

The Interim Plus + + + + +

Curriculum Learning Resource

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The *Interim Plus* is a curriculum learning resource specifically designed to assist teachers in integrating life issues, from a moral

perspective, into their lesson planning. The periodical is published bi-monthly by *The Interim Publishing Company*, 157 Catharine St. North, Hamilton ON L8L 4S4 TEL 416-204-1687 interimplus@theinterim.com

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In this month's edition of *The Interim Plus* we explore the problem of media bias in news coverage, reporting and analysis. Next month we would like to focus on the use of cartoons within that business.

News and entertainment media can be great tools to help educate the citizenry, but mass media can also be a means for pushing disinformation, corrupting the body politic, sowing distrust and fomenting social divisions. We live in a smaller world than in the past. News comes and goes almost instantaneously. But who decides what is news? Who decides what to include and what to exclude, and based on what criteria? Is it the editor? The owner? The audience? And what is the relationship of news to an informed citizenry?

Here are some of the functions or services that news can perform in a free society: be a source of important information so that citizens can reach and make sound political choices, whether at the local or national level; properly investigate any concentration of power, particularly that of governments and that of corporations; help people to comprehend and appreciate the complexity of the world in which they live, both at home and abroad; help citizens to understand and appreciate the perspectives of people different from them; provide an outlet for people to express or air their views and vent their dissatisfactions by doing so; and on rare occasions, advocate for particular political programs and policies. Not everyone would agree to all these uses of the news business. Some of these uses are welcome and some are looked upon with suspicion.

Students, like all of us, are impressionable young human beings, but they are quite capable of engaging in critical thinking. This resource is intended to help the teacher to stimulate such thinking and learning in the classroom. You can adapt any of the material for your own lesson planning. We hope it serves that practical objective. As always, please share with colleagues in your school or in your board if you find it of value.



PART A - Media Bias

An excellent article from the recent January 30 edition of The Catholic Register provides a useful introduction to the topic. (<https://www.catholicregister.org/opinion/columnists/item/33967-sr-helena-burns-truth-and-the-world-according-to-media>)

Sr. Helena Burns: Truth and the world according to media

When I give Media Literacy workshops to folks, I often ask: What's the first thing you think of when you think of "the media"? The overwhelming majority think: the news.

*Of course, the term "media" is actually quite expansive and includes five categories (according to one of my astute Media Lit profs): **content, technology, business, institutions and audiences**. If you're surprised by "audiences" being part and parcel of "media," it's because audiences have way more power and control over media than they realize.*

Do you look to the news media for truth? If you answered affirmatively, we need to talk. In a free country (where the media is not state-controlled), journalistic standards are such that reporters should be impartially, disinterestedly seeking out and delivering the truth as best they can, serving up their unadorned findings to us.

However. Over time, news outlets have been bought out by larger and larger media and business concerns with profit motives. This is a problem. Advertisers basically support our ability to get news that's free of charge. And what wares, pray tell, are these advertisers hawking? Is it possible that advertisers might be shaping the content of the news so that we, the audience, feel we must absolutely and urgently avail ourselves of their products? Did you know that in the United States, a representative of Big Pharma sits on the board of almost all major news outlets?

As a news junkie who has enjoyed devouring a physical newspaper every day since I was 12 years old, I am not trashing all the valiant news organizations and news people who have kept me informed and often risked their lives to tell important stories through the years. But the times they are a-changing. Do you notice?

There are only five corporate behemoths (it used to be six) that own virtually all the commercial news and media produced in the world. Once fairly trustworthy, national and even local news sources now parrot the same talking points in unison. The sacred trust of the fourth estate has been compromised.

*Sr.
Helena Burns*



So to whom can we turn? I personally sample a large smattering of more or less independent news and information channels all over the Internet. Don't laugh because it's the Internet. The Internet can mean you and me and a microphone reporting about our neighbourhood. That's real. That's honest. And by information channels, I mean folks who are "boots on the ground" in whatever sphere I'm interested in.

The only problem with this citizen journalism today — besides obvious frauds and click-baiters — is ever-increasing censorship. Did you know that Twitter teamed up with AP and Reuters in 2021 to suppress what they deem "misinformation"? Could it be that misinformation means whatever might harm their bottom line? Did you know that most "fact-checking" entities are set-up and paid for by platforms that embrace special interests and special interest groups? Did you know award-winning scientists, doctors and researchers are being silenced and cancelled across all media because they are trying to actually "do science" the way it's supposed to be done: by dialoguing and wrestling with the data, and because they are questioning the monolithic narratives around the pandemic?

*We need to be hyper-vigilant regarding news media today. Sample alternative news outlets (both secular and Catholic). I'm a big YouTube fan when it comes to news. **WION** out of India brings a fresh global perspective. **2nachecki** is Africa reporting on itself and correcting false narratives. And who doesn't love **Rebel News** Canada, UK and Australia? Often, they are the only media who show up to newsworthy protests. And as much as I favour these courageous, plucky news correspondents, all media must be subjected to critical thinking and Media/News Literacy.*

We don't need to be suspicious (a no-no in Media Literacy), but simply intelligent and questioning. If something doesn't add up, if something smells funny, if something doesn't make sense—don't just swallow it down. Investigate further. Talk back to your TV or media device. Take another look at what has conveniently been labeled "conspiracy theory." It ain't a theory if it's documented and unfolding right before your eyes. Believe your eyes.

