

## 'Deconstructing' the News

### Is Too Much Texting A Mental Illness?



How to Assess the Reliability of the News

Texting.wmv

## Countdown To Test #2

Held in Recitation, week of  
April 23-27  
Emphasizes Lectures 7-11,  
(Fairness & Bias through  
Power of Images)  
...but requires some use of  
concepts from Test 1.  
Same format: 10 questions,  
100 points possible.



Deconstruction: *"Application of News Literacy concepts to the analysis of component parts of a news report in order to dispassionately judge its reliability."*



## A Deconstruction Worksheet

### How to Judge Reliability

- 1) Summarize the main points: Does the headline and the lead support the main point(s)?
- 2) How close does the reporter come to opening the freezer? Is the evidence direct or arm's-length?

## A Deconstruction Worksheet

### How to Judge Reliability

- 3) Evaluate the reliability of the sources using I'M VA/IN
- 4) Does the reporter make his/her work transparent?
- 5) Does the reporter place the story in context?

## A Deconstruction Worksheet

### How to Judge Reliability

- 6) Are the key questions answered?  
- Who -What -When -Where? -Why? -How?
- 7) Is the story fair?

## And The Whole Point Is....

What can a news consumer  
Do with this information

**Is it actionable?**

## Deconstructing the News

### The power of Context

However, behind the image of two-year-old Jingdan lies a tale not of intentional cruelty but, it seems, one of misplaced love and fear: his sister disappeared from the same spot just two weeks ago.

"I was afraid I would lose him too," their father, Chen Chuanliu, said today.



## Deconstructing the News

### The power of Context

THE HUFFINGTON POST Chinese Man Locked In Cage All Day  
'For His Own Safety' (PICTURES)



## Key Definitions

Main Entry: **con·text** 

Pronunciation: \ˈkən-tekst\

Function: *NOUN*

**Context:** Facts that surround an event or elements of a news story and provide meaning or significance

## Context

The New York Times

Education

As College Fees Climb, Aid Does Too

By THOMAS HODGE

When you look at how much students are actually paying, on average, it is lower, after adjusting for inflation, than five years earlier."



## Deconstruction



1) Summarize the main points of the story

## Deconstructing the News

### How Reliable is the Headline?

#### Assaults Plague Campus

On October 27, 2006, News Release, the Vice President of Student Affairs sent an e-mail to the entire university informing students, staff and faculty of the recent sexual assault of two female students.

According to Douglas Little, Assistant Chief of the Fresno County Police Department, the two men allegedly involved with the assault are known to the police. Little commented, "Both the British Colony police and Fresno County Police departments are working on the case together."

When asked about the safety of the campus community with respect to the recent incidents, Little responded, "There is no danger to the university community."

an e-mail to the entire university informing students, staff and faculty of the recent sexual assault of two female students

The police believe these two men are innocent, and the university has given them every support. Little was unable to provide any information about the location of the attack on campus because of possible violations of the privacy of the two female students. Aside from this sexual incident, students also have the ability to become involved with the police and prosecutors as is shown by the university to minimize the occurrence of such attacks.

Is the Headline Supported By the Story?

## Deconstructing the News

### How to Find the Main Points of the Story

#### The Washington Post

Foreclosure freeze could put security clearances at risk

The sudden moratorium on many foreclosures across the country has unexpectedly put some federal workers and contractors in jeopardy of losing their security clearances because of the heightened uncertainty clouding their finances, according to lawyers who handle these cases.

Employees with security clearances are monitored by the government for financial problems that would make them vulnerable to bribery or blackmail. And with many financial companies adopting some form of foreclosure freeze in recent weeks, it's taking longer for some delinquent borrowers to resolve their mortgage cases and put their troubles behind them, the lawyers said.

Find the Headline and "Lead"

## Deconstructing the News

An Agent, a Green Card, and a Deceased Boy

The 16-minute recording, which the woman first took to The New York Times and then to the Queens district attorney, suggests the vast power of low-level immigration law enforcers, and a growing desperation on the part of immigrants seeking legal status. The aftermath, which included the arrest of an immigration agent last week, underscores the difficulty and danger of making a complaint, even in the rare case when abuse of power may have been caught on tape.

The Main Points Aren't Always in the First Paragraph

## Deconstructing the News



## Deconstructing the News



2) Assess the evidence supporting the main points of the story.



