/educational-leadership/dec09/vol67/num04/Silence-Is-Golden.aspx>

A case study in source evaluation



The Secret Service is under fire recently for mishandling White House and Presidential security.

There was a fence jumper who made it inside the White House, an armed felon who got on the elevator with the President and this story, shots fired at the White House that the Secret Service didn't know about until a cleaning lady found some broken glass.

Let's use stories about this event to critically evaluate the various sources who are offered to us.

Judging the reliability of sources

Independent Sources
Are **Better** Than
Self-Interested Sources

Okay, rule 1...

A source who has a personal interest in the outcome may not even know how that influences their perceptions. It's the purest kind of cognitive dissonance.

So, a source who doesn't have a stake in the outcome, who is therefore independent, is usually reliable.

Let's be clear: Rational Self Interest, looking after your health, your wealth, your loved-ones and your comrades is not the same thing as selfishness, the childish or irrational desire to possess everything.

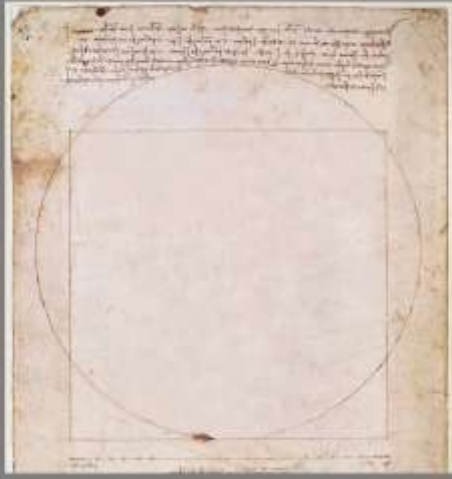
You've seen Leonardo DaVinci's "Vitruvian Man", which was his ground-breaking reduction of human proportions to geometry.

We used that memorable image a couple of lectures ago to help you think about journalistic independence.

Today we use it again, to reinforce your understanding of independence and self interest.

Today, we use it to think about the independence of SOURCES, the people who are quoted or interviewed in news reports.

Self-interests define individuals



(LECTURER. ANIMATION AUTOMATICALLY SPINS THE VITRUVIAN MAN IN, IN ADDITION TO THE FOUR AREAS IN WHICH OUR INDEPENDENCE IS CHALLENGED.)

Sources are, like you, pulled in all directions by a variety of allegiances:

- **ALLEGIANCE** We can't be neutral about the religious (and political) beliefs and comrades we choose;
- **INTELLECT** We are not neutral about what we think we know as a result of our education and unique experiences;
- **LOVE** Every code of ethics warns professionals we can't be neutral about the family we are born into, the family we spawn and those we love;
- **MONEY** And when our finances are imperiled, we can't be expected to make an independent or neutral observation.

So, when a reporter offers you a witness or expert or observer, you want to know of any major conflicts of interest. Of course a Cardinal says the Church isn't to blame for pedophile priests, of course a surgeon thinks every ailment requires surgery, of course the Dad says his kid never hurt anyone before he shot the neighbor, of course the sales manager says the car is awesome.

Self-interested sources...

In a statement on Sept. 20, the agency said Mr. Gonzalez "was physically apprehended after entering the White House North Portico doors" — leaving the impression that Secret Service officers tackled Mr. Gonzalez just steps after he opened the door and walked through. Secret Service officials said



White House officials also did nothing in the last week to correct the impression that Mr. Gonzalez had been stopped just inside the front door



Do Secret Service agents have a motivation to downplay the security breach?
Does the White House staff?

Ask the Secret Service how bad it got when Omar Gonzales jumped the fence, ran across the lawn, climbed the steps, opened the unlocked door and charged into the White House with a knife and they said...they got him right inside the door.

Ask the White House press secretary what happened and he answers..."What they said."

The truth?

Once the truth came out, it was clear the Secret Service screwed up badly.

Did they want anyone to know that?

Independent sources?



"This is really just part of a pattern of laxness," Ronald Kessler, author of "In the President's Secret Service," said on CNN, citing several infamous examples during the Obama administration, including Tareq and Michaela Salehi crashing the state dinner and agents hiring prostitutes in Colombia.

- Intellectually independent?
- Politically neutral?
- Financial interests at stake?
- Family involved?



"I'm very surprised," former FBI assistant director Tom Fuentes said on CNN. "You know, everybody's in a little bit of shock that someone not just jumped the fence, but that they got that close."

