

COMM 103 Media Analysis Paper

Paper Description: *Media Analysis: Newsworthiness.*

Enter the due dates from the syllabus or recommended daily schedule.

You may choose to turn in this assignment as either:

- **One full paper** (7-7.5 pages) due _____, **or**
- **Two half papers** (3.5-4 pages each)
 - Part 1 due _____, and
 - Part 2 due on _____

It doesn't matter which you choose. The paper is organized into discrete sections, which you can approach one at a time and in any order, so it doesn't matter if you break it up into two parts. I recommend doing it as one full paper due _____, and have built the recommended daily schedule to accommodate that. Still, it's your choice. You might like getting feedback on Part 1 before beginning Part 2, or you may have many obligations making it easier for you to approach the paper in the two parts.

There are no do-overs. If you turn in the full paper on the first due date, you cannot revise it and turn in Part 2 on the second due date.

Length:

Full paper: 5-7 pages required; 7 pages is ideal because you cannot develop ideas well in shorter papers. Spilling into an 8th page is not unusual but don't pad your writing just to do that.

- Full papers contain all 6 newsworthiness criteria, plus an introduction and conclusion
 - Full papers will look like the sample papers (but with more thorough comparisons than are found on many parts of the sample papers).

Two half papers: 3 pages each required; 3.5 to 4 pages each is ideal. Again, don't pad your writing. In half papers:

- Part 1 contains the introduction and the first 3 newsworthiness criteria
 - *Timeliness, proximity, prominence*
- Part 2 contains the second 3 newsworthiness criteria and the conclusion
 - *Consequence, human interest, economics*
 - Part 2 does not need an introduction. Just dive right in with "The fourth criterion of newsworthiness is consequence."
 - Type your name at the top of the page, and also type the name and date of your newspaper and magazine on the page before you dive into the fourth criterion.
 - Half papers will look like someone just cut the sample papers into two parts and handed them in separately. The content and guidance is exactly the same whether you're handing in one full paper or two half papers. (Again, we expect more thorough comparisons than are found on many parts of the sample papers. When discussing human interest, you should also more clearly specify how the story was told to generate an emotional response.).

The content description and guidance below doesn't separate out the full- and half-paper options. The options are described above, but because the content of the two halves is identical to that of the whole, there's no need to break them down in what follows.

Paper Content:

Apply Dominick's six criteria for newsworthiness (posted on BB and discussed in class) to the stories you see in your newspaper and magazine. Discuss each of these news values separately; I recommend using the news value label in the narrative transition into the section of your paper in which you discuss that news value. Describe how the news value is playing out in the paper/magazine you're analyzing. Provide examples of that news value in action, based on the stories you've selected. The six main topics of the body of your paper should be: timeliness, proximity, prominence, consequence, human interest, and economics. You should also compare how each criterion (*excluding* economics) is evidenced in the newspaper and the magazine – what similarities and differences do you see for each of the five criteria you're comparing? Include the comparisons as subsections under each of the five individual criteria (*excluding* economics) before you transition into your conclusion.

Conclude with a paragraph that presents some summary evaluation of the news selection in these media based on whatever you find most interesting. You should consider the similarities and differences you found in the newspaper and magazine, and reflect on *why* you think things were as you found them. In addition, there are any number of things you might want to write about in your conclusion. For example, you could consider the extent to which items that really aren't "news" (as you would define news; as something important) were included in the newspaper. What items were these? (Just because people are interested in something, does that make it "news?") Should something have received more coverage? If so, what would you cut? Or you might consider the source of the various stories might have been – anything from PR firms? Did you see any stories using news releases? Or, you might consider ethical issues – what was done ethically right? Was anything ethically suspect? You could, if you wished, discuss the quality of the writing, and the use of visuals. You could try to determine the newspaper's target audience based on your review of the news content. How effective do you think the paper is at reaching its target audience? You could consider what was especially well-done overall, and what was especially poorly-done. *These ideas are presented as examples of what you could do in your conclusion; do not feel obligated to focus on any of these if something else strikes you. Do NOT try to address all of the items in this list; select one or two points to consider in your conclusion. However you wish to approach it, conclude with your overall evaluation of the newspaper and magazine content and try to come up with your own opinions as to why the newspaper/magazine exhibited the similarities/differences you found.*

Strong papers fold in many examples of stories to illustrate each criterion, focusing deeply on a few examples in each criterion as the most important (detailed) examples. Please note that you can present multiple examples in an efficient (i.e., not lengthy) manner – it's all in how you write about what you see. The sample papers contain examples of doing this, and demonstrate the ideal of including 7 quick examples in a list, followed by 3 detailed examples. They also demonstrate not repeating stories in the 3 detailed examples, although it is okay to repeat stories in the quick list of 7. Be careful not to force news stories into categories in which they don't fit. And do not simply describe the stories – you must tie them into the criteria. *Do not look at or write about advertising, promotional material, or any paid content in any section of this paper – only analyze and write about the news/editorial content.*

You will find examples of complete papers on blackboard, and videos explaining each of these examples' strengths and areas of improvement. Using these tools wisely is extremely beneficial to your score on this assignment. Strive to emulate what is strongest in those papers, and improve on what is less strong. Some of the comparisons are a bit generic – avoid that! Also, some of the human interest presentations don't explicitly state HOW the story was told in a way to generate the emotional response. Human interest is more than just the topic of the story.

