Lecturer Alerts

This lecture is intended to be continued in a subsequent class section. The atmosphere envisioned is a seminar, with students (having read the examples ahead of time) working their way through Workbook examples with their teacher. The point is to begin developing their ability to deconstruct in real time.

After this lecture, students will be able to:

1. Begin to apply key lessons of News Literacy in real time to find or identify reliable information.
2. Use the IMVAIN test of source reliability on the fly.
3. Distinguish, on the fly, between direct and indirect evidence and even spot-check if conclusions are logical or not.
4. Begin to correctly use the terms "Transparency" and "Context" to judge the professionalism of news reporting.
5. Use the Deconstruction Workbook as a means to rehearse detailed and sophisticated judgment of news reports.

These are the capstone skills of this course, encompassing all 6 outcomes promised by the syllabus.

Reminder: Bring Deconstruction Workbook to Recitation, too.

‘Deconstructing’ the News

Is Too Much Texting A Mental Illness?

How to Assess the Reliability of the News
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

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?

Context & Transparency
Two Ideas Students Struggle With

Key Definitions

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

The power of Context

As their state financing dwindled, four-year public universities increased their published tuition and fees almost 8 percent this year, to an average of $7,605… When room and board are included, the average in-state student at a public university now pays $16,140 a year.

"Trends in College Pricing" and "Trends in Student Aid" reports is that fast-rising tuition costs have been accompanied by a huge increase in financial aid, which helped keep down the actual amount students and families pay.

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

Key Definitions

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.
TRANSPARENCY

"...lax oversight of the district’s credit card, (was) among a series of financial irregularities outlined in a critical audit of the Wilton-Lyndeborough School District."

Deconstructing the News

Deconstructing the News

Transparency is Openness about Methods

- “Could not be reached”
- “Requested anonymity because she feared losing her job”
- “A reporter attempted to contact the family at home, but no one came to the door.”
- “The information could not be independently verified.”

Deconstruction

1) Summarize the main points of the story

Deconstructing the News

How Reliable is the Headline?

Is the Headline Supported By the Story?
Deconstructing the News

How Reliable is the Headline?

Is the Headline Supported By the Story?

Step 2:
Deconstructing the News
Assess the evidence supporting the main points of the story.

Direct Evidence?
Indirect Evidence?
Are The Inferences Logical?
Did The Reporter Open the Freezer?

Direct Evidence

Mother Jones 47 percent video: Mitt Romney does damage control

Mitt Romney says his remarks were not “vilely stated” at a fundraiser in Boca Raton, Fla. In the secretly-shot video released by Mother Jones, Romney says 47 percent of the people will vote for Obama “no matter what... who believes that they are victims.”

By Dan Thomass, Associated Press | September 11, 2012

Evidence: Did the reporter open the freezer?
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?

What’s the Evidence That Sen. Gillibrand Will Run for President?

Test Inferences for Soundness

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
Checking Inferences

Deconstructing the News

Step 3: Deconstructing the News Evaluate Sources. Are They Reliable?

Step 3: Evaluate Sources

1) Independent Sources Are Better Than Self-Interested Sources
2) Multiple Sources Are Better Than Single Sources
3) Sources Who Verify Are Better Than Sources Who Assert
4) Authoritative/Informed Sources Are Better Than Uninformed Sources
5) Named Sources Are Better Than Unnamed Sources

(Mnemonic Device: "I'M VAIN")
Deconstructing the News
Evaluate Sources Using IMVAIN

Independence vs. Self-Interest

Sources Asserting vs. Verifying

Trustworthy Anonymous Sources Are Offered to You With:

- Transparency
- Characterization
- Corroboration
Anonymous Sources

Transparent enough?

Characterized enough?

Benghazi attack may cloud Clinton's legacy

Anonymous sources, such as those in the Department of Defense, are not bound by media and governmental standards: they do not want to know. They would rather keep secrets than tell them. Therefore, when they tell us a story, they do not know how much to tell us. When they pull the curtain aside, they do not know what is behind it.

Key Definitions

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

Does the reporter make his or her work transparent?

National Public Radio Reports from Basra

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
Corrections are Institutional Transparency

Step 5:
Deconstructing the News
Does the reporter place the story in context?

Transparency

Teen rape trial shines unwelcome spotlight on Ohio town, football team

Both boys have been identified by a judge in court, by defense attorneys and in newspapers and other media reports.

CNN is not identifying the girl, who also is a juvenile, in accordance with its policy not to release the names of alleged rape victims.
Deconstructing the News
Does the reporter put the story in context?

Nassau and Suffolk are two of New York's 62 counties, but account for 10% of car thefts.

Step 6: Deconstructing the News
Are the key questions answered?

Step 7: Deconstructing the News
Are people and their ideas fairly presented? Is fair language used?
And The Whole Point Is....

What can a news consumer **Do** with this information

Is it actionable?

Deconstructing the News
Case Study: The pregnant man story

Do These Sources Help?

Assess reliability by Evaluating Sources & Evidence

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
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?

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?

6) Are the key questions answered?

7) Is the story fair?

