

### Opinion...A License to "Kill?"



### Actionable information?



### Actionable Information?



The New York Times  
The Opinion Pages

OP-ED COLUMNIST

## The Ignorance Caucus

By PAUL KRUGMAN

Published: February 10, 2013 | 591 Comments

Last week Eric Cantor, the House majority leader, gave what his office told us would be a major policy speech. And we should be grateful for the heads-up about the speech's majorness. Otherwise, a read of the speech might have suggested that he was offering nothing more than a meager, warmed-over selection of stale ideas.

Comment is free

## Finland has an education system the US should envy – and learn from

Finland's test scores top global charts, but the country doesn't obsess about tests like the US, and it pays teachers adequately



Linda Moore  
guardian.co.uk, Friday 15 February 2013 10:17 EST  
Jump to comments (89)



Barack Obama at a charter school in Washington, DC. Photograph: Jim Watson/AFP/Getty Images

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

February 12, 2013 11:33 AM EST

POLITICAL DIARY | February 12, 2013, 1:33 p.m. ET  
Sequester Fairy Tale

The White House is heaving in the wind over the impending sequester as it tries to devise some kind of credible story about where the budget cuts came from and why they need to be stopped. One problem for the White House is that its story about the automatic cuts keeps changing by the day.

What's ineluctable is that the White House conged up the idea of the automatic cuts in domestic and defense programs to try to force Republicans to agree to a tax increase. This was verified by Bob Woodward of the Washington Post and was confirmed to me by House Speaker John Boehner, who was in the room negotiating with President Obama at the time. "The White House came up with the sequester idea," Mr. Boehner told me emphatically last month.

Last year Mr. Obama declared that he would "veto" any attempt to turn off the automatic cuts because of the crisis of the deficit. "I will veto any effort to get rid of these automatic spending cuts to domestic and defense spending," he said. "There will be no easy off-ramps on this one."

But during the fiscal cliff negotiations, the White House mistakenly thought Republicans would beg Mr. Obama to turn off the sequester. Instead, Mr. Boehner and Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell told the White House they could "live with the sequester."

## Four Questions:

1. How do you tell the difference between News Reporting and Opinion Journalism?
2. Why should you care which is which?
3. What is the value of Opinion Journalism?
4. How do you tell the difference between Opinion Journalism and mere "bloviation" or counterfeit opinion?

## What is Opinion Doing in the Journalism Neighborhood?

Society of Professional Journalists  
Improving and protecting journalism since 1909

### Code of Ethics: (excerpts)

- ✓ Distinguish between advocacy and news reporting.
- ✓ Analysis and commentary should be labeled and not misrepresent fact or context.
- ✓ Deny favored treatment to advertisers and special interests and resist their pressure to influence news coverage.
- ✓ Remain free of associations and activities that may compromise integrity or damage credibility.

## What About V.I.A.?

Society of Professional Journalists

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### Verification:

"Analysis and commentary should be labeled and **not misrepresent fact or context.**"

### Independence:

"Deny favored treatment to advertisers and special interests... (and) remain free of associations and activities that may compromise integrity or damage credibility."

### Accountability

"Analysis and commentary **should be labeled** and not misrepresent fact or context."

## A Brief History of Opinion Journalism



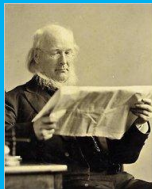
Alexander Hamilton Starts the *New York Post* and Attacks Thomas Jefferson

## The Rise of the Non-Partisan Press Mass-Market Publishing – Newspapers profited by attracting a wide variety of readers and advertisers



## The Opinion Quarantine

### Editorials



## A Virtual “Wall” Protects Credibility of Neutral Reporting

In print, online, a paper like the New York Times physically separates news coverage from opinion writing, AND those writers are also segregated in the building.



News Reporting

Opinion Journalism

- WORLD
- U.S.
- POLITICS
- NEW YORK
- BUSINESS
- DEALBOOK
- TECHNOLOGY
- SPORTS
- SCIENCE
- HEALTH
- ARTS
- STYLE
- OPINION

**Boehner Halts Talks on Cuts, and House G.O.P. Cheers**

Speaker John A. Boehner seems to have decided that he may have more to lose by negotiating with the White House over spending.



**The Opinion Pages**

- Brooks: The Learning Curve
- Krugman: Ben Bernanke, Huddle
- Cohen: Israel's Security
- Egan: Science and Sensibility
- Op-Ed: Give Up Your Pew for Lent

## The Opinion Quarantine

### Columns



Moynihan's Maxim:  
“Everyone is entitled to the  
own opinions, but they are  
not entitled to their own  
facts.”



