How News is Made
Colonial Era Newspapers

- Gutenberg-type Technology
- Low Literacy Rates
- Economic Information
- James and Ben Franklin
The modern newspaper is born on November 29, 1814, when *The London Times* became the first newspaper to be printed by steam, allowing for larger circulation at lower cost. On the first day of the machine's operation, troops were hired to prevent violence by soon-to-be-unemployed print shop workers.
The "Penny Press": The New York Sun began publication September 3, 1833, as a morning newspaper (edited by Benjamin Day with the slogan "It Shines for All")
• An Example of NY Sun's Coverage:

• “Some six years ago a young gentleman, the oldest son of a distinguished baronet in England, after completing his course in education, returned home to pay his respects to his parents, and to participate in the pleasures of their social circle. . . . [The account goes on to describe how the handsome youth fell in love with a girl his father had adopted as a ward. Eventually the couple ran off together because such marriages were forbidden, and the scion was disinherited by the angry baron. On the death of the father, however, the son was declared heir to the title. A younger son tried to wrest the estate by charging his elder brother with incest. Ends leaving reader in suspense:] And while our hero was unsuspiciously reposing on the soft bosom of his bride, a brother's hand, impelled by a brother's hate, was uplifted with fratricidal fierceness for destruction.”
• News is not produced because something happens.

• News is produced to fill the “news hole”

• Journalists follow routines which produce news

• News routines form the “news net” that catches some events but not others
Roles and Routines in Social Life

- Roles: shared, expected place or function in regular everyday social activity
- Routines: patterned, repetitive forms of behavior that organize a person's activity
- Institutions: organized collections of individuals that distribute resources, often held together by roles and routines
Some Basics about News

• Media mediate. They cannot relay reality, or raw information. They interpret reality.

• News is stories: events have to be turned into stories before they can be news events. And stories often work because they are familiar, not because they are new.

• News cannot be absolutely "unbiased." Calling news biased is like saying the sky is blue.

• News is produced to fill newsprint and TV time, not because something happens
The Web of Constraints/ The News Net

- Physical constraints (news covers the possible, especially the easy)
- Constraints of interpretation or ideology
- News Routines
Some news routines

- Beat journalism, e.g., the crime beat
Not guilty plea in Cape carjacking

Answers sought in woman’s death

By Jennifer Longley GLOUCESTER SENTINEL"SUPPLEMENT

ORLEANS — The boyfriend of a young woman who died in her car after being struck by a car driven by a man who had just been released from prison has been charged with carjacking and assault.

Christopher Clarke, 41, of Cape Cod, was arrested at his home in Orleans on Wednesday night, police said.

Clarke was driving a van that was stolen from a woman who was later found unconscious on the bedroom floor and was pronounced dead at Cape Cod Hospital.

Clarke has not been charged in connection with the death of the 40-year-old woman, but the carjacking and assault charges yesterday stemmed from an incident that occurred in Orleans on Monday night.

A man, who is believed to be Clarke’s ex-boyfriend, was driving a car that was stolen from the woman’s home.

Clarke, who is 41, was listed as a parolee from Massachusetts prisons.

Clarke, who has a history of violent crimes, was arrested on a warrant for carjacking and assault.

Clarke, who is 41, is expected to be arraigned in Orleans District Court on Monday.

New England in brief

MANCHESTER, N.H.

Man held in vandalizing of cemetery

A Manchester man was held in the Hillsborough House of Corrections, overlooking the Manchester cemetery where he allegedly vandalized 20 headstones on Sunday.

Mark Rhodes, 18, who was charged with vandalism of property on Sunday, was ordered to appear in court on Monday.

The headstones were damaged, but no one was hurt.

SPRINGFIELD

Prosecutors say 2 men assisted in theft

Prosecutors said a former board member and accountant for a city-run loan program were actively involved in stealing hundreds of thousands of dollars from the agency, but the men’s lawyers said they were unwitting pawns caught in an R.I. corruption probe.

The arguments capped a three-week trial in US District Court for Cornell Lewis, a former member of the Greater Springfield Entrepreneurial Fund’s board of directors, and Marko Zaric, a former leasing consultant. The two are re
• The Education Beat
Student fees rising fast

By Tim Johnson
Free Press Staff Writer

September 14, 2007
As public angst over soaring college costs focuses on annual tuition increases, another component of students' annual bills receives less public notice -- even though it's rising even faster than the big-ticket items on some campuses.

That component is student fees. Apart from tuition and room and board, fees are assessed on many campuses for the use of athletic facilities, for health care, transportation, and technology and other services, as well as for student activities. At some schools, most of these fees are rolled into a "comprehensive student fee"; some schools lump them together with tuition.

Either way, according to the College Board, which charts college costs, fees have been rising faster than tuition -- by 8 percent to 11 percent at state colleges and universities in 2005-06.

