

News Literacy – JRN 101 / JRN 103

Operation SWIFT Homework directions

Name:

Rec. # and Instructor:

***Must be uploaded prior to recitation. Bring a hard copy with you for an in-class activity.**

What you're doing: In the SWIFT Readings folder, read the stories on The New York Times decision to expose Operation SWIFT. The readings are located on the Lecture Blackboard site in their own folder titled S.W.I.F.T. Readings. Also read Media Debates Chapter 16, which is located in our digital textbook. The Media Debates chapter will provide you with context for the debate on SWIFT.

Your homework assignment is to make two lists of at least **five** talking points each that you could use in a debate or a courtroom.

List 1: Five arguments in support of the Times' decision and/or its right to publish the information.

List 2: Five arguments against the Times' decision and/or against its right to publish the information.

A talking point is a simple statement of a point you wish to make, followed by the list of supporting facts or information. Here's an example of one of the talking points circulated to supporters of Elena Kagan's nomination to the U.S. Supreme Court. Each of yours won't be this comprehensive, perhaps, but you get the idea. List your arguments and support them with evidence from the reading.

Critics who have attacked Kagan's record for hiring minorities at Harvard Law School have failed to include other appointments/hiring/promotion decisions that enhanced diversity while she was the Dean:

- Lani Guinier was the only woman of color on Harvard Law School's faculty – a source of great complaint until 2005, when Kagan hired Jeannie Suk, an Asian-American woman and up-and-coming young scholar.
- Guhan Subramanian, a South Asian law professor, was given tenure in 2004 – making him the only South Asian law professor on the faculty.
- Kenneth Mack, an African-American legal historian, was given tenure in 2006.
- Harvard Law School already has one of the largest group of black tenured law professors in the nation (Scott Brewer, Lani Guinier, Ken Mack, Randall Kennedy, Charles Ogletree, David Wilkins).
- Of the 12 Clinical Professors Kagan hired, three were minorities – 25%. This included Ron Sullivan – a highly sought-after African-American law professor Kagan poached from Yale University, Brian Price – an African-American professor who teaches in the area of community

economic development and Ashish Nanda – a South Asian professor who helps run the school's executive education program.

- Kagan dramatically expanded public interest clinics at Harvard – important vehicles for students to work with underserved communities in the Boston area.
- She created clinics in areas like Child Advocacy; Death Penalty; Environmental Law and Policy; Gender Violence; and War Crimes. The number of students participating in clinics increased 240%, from 360 to 866.

Why you're doing this: In recitation, your class will debate the merits and repercussions of the Times decision. You won't know until you get to class which side of the debate you'll be on, or how extensively you may be called to argue, so **you must be prepared to argue from either side.**

What you should aim to get out of it: This week's lecture addresses whether the U.S. press has too much or too little freedom, a brief history of press freedom, and the legal and ethical limitations on what stories can be published or broadcast. This assignment will require you to study that material and apply it to a critical analysis of the SWIFT stories, one example of a difficult decision made by journalists. You should come out of this assignment with a more nuanced understanding of the mission and responsibilities of the press. A great job earns 4 points.