### WH money helps pay for NYPD Muslim surveillance

The AP confirmed the use of White House money through secret police documents and interviews with current and former city and federal officials. The AP also obtained electronic documents with digital signatures indicating they were created and saved on HIDTA computers. The HIDTA grant program is overseen by the White House Office of National Drug Control Policy.

**Evidence: Did the reporter open the freezer?**

## Deconstructing the News



How close did the reporter come to opening the freezer? If not, did a reliable source open it?

## Deconstructing the News

The 16-minute recording, which the woman first took to The New York Times and then to the Queens district attorney, suggests the vast power of low-level immigration law enforcers, and a growing

Money, not sex, is the race-occasion currency of corruption in immigration, but according to Congressional testimony in 2006 by Michael Maxwell, former director of the agency's internal investigations, more than 3,000 backlogged complaints of employee misconduct had gone uninvestigated for lack of staff, including 500 involving criminal allegations.

**Evidence: Did the reporter open the freezer?**

## Assessing Evidence

The New York Times

Crime Blotter Has a Regular: Yankees Caps

By MARY FRUNZ

Published: September 15, 2009



## Test Inferences for Soundness

Main Entry: **evidence**

Pronunciation: \i-ˈvɪ-dəns(i)s, -və-,dəns(i)s/

Function: noun

Date: 14th century

Main Entry: **inference**

Pronunciation: \ɪn-ˈfɪ-ə-ˈrɛnʃ(i)s, -fɛnʃ(i)s/

Function: noun

Date: 1594

**Evidence:** Information that proves or disproves something

**Inference:** Taking information that is accepted as true and then drawing a conclusion that may or may not be valid

## Deconstructing the News



Pulling all-nighters earns lower GPAs

Updated 10/14/09 6:12 AM | Comments (12) | RSS | Facebook | Twitter

By Michael Vitarin, Associated Press



In Tracher's first study, 85 students said they had pulled one or more all-nighters, and 45 said they hadn't done any. The survey was conducted in Psychology 101 classes, and included students in a variety of majors.

**Is The Inference Sturdy?**

## Deconstructing the News

### 3) Are the Sources Reliable?



## Judging the Reliability of Sources

- 1) **I**ndependent Sources Are **B**etter Than Self-Interested Sources
- 2) **M**ultiple Sources Are **B**etter Than Single Sources
- 3) Sources Who **V**erify Are **B**etter Than Sources Who Assert
- 4) **A**uthoritative/**I**nformed Sources Are **B**etter Than Uninformed Sources
- 5) **N**amed Sources Are **B**etter Than Unnamed Sources

(Mnemonic Device: **I'M VAIN**)

### Example 4

Afghan investigator: US burning of Qurans was intentional



**Quran-burning an accident, U.S. tells Afghanistan**

KABUL, Afghanistan — The U.S. apologized Tuesday for the burning of Muslim holy books that had been pulled from the shelves of a detention center library adjoining a major base in western Afghanistan because they contained eavesdropped messages or intercepts.

The White House echoed military officials in saying that the burning of Qurans and other Islamic reading material had been caused in a pile of garbage was an accident.

## Deconstructing the News

### How to Assess Source Authority

Experts Had Long Criticized Potential Weakness in Design of Stricken Reactor

"Not banning them might be the end of nuclear power," said Mr. Lochbaum, a nuclear engineer who spent 17 years working in nuclear facilities, including three that used the G.E. design.

Is the Source Authoritative? Independent?

Why or Why Not?



## Deconstructing the News

### How to Weigh Sources

**Accused G.I. 'Snapped' Under Strain, Official Says**  
By ERIC SCHMITT and WILLIAM BRIDGES

"When it all comes out, it will be a combination of stress, alcohol and domestic issues — he just snapped," said the official, who has been briefed on the investigation and who spoke on the condition of anonymity because the soldier has not yet been formally charged. His comments drew from accounts of the sergeant's state of mind from two other soldiers with whom he illicitly drank alcohol on the night of the shootings, the official said, and those soldiers face disciplinary action.

**Verification or Assertion?**

## How to Judge Anonymous Sources

**Transparency**  
**Characterization**  
**Corroboration (evidence/sources)**

## Deconstructing the News

### How to Assess Source Reliability


**The New York Times**

**Criticism and Questions Over Plan to Move Macy's Thanksgiving Parade Out of Times Sq.**  
By NICHOLAS FOLEY  
 PUBLISHED NOVEMBER 2011

But some critics are skeptical. A community leader who spoke on the condition of anonymity to preserve his publicly neutral stance, said he was at a meeting with Macy's representatives last year, at which the retailer "threatened to move the parade to another city," unless the route changes were agreed upon.


