

# Lecturer's Alert: Slide Count

You'll note an overabundance of slides. This is because our faculty teaches this lecture a number of different ways and each prunes according to his/her need.

That's a fancy way of saying you'll have to throw some slides out. Fortunately, there's not much video

 busted.wmv	0:01:37	27,563 KB
 codered.wmv	0:00:10	674 KB
 noise.wmv	0:02:05	59,425 KB
 peterking.wmv	0:01:09	14,050 KB



We offer this video for alternate use as a local reporting example in which only one side of the story is heard from.

<http://newyork.cbslocal.com/2012/02/27/long-island-residents-say-noise-from-jfk-overnight-arrivals-on-the-rise/>



**Noise.wmv**

NEWSFELLOW: NEWS FELLOW: LINK (INSERT) VIDEO TO THIS SLIDE AND SELECT  
"START AUTOMATICALLY"

<http://newyork.cbslocal.com/2012/02/27/long-island-residents-say-noise-from-jfk-overnight-arrivals-on-the-rise/>

*Piano Project 2012:*  
*Hommage à Olivier Messiaen*  
*-Musique pour Piano*

The Piano Project is a collaboration between more than 25 pianists at the school to put together a three-concert marathon series with nearly 300 minutes of music oriented around a single theme.

This year's concerts will take place on Wednesday, March 28th at 12, 4 and 8 pm in the Recital Hall at the Staller Center with two pre-concert lectures given by Judith Lochhead and Peter Winkler.

This all-Messiaen project will include complete *Visions de l'Amen* and *Vingt regards sur l'enfant-Jésus* as well as his early works and several bird pieces for piano.

Explore the links above for the full description of the Project, profiles of the musicians, this year's program, photos, and recordings from past Piano Projects.

Local to Stony Brook, information only for students.

# Is the News Media Biased?



Slide on screen as students file in

# What the Public Believes

- 74% say news organizations tend to favor one side in dealing with political and social issues
- Only 18% say they deal fairly well with all sides.
- The proportion saying the press favors one side has jumped 8 % since 2007 and 21% since 1985



The Pew Research Center for the People & the Press

©2009 survey

Press Accuracy/Rating Hits Two Decade Low

Well, the public sure thinks so. Look at these numbers.

# What the Public Believes

- 50% believe the media has a liberal slant
- 22% believe the media has a conservative slant

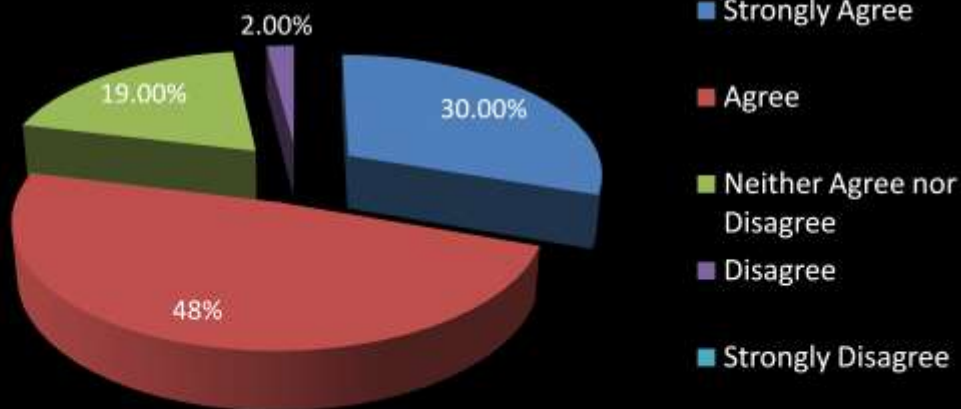
-Pew Research Center, 2009 survey  
*Press Accuracy Rating Hits Two Decade Low*

And they see a specific slant.

# What's your opinion?

## *"Most news outlets exhibit bias"*

### Your Results



(DIGITAL EDITOR'S NOTE: The graph above is fully editable and customizable. It was created IN PowerPoint. Double click on the pie chart, then on right click, select "edit data" and use your local numbers, if you do a survey in your class.)

Updated 2/22/12

Here's what you and your classmates said at the beginning of the semester when asked if Most News Outlets Exhibit Bias.

30% strongly agree

48% agree

19% neither agree nor disagree

3% disagree

0% strongly disagree

ASK:

Why should we care if there is bias in news reports?

Why do you believe there is bias?

What evidence do you cite?



## No Doubts



"Now, it is common knowledge that the mainstream media from the major television networks to the country's most influential newspapers are biased against the GOP."

It must be true if I saw it on TV.

Hannity says the nation's newspapers are unfair to the Republican party.

## No Doubts

"Hosts on Fox raise money on the air for Republican candidates, they endorse them explicitly, they use their Fox News profile to headline fundraisers ... They can do that because there's no rule against that at Fox. They run as a political operation, we're not."

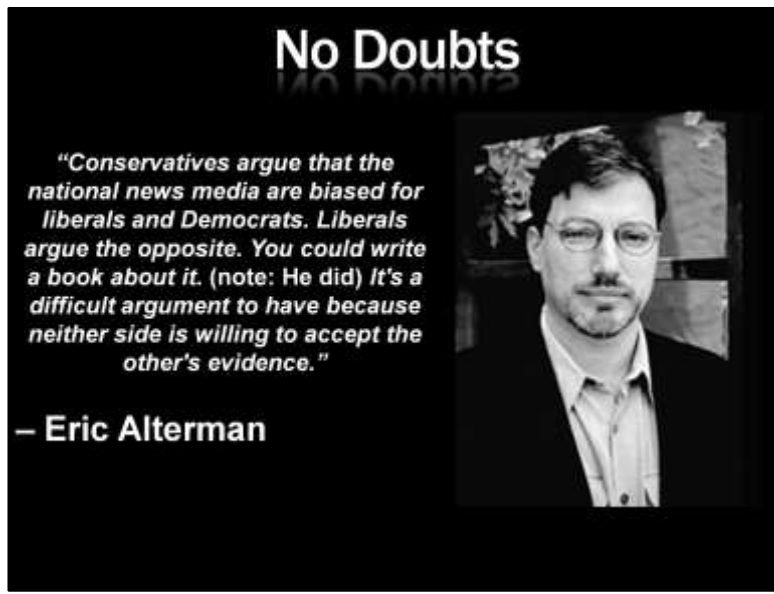
– Rachel Maddow



It must be true if I saw it on TV.

No less of an expert than Rachel Maddow says Fox is the biased one.

She has no apparent doubts of this.



Eric Alterman is a Distinguished Professor of English and Journalism at Brooklyn College and CUNY Graduate School of Journalism, a columnist for several publications and a “Senior Fellow” at three major political think tanks.

Here, he ably re-capitulates Moynihan’s Maxim\* on his way to arguing that most media outlet owners are conservative capitalists and therefore the nation’s opinion pages are overwhelmingly conservative and capitalist.

Point is...everybody seems to believe the news media is one big propaganda apparatus for the powers that be...

Is there a *perception* of bias  
or is the bias real?

We have been telling you all semester to find the news neighborhood when hunting the reliable information you need to be a powerful citizen. Meanwhile, several companies in the news business have made news media bias the cornerstone of their marketing campaigns. They sling the charge at their competitors without seeming to care that they've now trained news consumers to distrust all journalism. When we hear the phrase "News media" the next thing we think is "Bias."

It's an easy charge to make. Few will argue with you.

But if you're going to assert that journalism is slanted, how do you prove it?

Today, we're going right into the heart of the controversy so you can decide for yourself what is balance, what is fairness, and what is bias, both in the news media and ...

...inside **your** skull.

# Housekeeping



**New York Times Columnist David Carr**

***"My Life As..."* Lecture**

**March 12 - Javits 100**

**8:30pm**



In Advance of Carr's Talk, Private Screenings for our students



THIS YEAR, THE BIGGEST STORY IS THEIR OWN.  
**PAGE ONE**  
 INSIDE THE NEW YORK TIMES

One: *Inside the New York Times and the Future of Journalism*  
 11:40am- 1:40pm  
 March 5<sup>th</sup>  
 Physics 118

**Tickets not required**  
 Readers:

*"In the hands of Andrew Ross ... there lies something akin to 'The Social Network' for the news business, a movie uniquely capturing this moment in time."  
 -critic Anthony DeRosa*

**Los Angeles Times:**  
*"The New York Times documentary is likely to hearten believers and leave skeptics unmoved."  
 -Media writer Jim Rainey*


<http://goo.gl/oNkmC>

We will not swipe ID codes.