Lately, I have been absolutely struck by and stuck on this passage from 2 Thessalonians 2:11 about the End Times where God says that He will send a "powerful delusion." Why? Because we didn't love God? Didn't follow His commandments? Because we were bad? No. Because we "didn't love the truth."

(Sr. Burns, fsp, is a Daughter of St. Paul. She holds a Masters in Media Literacy Education and studied screenwriting at UCLA. Hellburns.com Twitter: @srhelenaburns.)

Questions

1. Explain how each of the five components may influence the other components. Provide a specific example of this interplay.
2. When we watch or read news sources do we really look for truth or confirmation of our own opinions?
3. Is it possible for journalists to be objective given the fact that in Canada the federal government supports the media outlets, both print and broadcasting, to the tune of \$600,000,000 in aid and spends massive amounts of advertising on top of that?
4. Can journalism be taken seriously if announcers sing from the same song book?
5. Why would/should the particular merger of AP and Reuters in 2021 be of great concern to news gathering and broadcasting?
6. If, as Burns claims, "*fact-checking*" entities are set-up and paid for by platforms that embrace special interests and special interest groups why is this scandalous? Are there any specific examples of this influence in action in the way that Covid-19 news and information are reported?
7. Are scientists and medical personnel fudging data or reporting honestly, objectively the findings of genuine studies in their fields? (https://childrenshealthdefense.org/defender/researchers-covid-conclusions/?utm_source=salsa&eType=EmailBlastContent&eId=d7b49afb-5ed3-4ba2-a39e-e2913391b2d1)
8. What is "citizen journalism" and what problems might be associated with it?
9. Why is it incumbent on readers to cross-check sources before drawing important conclusions regarding an event?
10. Why should we bother looking at who the news gatherers are in terms of wealth, gender, ethnicity, language, religion, race, sexual preference?
11. What if there were a heavy concentration of reporters/journalists who fell into one or other of those categories, how would that imperil the reflection of society and impact on that public mirror that newspapers and television are supposed to reflect?
12. What is our own responsibility as the audience, the consumers of news and opinions?
13. What is the point of the cartoon above?

Classroom Activity/Assignment

The news business is quite a complicated and sophisticated business. It is also vital to a free society. In the communications field there is the creator of a message, the message itself, a means of communicating the message, and a receiver of the message. We also need to note who pays for all this at each step.

To understand this service and business better and appreciate its influence in our lives, it is good to take a closer look at the five components referenced by Sr. Helena Burns in the article cited above.

Learning Activity:

1. Divide the class into groups of 4 to 7 students, depending on the size of the class. Assign each group **one** of those five components to research, summarize, analyze, and write up a report for the rest of the class. A few questions have been generated to help the individual study group in their research. As well, for each component links to some useful web

articles have been provided. Neither the questions nor the articles are in any way exhaustive. Teachers may want to expand these resources. The material here is to help students get started.

2. Examples of media reports on various topics are also suggested for a few public issues in the news whether current events like Ukraine-Russia tensions, the Canadian trucker convoy, inflation reports, free speech or controversial issues like the COVID-19 pandemic, or government policies on immigration, taxation, abortion, day care, health spending. The approach could be utilized to address any public issue that interests the class.
3. The lesson(s) could take up 2-4 periods including reports from the groups and ensuing class discussion of results found by the individual groups. Each group is assigned one issue to study in the context of its coverage by the media. A division of labour should be further divided by having each student within the group tackling a different article and doing the same summarizing of arguments/findings, writing it up and helping in the compilation of the report for the group.
4. Evaluation of the student work and report could be a combination of self-evaluation, group evaluation and teacher evaluation of the group work. Rubrics could include such elements as: source gathering reliability; proper citation; quality of report (degree of detail, actual findings, accuracy of data provided); organization and clarity of the summary; etc. etc.
5. An ambitious class could also be requested to complete the study unit by publishing the entire project with the assistance of the teacher. A mark could also be assigned for the class as a whole as to how it had succeeded in completing the overall task.



Content

Regarding this component of the news business, here are some of the questions to pose in looking at a topic in the news:

1. Is the content or news being reported important?
2. Is the report accurate in terms of specific details?
3. Is the report free of any bias?
4. How can one tell if the report is objective?
5. Is there evidence that the report is mostly opinion?
6. Are all/different sides of the issue being reported?
7. Is there sufficient context given to the report? Are the issues properly framed?
8. Are there any spokespersons interviewed? And from different sides of the issue?
9. Are any conclusions drawn as to the meaning of the issue?
10. Is the report honestly balanced, fair and objective?

11. Compare reports on the same issue from different media sources.

Consider these questions vis à vis the coverage of the ongoing tensions between Ukraine and Russia. There are additional questions based on a specific CNN news story on this international border tension.

<https://www.rt.com/russia/548792-west-deceived-crucified-ukraine-key/>

<https://www.foxnews.com/opinion/tucker-carlson-biden-ukraine-policies-washington-priorities>

<https://www.cnn.com/2022/02/05/politics/russia-military-ukraine/index.html>

the telegraph and samuel morse



Technology

People have communicated from the time of cave-dwelling. It may have been by sound, pictographs, art, and language. Here are some questions to help in the research of technology and the news business.