Daniel Patrick Moynihan (deceased)  
U.S. Senator from New York

## An Opinion Quarantine on TV?



## What Happens When Lines Blur?



## An Opinion Niche Is Partisan Cable TV Inheriting the Role of Hamilton-era Newsletters?



## Is Opinion Important in the News?



CNN doesn't take sides in its political coverage and is suffering because of it

## Los Angeles Times



## \* POLITICS NOW \*

Fox recedes, MSNBC surges with DNC coverage



## Question # 1:

How do we tell the difference between News Reporting and Opinion Journalism?



## News Report or Opinion Journalism ?



## News Report or Opinion Journalism ?



## Definition of News

**Main Entry:** **news** 🗣️  
**Pronunciation:** \ˈnjuːz, ˈnyuːz\  
**Function:** *noun plural but singular in construction*  
**Usage:** *often attributive*  
**Date:** 15th century

News is information about a subject of some public interest that is shared and subject to the journalistic process of verification by an independent organization that is accountable.

## Definition of Opinion

**Main Entry:** **opinion** 🗣️  
**Pronunciation:** \ə-ˈpin-yən\  
**Function:** *noun*  
**Etymology:** Middle English, from Anglo-French, from Latin *opinion-*, *opinio*, from *opinari*  
**Date:** 14th century

Opinion is a view, a judgment, or an appraisal formed in the mind about a particular matter.

## How You Can Tell If It's News Reporting or Opinion Journalism?

### Language and Labeling

## Language Clues

- First-person statements
- Exaggeration or Superlatives
- Emotional or dramatic descriptions
- Tone (sarcasm, irony, parody)

## Opinion Journalism Landmarks: First-person ("I")



### Exploiting the Prophet

THE WASHINGTON POST

BY JOHN H. COOPER

THE WASHINGTON POST

THE WASHINGTON POST

THE WASHINGTON POST

THE WASHINGTON POST

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I think a few things are going on. The first is that many Muslim countries lack a tradition of free speech, and see ridicule of the prophet as part of a larger narrative of the West's invading or humiliating the Islamic world. People in these countries sometimes also have an added view of how the United States handles blasphemy.

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## Opinion Journalism Landmarks: Exaggeration or Superlatives

"Look. We are not the mouthpiece for the Democratic Party of the United States. But that party is so crackhead-incompetent at selling its own program, we thought it was important that someone point out to the public one of the party's accomplishments. Here it is: The current Congress...with Sen. Harry Reid of Nevada at the helm in the Senate, approved the biggest tax cut in United States history. And the Republicans voted against it. All we can say is that voters should keep their eyes on the ball even if the Democrats don't."

-(2010)The Reno (Nevada) News & Review

## Is This Journalism?

### The News:

Rep. Michele Bachmann, campaigning for President, said: "Well, I will tell you that I had a mother last night come up to me here in Tampa, Florida, after the debate. She told me that her little daughter took that vaccine, that injection, and she suffered from mental retardation thereafter... This is a very real concern and people have to draw their own conclusions."

### The Editorial:

"Mrs. Bachmann's vaccine demagoguery is another matter. After the debate the Minnesotan has been making the talk show rounds implying that HPV vaccines cause 'mental retardation' on the basis of no evidence. **This is the kind of know-nothingism** that undermines public support for vaccination altogether and leads to such public health milestones as California reporting in 2010 the highest number of whooping cough cases in 55 years.

## Opinion Journalism Landmarks: Tone (sarcasm, irony, parody)

**We're watching our freedoms vanish**

Here's how to cut crime at a stroke. It's cheap, it's foolproof and we can start to implement it today. Let's install surveillance cameras and microphones in every room of every new home that is built... Isn't this the logical extension of what is already happening, of what we're allowing with barely a squeak of protest?"

-Scotland Sunday Herald

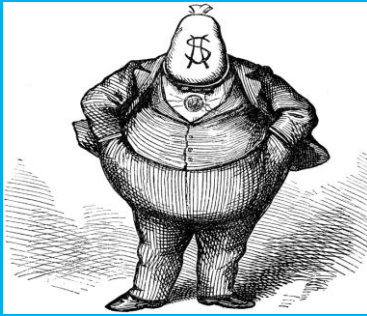
# The Importance of Labeling

- ◆ Reporter's Notebook:
- ◆ Editorial:
- ◆ News-Page Column:
- ◆ Op-Ed Contribution:
- ◆ Review:
- ◆ News Analysis:

