

# JRN 101B/ 103G: News Literacy/ FALL 2010

## Recitation 5: You Be the Editor

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There is no BackPack for this lecture set, since the material conveys broad course concepts, themes, and principles, using current events to illustrate and support those points.

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*.

### I. **Organization:**

--Attendance

--Collect “News Drivers” homework

--Quiz

--Good News/Bad News Assignment: 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.

### II. **Recap Lecture**

One of our Fall semester adjuncts, Jack Millrod, took time in October, 2010, to organize the news definition, the factors of editorial judgment and the News Drivers all on one sheet, to help students see them in a number of contexts. That is included at the back of this packet. You can either post it for students or use it as your guide for a review of the lecture.



### III. **“Media Debates” chapter 10 discussion**

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?



#### IV. 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 a bit 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.

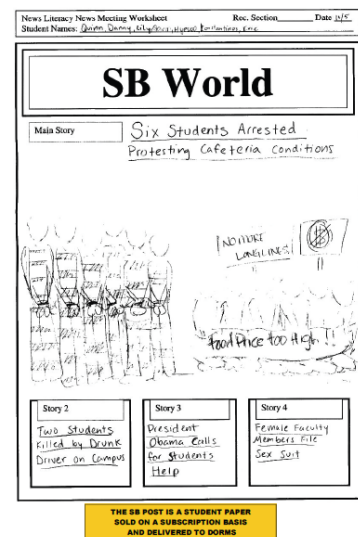
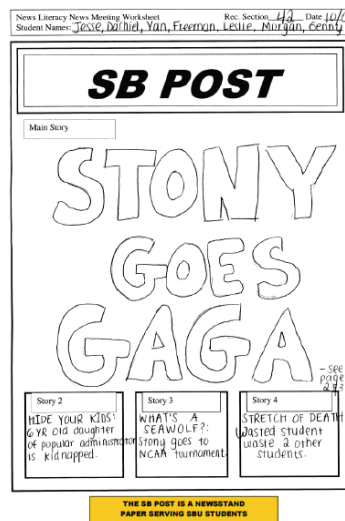
**IMPORTANT. BRING COMPLETED COPIES TO DEAN FOR NEXT WEEK'S SLIDE SHOW.**

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.

#### IV. (alternative)

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.



# What is news?

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

**Editorial judgment** (What else is news today?)

**Audience** (Who is our target reader/viewer/user?)

**Profit and competition** (Circulation model, professional pride, etc ...)

## Universal 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)
- **Timeliness Type II Commemoration** (Looking back ... anniversary stories)

### *HOW MANY?*

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

### *WHY (should you care)?*

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