1. How has technology over the years, over past centuries, impacted the different aspects of news gathering, news reporting, news printing, news dissemination, news broadcasting, and news syndication? There are many individual technological breakthroughs made over the centuries. Each could be briefly explained as to how it impacted the news business: printing press, rotary press, offset press, monotype, linotype, photocomposing, color printing, the telegraph, telex, stenography, photography, fax, radio, television, tape recorder, film recording, sound recording, replay, floppy disk, chips, satellite, computer, internet, digital camera, social media, smart phones.

2. How has the technology made it less expensive, faster, more immediate to generate news reports?
3. Has the speed of news gathering and dissemination been compromised by the very accelerated pace at which it is done? Why or why not?
4. What are some of the predictions regarding the future of the news industry from a technological point of view? Is it a hopeful future or one that is to be dreaded?

<http://cyberjournalist.org.in/advance.html>

<https://online.maryville.edu/blog/future-journalism/#:~:text=AI%20platforms%20can%20be%20used,mainstream%20than%20one%20might%20think>

<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/1077699013493789?journalCode=jmqc>

<https://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/journalism-media-and-technology-trends-and-predictions-2021>

<https://www.ukessays.com/essays/journalism/impact-of-technology-on-journalism-and-the-production-of-news-5981.php>

<https://www.adweek.com/performance-marketing/the-top-7-technologies-that-changed-journalism-forever/>



image of offset printing press courtesy of Shutterstock

The Business of News

The News Business is big business and when it comes to the print medium, news corporations have taken a big financial hit in the last few decades. The advertising dollars have migrated from print to the digital/internet media platforms. According to a report, Canadian companies that produce journalism are “saddled with tax disadvantages in selling advertising and subscriptions.” (*The Shattered Mirror: News, Democracy and Trust in the Digital Age* (<https://ppforum.ca/project/the-shattered-mirror/>) That important report came out several years ago, in 2017, and was put out by Public Policy

Forum (PPF), an organization claiming to be a non-partisan, independent think-tank devoted to discussion of public policy in the Canadian context. It is worthwhile looking at the main findings in *The Shattered Mirror*, the problems and dangers it highlighted and its recommendations to help the news industry serve better a democratic society like Canada.

Concerns for news business go back many decades in Canadian history. At the height of the print newspaper industry the concern centered on the concentration of media outlets (both print and visual) in the hands of too few people. The fear was that such a monopoly would compromise the public health of Canada’s democracy, the ability of people to be informed properly and be able to participate meaningfully in the political process to the extent that they wished to participate. According to the authors of this paper, that old style journalism was a fair reflection or mirror of the society, how it perceived itself and its shared values. But now that mirror has been shattered by the “blend of **content concentration, revenue consolidation and indifference to truth**”. [my bold] These constitute troubling developments.

The report expands on this with the following claims. With the digital revolution, online actions and interactions enable the harvesting of data on individual and group preferences, behaviour and purchasing patterns — information that can then be used to market everything from content to retail goods to networks of connected individuals. People are revealed through their digital activity — they have all but come to constitute themselves by it — and the knowledge of those transactions is the commercial basis for the new communication empires [29] of Google, Facebook and Amazon. They get the largest share of ad growth in the USA. But they also impact other nations’ media, because these giants straddle the world. Canadian internet sites get very small potatoes in comparison. Google and Facebook claim not to be news producers but merely technical purveyors.

[31] However, they are not neutral. They do have influence over what issues get covered, the degree of exposure and when and how. They exploit the content produced by others and they skim off all the revenue. The news producers are left with crumbs. Moreover, the report also laments the quality of the new “news model”, charging that the news gathering and distribution has become less reliable because of the multiplicity of sources and the amateur background of the news gatherers and producers.



With respect to the improvement of the business model; and the quality of the product, the report makes a long list of recommendations, including:

- taxing internet use
- obliging the digital giants to an ethical investment policy
- extending Section 19.1 of the Income Tax Act to the Internet and make Google and Facebook pay taxes on revenue obtained from Canadian ad buyers
- the Government of Canada advertise only in media that qualify under Section 19 provisions
- extend GST/HST to all digital news subscription and advertising revenue for companies not qualifying under new Section 19 criteria and rebate GST/HST for those that do qualify
- amend Canada’s charity laws and regulations to allow non-profit news organizations producing civic-function journalism to qualify as recipients for support from philanthropic foundations and, in some specific cases, become charities themselves
- overhaul the rules around policy advocacy by charities to allow for non-partisan civic-function journalistic activity
- review the Copyright Act’s fairdealing rules to strengthen rights of news originators to control their intellectual property
- protecting the rights of content creators when content is disseminated, such that the original producer of the content should be able to decide whether it wants to share—and whether it wants to negotiate compensation in some form with the news aggregator sites like *Drudge Report*, *The Huffington Post*, *Gab*, *Breitbart News*, *Millennial Post*, *National News Watch*, etc. etc.
- create a Future of Journalism & Democracy Fund to foster excellence in digital news innovation to help the transition of community newspapers to a digital platform and to support independent journalists and organizations that produce civic-function journalism, with special attention to local news, investigative and accountability journalism, and the use of data and evidence in journalism
- establish a local mandate for The Canadian Press so as to create a professional, open-source news service to supplement waning local and regional coverage of civic-function news with trustworthy news from an organization with high journalistic standards
- establish an Indigenous journalism initiative in keeping with a new era of reconciliation, self-government and nation-to-nation relations
- establish a research institute dedicated to the study of news and democracy to offset the dearth of data about Canadians’ media habits, preferences and attitudes, and to track the challenge of fake news and assess measures for countering it

- bolster the ‘inform’ imperative in the CBC mandate
- give sufficient financing for CBC online to free up **cbc.ca** of the need to “attract eyeballs” for digital advertising and free it from the “clickbait” mentality that devalues serious journalism
- transform CBC’s content distribution so as to increase the impact of its journalism and nourish the development of a more dynamic and diverse news ecosystem
- broaden the dissemination of CBC news to act as a counterweight to the presence of fake news and in support of digital innovation by young media innovators across the country.