Instead, each lecture may assign a short paper for extra credit.

Private Screening for our students  
"Page One: Inside the New York Times  
and the Future of Journalism"

6:50pm-8:50pm  
March 5<sup>th</sup>  
Javits 111  
Tickets not required



THE YEAR, THE BIGGEST STORY IS THEIR OWN.  
**PAGE ONE**  
INSIDE THE NEW YORK TIMES

REUTERS:  
"In the hands of Andrew Ross ... there lies something akin to 'The Social Network' for the news business, a movie uniquely capturing this moment in time."  
-critic Anthony DeRosa

LOS ANGELES TIMES:  
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<http://goo.gl/oNkmC>

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## Three Questions Today:



- How do we know if a news article is fair?
- How do we know if a news outlet is biased?
- What's the difference between news media bias and audience bias?

Okay, where were we?

Bias.

Here's how we'll think about bias today, through these three questions



(ANIMATION: Wolf Image fades in, then on next click, image changes to the Three Little Pigs.)

Let's start on familiar terrain.

ASK: Who is this? (wolf)

He huffed and...(puffed)

And why was he huffing and puffing? (to blow the house down)

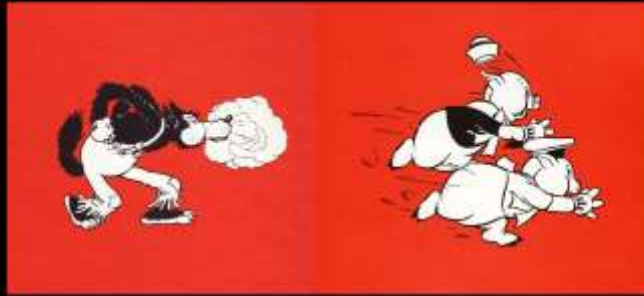
(NOW CLICK TO GET THE SCARED LITTLE PIGS.)

ASK: Why are these poor little guys running?

What did you learn about wolves from this story?

(SPECIAL NOTE TO LECTURERS: YOU'LL TELL THE STORY BETTER IF YOU HAVE READ "The True Story of The Three Little Pigs," by Jon Scieszka, Viking, 1989, a million-seller)

## What is missing?



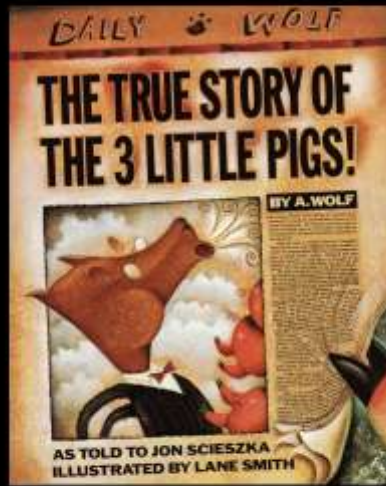
The story of the three little pigs and the big bad wolf is a fairy tale but it still satisfies the human need for the kinds of information for which humans have a primal need:

It diverts...with cute pigs and a dramatic climax. It connects... by offering a universal moral from which we can all learn (idle frolic doesn't pay off like hard work) And it even alerts by teaching us to beware of Big Bad Wolves.

Is there anything missing from the story?  
(Keep asking until they get lukewarm.)

Finally, a smart guy from Brooklyn, Jon Scieszka (Pronounced SHESS-ka like Fresca), thought hard about what he'd been told since he was a little kid and he went after the rest of the story...

# Balance, Fairness and Bias



And in 1989, Scieszka convinced Viking Publishing to publish the wolf's side of the story...



(ANIMATION: First image: Chalkboard of Sugar and Sneeze. Next click, Wolf out to borrow sugar)

A Wolf... that's Alexander T. Wolf... told Scieszka The whole misunderstanding started wit' a cup of sugar and a sneeze...

Just because wolves eat cute little rabbits and deer and pigs, people assume da worst. What...you don't eat chickens and cows and pigs?

Anyhow, A. Wolf was baking his granny a birthday cake and didn't have enough sugar.

So he goes to see his neighbor, who is a pig.

This pig, he's kind of a flake...'built his house outta grass. The wolf knocks and that flimsy grass door falls right in.

He Yoo-Hoos in the door. *"Little Pig, Little Pig, are you in?"*

Still no answer. And right about then, bits of straw from the house tickle his nose and make him sneeze.

A really huuuuge sneeze.

And that stoopid grass house goes kablooney.



(Animation: Slide opens with the dead pig in the wreckage.

Next Click: brings up headlines from The Daily Pig and overseas coverage of the situation)

And in the middle of all that straw??? Dead pig.

Rude little porker had been home the whole time and got killed in the wreckage.

The wolf knows it'd be a sin to leave a whole pig there to rot. He does his civic duty.

But he still needs a cup of sugar for his Granny's birthday cake.

So on he goes to the pig's brother up the road... 'Second little pig can't come to the door, hollers that he's busy shaving *"the hairs on his chinny, chin, chin."*

And wouldn't you know it...another sneeze and a tragic fatality.

The smell of rotting meat can really drive down property values.

Plus, hello? Ever heard of Trichinosis or Paragonimus? It's poor citizenship to leave pork lying around.

So A Wolf does everybody a favor and cleans up that bacterial hazard, which is the important function of wolves in any healthy ecosystem: recycling.

A Wolf still needs that cup of sugar for his granny's cake, so up the road he goes.

The third pig also has an attitude. He says he won't give the wolf any sugar, but then he goes and says *"And your old granny can sit on a pin!"*

Getting up in the grill of A Wolf is not very sensible. In fact, during the jailhouse interview, Admits the pigs talking smack about his granny made him a little crazy.

(CLICK HERE TO SECOND IMAGE SET)

So it's true that when the cops showed up, A Wolf was trying to break down the hard-working pig's door. But he was a nice guy provoked by piggish behavior.

## Balance, Fairness and Bias



(Animation: Slide opens with cute picture of wolf pup.

First click brings up the headline and the Image of the Daily Pig Newspaper.

Second Click: Fades all that out and brings up photos of nasty-looking Feral Pigs.

A wolf can't get a fair shake from porcine news media outlets like the Daily Pig. They're biased.

For instance: You never hear that the average North American wolf is only 79 pounds and starts out like this cute little pup.

(CLICK NOW) while the average North American hog is 250 pounds ,with huge tusks and equal or superior intelligence to any canid. Three yearling pigs would be a good match for any wolf.

But The Daily Pig wrote this totally one-sided story and never even asked the wolf's side.

And then it went viral and even got made into a movie.

So, that's what is missing from the fairy tale of the three little pigs and the big bad wolf?...The wolf's side of the story.

ASK: Is there a serious lesson we can learn from Jon Scieszka's re-telling of the fairy tale?

## What's the Difference Between Fairness and Balance?

That's a silly example, but it leads us to an important question about journalism.

What's "fairness" and what's "balance" and what's the difference between the two?

(A series of slides follows)



# Key Definitions

Main Entry: **ˈbal-əns** 🔊

Pronunciation: \ˈbɑ-lən(t)s\

Function: *noun*

Etymology: Middle English, from Anglo-French, from Vulgar Latin \**bilancia*, from Late Latin *bilanc-*, *bilanx* having two scalepans, from Latin *bi-* + *lanc-*, *lanx* plate

Date: 13th century

**Balance:** Equality between the totals of the two (or more) sides of the account. Balance is more technical; a quantitative measurement.

## Slide: **Key Definitions...balance**

(an equity, almost a mathematical equivalence).

ASK: When is it appropriate for a story to be carefully...point-counterpoint-rebuttal-re-rebuttal...balanced?

(Wrap their answers up with...)

*“A dispute between two sides when there is conflicting evidence, or points of view, and no definitive evidence to suggest one side is right.”*

# What Is Balance?

(CNN) -- The private intelligence firm Stratfor called the release of some of its e-mails by WikiLeaks a "deplorable, unfortunate -- and illegal -- breach of privacy."

"In December, thieves compromised Stratfor's data systems and stole a large number of company e-mails, along with other private information of Stratfor readers, subscribers and employees," it said Sunday in a Facebook posting. "Those stolen e-mails apparently will be published by WikiLeaks."

In a statement, WikiLeaks said it had begun publishing the e-mails, which are dated between July 2004 and December and exceed 5 million in number. "They reveal the inner workings of a company that fronts as an intelligence publisher, but provides confidential intelligence services to large corporations ... and government agencies," the statement says. "The e-mails show Stratfor's web of informers, pay-off structure, payment laundering techniques and psychological methods."