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:

1. Bring Deconstruction Workbook to Recitation

2. Writing assignment: “Deconstructing the Washington Post’s report on Walter Reed Hospital”

Housekeeping, Announcements & Notes

Countdown To Test #2

Held in Recitation, Emphasizes Lectures 7-11, (Fairness & Bias through Deconstructing TV News) Same format: 10 questions, 100 points possible.

thus endeth the Lesson...
Example 4

Deconstructing the News
The Main Points Aren't Always in the First Paragraph

Deconstructing the News
How to Assess Source Authority

Is the Source Authoritative? Independent?
Why or Why Not?

Deconstructing the News
How to Weigh Sources

Verification or Assertion?

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

“...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.

“...a combination of stress, alcohol and domestic issues...”
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.

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?

Does the Headline Match the Story?

Japan to officially celebrate end of US occupation after WWII

Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe said the country would mark the 70th anniversary of the end of World War II with a new national holiday to honor those who fought and died for the country. The annual event, known as the “Day of National Reconciliation and Peace,” will be held on Aug. 15, the anniversary of the country’s surrender.

The Voice of Russia

Asserting vs. Verifying

US jobless rate drops to 7.8% in September

John E. Silvia, chief economist for Wells Fargo & Co. in Charlotte, N.C., said he found the numbers to be more reliable, but that he does not accept evidence of a conspiracy in Friday’s report.

He said he expected September’s rise in part-time employment was due to college students returning to school and taking part-time jobs.

The question that has confounded many economists, he said, is whether the sluggish rate of job growth that the nation has experienced for the last three years is new or just the “new normal.”

Silvia said, “The challenge we all have is the economy’s just not growing the way we had expected.”

Find the Context

McClatchy-Marist poll shows Obama tumbling in voters’ eyes

At least some of the president’s fall to Earth lies in the fact that voters no longer see him in the context of an election. He has to stand alone in the eyes of voters again and doesn’t benefit from the comparison with Republican rival Mitt Romney.

Another factor in the president’s decline is anxiety about the economy and the country.

The national survey, conducted four months after Obama was re-elected with 51 percent of the popular vote, found 45 percent of voters approving of the way he is handling his job and 48 percent disapproving.

Obama still outpaces Congress by a large margin.
Deconstruction Step 7: Is it Fair?

**NEW YORK POST**

Gov rips 'Housewives' hubby

By DAN BUSCA

Jan 10, 2013

The show may be "Real," but this home, apparently, is not.

New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie yesterday suspended — and demanded the resignation of — the husband of one of the "Real Housewives of New Jersey" from a water commission, saying he lied to officials about his "real" residence.

Christie said Albert Manzo, whose wife, Caroline, is a star of the reality show, had claimed in 2005 — when he was nominated to serve on the North Jersey Water District Supply Commission — that he lived in the Brownstone restaurant in Paterson, which he co-owns.

In reality, Christie said, Manzo lives with his wife in Franklin Lakes, in a home featured in episodes of the Bravo reality show.

Manzo maintains the Brownstone is his legal residence and he won't resign.

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Deconstructing the News

How Transparent is the Story?

Who has a better pension: Romney or Obama?

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Does the Headline Match the Story?

Columbia Students Are Obsessed With Nutella, Consuming Up To 100 Pounds A Day (UPDATE)

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Does the Headline Match the Story?

Dad Arrested After 2-Year-Old Texas Girl Dies Following Spanking

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"Natalie Williams was arrested and sent to jail, after police say she spanked her 2-year-old daughter to the point that she died, and she admitted to it."

"She was arrested on Saturday, May 29, after police said an autopsy was performed on the girl and the death was ruled a homicide."

"The preliminary cause of death was listed as blunt force trauma."
Deconstructing the News

**Where is the Lead?**

**Deconstructing the News: Inference**

There, an official from the United States Anti-Doping Agency ordered them to provide urine samples for a surprise test to detect steroids and growth hormones — drugs not typically associated with the quiet methods of ice fishing.

2nd Paragraph

With digging a murky problem throughout sports, drug testing has arrived at the most unlikely places, including the chilly Big Bay Plains Reservoir, where competitors hide their in their pockets and probe polystyrene over power.

**Deconstructing the News: How to Weigh Sources**

**Asserting vs. Verifying**

New York Soda Size Limit Statute Barred by State Judge

"The loopholes in this rule effectively defeat the stated purpose," Tingling wrote. "It is arbitrary and capricious because it applies to some but not all food establishments in the city, it excludes other beverages that have significantly higher concentrations of sugar sweeteners and/or calories on specific grounds and the loopholes inherent in the rule, excluding but not limited to no limitations on refills, defeat and/or serve to gut the purpose of the rule."

Chris Gindersperger, a spokesman for the American Beverage Association in Washington, one of the plaintiffs, said the bar would have cost local bottlers and distributors at least $790,000 combined to retrofit, remodel, re-label and restock.

Today, his group said in a statement that the ruling "provides a sigh of relief to New Yorkers and thousands of small businesses in New York City that would have been harmed by this arbitrary and unpopular tax."
Anonymous Source

US intel sees missile movement in North Korea

Is there transparency? Characterization? Corroboration?

Deconstruct this story

Evaluate the reliability of sources using the IM/VAIN.

Does the reporter open the freezer?

Transparency and “Quote Approval”