The readers or consumer of news, in all its different forms and shapes, may not be aware of the limitations and challenges that beset the news industry. The financial or business model originally set up with newspapers does not work any longer. The corporate owners are not in business to lose money. They are in the news business because they believe it is a sustainable industry. It is true that some newspapers may in fact be losing propositions within a larger corporate structure, and that the ultimate owners don’t care whether a specific newspaper, for example, the Washington Post, loses money. To those particular owners it may be worthwhile to absorb the financial losses if they are able to sway public opinion on matters which are much more important to them, whether it is hostility towards a political party or specific politician, or wanting to promote a particular social cause. In evaluating the economic and ownership aspect of the news business the research efforts could be guided by the following questions:

1. Why do companies or individuals want to own a newspaper or a television station or a television network? What are their possible motives?
2. How would/could ownership of such a news outlet impact the reporting, coverage, analysis, and commenting allowed or encouraged on the station, network, or news pages and editorial content of the paper?
3. Who owns the major news outlets in Canada, for example – CBC/Radio Canada, CTV, Global News Network? What about the cable carriers – Shaw, Rogers, Telus?
4. Who or what pays for the production and consumption of “news”?
5. Is there too much concentration of ownership in the news business? How is that a danger, why or why not?
6. What reforms or changes in the law could improve the prospects for the journalism as a profession?
7. Would you agree with this finding/comment in the *The Shattered Mirror: The “sudden consolidation in unseen hands of both Internet ad revenues and control of who sees what among the thousands of competing political and social narrativesmay be putting democracy itself at risk”*. Why or why not?
8. Of the many recommendations contained in *The Shattered Mirror* report, which in your opinion are reasonable and should be acted upon? Explain.
9. Which of the recommendations do you think are more problematic? Explain.
10. A caveat: Who is to say that the CBC itself or CTV or Global News is not a purveyor of fake news? Why is there an assumption that only a state-supported agency can be a broadcaster of serious news and truly inform the general public about important public matters? Do these three public and private networks actually differ in their coverage and reporting? Explain.

<https://ppforum.ca/project/the-shattered-mirror/>

<https://www.digitalnewsreport.org/publications/2020/journalism-media-and-technology-trends-and-predictions-2020/>

<https://www.poynter.org/reporting-editing/2012/why-journalists-should-explore-the-business-side-of-the-newsroom/>

<https://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/our-research/changing-business-journalism-and-its-implications-democracy>

https://cs.stanford.edu/people/eroberts/cs181/projects/2010-11/Journalism/indexcdf1.html?page_id=10

https://www.wikiwand.com/en/List_of_assets_owned_by_Bell_Media

<https://techcrunch.com/2019/12/02/mass-media-vs-social-media/>

<https://www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage.html>

<https://www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/services/funding/periodical-fund.html>

<https://www.canadaland.com/canadian-media-liberals-trudeau-government-funding-covid-cbc-erin-otoole/>

Institutions or Wireservices

Newspapers and local television stations, for the most part, do not exist as stand-alone entities. The costs of running a newspaper or t.v. station are prohibitive unless the company or network has deep pockets, a favourable almost closed market, and/or a superb reputation for some special reason and/or draws sufficient advertising revenue to make it an independent viable media source. However, most newspapers and television stations have symbiotic relationship with a larger network. They tend to be members of a chain of papers or television network. Commercial wireservices and television networks are important partners in the news business.



In one of the links below (<https://www.agilitypr.com/newswires-101/>) it is stated that one benefit/value of a news agency is that “in today’s changing and competitive media landscape, many outlets now rely on news agencies to provide their baseline news copy. This allows the outlet to employ fewer reporters and redirect resources instead to creating more robust editorial content to give the publication its unique flavour and characteristic ‘voice’”. Later in that same article the summary outlines the main uses and value of a wire service

- News wires collect news stories, photographs, columns, and press releases and make them available to a broad network of subscribing journalists and news outlets.
- Not all news wires distribute both news stories and press releases. PR folks are typically referring to the wires that act as press release feeds.
- News wires were created to make journalists’ jobs easier. Distribute quality content and style accordingly.
- Most journalists do still use news wires, whether for fact checking, news ideas, or to monitor industry trends.

There are many types of newsservices depending on what kind of news or information one is looking for or wanting to report on. It could be stocks and the market, or sports, or entertainment, or politics. It may also operate on a regional basis or national basis or continental basis. A few are used worldwide. Language makes a difference.