ANIMATION: Slide opens with article headline and picture. Clicks bring in opposing viewpoints found in the article, one by one.

For example: A private security company says hackers broke into its private files and stole secrets related to the national security.

WikiLeaks says it was an act of civil disobedience, a crime with the intent of exposing criminal or immoral behavior.

Who is right?

The indignant executives at Stratfor, who say this was a theft?

Or the indignant hactivists who say they are exposing corrupt behavior paid for by US taxpayers and sanctioned by the government?

When the answer is unknown or subject to debate, you want an almost mathematical balancing of points of view, like this one.

[http://www.cnn.com/2012/02/27/us/wikileaks-stratfor/index.html?hpt=hp\\_t3](http://www.cnn.com/2012/02/27/us/wikileaks-stratfor/index.html?hpt=hp_t3)



Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad calls the extermination of six million Jews during World War II "a myth" perpetuated by Zionists to generate support for the State of Israel.

Whenever a reporter prepares a story that focuses on or even mentions the Holocaust, should Holocaust deniers like Mahmoud be given equal time, equal space?

In the war crimes trial at Nuremberg, top Nazi officials did not deny what they had done. Physical evidence at the death camps and at the sites of massacres corroborated the testimony of witnesses.

Allied soldiers, liberating prison camps, saw it with their own eyes. Expecting a heroic place in history, The Third Reich kept precise and copious documents and photos and films of their systematic extermination of Jews, Gypsies, homosexuals and others. German official documents are the basis for the War Crimes Tribunal's estimate that Nazi Germany killed 6 million Jews.

Would a "balanced" news report about the Holocaust give equal time to people who say it is a myth?

Would that be fair or unfair? To whom? (to consumers, to the evidence.)



So in cases like the Holocaust, a precisely measured “balance” could be inaccurate, giving undue weight to falsehood or unsupported assertions.

But what about scientific debates?

The majority of climate scientists have found that there is evidence the Earth’s climate is changing in unusual ways. And the majority conclude human activity is a factor.

So, should news reports give a balanced amount of time or space to those who say the climate isn’t changing at all or that it’s merely a cycle?

Now...how about the **rate** of climate change, or the best **counter measures**? Authoritative scientists disagree about the rate of change and the steps that will reverse the trend...Should some kind of measure of balance come back into play in those reports?

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2011/mar/08/democrats-climate-change-big-guns-republicans>

<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/debate/article-1230113/The-devastating-book-debunks-climate-change.html>



(LECTURER: THIS IS AN ALTERNATIVE TO THE PRIOR SLIDE)  
<http://www.treehugger.com/climate-change/climate-change-could-make-everest-unclimbable-warns-sherpa.html>

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<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2011/mar/08/democrats-climate-change-big-guns-republicans>

<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/debate/article-1230113/The-devastating-book-debunks-climate-change.html>

# Key Definitions

Main Entry: **fair** 

Pronunciation: \ˈfer\

Function: *adjective*

Etymology: Middle English *fager, fair*, from Old English *fæger*; akin to Old High

German *fagar* beautiful

Date: before 12th century

**Fairness: Marked by impartiality and honesty. Free from self-interest, prejudice, or favoritism. Being fair to the evidence.**

That's why we offer you another concept:  
Fairness.

What might we mean by this definition: "Fair to the Evidence?"

Using this definition, a journalist is being fair to whom? (news consumer, or better yet: the facts)

## **Finding Fairness:**

- **Fair play**
- **Fair language**
- **Fair presentation**

If fair reporting is what you want...how do you check out the news for fairness?  
Here's a simple list to start with.

## Fair play:

- Obvious effort to include relevant perspectives
- People, Organizations get to respond to negative charges

*Here's what we mean by fair play:*



# Fair Play

AP Associated Press

## Delaware mom denies trying to sell baby

Philadelphia man for \$15,000 denied the allegations Wednesday and said she loves her newborn son and wants to be with him.

Orlando Wismer told The Associated Press that the accusations against her and

Police have charged Wismer and Gavaghan with dealing in children and conspiracy. They were arrested Friday after detectives said they confirmed the two were involved in the sale and purchase of the newborn, and the baby was placed in foster care.

her for getting into a baby in a more serious way.

On Wednesday, emergency help was called. Wismer posted a trip to Disney

Wismer, 33, said Gavaghan, 54, is a friend who offered to help when she found herself pregnant, in a difficult home situation, and unwilling to get an abortion. She also says she didn't want to give her baby up for adoption because she would never see him again.

Wismer, 33, is pregnant, in a difficult home situation, and unwilling to get an abortion.

"I was just waiting for a miracle," she said, adding that she gratefully accepted Gavaghan's offer to help. "I was so positive about what I was doing."

"I was just waiting for a miracle," she said, adding that she gratefully accepted Gavaghan's offer to help.

Wismer said the charges stem from confusion on the part of her grandmother, who had alerted authorities that her granddaughter wanted to sell her baby to a homosexual couple. A statement of probable cause said that a tipster advised authorities that Wismer was trying to sell the child because she did not want it and sought money for a trip to Disney World.

In this report, prosecutors accuse a woman of selling her baby. Prosecutors have brought serious charges against her and the man found with her baby.

The journalist has tracked her down and gotten her explanation of what happened.

Fair Play is the idea that you don't publish something negative about the person without offering them a chance to respond. And, legally speaking, she is innocent until a court rules otherwise.

So, this story reflects the fair play ethic: balanced reporting while the facts are yet unknown.

<http://www.hometownannapolis.com/news/REG/2011/10/06-16/Delaware-mom-denies-trying-to-sell-baby.html>

# Fair Language:

**Avoids loaded words**

(Animation: Click activates a flashing “Avoids loaded words”)

Even a story that includes all relevant perspectives and gives people a chance to respond to serious charges can be pretty unfair if words are used that make a person look bad or give a rosier glow to one side and not the other.

# More Language Landmarks

- “Right-to-Life” vs. “Anti-Abortion”
- “Pro-Choice” vs. “Pro-Abortion”
- “Ruthless” vs. “Tough”
- “Admitted” vs. “Said”
- “Islamic Community Center” vs. “Ground Zero Mosque”

In the Opinion lecture, we suggested you pay attention to language that tells you when you're in the opinion neighborhood. ASK: In these pairings, how might a news organization's choice of these words be unfair...to the people written about...to the evidence...to the news consumer. particularly in a news report.

ASK: Who will react most strongly to one or the other term?

Why is that?

What does that suggest about bias?

## Fair Presentation:

- Avoids prejudicial photos
- Presents photos and other visuals that are appropriate to the report

Fair presentation goes beyond where the information appears, in a newscast, in a written report. It includes the selection of illustrations and visual journalism (photos, videos, charts & graphics)



The upper left-hand photo of former U.S. House Speaker Newt Gingrich is probably what he would prefer to see with any report about him.

What kind of story would be fairly illustrated by these other images? (Work through one by one)

Point is: If it's a report about him trading wisecracks with an audience, the upper center photo would be appropriate. But it would not be fair presentation to then use that same photo in an unrelated story about his voting record on pornography regulations.



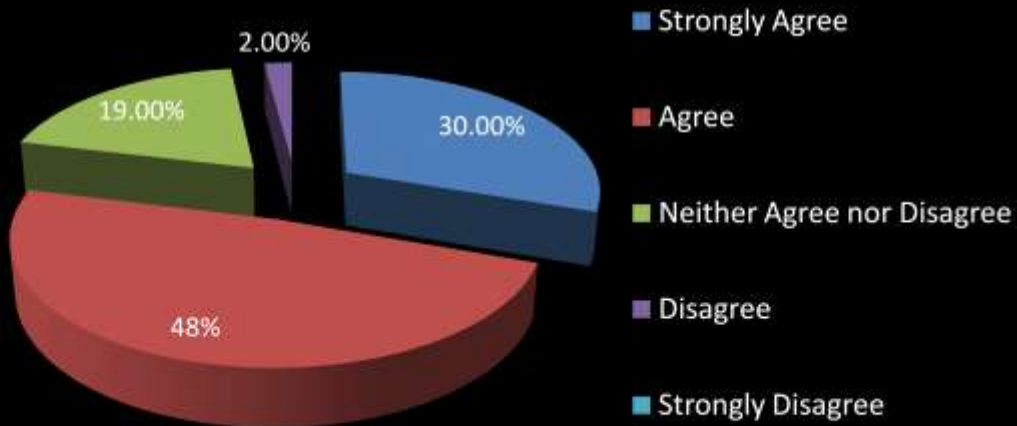
When reporting on the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina in New Orleans, some looters were called looters and others were not.

