

48-Hour Blackout Assignment

Date and time Blackout started:

Date and time Blackout ended:

Special Note: Your instructors have read hundreds of Blackout assignments and it is painfully obvious who is pretending and who is not. It seems easy to imagine some experiences and write them up.

What you're doing: You are about to enter the "Twilight Zone." Beginning **at the time designated by your instructor**, and ending 48 hours later, you adhere to a strict news blackout. Make no effort to obtain news from any source, including from family and friends. No weather forecasts, no sports scores, no news of any kind. NO FACEBOOK, TUMBLR, TWITTER, REDDIT OR SIMILAR SOCIAL MEDIA.

More importantly, you must take active steps to avoid news that makes its way to you: walk out of the room if the TV is tuned to news, switch stations if news breaks in on your radio, change home pages if news turns up there, leave the table if it comes up a mealtime.

The point of this experience is to shut out all news, whether it is consumed actively or passively. Carry a notebook, (or use your phone) Take detailed notes (time, place, incident, what you felt or said) of your observations and reactions. In the paper, select 3 to 5 anecdotes to illustrate about your experience.

Include the day/time your blackout started and ended. Then describe your experience in 250-300 words. Start with a strong, well-crafted opening statement and back it up with effective examples. Avoid trivial weather-related anecdotes.

Why you're doing this: The first lecture posed some questions that are fundamental to this course: What is news? Why does it matter? This assignment should, in the absence of news, help you to begin to answer those questions.

What you should aim to get out of it: You should develop an understanding of the information that you normally rely on to make decisions, large and small. You should consider why and how the news is important, where it comes from, and the extent to which we may take its presence for granted.