## The Forms of News and Opinion

# The News to Opinion Spectrum: Print

# Editorial Cartoonists and Caricature



Cartoonists use exaggerated Language AND Art

# Editorial Cartoonists and Caricature



Cartoonists use exaggerated Language AND Art

# Labeling on TV

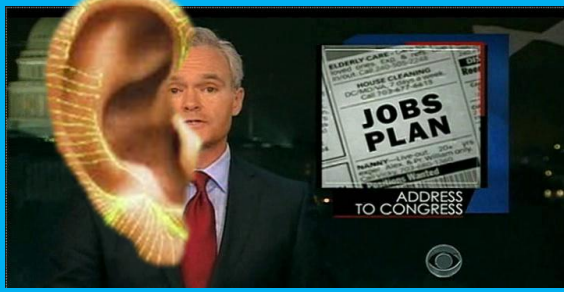


How Do You Know if It's Opinion?

# The Importance of Labeling



# The News to Opinion Spectrum on TV



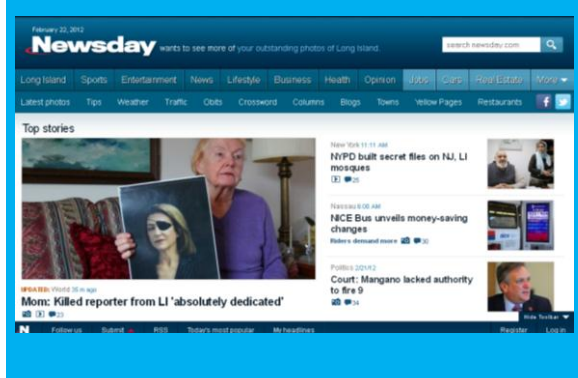
# News to Opinion on TV



# The News to Opinion Spectrum Online



# The News to Opinion Spectrum Online



# The News to Opinion Spectrum Online



# The News to Opinion Spectrum Online





## The News to Opinion Spectrum Online



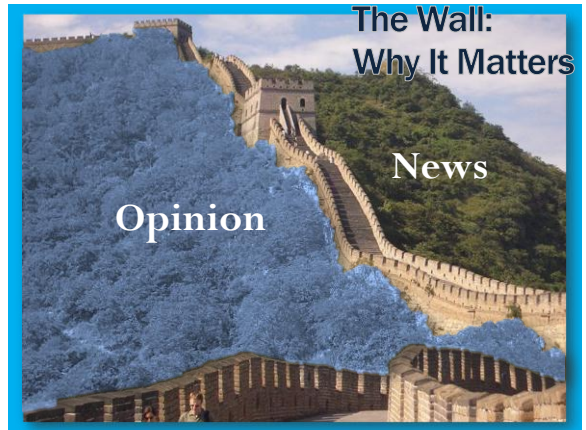
## The News to Opinion Spectrum Online



## Question #2: Why should you care which is which?

The goal of news reporting is to give you the information you need for your Fourth Estate role.

The goal of opinion journalism is to help you make up your mind about that information.



**Octavia Nasr fired by CNN over tweet praising late ayatollah**  
 Internal memo said Twitter tribute to Hezbollah's spiritual leader had compromised senior Middle East editor's credibility

Peter Walker  
 The Guardian, Thursday 8 July 2010 15:21 EDT

A CNN version of 20 years. Octavia Nasr called her tweet about Ayatollah Mohammed Hussein Fadlallah "an error of judgment." Photograph: CNN

## The Virtual "Wall" In Practice

## The Separation of 'Church' and 'State'



Newsday Looks at the Shoreham Nuclear Power Plant in Two Ways

## Question #3:

What is the value of Opinion Journalism?

- Gives you new insights
- Challenges your assumptions
- Helps you make a decision or judgment
- Provides a public forum of ideas for the public to consider.

Opinion Journalism is Valuable When:

- You are well-informed
- You are open-minded
- You are active, not passive

## Question #4:

How Do You Spot Counterfeit Opinion Journalism?  
(Evidence vs. Emotion)



## Some Journalists Consider Cable TV Bloat Unethical

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Opinion Journalism or Counterfeit?





