News Literacy Curriculum Toolkit

Scope

Developed by members of the IFLA News Media section, this document is intended to serve as a modular lesson guide. Using this document, instructors planning news literacy topics for university students in courses such as Journalism, Rhetoric, Technical Communication, Information Science, could identify classroom activities or lessons for incorporating into their own teaching.

Sections

Classroom Materials

Common news literacy terms and definitions

Basic terms to form a glossary of news literacy related definitions:

- News literacy
- Media literacy
- Media consumption
- Ethos/Pathos/Logos
- Critical thinking
- Information society
- Networked society
- Technological determinism
- Post-truth
- Analytical skills
- Gamification techniques
- Infotainment
- Information agencies
- News production
- Echo chamber
- Filter bubbles
- Doomsscrolling
- Fake news
- Construction of reality
- Verification of news
- Intercultural communication
Rhetorical analysis  
Gatekeeping  
Cognitive distortion  
Discourse  

Lecture topics (theory)  

1. Ethos/Pathos/Logos: recognizing these in communication situations, including in news content  
2. Qualities / attributes of news texts (such as abruptness, relevance, conflict or drama, locality, social significance etc.)  
3. Key approaches to news studies (propaganda theories, commodification of news, opinion leaders, agenda-setting theories and its transformation, critical approaches, linguistic approaches, cultural approaches etc.)  
4. Sociology of news (steps of news production and roles of various stakeholders in this process: media owners/funders, journalists, editors, businessman, social and political institutions)  
5. News in different media channels (printed, TV, radio, digital-born, interpersonal, mixed)  
6. Information and psychological impact of news  
7. Evaluation and verification of news  
8. News source analysis for rhetorical position  

20-30 minute classroom activities  

Critical thinking group activity  

Research Bias: Individual Activity  
Ask students to evaluate news articles about a research topic that discuss conflicting data based on conflicting studies. Interrogate why there is conflicting data with questions such as, Who funded each research study? How might the funding change the outcome? (For example: Splenda/sucralose safety research.)  

Job Posting Evaluation Activity  
Ask students to compare job postings in newspapers across different decades (1950s/1970s/2010s, for example).  
Ask students to examine postings for:  
- words or terms used in earlier postings we don’t use today.  
- types of work requested in earlier decades versus later years.
Intended audience of postings, as identified by applicants sought (only women/only people of color/only men, etc.) over time.

Discuss the following questions with students:
- Is the work requested from the earlier decade versus later decades reasonable for someone to do within the amount of time requested for hiring? (Changing labor policies/practices over time)
- Does the writer of the job posting seem respectful toward the audience, versus the tone evinced in the other job postings?
- What surprises you from the earlier decades versus the more recent decade job postings?

Group work (based on lectures № 2,3)
- Student group is divided at several subgroups
- The teacher gives news materials to every group from different media sources.
- Students analyze given materials from different methodological perspectives: cyber-optimism / techno-optimism, cyberskepticism / technopessimism, ethnomethodological approach, media effects, critical media theories, social media theories.
- Moreover they analyze how material form affects the meaning (print media; electrical media, new media (social networks, blogs, instant messengers).
- The lesson ends with the discussion:
  - students need to present their interpretation of news from various perspectives trying to focus on how internal and external factors of news production make an influence on people’s comprehension.

Activity Name: Historical News Analysis


Provide students with articles from historical newspapers on different topics (e.g, the 1918 influenza pandemic, World War I, women’s suffrage, etc.). Have the students critically view the news articles from the context of when they were published, e.g., who owned the newspaper, who was the audience of the newspaper, where were the news items placed in the newspaper (front page? Above the fold?), what other stories surrounded the article?
Comparative News Analysis
Students choose the up-to-date topic for analysis and search news about it in different sources. It’s important to use news sources from various countries or regions (in English or languages that students/teachers can use). Many newspapers/websites/official government sources have English versions. The key task is to compare worldviews about the chosen issue, underline similarities and particularities and try to explain the differences in context of cultural, economical and political background. How will different angles influence the perception of news? What kind of disinformation techniques could be identified based on this comparison?

Activity Name: News Coverage Trends/Patterns
Approximate Time: Long term (multiple weeks or full semester)
Student’s group is divided into subgroups for an experiment. Duration is no less than one week. Better - a couple of weeks.

One subgroup during that time uses for news consumption only traditional (paper) newspapers, while another - only social media news sources, another - only TV sources, another - only radio (and podcasts), another - gets the news only from private talks and conversations (oral communication). In the end all of the subgroups present their picture of the world based on the news they have consumed. How will these pictures differ? Did someone feel a deficiency of one-channel consumption? What kind of news structure is dominant in the chosen channel? How does this structure affect/shape the meaning? What are the differences in frequency/analysis/reporting styles?

Skills and competencies
LIS knowledge approaches can be utilized in the modern information environment. Traditional LIS, Rhet Comm, and critical thinking skills that are connected to the news literacy concept include:

- Bibliography development
- Text analysis skills
- Rhetorical context recognition
- Scholarly communications proficiency
- Research strategies
Additional Resources for Teaching News Literacy

The external resources below are existing information literacy frameworks that can be adapted for news literacy.

Edsitement
https://edsitement.neh.gov/

Framework for Information Literacy in Higher Education
(https://www.alal.org/acrl/standards/ilframework)

Guidelines for Primary Source Literacy
(https://www2.archivists.org/sites/all/files/GuidelinesForPrimarySourceLiteracy-June2018.pdf),

Companion Document to the ACRL Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education: Journalism
(https://www.alal.org/acrl/sites/ala.org.acrl/files/content/standards/Framework_Companion_Journalism.pdf),

Framework for Teaching News Literacy
(https://newslit.org/educators/resources/framework-for-teaching-news-literacy/).