General Paper Guidance.

Students who consult this guidance regularly both before and during the paper-writing process tend to prepare the strongest papers. Other hints include taking notes when we discuss the papers in lecture, reviewing the grading sheets posted on blackboard, and looking at the sample papers on blackboard. Double-check the technical requirements before turning in your papers to help avoid penalties.

Make sure you understand the news criteria. The Dominick-related material posted on Blackboard also contains hints for applying the criteria to your own analysis.

You must get a hard copy of a *current local daily* newspaper for any Monday-Friday (not Sat/Sun) AND a hard copy of any *current, monthly* magazine.

- I recommend you get your paper and your magazine on the same day, and relatively early in the term. Tell anyone else who lives with you not to recycle this paper.
- If you haven't ever purchased a magazine or newspaper, look for them at grocery stores (Jewel, Mariano's), pharmacy/convenience stores (Walgreen's, CVS, Osco), and other places. You can also find newsstands on the street (staffed or coin-box). Some stores may sell magazines but may not carry newspapers (Costco, Target, Walmart). You may need to ask staff in stores where these items are.
- "Local" means in the Chicago metro area. You must use a local newspaper, but you do not need to use a local magazine.
- "Daily" means at least a Monday-Friday publication schedule (no weeklies). Do not select a weekend newspaper without permission. You have to approach them differently than a Monday-Friday issue, which increases the difficulty.
- Free dailies such as the *RedEye* are generally less good for this assignment because they do not represent traditional journalism and because they are affected in additional ways by the economic news value. You have to approach them differently which – although it's possible – is for most students much more difficult.
- "Monthly" means the magazine comes out once a month. Look for a publication date that is simply (for example) "June" or "October" without listing specific dates. If you look at *People* or *Time* magazine, you'll see these are not monthly – they are weekly, so are not suitable for this assignment.
- You cannot do these assignments with an online version of the newspaper or magazine, nor with a newspaper from another city (A print suburban Chicago daily newspaper is fine). If you are not in Chicago, use a paper that is local to you, and mention that in the introduction.
- Three-point deductions will be given for not using hard copies of a local daily paper or a monthly magazine.
- Five-point deductions will be given for not including both a newspaper and a magazine. In addition, your overall score will be affected because your analysis will necessarily be less thorough, and you will be unable to make the required comparisons.

In your paper, use examples from the newspaper and magazine as evidence to support your arguments. State all your claims and premises explicitly. For example, if you wish to say that a news story reflects the timeliness news value we discussed in class, then you need to discuss examples of stories that illustrated this news value and explain why you think the timeliness news value is present. Always remember this guiding principle: people reading your work never know what's in your head, we only know what's on the page.

Your paper is a narrative analysis of what you have seen. In your papers, there should be very little simple recounting of what you saw. Instead, you should analyze the content. *In grading this type of analysis, the emphasis is on your insight, appropriate application of course concepts, and depth and sophistication of the*

arguments presented. Your writing is also evaluated. Always keep your analysis rooted in this newspaper (magazine); do not speak of “news” or “media” (or even this one media outlet) in general terms. Keep everything you say focused on this single day’s edition of the newspaper and single issue of the magazine.

Write in a style that is comfortable for you, but make sure it is clear, grammatically correct, and carefully proofread. “Comfortable” does not mean “sloppy,” nor does it imply that the rules of good writing will not be considered when evaluating the work. The first person (I, me, my) is recommended for this class. The second person (you, your) is rarely appropriate in academic work; do not say “you” unless you are intentionally directing your words to the reader (in this case, that’s me, Prof Lind). Only use words that come naturally to you; do not put on your formal and stilted “I’m writing a class paper now” hat. Write to communicate. Be clear and direct, and be certain that the story you want to tell comes across. Do not depend on spell-check. It’s a good tool, but it will never replace careful human proofreading.

We say that APA style is required for all papers in Comm 103. However, we are actually using a *variant* of APA style. You may not need any in-text citations, and you will probably not need a reference list, even though in other courses you might. Specifically, in Comm 103, your use of APA style will be evaluated according to the following guidelines, which should not be applied to any other course. (Our header requirement, described below, is not exactly APA, either.)