The nature of each description, presents the image to you in a strikingly different way.

(You wouldn't notice it, probably, unless you were looking at multiple news outlets and they were taking different approaches to describing people who broke into stores and took supplies.)

# *“Most news outlets exhibit bias”*

## What You Said About That Statement



(DIGITAL EDITOR'S NOTE: The graph above is fully editable and customizable. It was created IN PowerPoint. Double click on the pie chart, then on right click, select "edit data" and use your local numbers, if you do a survey in your class.)

Updated 2/22/12

So when you said Most News Outlets Exhibit Bias...what exactly did you mean?  
(If time, ask for some comments)

# What is Bias?

Main Entry: **'bi-as** 🗨️

Pronunciation: \ˈbi-əs\

Function: *noun*

Etymology: Middle French *biais*

Date: 1530

**Bias: A predisposition that distorts your ability to fairly weigh the evidence and prevents you from reaching a fair or accurate judgment.**

It's tempting to attribute unfair journalism to bias. That journalist doesn't like that person, or disagrees with that idea.

We can't look into someone's head and see bias. But we can look at what they have done in the past to see if there is evidence of a predisposition.

*ASK: Is being unfair in a story the same thing as being biased?*

*When people say the news media is biased, is this what they mean?*

*What is the evidence?*

*Is bias the only conclusion you can draw from the evidence you have?*



## Fair, Unfair, or Biased?



### School Bus Aide Busted Dealing Methadone

Here's a local news report. As you watch, pay careful attention to what is included and what is missing. Think about Fair Play, Fair Language and Fair Presentation.



NEWSFELLOW: NEWS FELLOW: LINK (INSERT) VIDEO TO THIS SLIDE AND SELECT "START AUTOMATICALLY"

Is this report fair? Is it biased? Is it neither?

ASK:

- ✓ What would it take to prove FOX 5 is BIASED against the bus driver? (or in favor of the kid)?
- ✓ What are other possible reasons this particular story was unfair? (Sloppiness, bad editing, time constraints, etc.).

## The News Literacy Definition:

**Bias:**

**a pattern of unfairness**

For the purposes of this course, here's the definition of bias.

## Common Flaws in “Bias” Claims

- “*The news media is biased*” is an over-generalization.

- Opinion Journalism on the “Opinions” page or tab or in one time-slot of a broadcast doesn’t necessarily prove there’s slant in entire news product.

### SLIDE: How to Assess Bias

A credible assessment of bias must apply to a single news outlet or news report, not the entire “*news media*”. A generalization like that is untrue on its face. Impossible. What we call a “fallacy”

Another common fallacy is what we call guilt by association. If your brother does something illegal, does that automatically make you a criminal?

People say, for instance, that once an Editorial in a newspaper criticizes a politician, the whole newsroom staff adopts that view and acts on it. Again, an over-generalization that is easily knocked down, starting with examples like Newsday’s coverage of Shoreham Nuclear Plant, which its editorial page supported.

One bias you can easily prove in any newsroom: There IS a bias for stories about conflict and about change.  
DUH!



This aired during the New Year's Day (2007) broadcast of The Situation Room with Wolf Blitzer on CNN.

The story was about the search for Al Qaeda leader Osama Bin Laden.

At that time, opponents of presidential candidate Barack Obama were playing on American misunderstanding and prejudice against Islam by emphasizing Obama's full name "Barack Hussein Obama" and his father's religious upbringing (born Muslim, but rejected the faith).

So, without doing too much psycho-analysis, is this a simple typo? Or is it evidence of a biased attempt to equate Democrat Obama with totalitarian Osama?

## Bias or "Scoop" Fever?



Dan Rather and George Bush

During the hotly contested 2008 election, 60 Minutes aired a report that suggested young George Bush, while serving in the Texas Air National Guard, disobeyed an order to appear for a physical exam, and that friends of the Bush family tried to "sugar coat" his Guard service.

The story relied on four documents allegedly written by one of Mr. Bush's Texas Air National Guard commanders in the early 1970s, Lt. Col. Jerry Killian, who is now dead. Questions about the authenticity of the documents were raised almost immediately. Some critics said the documents were most probably forgeries prepared on a modern word processor. Other critics questioned whether Killian would have - or could have - written them.

After a stubborn 12-day defense of the story, CBS News conceded that it could not confirm the authenticity of the documents and asked former Attorney General Dick Thornburgh and former Associated Press President Louis Boccardi to conduct an independent investigation into the matter.

Their findings were contained in a 224-page report in which the blue-ribbon panel said it was not prepared to brand the Killian documents an outright forgery, although the panel did raise serious questions about their authenticity and the way CBS News handled them.

The panel identified 10 serious defects in the preparation and reporting of the story that included failure to obtain clear authentication of the documents or to investigate the controversial background of the source of the purported documents, retired Texas National Guard Lt. Col. Bill Burkett.

The panel said a "myopic zeal" to be the first news organization to broadcast a groundbreaking story was a key factor in explaining why CBS News had produced a story that was neither fair nor accurate and did not meet the organization's internal standards.

"The combination of a new **60 Minutes Wednesday** management team, great deference given to a highly respected producer and the network's news anchor, competitive pressures, and a zealous belief in the truth of the segment seem to have led many to disregard some fundamental journalistic principles," the report said. The producer of the piece, Mary Mapes, was also faulted for calling Joe Lockhart, a senior official in the John Kerry campaign, prior to the airing of the piece, and offering to put Burkett in touch with him. The panel called Mapes' action a "clear conflict of interest that created the appearance of political bias."

# Opinion or Bias?

OP-ED COLUMNIST

**Can Hillary Cry Her Way  
Back to the White House?**

By [MAUREEN DOWD](#)



OP-ED COLUMNIST

Caribou Barbie is one nutty puppy.

The New York Times runs Op-Ed columns with headlines and phrases like this...Does this mean The New York Times is biased against Clinton and Palin...or does it mean the New York Times has an opinion page that runs Maureen Dowd's column?

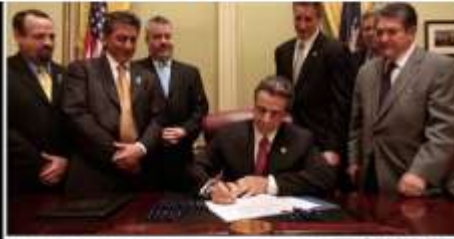


A different take on the same question. Is Fox TV's decision to broadcast Rush Limbaugh's conservative talk show proof that FOX News is biased?



# News Judgment or Bias?

New York Allows Same-Sex Marriage, Becoming Largest State to Pass Law



Gov. Andrew M. Cuomo of New York signed a law on Friday that allows gay and lesbian couples to marry in the state.

ALBANY — Lawmakers voted late Friday to legalize same-sex marriage, making New York the largest state where gay and lesbian couples will be able to wed and giving the national gay-rights movement new momentum from the state where it

PHOTOGRAPH BY AP/WIDEWORLD  
PHOTOGRAPH BY AP/WIDEWORLD

Is story choice evidence of bias?

Depending on who you talk to, only three to five percent of the US population is gay. Yet legalization of marriage for gay New Yorkers was treated as major news.

ASK: Does this mean the News Media are biased against religious conservatives and biased in favor of gay marriage?

What kind of evidence would support a charge of bias?

ASK: Are there any drivers in play that make this a legitimate news story in the New York Times?

(Conflict, Change, Human Interest, Proximity of gay community)

<http://www.nytimes.com/2011/03/10/nyregion/10marriage.html?partner=rss&emc=rss>

# News Judgment or Bias?

USA TODAY | News

## Where states stand on same-sex marriage

Same-sex marriage is legal in New York, Connecticut, Iowa, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Vermont, Washington and the District of Columbia. Here is where each of the states stand:

- No action pending
- Action pending
- Allows domestic partnerships
- Allows civil union
- Allows same-sex marriage



Is story choice evidence of bias?

Depending on who you talk to, only three to five percent of the US population is gay. And yet the recent action by state courts and state legislatures has been national news.

ASK: Does this mean the News Media are biased against religious conservatives and biased in favor of gay marriage?

What kind of evidence would support a charge of bias?

ASK: Are there any drivers in play that make this a legitimate news story in USA Today? How about on your local TV news?

(Conflict, Change, Human Interest, Proximity of gay community, Prominence of supporters or opponents, etc.)

