

Current Event Coverage Report

This project asks you to synthesize the media coverage surrounding a current event in order to better understand both the event itself and the way it has been written about. First you'll choose a current event that's receiving wide media coverage. Next, you'll collect every article, editorial, blog post, pundit's monologue, think tank essay, analysis, etc. about your event, and then you'll evaluate the merits, credentials, biases, and failings of each. Lastly, you'll compose a report examining the event and its portrayal in the media.

Note for international students: You can focus on current events and sources from your country or region of origin if you choose.

To produce your Coverage Report, follow these steps:

Step 1: Choose a Current Event

The first thing to do is choose the current event you'd like to focus on. Ideally, this should be something that

- Has occurred within the last 2 months
- Has received significant media coverage from a variety of sources
- Is of general interest to the population (In other words, it's covered in the national or international sections of newspapers. You don't have to do something overtly political, but please don't do sports, arts, fashion, video games, or other niche concerns. If you have any question whether your topic is a good one, ask me).

Step 2: Collect All the Media

Once you've chosen an event to cover, the next step is to find everything you can on that topic. In class we're coming to understand better the landscape of public discourse, and you should try to pull from all parts of the landscape if possible, without discrimination. You should look for left- and right-leaning publications, basic journalism and deeper analysis, opinion pieces and arguments, interviews and punditry, blog posts and tweets, print and broadcast sources, clickbait and responsibly headlined articles, and anything else you can think of.

At minimum, you need to find **30 sources** on your current event.

Step 3: Write an Annotated Bibliography

An annotated bibliography has 2 parts: citations for all the sources you've found (that's the bibliography part) and notes on each source (that's the annotations part). Your bibliography will include citations for every source you find and annotations for 15 of your sources.

Citations: Each source you find should have a citation that follows the documentation style of your choosing (MLA, APA, etc.). They should appear just as they would in a Works Cited or References page.

Usually bibliographies are organized alphabetically, but you should also organize yours by source type. Therefore, divide your bib into the following sections using a bolded subheading for each section (within each of these sections, your citations should be alphabetized):

- Fact-based Journalism
- Interpretive Journalism
- Opinion-based Journalism
- Other Sources (could include satire, fake news, memes, social media posts, videos—anything that doesn't fit in another category or isn't professional journalism)

(These categories are defined and discussed in detail in the reading, and we will practice identifying them in class.)

Annotations: 15 of your sources should also have annotations that detail the following things for each source:

- **Summary:** Give a one- to two-sentence summary of what the source reports or argues.
- **Provenance:** Discuss the provenance of the source including who wrote it and what credentials or qualifications they have as well as who published it and what credentials they have.
- **Bias:** For fact-based and interpretive journalism sources, identify the bias you detect in the article (or its absence), with examples, and discuss whether that bias falls within acceptable limits, in your opinion.
- **Reasoning:** For interpretive and opinion-based journalism sources, discuss the fairness and quality of the argument: are claims backed up with credible evidence, are their logical fallacies or other mistakes, does the writer use any dirty tricks or unrealistic shortcuts?

You can choose which 15 sources to annotate, but they should represent the breadth of what you found, both in source type and quality.

Step 4: Write the Report

Having found, read, and analyzed all those sources, you are now qualified to synthesize what there is to know about your chosen event, seeing through the bias and the limitations of any one source. In 1000-1500 words, and citing from your sources as necessary, explain to your reader the following:

The Facts

- The basic facts of the event that are almost certainly true
- The aspects of the event that are probably true but whose verity is questionable
- Anything that has been reported that is certainly not true

The Opinions

- The major opinions and interpretations of the meaning or importance of the event
- The quality of the reasoning supporting those various interpretations

Your Conclusions

- How have bias, the quality of reporting, and the quality of reasoning impacted the way this event has been presented in the public discourse?