No source is perfectly independent.

Ron Kessler has made a career of writing about the Secret Service, the FBI and the CIA, sometimes quite critically.

He doesn't work for them.

But...problems probably help sell books.

(Also, if you follow his comments through, he uses the Secret Service mess to condemn the entire Obama presidency.)

Fuentes may be a little more independent.

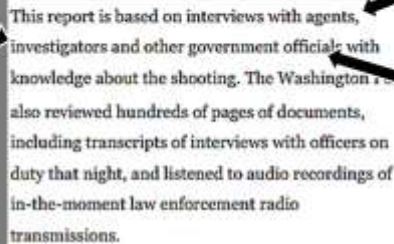
He has no book on the market.

He has no federal paycheck.

His comments, if you follow them, stay focused on Secret Service operations and don't stray into politics.

Judging the Reliability of Sources

Multiple Sources
Are **Better** Than a
Single Source



This report is based on interviews with agents, investigators and other government officials with knowledge about the shooting. The Washington Post also reviewed hundreds of pages of documents, including transcripts of interviews with officers on duty that night, and listened to audio recordings of in-the-moment law enforcement radio transmissions.

In the courtroom, we call it corroboration. In scientific circles, we say data is stronger if multiple researchers conducting the same experiment replicated the findings. It's more than just strength in numbers, which is a logical fallacy, by the way. If several people independent of one another, are saying the same thing...you can trust it more.

Multiple Sources

2-Tier Secret Service Faces a Test

By MATT APUZZO OCT. 6, 2014

WASHINGTON — Had last month's White House fence-jumper made his dash across the Norm Lawn just a few minutes earlier, he would have found the building teeming with dark-suited Secret Service agents and a counterassault team trained to repel surprise attacks on the president.

But when President Obama left the White House for Camp David the night of Sept. 19, responsibility for protecting the White House fell to a lesser-known branch of the Secret Service, the Uniformed Division, whose officers have traditionally been younger, less experienced and paid less.

The intruder, after outtraining one team of the division's officers, bowled over another officer, and entered the White House, shining a harsh light on the Secret Service that last week led to the resignation of the service's director.

Representative Sheila Jackson Lee, Democrat of Texas, said she was astonished by a photograph showing "one, two, three, four, five, six uniformed officers — I wonder if there's a problem here — chasing this gentleman who looks like he's a security firm." Other recent episodes, including an intruder who broke a White House window, and the kidnapping of agents for drinking and taking photos, says to their rooms before a presidential trip to Colombia, have raised questions about the agency's competence, its

"There's a disparity between agents and officers," said Manuel Ovalle, who spent decades in the Uniformed Division and served as its ombudsman. "Fighting was endemic; he said it was an agent-run organization."

That disparity, along with the questions it raises about morale and training, is one of the issues the Secret Service says it is investigating in response to the intense criticism it has received over the security breaches. "Everything is going to be looked at," said Kevin S. Simpson, the chief of the Uniformed Division.

About 3,200 agents protect the president, his family and other high-ranking officials. A smaller number of uniformed officers, about 1,300, stand posts at the White House and at the president's residence, and provide police services for foreign embassies. When the president travels, officers go with him to run metal-detector stations.

Becoming an agent requires the equivalent of a bachelor's degree with "superior academic achievement." Many new agents have served in the military. Becoming a uniformed officer, on the other hand, requires a high-school diploma. And for new recruits, each branch runs its own training courses, with the agents focusing more on specialized criminal investigative techniques and the protection of dignitaries.

While uniformed officers can advance onto specialized, prominent assignments such as the canine unit or the counter sniper team, guarding the White House grounds on foot is among the least attractive assignments and often falls to officers fresh out of training, former officials said.

"These young kids come in all excited. They've come through training and shot their weapons," Mr. Ovalle said. "And then they're standing. They're just standing there for long hours."

Carl Peters, a former officer, described the reaction of some uniformed recruits to their duties. "Wow, it's not like 'In the Heat of the Moment' Hollywood movie about a veteran Secret Service member guarding the president. 'There's a lot of some mundane stuff that you have to do,'" Mr. Peters said, adding that he always thought talk of a rift between the uniformed force and the agents was



ANIMATION: EACH CLICK BRINGS UP ANOTHER LABEL, 1,2,3,4

The first 12 paragraphs of this New York Times report on problems at the Secret Service rests on four different sources, two no longer on the Secret Service payroll, one current official of the Secret Service and one a member of Congress who is part of the oversight committee.

