

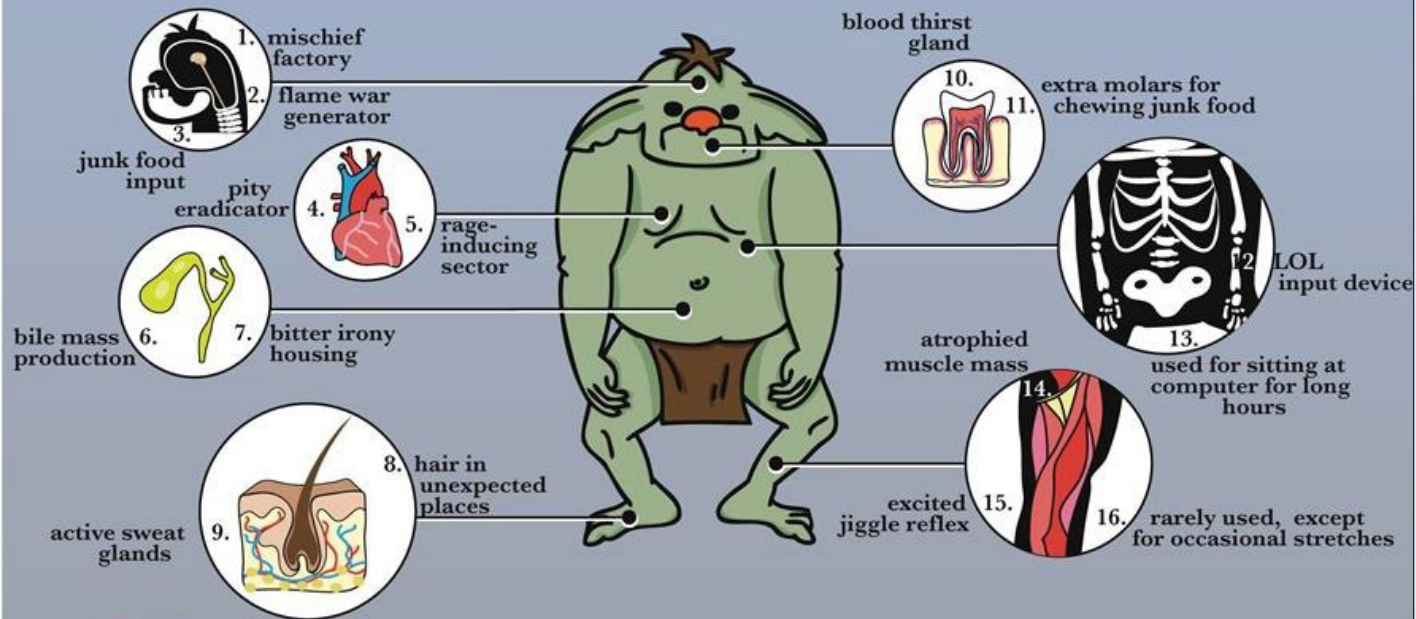
Recap: Doing journalism well

- Different kinds of stories reported in different ways
- Factors – timeliness, importance, depth, etc.
- ‘10 Commandments of News’
- Digital-age demand for immediate news can create problems in fully reporting breaking news stories
- Examples – Giffords shooting, JFK
- Reporters and citizens are entitled to public info from government agencies
- Freedom of Information Act – request info

Today: Journalists and Credibility

- Journalists speak on challenges of the job
- Interplay between how journalists gather news and how audiences perceive it
- Trolling: How and why does it happen?
- Effects of trolling
- Media Bias: What it is and isn't
- Audience skepticism, cynicism, nihilism
- How should journalists deal with these?
- Establishing and maintaining credibility

anatomy of an internet troll



reddit

YouTube

digg



myspace



4chan

information provided by
www.term LIFE insurance.org

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How Trolls are Ruining the Internet (Time)

Media Bias

- **Political bias:** Deliberately slanting news coverage to favor one candidate's/official's/party's policies over others
- Past few decades – common accusation
- Opinion pieces aren't news stories – purpose is to argue one side – if clearly labeled, can't be considered 'biased'
- **Structural bias:** features of news selection make one side look bad – poor economic numbers, polls, etc.
- **Algorithmic bias:** News sites' software promotes stories other readers favor – popularity over completeness
- **Sponsor bias:** News sites sometimes promote stories sponsored by advertisers over those that are not

Skepticism, Cynicism, Nihilism

- **Skepticism:** An attitude of questioning, disbelief, or doubt
- Doesn't assume everything is false, just seeks proof
- **Cynicism:** A belief that people are only interested in themselves and are rarely sincere about anything
- Assumes people motivated by selfish desires, greed – so it's okay if I am too
- **Nihilism:** A belief that life has no true purpose or meaning, that no action or idea is fundamentally good or evil
- Assumes all values are meaningless, that morals are silly and those who hold them are fools
- 'We're all gonna die anyway'

Reflexive Contrarianism

- **Definition:** People instantly taking positions opposing what they think most people believe – ‘mainstream’
- Implies a sense of superiority – appeals to people dissatisfied with their own lives – ‘I know the *real* story’
- Existing anti-media narrative feeds into this – belief in political, ideological bias creates automatic distrust
- Digital media also feed into this – ‘here’s what *they* don’t want you to know’ – clickbait, conspiracies, etc.
- Studies show this has continually risen in 2000s – cynicism has become a way of belonging
- Downside – doesn’t involve thinking for yourself

**How can responsible
journalists and news
organizations
overcome this?**

Credibility

Definition:

The likelihood that something informs,
or at least avoids misleading.

– *Columbia Journalism Review*

Credibility

- As a journalist, the coin of the realm is your credibility.
– *Devin Fehely, KPIX CBS5*
- If it's not passing the smell test, then that's something you check and double-check.
– *James G. Hill, Detroit Free Press*
- It's tough because there are people who go out and purposely try to confuse readers.
– *Juju Chang, ABC News Nightline*
- We live in an age in which anybody can mimic journalism, but not everybody practices journalism.
– *Gerald F. Seib, Wall Street Journal*

Credibility

- Do the facts reported in the story check out when compared to other outlets' stories on the topic?
- Does the writer attribute the story's information?
- Does the tone of the story indicate the reporter has done due diligence in finding facts?
- Are there elements of the story that might indicate it is actually satire or clickbait?
- Does the outlet providing the story have a track record of credible reporting?