### Common Errors in Critical Thinking

|   |  |  |   |
|---|--|--|---|
| <p><b>Denying the antecedent</b></p> <p>If I had paid for the car, I would have bought it. Therefore, because we did not buy it, we must not have paid for it.</p>              | <p><b>Affirming the consequent</b></p> <p>If I had paid for the car, I would have bought it. We bought it. Therefore, I must have paid for it.</p> | <p><b>Quoting out of context</b></p> <p>My opponent is a liar. He said that in his speech. He said that in his speech. He said that in his speech. He said that in his speech.</p> | <p><b> begging the question</b></p> <p>The defendant is guilty because he is guilty. The defendant is guilty because he is guilty.</p>  |
| <p><b>Established history</b></p> <p>My opponent is a liar. He said that in his speech. He said that in his speech. He said that in his speech. He said that in his speech.</p> | <p><b>The fallacy of ambiguity</b></p> <p>The defendant is guilty because he is guilty. The defendant is guilty because he is guilty.</p>          | <p><b>Misconceptions</b></p> <p>My opponent is a liar. He said that in his speech. He said that in his speech. He said that in his speech. He said that in his speech.</p>         | <p><b>Sloppy logic</b></p> <p>The defendant is guilty because he is guilty. The defendant is guilty because he is guilty.</p>   |
| <p><b>Sleeper effect</b></p> <p>I remember making two friends. They are now my best friends. They are now my best friends. They are now my best friends.</p>                    | <p><b>Cognitive dissonance</b></p> <p>I know I should be a doctor. I am a doctor. I am a doctor. I am a doctor.</p>                                | <p><b>Appeal to authority</b></p> <p>My opponent is a liar. He said that in his speech. He said that in his speech. He said that in his speech. He said that in his speech.</p>    | <p><b>Bandwagon fallacy</b></p> <p>My opponent is a liar. He said that in his speech. He said that in his speech. He said that in his speech. He said that in his speech.</p> |
| <p><b>Framing</b></p> <p>The defendant is guilty because he is guilty. The defendant is guilty because he is guilty.</p>  | <p><b>Confirmation bias</b></p> <p>I know I should be a doctor. I am a doctor. I am a doctor. I am a doctor.</p>                                   | <p><b>Red Herrings</b></p> <p>My opponent is a liar. He said that in his speech. He said that in his speech. He said that in his speech. He said that in his speech.</p>           | <p><b>Ad hominem</b></p> <p>My opponent is a liar. He said that in his speech. He said that in his speech. He said that in his speech. He said that in his speech.</p>        |

## Opinion Journalism or Counterfeit?

Rush Limbaugh  
*The Rush Limbaugh Show*

## Opinion Journalism or Counterfeit?

### Fact-based vs. Emotion-based Logic vs. Belief

## Cable TV Isn't The Only Culprit

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The New York Times  
**The Opinion Pages**

**Public Editor's Journal**  
MARGARET SULLIVAN

January 26, 2013, 12:00 pm 21 Comments

**A Column About Poverty Programs Creates a Stir and Raises Legitimate Questions**  
By MARGARET SULLIVAN

But in this case, he did not talk to the primary sources, the parents of poor and developmentally disabled children. Given the provocative nature of his opening statement and its importance in setting up the column's thesis, it should have been completely solid.

But now, having read all the material — points and counterpoints, objections and defenses — I believe that some of the column's assertions were based on too little direct evidence or used statistical information that is, at the very least, open to interpretation.

OPINION BY JAMES JACKSON, KY

**Profiting From a Child's Illiteracy**

*This is what poverty sometimes looks like in America: It is a social class war. Parents here in Appalachia tell country parents pulling their children out of literacy classes. Moms and dads fear that if kids learn to read, they are less likely to qualify for a monthly check for having an intellectual disability.*

## Journalism, Opinion Journalism or



## Journalism, Opinion Journalism or Counterfeit Opinion Journalism Which Is It?



## News vs. Opinion: A Summary

To tell the difference between news and opinion,  
analyze language & labeling

Start with news: Know the news before you  
seek opinions about the news

Moynihan's maxim: *"You're entitled to your own  
opinion, but you're not entitled to your own facts."*

Alternate views can sharpen your thinking

## The New York Times

### The Opinion Pages

OP-ED COLUMNIST

#### An Unserious Man

By PAUL KRUGMAN

Published: August 19, 2012 | 863 Comments



That's how it works at the Times, or at least how it works for me. I supply a list of sources with each column submission; for yesterday's piece it looked like this:

\$4.3 trillion: <http://www.taxpolicycenter.org/numbers/displayatab.cfm?Docid=3301&DocTypeID=5>  
lines 2, 3 and 5

Ryan cuts: <http://www.cbpp.org/cms/index.cfm?fa=view&id=3723> (I count his Medicaid cuts relative to current policy, not policy including Obamacare)

Disproportionate benefits at top: <http://www.taxpolicycenter.org/numbers/displayatab.cfm?Docid=3337&DocTypeID=2>

Ryan award: <http://www.thefiscys.com/content/sen-kent-conrad-rep-paul-ryan-and-gov-mitch-daniels-named-2011-fiscy-award-recipients>

Baseline: <http://www.latimes.com/news/nationworld/nation/la-na-ryan-20120817.0,1246452.story>