Judging the Reliability of Sources

Sources Who **V**erify
Are **Better** Than
Sources Who Assert

Where are we now?

I.M..... **V**

ASK: What is the difference between
Verify and Assert?

Verifying or Asserting?

SourcesThatAssertIngraham.mp4

"I guess...you do get the sense that political correctness could have been a factor here..."

A person can have impressive credentials, yet still provide only assertions. This is the nitty gritty of source evaluation: what exactly did the source say?

On the one hand, Laura Ingraham worked in the White House during the Reagan Administration, so she has actually seen the entryway and the Secret Service guard detail.

On the other hand, she stretches that expertise all the way to an assertion that the fence-jumper got through the door because of political correctness in the selection of Secret Service agents and Directors.

A Corollary to Last Week's Lesson:



Just Like We
Always ask:
*"Did the Reporter
Open the Freezer?"*

You can also ask"
*"Did the Source
Open the Freezer?"*

One way to think of this is as a corollary to the Open the Freezer rule.

Shouldn't the reporter always ask a source if he or she opened the freezer? Isn't that what we mean by asserting versus verifying?

One more way to think of it is this:

In Texas, when someone is accused of bragging they often come back with this phrase: *"It ain't braggin' if ya done it."*

Maybe that's a useful way to think about sources. *"It ain't assertin' if ya prove it."*

Judging the Reliability of Sources

Authoritative/**I**nformed Sources
Are **Better** Than
Un-informed Sources

IMVAIN...I-M-V

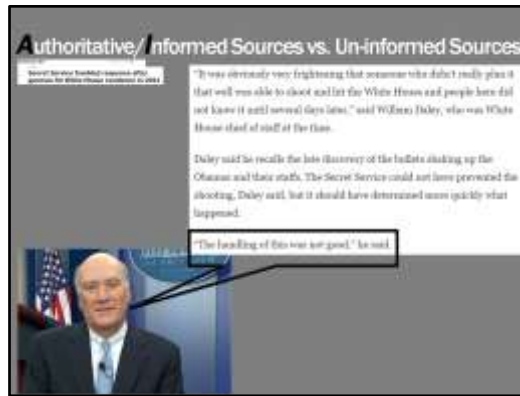
A/I (WE USE TWO LETTERS FOR ONE RULE)

Now we are at A/I...a reliable source is Authoritative or Informed about the events or topics on which they are quoted (or interviewed).

Authority is STORY-SPECIFIC.

A neuro surgeon is an impressive person, but is only authoritative as to brain surgery, not as to engineering or aviation.

Further, a neurosurgeon is authoritative as to brain surgery, but may not be well-informed about a specific person's tumor.



It's one thing when a talk show guest makes guesses and assertions about what happened and its effect on the First Family and White House staff.

But when the White House Chief of Staff talks about it, you have a person who is both authoritative about White House operations in general AND is informed as to the specific details of this situation.

While he's downplaying the Secret Service's failure to discover the shooting evidence, his statement that "The handling of this was not good" is stronger than an assertion. It is based on knowledge of the facts.

Authoritative/Informed Sources vs. Un-informed Sources

Secret Service fumbled response after gunman hit White House residence in 2011

"This is symptomatic of an organization that is not moving in the right direction," Rep. Jason Chaffetz (Utah), a leading Republican on the House Oversight and Government Reform Committee, said in an interview. The committee, which oversees the Secret Service, has invited the director to testify at a Tuesday hearing on security issues.

Versus...



denvic98

9/30/2014 12:25 AM EDT (Edited)

I question the range of the weapon in the car firing with that much accuracy at 650-700 yards. To make that shot pattern from that distance, at night, with that weapon is next to impossible

Congressman Chaffetz may not have been at the White House when the shooting and fence-jumpings occurred, but one of his jobs in Congress is to serve on the Committee which oversees the Secret Service.

Clearly, he is both authoritative, by virtue of his position, and informed, by virtue of being briefed by investigators. Denvic98 is...a commenter on the Washington Post website, who claims ballistic expertise and goes on to discuss the merits of the AK-47 as a long-range weapon...problem is, the weapon used was not a Kalashnikov...and we don't know who DenVic is, which gives denvic98 a zero rating on authority/informedness...