- If you’re referring to Dominick in your paper, use a proper in-text reference: “Dominick (2013) presents...” or “Dominick (2013) listed the...”. You probably never need to quote Dominick, but if you do, include the page reference: “According to Dominick (2013, p. 277-278), the most important thing is ‘insert quote’.” Or “Dominick (2013, p. 277-278) defined proximity as ‘insert quote’.” If you are not taking a direct quote, do not include the page numbers. It is highly unlikely you will ever refer to Campbell in this paper, because it is based on Dominick’s criteria. However, if you do refer to Campbell, follow the same citation information as listed for Dominick. You do not need to take any direct quotes, because there is nothing in this material that you cannot express as a paraphrase, but please note that you are allowed to use direct quotes in this paper, if attributed properly.
- We use “quotation marks” to represent quoted material. Punctuation marks always go inside “the quotation marks.” (not “outside the quotation marks”.) ‘Single quotes’ are reserved for use when you’re inserting quotes within quotes – as was done in some examples above. You probably won’t be using quotes within quotes.
- If you refer to Dominick in your paper, you do not need to include a reference list. If you choose to include a reference list, it will be evaluated for proper APA style, so be sure you reference it properly. Again, you should not refer to Campbell, but if you do, treat it the same way as a reference to Dominick.
- If you are using the work of any other author in your text, you must include the proper in-text reference and you must include a reference list. You do not need to refer to the work of any other authors for this paper, *and you are strongly encouraged not to*, but if you do, your references will be evaluated for proper APA style – not the variant I’ve described here.
- For our purposes, the “media text” being analyzed (the newspaper or magazine) is not considered a source, and you do not need to include the newspaper, magazine, or any individual stories in a reference list. If you do include a reference list, it will be evaluated for proper APA style.
- You do not need to include the page number or author of the material you have selected as examples in your paper. You do want to let us know a little about the material, though – “The story about Snooki’s car fire is an example of prominence because...” If the page number is relevant in and of itself (for example, if it’s on Page 1 this might be an economic consideration at work), feel free to include that in your paper, but include it as a part of the body of your paper and not as a reference item.
- You must italicize the names of all media outlets and all media content. Thus, *The Chicago Tribune*, *Ebony*, *Sports Illustrated*, *Game of Thrones*, *Killing Us Softly IV*, *Color Adjustment*, *The Chicago Sun-Times*, and so forth, must always appear in italics. For most students, because we don’t require a reference list, grading your APA style is a function only of italicizing these titles, so if you are careful and double-check your

paper, this should help your score rather than hurt it.

Format requirements for all papers include the following:

- Please print directly from Word or another word processing program – do not save your document as a pdf file before printing (unless you *verify* that the size is not being reduced, even by 1%). Always verify that there is no scaling.
- Use Times New Roman font, double-spaced, at 12 point. A **header (not a footer)** including page numbers, student name and assignment title must appear on *all* pages. Use 1-inch margins all around. Pages should be neatly and properly stapled together (improper/loose/protruding staples will be counted as no staples). *You will receive a 1-point deduction for each deviation from the above-listed technical requirements and for each inaccuracy in instructor name or course number/title, if used.* There are also content-related deductions presented elsewhere in this document. Make sure you follow the directions. If you have any questions about the reasoning underlying any of the items that can lead to a deduction, please ask. I'll be glad to explain their value to you as an author and to me as an evaluator.
- Do not use a title page, but please **type your full name at the top of the first page** (in addition to the header). Include the time the class meets, or (if online) the CRN. You do not need to include the instructor name or the course number/title on this page, but if you do, any errors in instructor name or course number/title will *each* receive a 1-point penalty. (Remember, it's Communication 103, not Communications 103.)
- Five-point deduction for not including your name on the paper; 3-point deduction for only including your last name. If I cannot identify the author of a paper not bearing a name, the paper won't be graded and the author cannot get any credit.
- One-point penalty if you are submitting your paper in two parts and don't type the name/date of your media at the beginning of Part 2.
- **The following items are applicable ONLY to online sections.**
 - Stapling is not applicable.
 - You must submit electronically via Blackboard, where your paper will be screened by SafeAssign.
 - Papers must be uploaded as a Word document or a PDF file. You must include your name in the paper filename. You must include the file extension in the filename (.doc, .docx, pdf). You must upload your paper using the "upload submission" option. Papers typed directly into the text box using the "write submission" option will not be evaluated and will earn 0 points. Especially if you submit a pdf, but even if you submit a word version, double-check that you have generated the file at 100%. Any percentage reduction will affect your font size and margins, and you'll get the technical/formatting penalty. If you convert a paper to PDF format, make sure that all your formatting (italics, margins, font, etc.) has transferred over properly.
 - You must include the CRN of your section at the top of the first page. Do not list multiple CRNs. You can find your CRN in your course schedule. 1-point penalty for not doing so.