1. What are news agencies? How did the AP and Reuters begin?
2. How did they impact the gathering, distribution and writing of news reports?
3. Are they still crucial to news gathering and reporting? Press releases” Branding? Marketing? Explain
4. Have such agencies lost their vital role? Explain
5. How do news agencies make/earn their money/revenues?
6. Can newswire services be trusted as objective sources of news and accuracy of facts?
7. Is the A.P. (Associated Press) and Reuters reliable and free of bias? Explain with examples.

8. Here is a list of the major world commercial newswire services African Press Organization, Business Wire, TASS, Cision, Press Trust of India, Asian News International, Xinhua News Agency, CNW Group. Who owns these different services?
9. Does the ownership influence the work of these newswire agencies? How can such agencies be held accountable for what they report?
10. Are some more reliable than others?
11. What areas of the world do these wire services serve?
12. What is the biggest news organization in the world?
13. Here is a list the top 8 largest publicly traded news media companies by market cap as of November 2020: i) News Corp. ii) The New York Times Company. iii) Daily Mail and General Trust plc. iv) Sinclair Broadcasting Co. v) E. W. Scripps. vi) Tribune Media Co. vii) Daily Journal Corporation. viii) Gannett Co.
14. What are the largest Canadian news sources?
15. Investigate ownership of these Canadian news sources: BNN Canada; Torstar; Globe & Mail; CTV Inc.?
16. Who owns Postmedia? (National Post, Toronto Sun, Edmonton Sun, Calgary Sun, Vancouver Sun, etc.)
17. Are there any significant independent news sources or television stations left in Canada?

<https://www.agilitypr.com/newswires-101/>

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/cherylsnappconner/2013/08/28/do-press-releases-still-matter-yes-but-not-like-you-think/?sh=c8765ef1e0a7>

<https://www.icfj.org/our-work/state-technology-global-newsrooms>

<https://www.investopedia.com/stock-analysis/021815/worlds-top-ten-news-companies-nws-gci-trco-nyt.aspx>

Audiences: Consumers of News

The consumers of news are mostly ordinary people. Not everything that passes for news interests everyone. On this basis the audience needs to be identified, reached and cultivated for success as a business and as an influencer of public opinion. In *The Shattered Mirror* another observation is made to this effect: “What democracy requires is sober attention to political authority. What the public prefers on normal days is clickbait: sensationalism, scandal, sentimentality and novelty. What media proprietors prioritize are profit margins and returns on investment. How can one reconcile the two?”

The reality is that some people do see the news media as biased, irresponsible and hysterical, either enflaming and cheapening public discourse or treating certain viewpoints with utter disregard. This can be seen easily by reading either angry letters to the editor of major newspapers or the comment sections of internet articles or the postings on Facebook or Twitter. To

some extent it may be somewhat justified if one looks at how the mainstream media treats certain topics in a sympathetic manner while opponents of a policy are depicted in harsh terms and/or marginalized. Other critics see news sources as primarily agents of the power structure they are supposed to be monitoring, be it the government or big pharma, or big tech, or the ideological unelected state apparatus/bureaucracy. Yet other critics of media worry that the media’s civic mission is undermined by a too cozy relationship to power brokers and thus the mission is too often sacrificed to satisfy the paper’s corporate ledgers. [26]



How gullible is the audience and how would that be a problem? The opening for fake news has been created by deeply sociological phenomena related to exclusion and breakdowns in

societal trust and cohesion. Certainly, coverage of the 2020 U.S. election and concerns about the aftermath helped to create a significant group of alienated, aggrieved and distrusting Americans. Now, it is being they learned that President Trump was indeed spied upon, not just when he was a candidate, but even when he was President. Are Canadians now being divided by the mass media’s coverage of the vaccine policies of governments and the extraordinary actions taken by federal and provincial governments? Perhaps the bias of the traditional news sources themselves account for the distrust.

A key factor to success in the newspaper and broadcasting businesses is to know the particular audience that they are trying to serve. A good short introduction to this aspect is this

Audience: Definition, 3 Types of Audiences

To run a successful business, you need to promote and sell your products to a targeted and valuable audience. Finding out the right audience and figuring out their needs and engaging them in the right way, is the biggest challenge for any business. It is no different for the news business.

An audience is a group of readers who read a particular piece of writing. One should anticipate the needs or expectations of your audience in order to convey information or argue for a particular claim. It is important to know your audience before you start writing. It is not a completely hit and miss operation to find out who your audience is or could be. Some features that help build a profile of your readership or viewers may include such things as their age, sex, level of education, economic status, political/social/religious beliefs, race, language, immigration status, urban/rural split, etc. Depending on the subject, one may also want to know what level of information the readers have about the subject (very basic, of a general reader, or that of a specialist or expert). One needs to analyze their audience in order to communicate effectively with them.

Three types of audiences are the “lay” audience, the “managerial” audience, and the “experts.” The “lay” audience has no special or expert knowledge. They connect with the human-interest aspect of articles. They usually need background information; they expect more definition and description, and they may want attractive graphics or visuals, colour as well as black and white. The “managerial” audience may or may have more knowledge than the lay audience about the subject, but they need knowledge so they can make a decision about the issue. Any background information, facts, statistics needed to make a decision should be highlighted. The “experts” may be the most demanding audience in terms of knowledge, presentation, and graphics or visuals. Experts are often “theorists” or “practitioners.” For the “expert” audience, document formats are often elaborate and technical, style and vocabulary may be specialized or technical, source citations are reliable and up-to-date, and documentation is accurate.