Judging the Reliability of Sources

Named Sources
Are **Better** Than
Unnamed Sources

This one seems so obvious it is barely worth mentioning, but it's a good time to mention this complex idea:
Let's look at this simple idea, encapsulated in the very first slide: **"Says Who?"**

ASK: As a reader, how does it strike you when a news report relies on un-named sources?

Do you think there are good reasons for a source to be anonymous?

What are they?

Evaluating Anonymous Sources

Transparency
Characterization

Corroboration (evidence/sources)

These are just some examples of a growing jihadi movement in Boston that one moderate Boston Muslim who spoke to TheBlaze TV's *For the Record* and was identified only as "Khaleed" called a "disease." Several other Muslim sources described a "criminal" growing recruitment and anti-

Law enforcement sources told NBC News

"The draft legislation is better than nothing. But it does not solve the underlying problems," said the company official, who requested anonymity because of the political sensitivity of the comments.

Here are some questions to ask when you're evaluating an anonymous source:

- Is there an adequate explanation why the source must remain anonymous (fear of retribution, prosecution) THAT'S TRANSPARENCY

- Is there sufficient information given to establish the source's value ("A witness...a co-worker") THAT'S CHARACTERIZATION

- Is there other information in the story, from named sources, documents or other forms of evidence, that independently corroborates what the anonymous source says? THAT'S CORROBORATION

If you don't have all that, are you being asked to take too much on faith?

Anonymous sources characterized

The Washington Post

Secret Service fumbled response after gunman hit White House residence in 2011

A woman in a taxi stopped at a nearby stoplight immediately took to Twitter to describe the actions of "this crazy guy."

"Driver in front of my cab, STOPPED and fired 5 gun shots at the White House," she wrote, adding, "It took the police a while to respond."

Another witness — a visiting neuroscientist who was riding by in an airport shuttle van — later told investigators he had seen a man shooting out of a car toward the White House.

"When the president came back ... then the s--- really hit the fan," said one former aide.

Michelle Obama addressed him in such a sharp and raised voice that she could be heard through a closed door, according to people familiar with the exchange.

Is the characterization of this anonymous source adequate?

Is there a good reason for this individual to remain anonymous?

Why are they insisting on anonymity?

We know there are several people, but we don't know why they are anonymous, how they know what they know and what evidence exists that corroborates their version of events.

A reader has little basis for trusting them, other than this: It's in the Washington Post, generally enforces high standards of evidence.

But that "trust me, I'm the Washington Post" ethic isn't very transparent, is it?



Weighing Sources: Authoritative is case-specific

LECTURER: STONY BROOK'S TLT MEDIA LAB HAS BUILT A LIVE INTERACTIVE TEETER-TOTTER TO ILLUSTRATE THE DYNAMISM OF SOURCE EVALUATION. IN THE RIGHT HAND CORNER, YOU CAN DRAG AND DROP AN IMAGE OF A SOURCE

THEN, YOU CLICK AND HOLD ON A CHARACTERISTIC, DRAG IT TO THE SIDE IT BELONGS ON AND CLICK TO DROP IT.

TO ILLUSTRATE DEGREES OF POSITIVE OR NEGATIVE, CHANGE WHERE IT IS ON THE SCALE.

THE TEETER-TOTTER REBALANCES ACCORDINGLY.

IT TAKES A LITTLE PRACTICE, AND YES THERE IS A TYPO (PROGRAMMER WILL FIX THAT)

HERE IS THE LINK: <http://tltmedia.cc.stonybrook.edu/projects/teeter/>

Here's the kind of sophistication we expect you to bring to your evaluation of sources. Each characteristic has different weights with different sources. Adjust, ponder, make a nuanced evaluation, not a black-and-white evaluation.



(ANIMATION: First three clicks go from Nixon waving farewell from Marine 1 through a series of headlines detailing his fall. Fourth Click brings up the Deep Throat covers.)

ASK: Who is this guy? (it's Nixon on the steps of Marine 1)

It is pretty tempting to dismiss all anonymous sources as untrustworthy, especially after the WMD debacle.

But when corroborated with other kinds of evidence, un-named sources can be the only way news consumers learn about serious problems in government or elsewhere.

An anonymous source was one key to the Washington Post's investigation of the attempted cover-up of the role Nixon's White House and campaign played in a break-in at the headquarters of the Democratic National Committee.