<http://www.usatoday.com/news/nation/story/2012-02-07/same-sex-marriage/52997090/1>



Pro-Israeli and Pro-Palestinian activists charge the New York Times shows favoritism in its coverage of the clashes between the Palestinian Authority and the nation of Israel.

In particular, they allege, photos like this, showing a wounded child, are selected to generate sympathy for Palestinians and anger at the Israeli Army.

ASK:

-Is selection of an emotional photo like this a clear example of bias?

-What is the evidence?

-Break it down for me...What are the drivers that make this photo newsworthy?



(Alternative to previous slide)

Climate change deniers charge that the news media demonstrates bias when it selects pictures of bears “stranded” on shrunken ice floes to dramatize the impacts of global warming.

Naturalists argue you could have photographed the same thing hundreds of years ago because the ice-pack has always calved icebergs and bears, being great swimmers, have always swum to small chunks to hunt and to play.

ASK:

-Is selection of an emotional photo like this a clear example of bias?

-What is the evidence?

-Break it down for me...What are the drivers that make this photo newsworthy?

# News Judgment or Bias?



Choosing not to cover a story  
is not de facto proof of bias

Major news outlets didn't cover the first few days of the Occupy Wall Street protests in New York, which led to allegations of political bias.

News consumers often complain about what isn't in the mainstream media.

They see a story elsewhere -- another publication or Web site that mirrors their ideology -- and cite it as an example of the MSM suppressing news.

ASK:

-Is a newsroom that doesn't give a story like this priority coverage clearly biased?

-What is the evidence?

-Break it down for me...What are the drivers that make the protests newsworthy?

-What would it take to prove bias? (How many other protests were there in New York that day?)



May 30, 2005, Natalee Holloway disappears on the final night of her five-day vacation with friends in Aruba. The high school senior's story gets saturation coverage on cable news channels, with CNN's Nancy Grace leading the way.

July 18, 2005, Latoiya Figueroa disappears shortly after a doctor's appointment in West Philadelphia. Her case gets no national coverage until angry activists beg Nancy Grace and other hosts to give a fraction of their attention to the disappearance of LaToiya.

"When black women disappear," "Essence" magazine wrote in June of that year, "The silence can be deafening."

The differential coverage over time is quantifiable and demonstrates clear bias...but on whose part? Is the audience...the ratings...partially to blame?



How about this example...

Everyone know what an obituary is?

True story: Two scholars looked at the obituaries published in the Chicago Tribune and found there were twice as many women dying as men...which would be bad news for our species, except that the vital statistics bureau's data showed women and men die off in approximately equal numbers in Chicago, the newspapers just choose to devote more attention to the deaths of men.

So why is it that the deaths of men (at age 72 on average at that time) were less newsworthy than the deaths of women?(age 79)

ASK: Is it bias? If so, what kind? Sexism? Classism? Job-ism?

What are other explanations for the imbalance? (reflects who got top jobs, what jobs were "newsworthy", fact that wife is around to memorialize hubby, but kids don't bother for Ma.)

**Whose bias** are reflected in those data?

So, in other words...bias is a complicated thing.

The stronger the emotion,  
The more likely bias will be charged:



- Politics
- Race and Gender
- Social Issues
- Religion

The accusation of bias most often rears its ugly head on hot-button topics: Politics, race, religion and gender and social issues.

ASK: Why is that?

Issues that are emotional and personal, that generate strong feeling and partisanship, tend to cause people to see bias in anything that does not support their feelings and beliefs or praise the group that is central to their identity.



## How to Spot Bias

- Look for evidence of a pattern
  - of unfairness over time
- Compare a variety of news outlets especially to search for a bias by omission
- Take note of the self-interest of those alleging bias

Just as we offer ways to find fairness, we offer ways to think and speak skillfully about bias.

✓ Look for a consistent pattern of unfairness over time.

✓ Compare news reports from a variety of sources, especially to search for a bias by omission

✓ Take note of the self-interest of those alleging bias. Are they advocates for journalistic excellence, or are they, for example, paid lobbyists for BP complaining about bias in coverage of the Gulf Oil Spill?



(LECTURER. THIS IS THE LECTURE'S HINGE, MOVING INTO COGNITIVE DISSONANCE)

If different people see different bias in words or story selection, then perhaps a major factor at work in the perception of bias is the news consumers Own Bias.

Write that idea down, it's a key concept in this course..."Own Bias." (Point to chest)

As a news consumer, If you're not thoughtful about your own biases, multiple studies show you can end up dismissing reliable information or not even being able to take it in.

Do that often enough, and you'll make poor decisions, take ill-advised actions and judge unwisely. You'll see the world in a one-sided way that warps the complicated nature of truth.



**(ANIMATION: Opening image of happy chicken in pastoral setting. Click to bring up nervous “Chicken Run” characters who have discovered they are headed for slaughter. Click again to bring up photo of chicken crammed in to industrial pens)**

If, for example, you believe in animal rights and yet you also love Chicken McNuggets, you may prefer to think chickens live happy outdoor lives until it's their turn to take one for the team. And then you watched Chicken Run and started wondering if Chickens live their lives in fear of the slaughterhouse.

As an adult, you might have to force yourself to sit through a documentary film on the conditions at large-scale chicken farms. Chances are your first reaction will be that the film-makers skewed the information or that chicken farms aren't as bad as they look.

If we really search for reliable information, we often won't like what we learn. In that search, Pogo has it right: The enemy of knowledge might just be...US

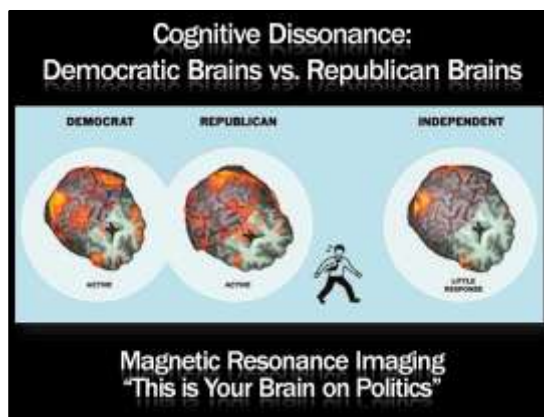
# You Want The Truth?



Social psychologists, in fact, say we are poorly equipped to deal with facts.

Codered.wmv

Click to launch Nicholson clip



Those screenwriters may have been onto something.

Neuroscientists at UCLA used magnetic resonance imaging to watch the brains of voters as they responded to the leading presidential candidates. When confronted with information that contradicted their belief system, strong partisans for Democratic Presidential nominee John Kerry and Republican George Bush shut down any critical thinking activity in the brain—instead, monitors found that emotional centers of the brain showed great activity.

This is just one study. But there is a growing body of evidence that your biases can get in the way of clear thinking or even clear perception.

[http://www.nytimes.com/2007/11/11/opinion/11freedman.html?\\_r=2&ref=opinion&oref=slogin&oref=slogin](http://www.nytimes.com/2007/11/11/opinion/11freedman.html?_r=2&ref=opinion&oref=slogin&oref=slogin)

THROBBING BRAIN ANIMATION...NEWS FELLOW: LINK (INSERT) VIDEO TO THIS SLIDE AND SELECT "START AUTOMATICALLY", **ALSO, SELECT "LOOP UNTIL STOPPED."** This isn't a video to watch, it's just a background animation to play while you speak.

Several times this semester, we have made reference to the value of understanding your own biases and how they affect your search for reliable information. Today we introduce you to specific concepts we expect you to know and use from now on to describe the bias inside individuals.

One of the most influential and widely studied areas of social psychology measures how humans react to the uncomfortable feeling caused by holding two contradictory ideas simultaneously, such as empathy for chickens and a hunger for Chicken McNuggets.

The theory of **cognitive dissonance** proposes that people are powerfully motivated to reduce that discomfort. In order to get rid of the feeling, people will change their beliefs and behaviors, **OR** they'll justify and rationalize or even block and warp new information.

*Like this: PETA is just exaggerating. Those Chickens are treated nicely. I could see them smiling" ...or..."chickens are dumb. They're not really animals...they'd die anyway, so I may as well eat them."*

We will, it turns out, do almost anything to escape that feeling of cognitive dissonance.

## Responses to Cognitive Dissonance

### Selective Distortion & Retention

People tend to distort (or forget)  
incoming information if it does not  
match their point of view.

Animation: Headline comes in automatically. Click once for term, second click brings up definition.

Here are some of the more interesting...or scary...findings.

Memory is not terribly reliable.

