

HOW IS NEWS DIFFERENT? Molly Turner

Introduction and Motivation: *One of the first challenges in a freshman Introduction to Mass Communication class is to make sure everyone shares the same definitions for segments of the American media landscape. Many of our students have not grown up with much, if any, distinction among media. This course has a news emphasis, so this lesson focuses primarily but not exclusively on how news is different from entertainment. Because most of their time is spent on the Internet via smartphones, tablets and computers, a good way to pique interest is to open up the lesson with several questions, such as:*

What sites have you looked at today?

What have you learned from these sites?

Did you pass any of that information on to someone else/post it on Facebook?

How would you describe what you learned/passed on? (news, gossip, how-to's, humor, etc.)

SMART¹ Objective:

At the end of this lesson, students will be able to identify and find examples of news and differentiate it from entertainment and other types of information. They will also be able to apply terms and standards to evaluate and the completeness and veracity of a news story using VIA.

News Literacy concepts or skills to be incorporated

- *The core concept of this lesson is Know Your Neighborhood; it also lays the groundwork and introduces What Is News.*

Values/Life Skills:

This lesson will encourage critical thinking and analysis, two skills that are invaluable to developing a belief system and decision-making in everything from voting to buying a car.

Suggested Vocabulary:

- Verifiable
- Independent
- Actionable
- Propaganda

Strategy for the lesson:

1. *Define News Neighborhoods*

¹SMART is an acronym that reminds us our lesson can be more effective if the objective is Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Time-bound.

2. *Show several examples of the news neighborhood categories, focusing on news and entertainment and have class discuss each one.*
3. *Define VIA*
4. *Give examples of news stories*
5. *The students will gain the knowledge in the first portion of the lesson to distinguish the different form of information that they encounter in daily life.*
6. *Leads to assignment: By the next class meeting, students are to find examples of as many different information types in their daily comings and goings and fill in the chart, explaining how each of their examples fulfills the definition.*
7. *Class will bring to class and, again, discuss their findings.*

Pivotal Questions:

- *What did you find?*
- *Did anything surprise you?*
- *Do other students agree/disagree with your assessment? How so?*
- *Did you find any examples that “blurred the lines” between news and another type of information?*
- *Did this exercise change how you think about the information bombarding you every day?*