

Provisional Truth

Students: Please review this assignment as soon as possible. It requires some advance planning on your part. You'll be looking for a story that has legs. In other words, a story that is going on right now, will go on for some time and that will change as new developments occur. NO SPORTS STORIES!

This week's list of outlets are:

Print

- The New York Post
- Newsday
- USA Today

Web

- english.aljazeera.net
- propublica.org
- slate.com

What You're Doing

Select any newsworthy story that the press has been covering recently. Using any single news outlet on the list below, or any combination of those outlets, track that coverage for no fewer than three days and no more than five days. NO SPORTS STORIES!

In about 300 words, briefly give three reasons you chose this story and tell why it's newsworthy (review the news drivers for help). Then focus the main thrust of your essay on a description of how the press coverage of this story changed over time and your assessment of why it changed.

Remember to organize your essay in a logical way. Provide specific examples to support your assessment and refer to dates that show the reader how a story progressed. Cite your sources properly and fully.

Why You're Doing This

In the previous lecture, you learned that journalism's first obligation is to the truth and following that truth is a process that builds over time. As in science, journalistic truth is defined as the best obtainable information on any given day. A smart news consumer knows to follow a story as it unfolds over days – or even years – and to continually evaluate the strength of the evidence.

This assignment will not only help your instructor to verify that you're following the news, a basic requirement of this course, but will also help you to recognize the nature of journalistic truth and to practice evaluating the evidence.

What You Should Aim to Get Out of It

You should gain a greater understanding of the provisional, incremental nature of journalistic truth and further develop an ability to critically analyze news for its credibility and reliability. This assignment is worth up to 4 points.