Much more can be remembered of recent events than those further in one's past. Worse, every time certain kinds of memories (episodic) are recalled, they are re-encoded within the hippocampus and altered a little. That's what we call transience and it's not that surprising.

But to reduce cognitive dissonance, we tend to distort or shut out information that conflicts with our biases. For instance, researchers at Towson and the University of Maryland found that when test subjects were asked to play the role of college admissions officers, they overstated the qualifications of applicants who agreed with their politics and understated those from the opposition party.

In this way we either warp new information to reinforce our beliefs or completely shut it out. People who think like me are smarter than those who don't...

<http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/j.1559-1816.2010.00665.x/abstract>

D. Schacter. *The Seven Sins of Memory*, Houghton Mifflin, 2001



## Responses to Cognitive Dissonance

### Source Misattribution

When they do remember sources, people may selectively attribute comforting information to a more respectable source .

Animation: Headline comes in automatically. Click once for term, second click brings up definition.

**Source Misattribution:** Often documented by scientists, Misattribution involves correct recollection but incorrect recollection of the source of that information

It's not exactly random "brain farts."

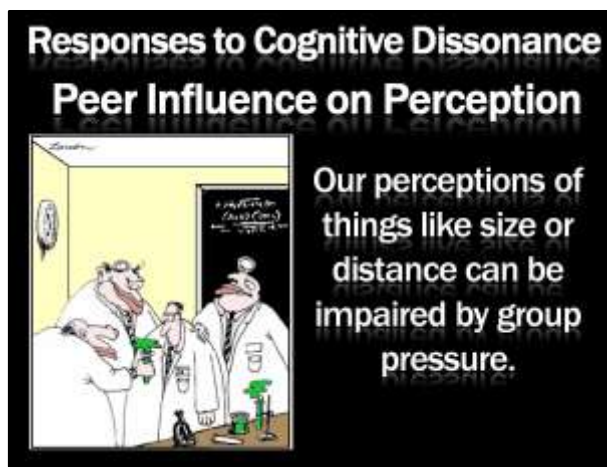
I'm exaggerating, but let's say on a late-night call-in show, you hear some random caller say something that confirms your beliefs and within three days you're telling people you heard a Nobel Prize winner say it on CNN. If you haven't already learned this in Psych, you should know that perception and memory are easily influenced. We are not digital recorders.



Animation: Headline comes in automatically. Click once for term, second click brings up definition.

We prefer information that **confirms** our preconceptions, regardless of whether the information is true. We gather and recall information selectively and interpret it to suit our beliefs. So, when reading about some emotional issue like abortion or gun control or gay marriage, we go to sources that tend to confirm us. We interpret ambiguous evidence as supportive. Why? It pains us to admit we're wrong. But if we persist, confirmation bias can lead us into junk. It gives us overconfidence and the habit of shouting down dissent. You could argue confirmation bias is at the heart of disastrous business, military and social decisions.

Plous, Scott (1993), *The Psychology of Judgment and Decision Making*,



Animation: Headline comes in automatically. Click once for term, second click brings up definition.

**Peer Influence on Perception:** In the 1950s, Solomon Asch at Swarthmore College began testing people's need to conform by testing if an individual's perceptions could stand up to a group's erroneous judgment of rope lengths. Trivial, but a vocal majority making an obvious mistake can convince others in the room that long is short and short is long.

If you can be pressured to misjudge distance or size, your little digital information recorder can also be pressured to distort what can be plainly seen without the pressure.

Not precisely a response to cognitive dissonance, but a good reminder that our senses can be manipulated by other people.



Stanford professor Shanto Iyengar reported in 2009 that Democrats avoided Fox when it came to political news and preferred National Public Radio and CNN.

2,000 people participated in a survey in which they saw a brief headline accompanied by the logo of the news organization. They were asked to choose which story they wanted to see. They didn't know the only difference was the logo. And when the news focused on controversial issues such as the Iraq war and politics, "partisans are especially likely to screen out sources they consider opposed to their political views," a result confirmed by researchers in a subsequent study.

**WHY ARE WE THIS WAY?**

We evolved with a need to make quick decisions to survive. So, we are by default a little impatient. We are fighting out own evolutionary history in the battle to become smart news consumers!

<http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/j.1460-2466.2008.01402.x/full>

# News Bias vs. Audience Bias



The War in Lebanon, 1982

**Does Being More Informed Guarantee That You Will Be a Less-Biased News Consumer?**

And just being patient about chasing down more information may not be enough.

**"Hostile Media Effect"**



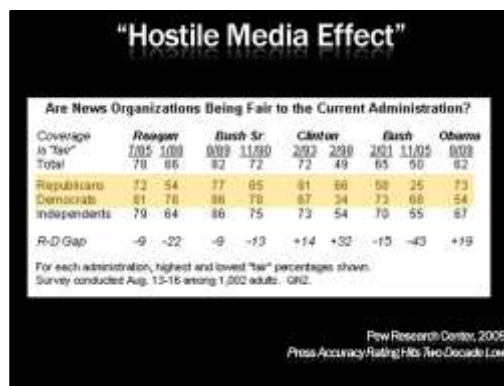
The War in Lebanon, 1982

- A belief among partisans that news reports are painting them in the worst possible light.
- People who are deeply involved in one side of an issue or another are quicker to spot and remember aspects of a news story that are negative.
- The best-informed partisans are the most likely to see bias.

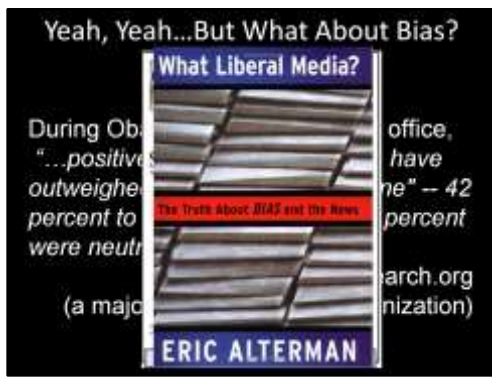
Partisans, people with clear opinions about the war in Lebanon were shown news coverage of the war. Researchers found that the more educated or knowledgeable the partisans, the more likely they were to perceive bias in news coverage and the less likely they were to be open to new information.

(From story in the Times:) *"When someone says several nice things about you and one derogatory thing, what sticks in your mind? People who are deeply invested in one side are quicker to spot and remember aspects of the news that hurt than they are to see aspects that help, said Richard Perloff, a Cleveland State University political communication researcher.*

*Stanford psychologist Lee D. Ross explains it like this: "When you are persuaded by something, you don't think it is propaganda". "Israelis know they see the world the way they do because they are Israelis, and Arabs, too. The difference is people think in their case, their special identities are a source of enlightenment, whereas other people's source of enlightenment is a source of bias."*



Partisans, people with clear party affiliations, see bias in patterns that seem to have more to do with current events and their beliefs than with the information they are seeing. Note how partisans' views of the fairness of news coverage swaps when the party holding the White House changes.



ANIMATION: Quote comes up automatically. First click bring up “Liberal Media Exposed”. Second click brings up Alterman book.

Critics gained ammunition in 2009 when a study by the Pew Research organization concluded that Obama “enjoyed substantially more positive media coverage than either Bill Clinton or George W. Bush during their first months in the White House.”

Conducted by the Pew Research Center's Project for Excellence in Journalism, the survey was based on a sampling of stories on network television newscasts and in national publications, including The Post. This report by a conservative watchdog group cites multiple studies that indicate the newsrooms of the major metropolitan papers are overwhelmingly Democratic. It fails to mention the Publishers and owners are overwhelmingly Republican. Which is (oversimplifying) the point of Eric Alterman’s book about bias, in which he says the media favor conservatives over liberals.

Can we infer from the surveys we started the lecture with that since viewers perceive the media to be biased that the media is, in fact biased?

Does the public perception of media bias have anything to do with the fact that liberal media bias is the focus of one network’s entire marketing campaign?

Can we infer from the fact that reporters have ideological beliefs that their reporting will reflect these ideological beliefs?

Is it possible, either through methodological checks and balances (VIA) or reflective policing of one’s biases to combat this bias if it exists?

<http://pewresearch.org/pubs/1206/media-coverage-of-obama-100-days>





**(Animation: First click is one person in a news meeting. Second click brings up the rest of the group of editors)**

Journalists have spent a great deal of time thinking about these questions, which is why codes of ethics exist: to police the neutrality of journalists.

Journalists understand these human tendencies (2<sup>ND</sup> CLICK) which is why they submit to the discipline of verification and embrace a checks-and-balances process by which the editing team challenges and shapes the final report.