The increase has been more dramatic at the University of Vermont, where the comprehensive student fee has risen 288 percent over the past decade, from $414 per year to $1,608. By contrast, tuition has risen 48 percent during that period, to $10,422 for Vermont residents; the cost of room and board has gone up 52 percent, to about $8,000.
Some News Routines

- Horizontal coverage
- Protective coverage (competition between papers, networks)
- Pack journalism and feeding frenzies
Horse-race coverage: a news routine

• Focuses on
  • Who's ahead, who's behind, he said/she said
  • Strategies adopted by campaigns
  • Discussions about why campaigns are engaging in various strategies and what their prospects are
  • Quotes from campaign staffers, spokespeople
(Atlantic Monthly Dec., 2002)
Bought Versus Free Media

In millions.

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Sources: mediaQuant, SMG Delta
By The New York Times
What's NOT in horserace coverage

• Policy: what would a candidate do if elected?
• Fact checks: how accurate are a candidate's claims?
• Principles: what are the basic philosophies or principles of a candidate and how are they different from others?
Mitt Romney and the enthusiasm gap

By Dan Balz, Wednesday, February 8, 1:27 PM

In the aftermath of Rick Santorum’s clean sweep of Colorado, Minnesota and Missouri, Mitt Romney is still, in fact, the front-runner for the Republican presidential nomination. But the lack of enthusiasm for his candidacy among conservatives foreshadows a potentially ugly road ahead to the party’s convention in Tampa and general-election problems if he becomes the nominee.

Romney advisers can offer all kinds of reasons for his anemic showing Tuesday. Some of them were cited in a memo issued as the polls were opening. The candidate was coming off two consecutive victories that should have given him momentum. The defensively worded memo was designed instead to dampen expectations.

The arguments advanced by Romney advisers are not incorrect. He did not spend real money in these states. He did not campaign in them much. No delegates were awarded in any of the three. Missouri was simply a beauty contest. Arizona and Michigan, whose primaries will be held at the end of the month, look favorable for Romney. Super Tuesday offers more opportunities to win. Santorum and Newt Gingrich have limited resources.

The campaign memo also said this: “It is difficult to see what Governor Romney’s opponents can do to change the dynamics of the race.”
• Strategy and horserace coverage is safe; you won’t get fired for it.
Headlines from May 2015

• "Jeb Bush, Marco Rubio leading GOP pack: poll"

• "John Kasich builds his 2016 team"

• "Carly Fiorina announces presidential bid"

• "Majority of Democrats don't care if Hillary runs unopposed"

• "Trump to get local GOP's "Statesman" award again"
Typical political journalism

David Leonhardt, May 2015, NYT: “According to prediction markets, Jeb Bush “remains the favorite, with Marco Rubio at 25 percent, Scott Walker at 18 percent and no other individual candidate above 5 percent. . . . [Bush] is the most experienced, tested candidate among the Republicans’ major contenders, with deep ties to party leaders, a popular tenure as Florida’s governor and a well-known interest in policy. He is also a mediocre speech-giver, the brother of a president who was among the least popular of the last 80 years, and a person who’s distrusted by many conservatives. I might quibble with the collective opinion of the prediction markets. (I believe they’re still overestimating the chances that the nominee will be someone other than Mr. Bush, Mr. Rubio or Mr. Walker.) But the notion that Mr. Bush’s chances are only slightly worse than they were at the peak feels right, for all the negative commentary he is now receiving.”
What shapes “news judgment”? 
Bernie Sanders Scored Victories for Years via Legislative Side Doors

By JENNIFER STEINHAUER  MARCH 14, 2016
Via Legislative Side Doors, Bernie Sanders Won Modest Victories

By JENNIFER STEINHAUER  MARCH 14, 2018
But in spite of persistent carping that Mr. Sanders is nothing but a quixotic crusader — during their first debate, Hillary Clinton cracked, “I’m a progressive, but I’m a progressive who likes to get things done” — he has often been an effective, albeit modest, legislator.

Over one 12-year stretch in the House, he passed more amendments by roll call vote than any other member of Congress. In the Senate, he secured money for dairy farmers and community health centers, blocked banks from hiring foreign workers and reined in the Federal Reserve, all through measures attached to larger bills.

“It has been a very successful strategy,” said Warren Gunnels, Mr. Sanders’s longtime policy adviser.

Mr. Sanders has been pushing basically the same legislative agenda since he was the mayor of Burlington, Vt., in the 1980s, one that favors workers, veterans and college students. But in 2016, he has found that the marriage of his passions and his blunt, fiery oration have come into vogue among many Democrats.
“I’m a progressive, but I’m a progressive who likes to get things done”—he has often been an effective, albeit modest, legislator. He has enacted his agenda piece by piece, in politically digestible chunks with few sweeping legislative achievements in a quarter-century in Congress.

Over one 12-year stretch in the House, Mr. Sanders passed more amendments by roll call vote than any other member of Congress. In the Senate, he secured money for dairy farmers and community health centers, blocked banks from hiring foreign workers and reined in the Federal Reserve, all through measures attached to larger bills.

But in his presidential campaign Mr. Sanders is trying to scale up those kinds of proposals as a national agenda, and there is little to draw from his small-ball legislative approach to suggest that he could succeed.

