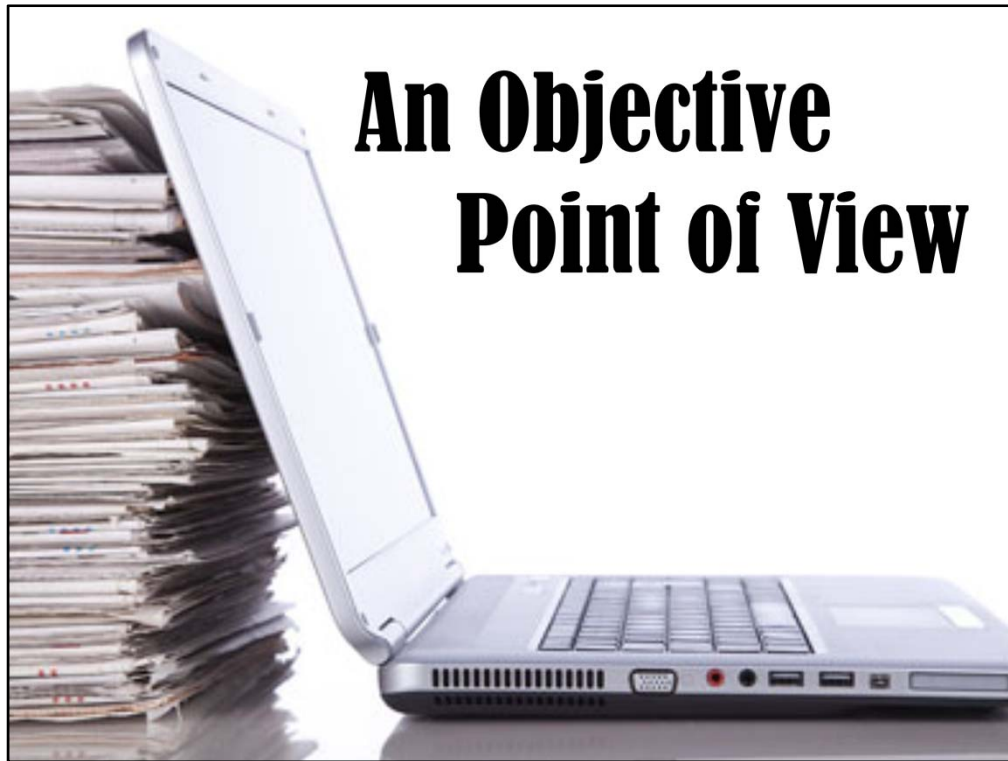


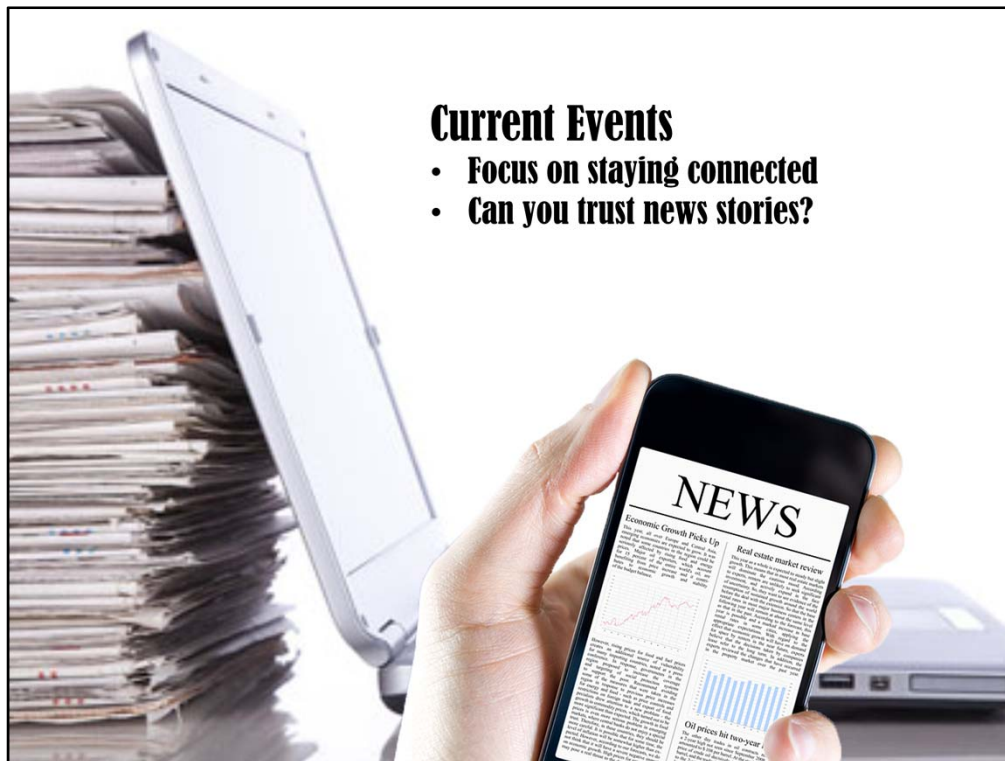
Module 11: Contemporary Voices
Topic 1 Content: An Objective Point of View