In that way, the hope is that individual biases can be whittled and sanded off a story as a team of individuals – all with the goal of neutrality – brings their own experiences and biases to bear on ferreting out flaws and fixing them.

Journalists submit to the discipline of  
**V**erification, a newsroom system of  
aggressive peer review and a code of  
ethics that defines **I**ndependence, and  
demands transparency-based  
**A**ccountability.

In this process, reporters are transparent about their reporting, disclosing how they know what they know and disclosing any conflicts of interest that might compromise the integrity, the Independence of the organization.

So the idea of Objectivity that some journalists refer to is not individual objectivity but this aspiration newsrooms have to guard their neutrality through a process of challenging each other's work until it is fair.

It's worth noting that in professional circles, journalists who flout this culture of neutrality quickly become pariahs.

(CLICK NOW FOR CRAZY V.I.A. ANIMATION)

# Voters on Income Tax Levels

Since January 2009 have your Federal income taxes:

- A) Gone Down
- B) Stayed the Same
- C) Gone up

86 %

ANIMATION: CLICK BRINGS UP THE YELLOW, SHOWING WHAT VOTERS THOUGHT (Of the wrong answers, but don't say that yet)

We're going to replicate a recent study. After you answer, we'll look at what voters headed to the polls in the 2010 midterm election thought they knew for sure about facts that might affect their decisions in the ballot box.

(Get rough straw poll, then show what 2010 midterm election voters thought.)

# Voters on Scientists' Views of Climate Change

Do you think that MOST SCIENTISTS believe that:

- A) Climate change is occurring
- B) Views are evenly divided
- C) Climate change is not occurring **45%**

ANIMATION: CLICK BRINGS UP THE YELLOW, SHOWING WHAT VOTERS THOUGHT (Of the wrong answers, but don't say that yet)

(Get rough straw poll, then show what 2010 midterm election voters thought.)

## **Misinformation and the Election**

**The good news: increasing exposure  
to news sources *decreased*  
misinformation...**

**The bad news: in some news sources  
higher levels of exposure *increased*  
misinformation**



Now the study.

When researchers at the University of Maryland asked voters some basic fact questions on their way to the polls and learned that, during the mid-term elections of 2010, many voters were flat wrong on important facts related to the ballot choices they were making.

55% thought the economy was still nosediving in recession, when statistics showed the recession ended in Q3 of 2009. 86% did not know their federal taxes have gone down since 2009. 45% thought climate change is not occurring or that scientists are evenly divided on the question, when in fact the National Academy of Sciences, which is made up of thousands of scientists, has overwhelmingly concluded the climate is changing.

A majority believed other falsehoods: that Obama initiated the bank bailout and that foreign donors financed the U.S. Chamber of Commerce's 2010 election crusade to elect Republicans.

## Misinformation and the Election

**Most scientist think that climate change is not occurring**

**Fox News Consumers**

**Rarely 30%**

**Once a week 45%**

**Almost everyday 60%**

Those who were most misinformed?  
Viewers of Fox News and MSNBC...the two most partisan news outlets.

Before you blame media bias, here's a big question:

Are Fox and MSNBC putting out false information?

OR...are Fox and MSNBC viewers unable to untangle their ears, eyes and memories from their reactions to cognitive dissonance?

## Conclusions

Are there examples of unfair news stories?

Absolutely

Is unfairness an automatic sign of bias?

No

Can a news outlet exhibit bias?

Yes, but it's hard to prove

Is the *perception* of bias as dangerous as bias itself?

Yes

ANIMATION: CLICK FOR THE ANSWER AND IT AUTOMATICALLY BRINGS UP THE NEXT QUESTION.

To wrap up, we think there are some conclusions you can draw, based on the psychological and sociological research and based on evidence gathered about news coverage. Here they are. (read slide)

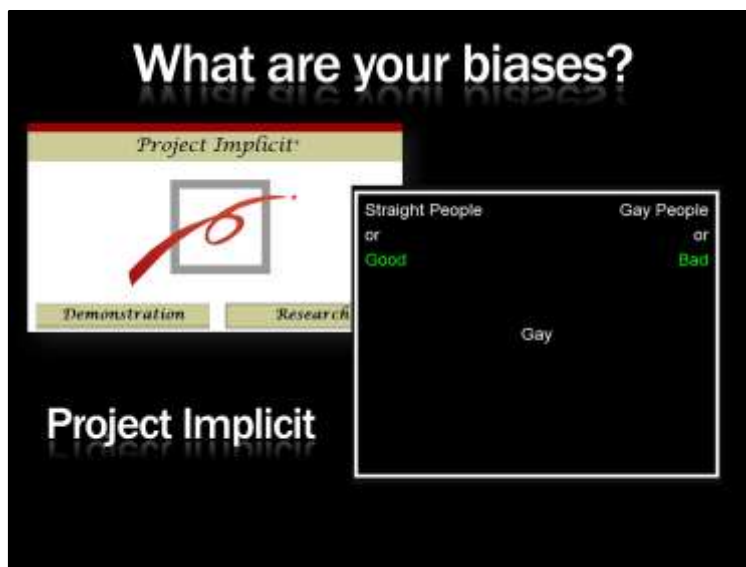


## Today's Key Lessons :

- ✓ Bias is a Pattern. Not an event.  
Examine the work of a single reporter or a single news outlet over time. A pattern, repeated, can be evidence. A single event is weak evidence, or may be evidence of your own bias.
- ✓ Stay Open to Information That Challenges Your Previously-Held Beliefs and Assumptions. Your own bias is powerful.

This is a big day. We learn two of the key lessons of News Literacy.

**Quiz Time!**



(ANIMATION: Images fade in. Project Implicit screen grab changes once automatically. )

First, we're sending you to the Project Implicit website to measure if you have absorbed automatic word associations that might reflect societal bias or even your own biases. It's a kind of video game that pushes you to match words and by measuring your delays, it attempts to sort out how you feel about certain people or ideas. You have a lot of options to test: race, gender, politics, age, size, religion. Pick a subject that interests you and keep track of what you learn. Point of this isn't that it's a perfect measure of your implicit biases. You're doing a light version of the experiment. Our point is that this gets you thinking about how your own biases might affect your ability to absorb information.

# Assignments:

(paste screengrab from Homework folder here)



hus endeth the Lesson...



The Rev. Phelps' Westboro Baptist Church, which protests outside funerals of U.S. Soldiers, has 71 members...in a nation of 310 million people. And the news media covers most if not all of these demonstrations...which the Supreme Court has ruled is within the Phelps' family's rights.

Yes, it's outrageous, but doesn't this demonstrate bias?

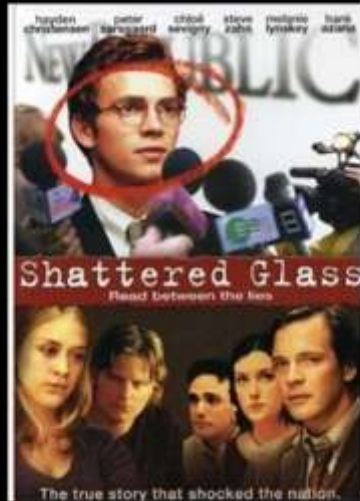
ASK: Is attention to these protests an example of pro-gay bias? Anti-gay bias?

ASK: Break it down for me...What are the drivers?

ASK: What kind of evidence would support a charge of bias?

## Shattered Glass Viewings:

Available on Blackboard, on Netflix, at the Library and at on-campus screenings to be announced



In a week, you'll be assigned to watch Shattered Glass and write about it. Wait until after next lecture to do so, so you'll have the concepts you need. A streaming copy will be available to you on BlackBoard. Plus you can order it from Netflix. Or watch one of the copies at the Library. Or by attending one of two on-campus screenings set up by the Center for News Literacy.

**Glasstrailer.wmv**

CLICK TO LAUNCH 2-MINUTE TRAILER OF SHATTERED GLASS



## Cutchogue farm sues neighbors for \$14M

Published: October 4, 2011 9:47 PM  
By: STACEY ALTHERR: stacey.altherr@newsday.com



[View large map »](#)

Paulette Satur and Eberhard Müller, owners of Satur Farms, filed the lawsuit Aug. 8 in State Supreme Court in Riverhead against their Alvah's Lane neighbors Patricia and James McNamara and John and Joan Lademann. Satur and Müller claim that homemade signs put on the McNamara and Lademann lawns accused the farm of "killing" them with diesel fuel and unsafe driving habits of the forklift operators. The signs have since been removed.