In conclusion, it is vital to know your audience to shape your message according to the audience. Because there are many audiences choosing to read a daily newspaper, for example, the paper may offer different sections, such that everyone will find something of interest in the paper, whether it is political news, sports, fashion and entertainment, stock market reports, living styles, book reviews etc. The writers may also vary as to their age, sex, ethnic composition etc. All these factors go into the make up of the newspaper’s writing corps.

Questions

1. Is the audience ultimately the most important component in the whole news cycle?
2. How can the audience impact the news business?
3. How do people access information or what passes as news?
4. What do people look for in news reporting?
5. How much do the audiences trust the news sources? Which are trusted most and which least and why?

<https://oxfordre.com/communication/view/10.1093/acrefore/9780190228613.001.0001/acrefore-9780190228613-e-845>

https://www.cjr.org/tow_center/audience-engagement-journalism.php

<https://dailyowan.com/2021/11/04/opinion-how-to-be-a-responsible-news-consumer/>

<https://www.iedunote.com/types-of-audience>

<https://open.lib.umn.edu/infostrategies/chapter/4-12-whos-the-audience-for-news/>



Part D Case Study I Ukraine-Russia Tensions

War and foreign policy of nations are complicated things to conduct in secrecy and to cover in the news. There is always the possibility of misunderstanding among the key players and the unintended consequences that may come from careless news reporting and analysis. The other important problem is that news and broadcasting corporations may be themselves duped by government agencies. Who knows when they are being used for nefarious purposes. Imagine how all this plays out in a dangerous situation that exists on the border between Russia and Ukraine. Seemingly, there is distrust between the two sides and the situation is not helped by the intrusion of other interested parties and wider considerations such as;



geopolitical rivalries, national sovereignty and security, economic needs, world military balance of power, conflicting philosophies of life and cultural wars, internal domestic concerns (elections, polls, popular opinion, historical precedents, energy dependence and independence). There are so many conflicting opinions and factors to consider. How would China react? What would NATO actually do? What are the drivers of peace? How are the different television news networks covering the issue? Are they taking an objective stance? Are they being jingoistic? Are they revving things up and egging certain nations on? Who wants war? Why would they want war? Who would gain

from a war in the area? Is it a false flag operation carried out by the American CIA? Is Russia truly intent on capturing more Ukrainian territory?

Have students read or view the sources listed below and determine whether the sources are reliable, independent or biased, and their ultimate trustworthiness as news sources. Have them explain from the source themselves why they reach the conclusion that they do.

<https://www.rt.com/russia/549475-ukrainian-neo-nazis-raise/>

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/live/2022/feb/15/ukraine-crisis-scholz-heads-to-moscow-as-us-tells-citizens-in-belarus-to-leave>

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/video/2022/feb/15/what-exactly-does-putin-want-in-ukraine-video-explainer>

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/2/14/german-chancellor-vows-immediate-sanctions-if-russia-invades>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VA9CmDVpYO4>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j4ek-FL8b4o>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YujeF84QRP0>

<https://www.cnn.com/specials/europe/ukraine>

[ukraine https://www.rt.com/russia/548812-ukraine-splits-biden-chances-invasion/](https://www.rt.com/russia/548812-ukraine-splits-biden-chances-invasion/)

<https://www.cnn.com/2022/02/15/europe/ukraine-russia-news-tuesday-troop-pullback-intl/index.html>

Putin says some Russian troops are withdrawing after drills, but skepticism in Ukraine and US remains

By **Ivana Kottasová**, Nathan Hodge and Uliana Pavlova, CNN

Updated 2:52 PM ET, Tue February 15, 2022

Kyiv and Moscow (CNN) President Vladimir Putin said Tuesday that Russia was sending some troops back to base after completing drills and that while he is open to further negotiations on the Ukraine crisis, Moscow's security demands were an "unconditional priority."

Russia's claims about troop movements were met with skepticism from Western officials, who said they had seen no evidence that any partial withdrawal had begun.

Speaking at a news conference in Moscow alongside German Chancellor Olaf Scholz, Putin said he continued to view Western deterrence measures as a "direct and immediate threat to national security."



The Economist

its expansion in Eastern Europe. The US and its NATO allies have repeatedly said such proposals are non-starters.

Putin also invoked the word "genocide" Tuesday to describe the situation in territories in eastern Ukraine controlled by Russian-backed separatist militants, calling out the West for what he insinuated was a double standard for justifying military intervention. Claims of discrimination against Russian-speaking populations in Ukraine were one of the justifications Russia used when it annexed Crimea in 2014.

Putin's comments came hours after the Russian defense ministry said some troops from its Southern and Western military districts had begun to return to their home stations.

The announcement did not specify where those troops were permanently based, where they had been exercising, or how many of them were withdrawing, and it was viewed with skepticism by officials from Ukraine, the US and NATO, who called on Russia to provide proof it was willing to deescalate the crisis on the border.

"Various statements are constantly being made from the Russian Federation, so we already have a rule: 'Do not hear and then believe. But do see and then believe,'" Ukrainian Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba told a news conference in Kyiv. "When we see the withdrawal, then we will believe in de-escalation."

NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg said the alliance had not yet seen "any sign of deescalation on the ground," but added that "signs from Moscow that diplomacy should continue" were grounds for cautious optimism.