**How Do You Weigh the Anonymous Source?**

## Deconstructing the News



**4) Does the reporter make his or her work transparent?**

# Key Definitions

Main Entry: **trans-par-en-cy**   
 Pronunciation: \tran(t)s-'per-an(t)-sē.  
 Function: *noun*  
 Inflected Form(s): *plural trans-par-en-cies*  
 Date: 1591

**Transparency:** The reporter specifies in the story what he or she *does not* know, and why it could not be learned; how they know what they do know; when the reporter pulls the curtain aside.

# Deconstructing the News

## How Transparent is the Story?



National Public Radio Reports from Basra

Npr\_basra.wmv

# Deconstructing the News

## Corrections are Institutional Transparency

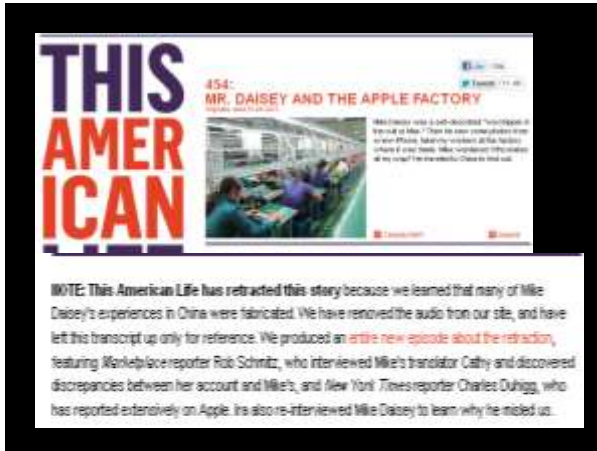
The New York Times

### Corrections

**NY TIMES**  
 The article in Basra, about a report that showed a group of men carrying rifles on a street in Basra, Iraq, was based on a video that was taken from a camera mounted on a car. The video was taken from a car that was driving through the street. The video was taken from a car that was driving through the street. The video was taken from a car that was driving through the street.

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**THIS AMERICAN**

454: MR. DAISEY AND THE APPLE FACTORY

**NOTE: This American Life has retracted this story** because we learned that many of Mike Daisey's experiences in China were fabricated. We have removed the audio from our site, and have left this transcript up only for reference. We produced an [entire new episode about the retraction](#), featuring Marketplace reporter Rob Schmitz, who interviewed Mike's translator Cathy and discovered discrepancies between her account and Mike's, and New York Times reporter Charles Dunigg, who has reported extensively on Apple. It's also re-interviewed Mike Daisey to learn why he misled us.

## Deconstructing the News

Step 6:

Are the key questions answered?



## Deconstructing the News

The New York Times

### Bronx Zoo Cobra Found Alive

Updated | 4:51 p.m.

She's been found!

An Egyptian cobra at the Bronx Zoo that had been [missing for seven days](#) was discovered "alive and well" on Thursday inside a nonpublic area of the zoo's Reptile House, not far from where she disappeared, said James J. Brebony, the zoo's director.

The Seattle Times

Winner of Eight Pulitzer Prizes

### GOP voters' passion uneven for Romney, Santorum

Mitt Romney may lead in delegates and Rick Santorum might have momentum, but neither of the two leading Republican presidential candidates is having an easy time exciting even his own voters.

Out of a dozen states where voters in the GOP contest have been polled, most Romney voters have said they strongly favor him in just five of them. A majority of Santorum voters felt that committed to him only four times out of 11 states where he was on the ballot and voters were surveyed.

Balance or Fairness?

# Deconstructing the News Case Study: The pregnant man story



Assess reliability by Evaluating Sources & Evidence

# Deconstructing the News Case Study: The pregnant man story



Do These Sources Help?

# Deconstructing the News Case Study: The pregnant man story



Does This Sonogram Help?

# Deconstructing the News Case Study: The pregnant man story



Do Baby Photos Help?

## Deconstructing the News



How reliable?

Texting.wmv

## Deconstructing the News



Weigh sources and evidence

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## And the Whole Point Is... Is it actionable?

- Can you reach a conclusion?
- Can you take an action?
- Can you make a judgment?
- Can you share this information?

## Assignments:

-  
-  
Each Lecture inserts own assignments...