"Deep Throat" was first introduced to the public in the book written by Washington Post reporters Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein about how they broke the Watergate story. His identity was the best-kept secret in Washington until June 2005, when his imminent death prompted him to go public. He was Mark Felt, the 2nd-in-command at the FBI and he fed the reporters a series of tips the FBI had been forced to sit on by the Nixon Whitehouse.

The scandal would eventually lead to the resignation of President Nixon as well as prison terms for six White House staffers and presidential advisers.

Felt was the key to the Washington Post's Watergate investigation. Without his information, The puny Washington, D.C. newspaper would not have been able to take on the Executive Branch of the U.S. government.



When CBS News reporter Clarissa Ward snuck in to Syria to report on President Assad's violent reprisal against a rebel uprising, she faced problems with how to report the news. People who appear on camera may be sought out and killed for speaking to foreign media. This is a common problem during political unrest.

Let's look at how this reporter solves the problem. As you watch, consider the difference between the risks Clarissa's sources may take if they appear in news reports, compared to the New York Times near-daily expectation that you are satisfied with anonymous back-biting by sources in stories about DC politics...



Ward1.wmv

(NEWS FELLOW LINK VIDEO HERE)



Ward2.wmv

(NEWS FELLOW LINK VIDEO HERE)



Ward3.wmv

(NEWS FELLOW LINK VIDEO HERE)

Judging the Reliability of Sources

Independent Sources Are Better Than Self-Interested Sources

Multiple Sources Are **Better** Than Single Sources

Sources Who **V**erify Are **Better** Than Sources Who Assert

Authoritative/**I**nformed Sources Are **Better** Than Uninformed Sources

Named Sources Are **Better** Than Unnamed Sources

(Mnemonic Device: I'M VAIN)

One more review, to cement the mnemonic device into your brain:

I

M

V

A/I

N

The News Literacy Source Evaluation Rubric In Exams (as opposed to real life!)

Tim Menke, U.S. Department of Health & Human Services investigator (3 points)

Question	Answer	Score
1. What is the source's name and title?	Tim Menke, U.S. Department of Health & Human Services investigator	3
2. What is the source's affiliation?	U.S. Department of Health & Human Services	3
3. What is the source's role?	Investigator	3
4. What is the source's expertise?	Investigating fraud	3
5. What is the source's bias?	Menke has no financial/personal stake in the truth of ABC's report, making him independent. He and other investigators say fraud is rampant. He's not giving factual material, just observations, though his comments are informed by his work investigating fraud. He is authoritative in general and appears well-informed on ABC's findings. He asserts as to the legality/severity of what is shown to him. He is named. Menke is a reliable source. (Students may not notice the second HHS investigator is not Menke. No penalty, as this got past most instructors.)	3

In News Literacy exams, here's how you are expected to evaluate sources.

We provide the chart.

You provide the evaluation scores and explain your evaluation.

On An Exam

	1 Not at all	2 Somewhat	3 A great deal
Independent	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Multiple	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Verifax	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Authoritative or informed	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Narrowed	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Rate _____ on a scale of 1-3, with 1 being unreliable, 2 being somewhat reliable and 3 being very reliable.
AND explain your rating in two or three sentences.

Explain

Insert
Nuance
HERE

The "Explain" Box Is Where You Make
Nuanced Remarks

**ANIMATION: CLICK 1=THE "INSERT NUANCE
HERE" NOTE AND THE UNDERLINE UNDER
"EXPLAIN" APPEAR.**



The problem with self-interest is that even though it's a negative, it is also a constant of sorts.

A really authoritative source will be one who is close to some dangerous or illegal activity, so she will either be afraid of losing her job or her life or some money. But because she is so far inside, she's got documents or photos or other evidence that verifies what she is saying.

When Is A Self-Interested Source A Reliable Source?

The Straits Times
www.straitstimes.com

Published on Mar 26, 2014

'History will judge us well' on MH370: Malaysia

KUALA LUMPUR (AFP) - Malaysia's government said on Wednesday that it would be judged favourably by posterity over its much-questioned handling of the crisis over missing flight MH370.

"I think history will judge us well," Transport Minister Hishammuddin Hussein told a daily press briefing on the search for the missing Malaysia Airlines flight



During the search for MH370 judged this a self-interested source.

But can we easily dismiss what he says?

He is definitely protecting his job and his employer.