Personnel from Russia's Southern military district began returning to base from Crimea -- the territory annexed by Russia from Ukraine in 2014 -- following the conclusion of exercises, state news agency RIA-Novosti reported Tuesday, citing Southern military district spokesperson Col. Vadim Astafyev.

"The personnel of the battalion tactical groups made marches to the areas of railway stations, where the loading of military equipment on the echelons is organized. Heavy tracked armored vehicles -- tanks, infantry fighting vehicles and self-propelled artillery -- are fixed on the platforms of the wagons, Astafyev said.

Earlier Tuesday, Major General Igor Konashenkov, spokesman for the Russian defense ministry, announced the troop movements but also added that large-scale drills would continue.

"In the armed forces of the Russian Federation, a complex of large-scale operational training measures by the forces continues, with almost all military districts, fleets and airborne troops taking part in them," he said. "As part of the test of the reaction forces of the Union State, a joint Russian-Belarusian exercise 'Allied Resolve-2022' is being held on the territory of the Republic of Belarus."

"The responses we received from the United States and NATO members to security guarantees proposals, in our opinion, do not meet the three basic Russian requirements," Putin said.

"We are ready to continue this joint work further. We are also ready to follow the negotiation track but all issues must be considered as a whole, without being separated from the main Russian proposals, the implementation of which is an unconditional priority for us."

Russia says it's moving some troops to their bases. What does this mean?

Russia has amassed more than 130,000 troops near Ukraine's border in recent weeks, according to US estimates, raising fears from Western and Ukrainian intelligence officials that an invasion could be imminent.

Among the Kremlin's demands are a guarantee that Ukraine will never be permitted to join NATO and that the alliance roll back

Konashenkov also said a series of naval drills -- involving surface ships, submarines and naval aviation -- was underway both in "operationally important areas of the world's oceans" and in the waters adjacent to the territory of Russia. "Exercises are continuing with formations and military units at other training grounds on the territory of the Russian Federation," he added.

The Kremlin's troop announcement came a day after Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov said there was still room for a diplomatic solution to the crisis.

In a carefully choreographed meeting that was shown on Russian television on Monday, [President Vladimir Putin](#) asked Lavrov: is there a "chance to reach an agreement with our partners on key issues that are of concern to us, or is it just an attempt to drag us into an endless negotiation process that has no logical resolution?"

Seated at the opposite end of a very long table, Lavrov responded: "If we are ready to listen to some counter-proposals, it seems to me that our possibilities are far from being exhausted."

NATO's Stoltenberg on Tuesday expressed hope that a war could be avoided, but said the alliance would not compromise on its core principles.

"Everything is now in place for a new attack, but Russia still has time to step back from the brink, stop preparing for war and start working for a peaceful solution," Stoltenberg told a news conference in Brussels on Tuesday.



In this photo taken from video provided by the Russian Defense Ministry on Tuesday, Russian armored vehicles are loaded onto railway platforms after the end of military drills.

The flurry of high-profile diplomacy continued Tuesday with Scholz becoming the latest leader to travel to Moscow for talks.

Scholz, who was meeting Putin for the first time as the German Chancellor, said it was the leaders' "damned duty to prevent a war in Europe."

"For us Germans, but also for all Europeans, it is important that sustainable security cannot be achieved against Russia, but only with Russia," Scholz said.

However, while Scholz was urging de-escalation, he didn't shy away from criticizing Russia, specifically mentioning the jailed opposition leader Alexey Navalny, who is currently facing another trial. "As far as Mr. Navalny is concerned, my position is very clear, this is not compatible with the principles of the rule of law."

Meanwhile, US ambassador to NATO Julianne Smith said Tuesday the US was "monitoring the situation" after the Kremlin's troop announcement, but added that the US "will have to verify" any claims of a potential move towards deescalation by Russia. "We have noticed today that Russia is claiming that they are moving towards some sort of de-escalation. We are monitoring the situation," Smith said. "We will have to verify whether or not that is in fact the case."

Speaking during a press briefing in Brussels, the US ambassador further noted that Russia "made a similar claim" regarding a potential de-escalation of tensions in December, but this later proved false.

But while the Kremlin was talking about troops returning home, satellite images released by Maxar Technologies revealed fresh signs of a Russian buildup. An analysis of the images



showed that at least 60 helicopters had landed within the past few days at a previously vacant airbase in Russian-occupied Crimea.

The helicopters are a mixture of transport and attack aircraft. Archival satellite imagery reviewed by CNN indicates the base at Donuzlav Lake on the northwest coast of Crimea has been vacant since at least 2003.

UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson told reporters Tuesday that he was not encouraged by the latest intelligence on Russia's buildup around Ukraine and said western leaders were receiving "mixed signals" from Moscow.

"We've got Russian field hospitals being constructed near the border with Ukraine, in Belarus for [what] only can be construed as a preparation for an invasion," Johnson said. "You've got more battalion tactical groups actually being brought closer to the border with Ukraine, according to the intelligence that we're seeing."

Meanwhile, Kremlin spokesperson Dmitry Peskov gave a noncommittal response Tuesday when asked about a move by Russian lawmakers to appeal to President Putin to recognize two breakaway regions in eastern Ukraine as independent. Donetsk and Luhank have been controlled by pro-Russian separatists since 2014.