An Objective Point of View

Module 11: Contemporary Voices

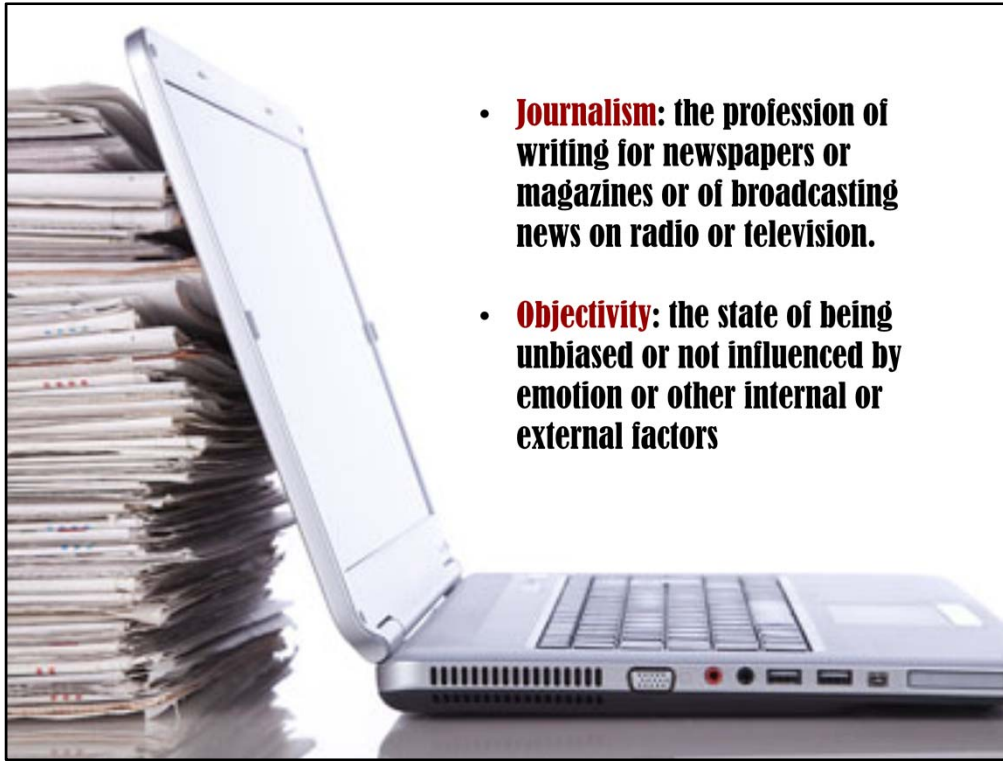
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It is nearly impossible to be completely uninformed on current events in today's world. With such a focus on staying connected to the Internet and social media via computers, tablets, smartphones, and other devices, it is hard to not have an idea of what is happening in the world around you. However, can you trust the news stories being reported in the media?