How to maximize the number of points you earn on this assignment:

1. **Print this paper description and the Dominick news criteria material posted on Blackboard. Read it carefully, and highlight important points.** Look at the scoring sheet. That's what I'll use to grade your papers, so don't leave anything out, and don't bother adding anything extra, especially to the discussion of the criteria. If you want to bring something extra, it may well fit into the conclusion. Do not try to

incorporate additional course concepts into the body of your paper, and do not reference Campbell's variation on the newsworthiness criteria. Keep it focused on Dominick's criteria.

2. Print a hard copy of the three sample papers for review.

3. View the videos about the sample papers. These videos discuss the sample papers paragraph by paragraph, noting the relative strengths and weaknesses of the papers. Take notes about the strengths and weaknesses on the hard copies. (Do not rely on your memory. Although simple, this quickly becomes information overload.) The critiques are quite thorough, and by the time you've made notes on all three sample papers you will have a great idea of what you should do in your paper.

4. Write your draft – starting with just the intro and the first criterion if you like. Then, use the Dominick descriptions and the sample videos to evaluate your draft's strengths and weaknesses.

- Print a hard copy of your draft and watch at least one (preferably more) of the sample paper videos again, specifically comparing your draft to the sample paper and what I say in the video about what is done well and what could be improved. A number of the *newspaper-magazine comparisons* in the sample videos tend toward the generic side, and could be stronger if they were rooted more explicitly in the observations the students made when looking carefully through their newspaper and magazine. Because I'm pointing this out to you, I expect your comparisons to be less generic than those in the sample paper. **Focus only on your newspaper and magazine; never discuss "newspapers" or "magazines" in a generic sense.** Even if you consider publication schedule or target audiences, for example, keep it focused ONLY on your magazine and paper, and avoid referencing "magazines" and "newspapers."
- Take notes on the hard copy of your draft as you watch the video and compare your work to what I say in the video.
- Compare your draft to the multiple specific hints contained in the description of Dominick's newsworthiness criteria posted in Blackboard, and in this assignment description. Add what you notice is lacking; remove unnecessary material.
- Revise your draft according to your notes.
- Repeat the process as desired, making sure you have gone through this process at least once for each of the six criteria you are using.
- Your paper should take into account the areas of improvement I identified in the sample papers (most commonly, to avoid being generic in the comparisons) as well as the specific hints I provide in my description of Dominick's newsworthiness criteria.

5. I am available to consult on your papers after you have viewed all three videos and revised your paper based on a second viewing of a sample video, to answer any additional questions. You must bring the copies of the sample papers, showing your notes from the videos. If an in-person consultation isn't possible due to scheduling, we can schedule a phone call. I cannot do email-only consultation.

6. This assignment is a mini content analysis. Therefore, it is much more like social science writing than some of the academic writing you may have done before. There is a general expected structure, evident in the sample papers. You should follow that structure when you write your paper. Besides being a good experience with this sort of writing, following the structure and formula will free you up to focus on what you want to say (based on the observations you're making in the newspaper and magazine) rather than how you want to organize your observations.

7. This assignment is not conceptually difficult, but it must be done with care. Do not overthink it, or try to fold in other course concepts to make the paper more conceptually rich. The criteria make sense. They are enough. They all you need to discuss. Focus on demonstrating what you see in the newspaper and magazine, and how the criteria might have influenced the media outlet's decision to include that story rather than any other story. You have many resources available to help you succeed on this paper, and I expect you to use them if you want to earn a high score.

8. Write well. Proofread carefully. Do not use “like” when you mean “such as,” or “while” or “since” or “as” when you mean “although” or “because.” Although commonly used (even in our text!) they are grammatically incorrect.

9. Think about using the UIC Writing Center (105 Grant Hall; 312-413-2206; <http://writingcenter.uic.edu/>). I recommend you use the writing center to focus on grammar, spelling, punctuation, and sentence/paragraph construction. The paper assignments explain what organizational structure is most effective, so you should follow that, and can focus your time with the tutor on other issues. To make the most of your time with the tutor, first review the sample papers and videos; bring a copy of the commented sample paper so the tutor better understands the expectations. I will evaluate everything – grammar, spelling, syntax – so make sure your individual sentences and paragraphs are strong.

10. Double check the formatting and technical requirements so you don’t have penalty points subtracted. Be absolutely certain the document is reproducing at 100% -- no scaling to fit. Many student documents have a slightly reduced size, even if submitting Word documents; this will result in a penalty point. If you work in a word processing program and then convert your document to a PDF file, make sure that all of your formatting has transferred over properly. If you’re worried about that, submit your paper as a Word document.