"Don't complain about farmers with your mouth full," said Satur Farms' attorney, Eric Bressler. "It's agricultural production. You have to till the soil, you have to plant, you have to harvest and you have to get it to market. All these things are part and parcel of agriculture."

<http://www.newsday.com/long-island/suffolk/cutchogue-farm-sues-neighbors-for-14m-1.3222665>

# What Is Balance?

## Discord Fills Washington on Possible Libya Intervention

"He keeps reminding us that the best revolutions are completely organic," the senior official said, quoting the president.



At the same time, there are persistent voices – in Congress and even inside the administration – arguing that Mr. Obama is moving too slowly. They contend that there is too much concern about perceptions, and that the White House is too squeamish because of Iraq.

Furthermore, they say a military caught up in two difficult wars has exaggerated the risks of imposing a no-fly zone over Libya, the tactic discussed most often.

For example: Story on Libyan intervention.

Who is right? Obama and those who say we can't take sides?

Critics who say we are betraying democracy?

When the answer is unknown or subject to debate, you want an almost mathematical balancing of points of view.

## Balance, Fairness and Bias



Is this what college women really do on Spring Break?

(Lecturers. This slide is the subject of considerable debate. It's a little offensive, which is why it perfectly illustrates the prejudice (fantasy) that caused newspaper editors to run really poor stories about the AMA study of college women's behaviors on spring break. We offer two more options, but you may wish to go a little tamer. Either way, don't spill the beans about the mistakes that were made in coverage of the Spring Break study. Leave those for the next class.)

According to an AMA study, alcohol and sex play a prominent and potentially dangerous role in the spring break trips of college women.

In recitation, you'll read the coverage of that study and look for evidence of media bias.

## Balance, Fairness and Bias



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# Voters on the State of the Economy

The American economy had a major downturn starting in  
the fall of 2008.

Do you think that now the American economy is:

A) Starting to Recover?

B) Still Getting Worse? **55%**

ANIMATION: CLICK BRINGS UP THE YELLOW, SHOWING WHAT VOTERS THOUGHT (Of the wrong answers, but don't say that yet)

You're an American voter...going to the polls in November of last year to pick a Congressman, a U.S. Senator or a Governor.

You've been paying attention to the news.

You Know What's going on.

Right?

In Yellow, are the percentages of voters who chose each answer in a University of Maryland study just before the election.



So if reliable information is the foundation of self-governance, who decides what is reliable?

#### BIRTH CERTIFICATE

ASK: What is this? Can you trust it?

Explain forged birth certificate indicating that Obama was not born in the U.S. (and therefore cannot be President.)

Explain that hundreds of thousands of Americans apparently believe this to be true. News consumers can be easily deceived by images.

#### HOW DO WE KNOW WHAT'S RELIABLE?

It used to be that only a small fringe of Americans were arguing that Obama was not really a legal President because he was born, they said, in Kenya.

A July 2010 survey by CNN found an interesting characteristic of the growing number of people who think Obama is foreign-born. (And therefore cannot be President.)

27% of ALL Americans believe Obama to be foreign born

But what you believe about this seems to be closely tied to which party you believe in.

41% of Republicans believe Obama to be foreign born

15% of Democrats believe Obama to be foreign born

**August 2009 PUBLIC POLICY POLLING - 24% of Americans believe he is foreign born.**



So if reliable information is the foundation of self-governance, who decides what is reliable?

#### BIRTH CERTIFICATE

ASK: What is this? Can you trust it?

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# Getting the facts straight...





Peterking.wmv

Rep. Peter King, R-NY, who represents western Long Island, is Chairman of the House Committee on Homeland Security. His decision to convene hearings to investigate radicalization of young Muslims in America has been criticized as a return to McCarthyite fear-mongering that will only succeed in reinforcing negative stereotypes about Muslim Americans.. .

ASK: Is CNN's the decision to cover the hearings evidence of bias? What is the evidence?

<http://www.foxnews.com/politics/2011/03/10/king-draws-firing-radicalization-hearings-majority-supports-discussion/>  
<http://www.csmonitor.com/USA/Politics/2011/0310/Peter-King-hearing-shows-sharply-polarized-attitudes-toward-Islam>



Point: Here's an example of a pattern of repeated obvious animus against one person in news coverage.

The Post makes no secret of its dislike for Hillary Clinton.

During the presidential campaign, Hillary was "angry," the "strife of the party" making "desperate" claims about her delegate count.

Then, after the "Super Tuesday" primary contests, they called her a "Super Loser" ...and when she campaigned on the claim that as President she would be able to handle bad men, they made this montage on page one.

More recently, the Post decided the house she went looking for was... "Castle Clinton."

ASK: What do you think?

Is that a pattern?

Could you compare the Post to other outlets and find similar words used?

Is there evidence enough to make a credible charge of bias?

# Obama's War Against Fox News



"What I think is fair to say about Fox -- and certainly

As for Dunn's complaint about Fox News' coverage of the Obama campaign, a study by the Pew Research Center showed that 40 percent of Fox News stories on Obama in the last six weeks of the campaign were negative. Similarly, 40 percent of Fox News' stories on Obama's Republican opponent, Sen. John McCain, were negative.

"It's astounding the White House cannot distinguish between news and opinion programming," Clemente said. "It seems self-serving on their part."

# Jon Stewart vs. Bill O'Reilly

# Hillary Clinton and the New York Times

The New York Times

Politics

## Media Charged With Sexism in Clinton Coverage



Senator Hillary Rodham Clinton is interviewed at her campaign plane in March.

By KATHARINE G. SEELYE and JILL BOGHRAN  
Published June 13, 2008

Angered by what they consider sexist news coverage of Senator [Hillary Rodham Clinton's bid for the Democratic presidential](#)

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# Hillary Clinton and the New York Times

THE PUBLIC EDITOR

## Pantsuits and the Presidency

By CLARK HOYT

Published June 22, 2008

SOME supporters of Hillary Clinton believe that sexism colored news coverage of her presidential campaign. The Times reported in a front-page article on June 17 that many are organizing boycotts of cable news networks created by the

I asked my assistant, Michael McElroy, to run a database search for some key words that might indicate sexism in The Times — “shrill,” “strident,” “pantsuit” and “giggle,” among them.



Clark Hoyt

Peggy Aulisio of South Dartmouth, Mass., reviewed your own stories and columns and think so too. And I think a fair reading of the Times did a reasonably good job in its news coverage. Dowd's columns about Clinton's campaign with language painting her as a 50-foot suffocating embrace, a conniving film n

## Geiger Lake plan draws some residents' ire

Originally published: October 3, 2011 8:49 PM

Updated: October 3, 2011 10:13 PM

By DENISE M. BONILLA, denise.bonilla@newsday.com



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Geiger Lake plan d...



Microsoft PowerPol...

<http://www.newsday.com/long-island/suffolk/geiger-lake-plan-draws-some-residents-ire-1.3220240>



## Warning: Test Ahead



10-question test on Lectures 1-6 will be administered in your week 7 recitation.

You will be directed to a special reading in advance of the exam, on which you'll be tested in the exam.

## ANIMATION: IMAGE FADES IN

Emphasize to students that detailed answers make the difference. If you can't cite specifics from news reports, readings, lectures, you lose points.

## **About that exam...**

**In addition to questions based on the lectures and readings, there is one other type of question:**

**In the Announcements on Blackboard, we have posted links to two examples of in-depth journalism.**

**Choose one that interests you and read it, carefully, from start to finish, with an eye to ways it illustrates course concepts. On the exam, you'll answer questions about that specific report.**

## Is Satire/humor "fair"?



Circling back to the Opinion neighborhood,  
what is

Is Satire/humor “fair”?



Just in case they pull the “you dirty academic Obama lovers” card

# News Judgment or Bias?



Maryland governor to sign same-sex marriage into law on Thursday

(Reuters) - Maryland's governor plans to sign a bill making same-sex marriage legal later this week, his office said on Monday, while opponents were making plans to challenge the new law at the ballot box.

Choosing a story to cover is not de-facto proof of bias.

<http://www.reuters.com/article/2012/02/27/us-usa-gaymarriage-maryland-idUSTRE81Q2CN20120227>

Depending on who you talk to, only three to five percent of the US population is gay.

Yet Governor Cuomo's intention to legalize marriage for gay New Yorkers was treated as major news.

ASK: What kind of evidence would support a charge of bias?

ASK: Break this story down for me...What are the drivers?

<http://www.nytimes.com/2011/03/10/nyregion/10marriage.html?partner=rss&emc=rss>