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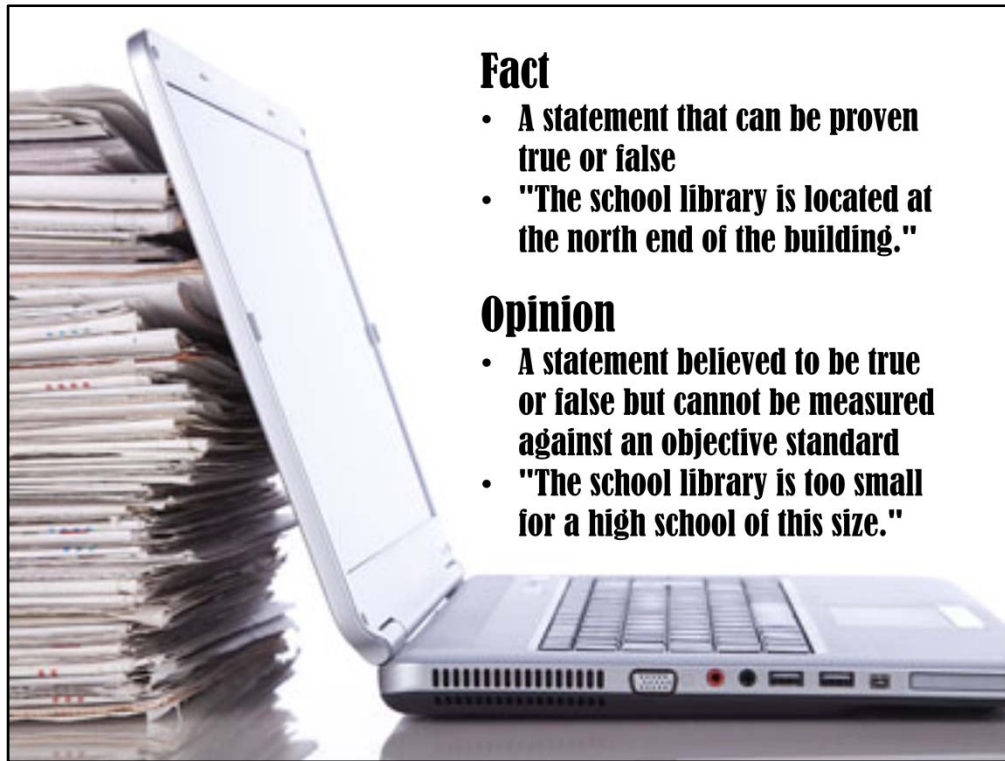


- **Journalism:** the profession of writing for newspapers or magazines or of broadcasting news on radio or television.
- **Objectivity:** the state of being unbiased or not influenced by emotion or other internal or external factors

Journalism is the profession of writing for newspapers or magazines or of broadcasting news on radio or television. One of the key principles of journalism is **objectivity**, or the state of being unbiased or not influenced by emotion or other internal or external factors. In other words, an objective point of view is a truthful point of view, a point of view that reports events exactly as they occurred and is concerned with just the facts. This was the goal of news reporting in the early 1900s: an unbiased and straightforward account of events and people. However, in today's tech-savvy world in which media outlets must vie for people's attention, is objectivity still possible? Sometimes reporters and news agencies often fall short of this goal as removing personal opinions, values, and beliefs from reporting is difficult.

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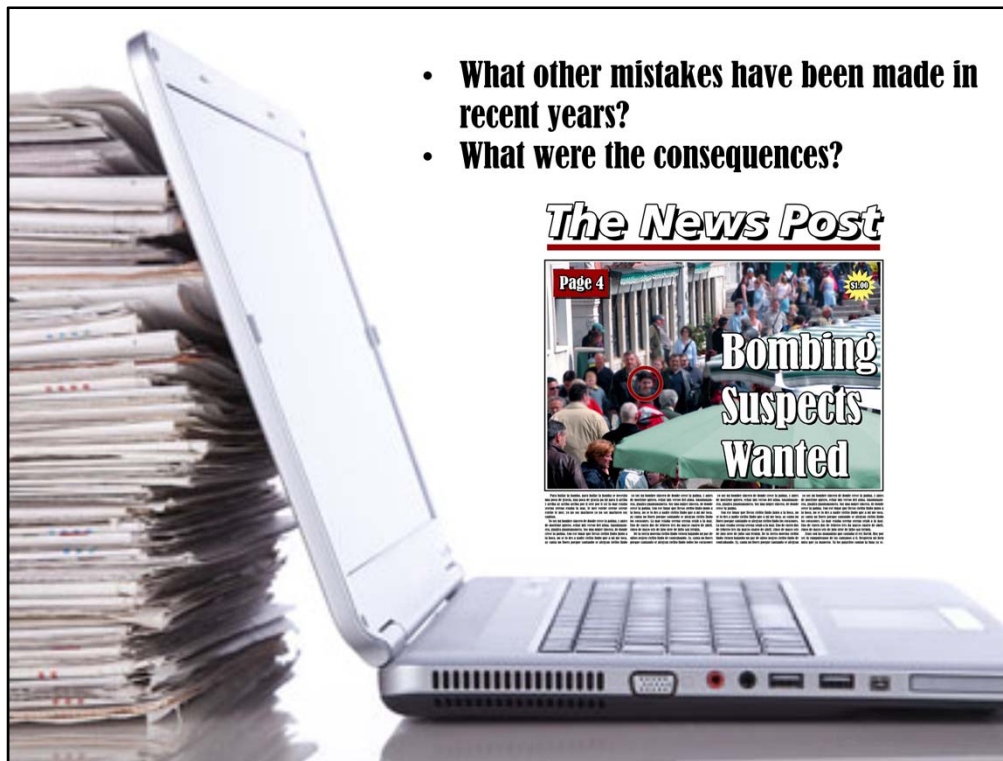


