JRN 101B/ 103G: News Literacy/ FALL 2010
Recitation: Opinion Journalism: Out of Place or Rare and Valuable?

The majority of the time in this recitation will be taken up by the test.

I.   ORGANIZATION

- Opinion review

- Test

II.   Review Lecture 6: News vs. Opinion (approx. 15 minutes)

There is a need to go back over the material covered in the lecture to make certain students understand the distinctions between news and opinion and the various forms of opinion. Emphasize a few points:
    1. The difference in the first place between news and opinion;
    2. The difference between types of opinions, as commonly labeled and defined.
    3. The difference between useful, fact-based opinions and bloviation.
     It's important to emphasize that journalistic opinion must meet journalism's standards of verification, independence and accountability but does give license to express judgment and opinion. Facts may be used selectively, but the "license to kill" we described in lecture does not give license to feed news consumers information that is not factual. Instructors might start class by passing out an example of a good opinion piece—one that's provocative and factually accurate.
<u>Use the example to review:</u>
Labelling Landmarks (types of Opinion Journalism, by medium and the most common labels: news analysis, Op-Ed, Editorial, Column, etc)
Language Landmarks:
            First-person voice
            Exaggeration/superlatives
            Overly dramatic
Faulty reasoning: (look for breakdown of basic deductive structures that follow. Here's a valid deductive argument: *"**IF** luck has no place in chess, **THEN** chess is a game of skill. There are no chance factors in chess. Therefore, chess **is** a game of skill"*)

Invalid arguments/Errors in Critical Thinking: a partial list from classical rhetorical studies:

-**The "Straw Man" caricature**: the opposing side's view is portrayed in its weakest possible form.

Generalizing from incomplete information: My roommate does x, therefore all college students do x

Ad populum: Everyone else does X, therefore X is a good thing.

Ad hominem: Attack on an authority's person (he's ugly) instead of credentials (her Ph.D. is from a diploma mill)

Ad ignoratium: Using the absence of evidence as evidence, as in *"The FBI file was not able to clear Professor X of spying charges."*

False choice/false dilemma: Overlooking alternate conclusions, as in *"Action on the Senate health care reform bill will either rescue the faltering economy or it will bankrupt us."* In fact, there are a lot of other possibilities.

Circular argument: *"My professor is a genius because it says so on p. 3 of "The History of Geniuses" and after all, he's the author of that book!"*

III.   **TEST** (Liz will have copies for each recitation, with different sets of questions for each. Many thanks to those who submitted suggested changes, updates and clarifications.)

IV.   **Assignments : Check Blackboard and your Lecturer for local variations.**