Mr. Sanders is suddenly promising not just a few stars here and there, but the moon and a good part of the sun, from free college tuition paid for with giant tax hikes to a huge increase in government health care, which has made even liberal Democrats skeptical.

Mr. Sanders has been pushing basically the same legislative agenda
News Judgments

• News decisions are not scientific, they are educated guesses.

• They are sometimes wrong: the New York Times ran stories saying that Saddam Hussein had WMDs. Many years later they ran retractions.

• News coverage can help make news.
Investigative Journalism

• The rare case of longer, in-depth coverage: investigative journalism (a.k.a. muckraking)
Between 1972 and 1976, Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein emerged as two of the most famous journalists in America and became forever identified as the reporters who broke the biggest story in American politics. Beginning with the investigation of a "third-rate burglary" of the Democratic National Committee headquarters in the Watergate complex, Woodward and Bernstein uncovered a system of political "dirty tricks" and crimes that eventually led to indictments of forty White House and administration officials, and ultimately to the resignation of President Richard Nixon.

Now available to the public for the first time are Woodward and Bernstein’s notes from source interviews, drafts of newspaper stories and books, memos, letters, tape
TORTURE AT ABU GHRAIB

American soldiers brutalized Iraqis. How far up does the responsibility go?

by Seymour M. Hersh

MAY 10, 2004

In the era of Saddam Hussein, Abu Ghraib, twenty miles west of Baghdad, was one of the world’s most notorious prisons, with torture, weekly executions, and vile living conditions. As many as fifty thousand men and women—no accurate count is possible—were jammed into Abu Ghraib at one time, in twelve by-twelve-foot cells that were little more than human holding pits.

In the looting that followed the regime’s collapse, last April, the huge prison complex, by then deserted, was stripped of everything that could be removed, including doors, windows, and bricks. The coalition authorities had the floors tiled, cells cleaned and repaired, and toilets, showers, and a new medical center added. Abu Ghraib was now a U.S. military prison. Most of the prisoners, however—by the fall there were several thousand, including women and teenagers—were civilians, many of whom had been picked up in random military sweeps and at highway checkpoints. They fell into three loosely defined categories: common criminals; security detainees suspected of “crimes against the coalition”; and a small number of suspected “high-value” leaders of the insurgency against the coalition forces.

Last June, Janis Karpinski, an Army reserve brigadier general, was named commander of the 800th Military Police Brigade and put in charge of military prisons in Iraq. General Karpinski, the only female commander in the war zone, was an experienced operations and intelligence officer who had served with the Special Forces and in the 1991 Gulf
Theories of Media’s Influence

• Theories of media effects
  - Hypodermic model
  - Minimal effects model
  - Agenda setting and priming
  - Cultivation theory
  - Political socialization

• Entertainment media

• New media

• Key Questions:
  - How and why do media matter in today’s politics?
  - How do media affect political processes both for political elites and ordinary citizens?
Bennett's Four Biases that Matter

- Personalization bias
- Dramatization bias
- Fragmentation bias
- Authority-disorder bias
TV and the tyranny of “good visuals”

William Howard Taft, U.S. President 1909-1913, weighed over 300 lbs., and would therefore be unelectable today because of what he would look like on TV.
Media and Political Elites

- Politics of image
  - Importance of appearance
  - Personalities are emphasized
    - The case of Kennedy vs. Nixon
- The case of Reagan
  - Image management tactics
    - Setting the stage
    - Photo-op
    - Pseudo events
News from the Politicians' Point of View

- Creating photo ops
- Timing releases for the news cycle
- Feeding the news machine vs. communicating with the public
- Cultivating Sources
Source Reliance

• Reliance on formal & official sources: Who counts as a newsworthy source?
• Experts/reliable sources: "according to a reliable source"
• "authoritativeness": senior official vs subordinates
• reporter's mutual relationship with sources
Professionalization of Political Communication

• Proliferation of PR and spin tactics

• Spin: A form of propaganda involving the creation and diffusion of a specific interpretation of an event, with the aim of creating consensus and public support
  - Setting the agenda
  - Planting stories
  - Managing journalists

• Politics as a spectator sport
  - Horse-race coverage
  - Celebrity politics
Impact of Image Politics

- Focus on images, not issues
- Politics is reduced to “selling products”
- “Hyperreality”
  - Public is often unable to distinguish between image and reality
Media and Social Movements

- Relationship between media and social movements
  - Movements ask the media to communicate their messages to the public
  - Media look to movements as one potential source of “news”
  - Media hold the upper hand

- Strategies of social movement organization to gain media coverage
  - Catering to the media
  - Framing stories
  - Use of alternative media
Summary

• The news net catches some events and not others, and is woven of:
  • geographical, financial, and ideological constraints
  • news routines: beats, source reliance, "getting THE story", dependence on visuals, etc.
  • the result is often 1) sound bite politics, a pattern that has a hard time addressing complex issues; 2) news driven by power relations
  • Is all this changing with the internet?