A **fact** is a statement that can be proven true or false. An example of a fact would be "The school library is located at the north end of the building." This statement is provable because it can be determined by walking to the north end of the building and verifying that the library is in fact there or not.

An **opinion** is a statement believed to be true or false but cannot be measured against an objective standard. An example of an opinion would be "The school library is too small for a high school of this size." This is not a provable statement because it depends on a number of different factors on which people may or may not agree. As there is not a standardized, objective measurement for the appropriate size of a library based upon student population, there is no way to confirm or deny this statement. Therefore, it is merely an opinion.

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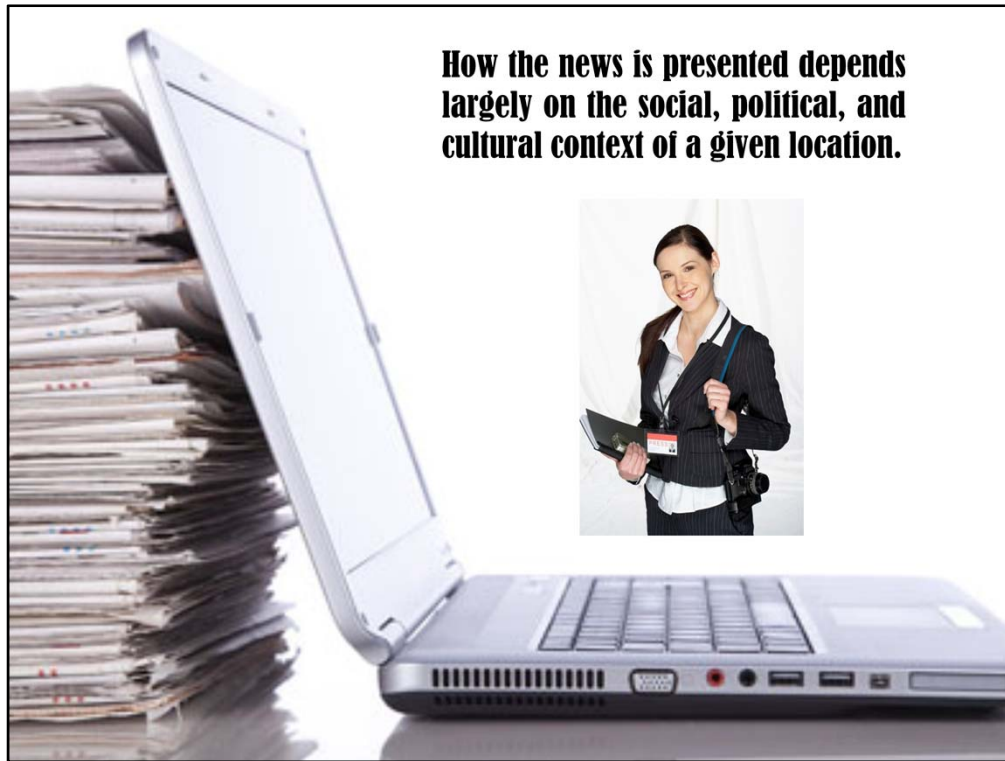


The advent of the technology age and the popularity of the Internet have greatly affected the way in which news is presented to the masses. Often objectivity is lost in the rush to be the first to report on major political or social news events. In many cases, the facts are just not yet known before reporters and journalists begin posting and publishing their news stories.