On the other hand, who would know the inner workings of the search better than the Transport Minister?

We offer this example mostly to caution against unduly harsh assessment of politicians and political appointees.

While it is true their self-interest can get in the way, it is also true that they are in the middle of the action and may know first-hand what others could only guess at.

Given that, how do you evaluate his reliability as to their handling of a multinational search?


Reconstructing the Blackwater Incident in Nusoor Square



(NEWS FELLOW LINK VIDEO HERE)

(Lecturer: This is a long piece, 6:27, but an excellent demonstration of the power of multiple sources, many of whom are also independent and/or Interested in very important ways)

Now let's watch this story and think about corroboration.



Blackwater.wmv

(NEWS FELLOW LINK VIDEO HERE)

Have students enumerate the number and variety of corroborating sources.

Based on that, how reliable is this report?



ASK: Do you evaluate these sources differently as a group than you evaluate them one-by one?

Why is that?

ASK: Break these sources down for me.

How do you evaluate each one?

- **Omar Wasso**, the rooftop witness, who is a pro-American supporter of Kurdistan
- **Erik Prince**, the President of Blackwater Security
- **The two police officers**, Ali Khalaf Salman and his partner
- An investigation by **the U.S. Army**
- A statement from **the State Department**, which had hired Blackwater
- **Wounded Taxi driver** (phonetic) Baras Hadoun

Pivot Point

**Every other row
Pivots to the row behind
To discuss in groups of four**

We have done this informally in years past, but now provide a slide to prompt short in-class discussions among students.

At appropriate moments, the lecturer will pose a question to the room and then ask students to pivot into groups of 4, discuss the question and prepare to offer answers to the whole room.

This will be clumsy until students learn the drill, but the idea is to break up the lecture with small-group work, if only to give students a chance to shift positions.

Key Lesson:

Evaluate Sources

Evaluate Sources

Evaluate Sources

Does verification trump self-interest? It depends. Does authority outweigh anonymity? Sometimes. Is singularity and anonymity a fatal flaw? It might be. It often frustrates students that there is no formula. But there can't be. The five rules of source evaluation: I.M.V.A/I.N give you a vocabulary with which to make judgments with clarity, but critical thinking is lonely work: you, probing information and Thinking For Yourself.

We may disagree with you in the amount of weight you give to characteristics, but so long as you are evaluating sources and not just taking for granted their weight...you are well on your way to News Literacy, particularly if you begin to demand that your news diet consist of reports built on credible sources.

And as always, this is not some snazzy jargon intended to make you insufferable to your friends and family. Rather, it is a crucial skill in your civic life.

The Quick Quiz

1. Is CBS a source or an outlet?
2. What does the M in "IMVAIN" stand for?
3. *Confusions? Comments? Suggestions?*

Every lecture, we'll stop and give you a quick quiz, just three questions.

This helps cement key lessons in your memory.

Plus, it helps us see if we explained things well.

And the third question is a chance for you to improve your own course.

We'll start lectures with a selection of your comments and suggestions.



hus endeth the Lesson...

To Be Fair...

"Saddam Hussein has spent the better part of this decade, and much of his nation's wealth, not on providing for the Iraqi people, but on developing nuclear, chemical and biological weapons and the missiles to deliver them."

President Bill Clinton, Jan. 27, 1998.



"Iraq is a long way from [here], but what happens there matters a great deal here. For the risks that the leaders of a rogue state will use nuclear, chemical or biological weapons against us or our allies is the greatest security threat we face."

Sec. of State Madeleine Albright, Feb. 18, 1998.



"He will use those weapons of mass destruction again, as he has ten times since 1983."

Sandy Berger*, National Security Adviser, Feb. 18, 1998



"Fateful decisions will be made in the days and weeks ahead. At issue is nothing less than the fundamental question of whether or not we can keep the most lethal weapons known to mankind out of the hands of an unreconstructed tyrant and aggressor ..."

Sen. Joe Biden (D, DE), Feb. 12, 1998
Now Vice President



*later convicted of stealing documents from the National Security Archive

ANIMATION: Each Click Brings Up Another Quote and photo in this order: Clinton, Albright, Biden, Berger

To be fair, President George W Bush, Vice President Dick Cheney and Secretary of State Colin Powell were not the only ones urging action against Saddam Hussein. Democrats had, too.

For example: (Clinton, Albright, Biden, Berger)