In April of 2013, two bombings occurred at the finish line of the Boston Marathon that took the lives of three people and injured hundreds more. Numerous images of people present at the scene were captured by security cameras and personal cell phones. In the end, this technology enabled investigators to identify and subsequently capture the alleged perpetrators but only after innocent bystanders were misidentified by media sources as the suspects. The mistaken identifications spread rapidly throughout social media and even mainstream news outlets before they could be retracted, resulting in threats and harassment toward the innocent individuals. What other mistakes have been made in recent years involving the reporting of major events? What were the consequences of unbalanced or mistaken journalism?

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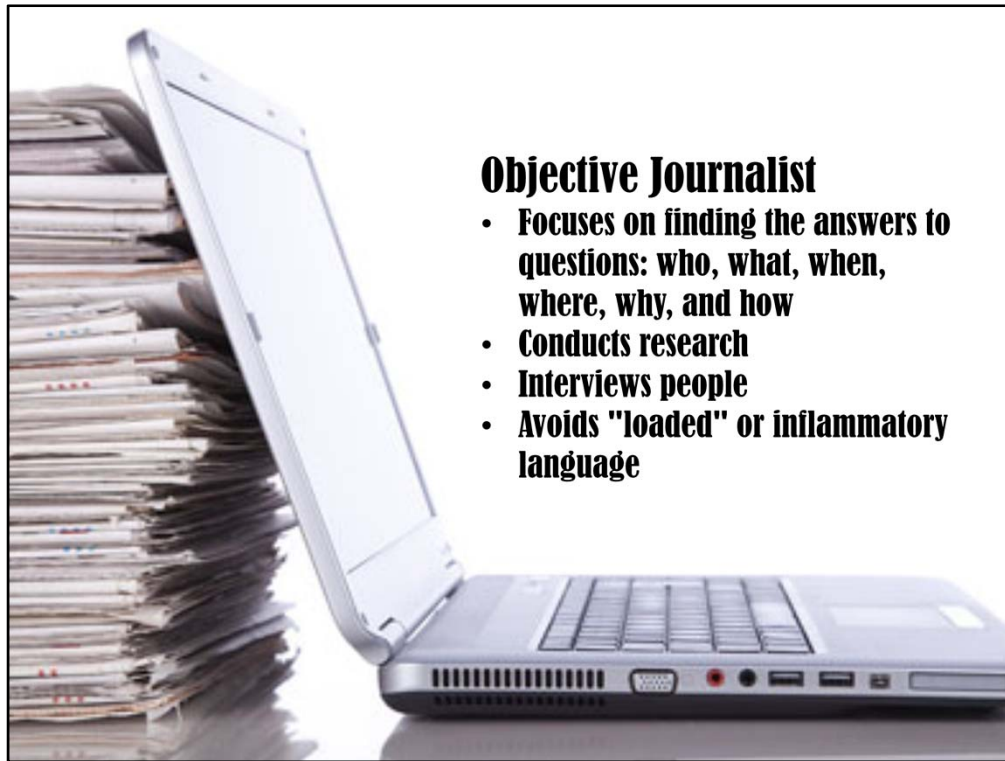
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What role do the opinions, values, and beliefs of the journalists who report the news have on the way it is presented? Do you think news of the Boston Marathon bombings was reported differently in other countries? How did the media's viewpoint of the Boston tragedy differ in Russia, Chechnya, or elsewhere compared to the viewpoint taken in the United States? As might be expected, there is often a difference in the way news is reported in different locations. How the news is presented depends largely on the social, political, and cultural context of a given geographic location.

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The objective journalist focuses on finding the answers to the most important questions: *who, what, when, where, why, and how*. He or she conducts research, interviews people who were there for first-hand accounts, and avoids "loaded" or inflammatory language when reporting. An example of inflammatory language is calling someone a "criminal" or "suspect" when he or she is only being questioned by police and has not been arrested. Just because a person is questioned does not automatically mean he or she is guilty of a crime or even suspected of committing a crime. Until the individual is formally accused of a crime, he or she should be referred to as a "witness" or "person of interest." An objective journalist understands this and does not incorporate his or her own opinion into the news. The goal of reporting the news is to keep people informed of the facts so that they can form their own opinions on the events; it is not to mislead them by presenting opinion as fact.