Asked in a conference call with reporters about the legislative action, Peskov said: "No one remains indifferent to the fate of Donbas. But still, Russia has repeatedly declared that it remains committed to the Minsk package of measures, and that Russia is in favor of the implementation of the entire Minsk plan as soon as possible, in the sequence that exists."

Donbas refers to the territories in eastern Ukraine controlled by Russia-backed separatist militants.

Asked about the issue during the news conference with Scholz, Putin said there were "mass and systematic violations of human rights in Ukraine and outright discrimination of Russian speaking citizens on legislative level."

Putin responded abruptly when Scholz expressed hope for a peaceful resolution in Ukraine, after recalling NATO's military intervention in response to the danger of genocide in the former Yugoslavia. "According to our estimates, what is happening in the Donbas today is genocide," Putin responded.

Putin has spoken repeatedly about what he describes as the violation of the rights of ethnic Russians and Russian speakers in Ukraine and elsewhere, and has stated that it is within Russia's rights to intervene militarily to protect them.

It was not the first time he's used the word "genocide" to describe what he calls Russophobia or discrimination against Russian speakers in eastern Ukraine. It's a term -- much like the word "fascist" -- that can be thrown around loosely in Russian political speech and does not necessarily imply direct comparison to internationally defined and recognized cases of genocide.

CNN's Uliana Pavlova, Darya Tarasova and Nathan Hodge reported from Moscow, while CNN's Ivana Kottasová, Tim Lister, Jim Sciutto and Olga Voytovich reported from Kyiv.

Questions

1. Are there clear disagreements between Russia and Ukraine?
2. What are the main issues causing the problems?
3. What specific actions taken by Russia is creating the fear and tensions along the border according to CNN?
4. What justification does Russia offer for their border actions?
5. Which nations are playing a role as potential peace-keepers or negotiators? Why would those nations be involved in this way?
6. What complaints/grievances do the Russians have toward NATO?
7. Overall, does the CNN article provide an objective analysis of what is going on? Explain.

Part E Pro and Con: Trucker Convoy

The difficulty of being objective in covering a news story can be easily seen in these contrasting descriptions of what has been going on in Ottawa. The same set of events are portrayed so differently that one could get the impression that the reports are speaking about different planets or different nations. Please also note the dates of the reports. The situation now has transformed into a much more serious problem with Prime Minister Trudeau refusing to talk with the truckers and instead invoking the Emergencies Act with all that such an action entails.

Here are perspectives from an external French observer of the trucker convoy, the Toronto Star, Globe & Mail, Ottawa based CBC reporter, and a group called Cultural Action Party Of Canada. Some see it as a challenge and resistance to globalists and admired for their stance, thus inspiring others to emulate their efforts in other nations, New Zealand, Australia, France, Belgium, etc. Others take the point of view that the truckers are a lawless, selfish minority group attempting to overthrow the legally elected government system with their demands, and thus need to be corraled and sent packing home, even if it takes police action.



Some prominent pundits outside Canada provide a sympathetic view of the protest, seeing the truckers more as heroes and even leading the world to oppose the tyranny of globalism (e.g. satirical video of British comedian Russell Brand and another where Canadian journalist Mark Steyn interviewed fellow Canadian Rex Murphy on GBNews, and Tucker Carlson on Fox News).

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6kxw5GFJjFc> starts at 27:07 minute mark

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DtUJpWYtGWM> Now it Makes Sense British comedian Russell Brand

<https://video.foxnews.com/v/6297540053001#sp=show-clips>

<https://www.rt.com/news/548915-freedom-convoy-canada-hysteria/> Why the Freedom Convoy is provoking unprecedented hysteria

The fact that it's ordinary people behind the Freedom Convoy, rather than professional activists, has caused alarm among the ruling class

[Rachel Marsden](#)

Rachel Marsden is a columnist, political strategist and host of an independently produced French-language program that airs on Sputnik France. Her website can be found at rachelmarsden.com

<reply+svb6l&17ehsi&&5e11f115542c4996f72d25e9d6ed3542495000cdd4f04d3c51c92cc2d807e971@mg1.substack.com>

Cultural Action Party Of Canada

What should be unfathomable is today a reality. The polarization of media coverage has spread far beyond Canadian borders. **United States, U.K., Australia, France** and other western countries are now reporting on the debacle in Ottawa.

<https://www.thestar.com/news/canada/2022/02/07/heres-how-canadas-freedom-convoy-is-being-described-by-media-around-the-world.html>

Here's how Canada's 'Freedom Convoy' is being described by media around the world

Media outlets across the globe — from France to India — have covered the demonstrations in Canada's capital with varying takes on what the convoy means and represents.

By Star staff Mon., Feb. 7, 2022

<https://www.theglobeandmail.com/opinion/article-the-trucker-convoy-shows-how-canadians-are-being-sucked-into-larger/>

The trucker convoy shows how Canadians are being sucked into larger conspiratorial narratives

Daniel Panneton special to the Globe and Mail published february 11, 2022 Daniel Panneton is a writer, educator and online hate researcher based in Toronto. In his opinion piece he decries the harm being done by "right wing extremists" who are taking advantage of some minor issues associated with the pandemic and going the conspiratorial route with them thus creating more division and a certain social instability with their views.

A more nuanced report from a CBC reporter based in Ottawa.

<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/faith-convoy-truckers-1.6350538>

Jorge Barrera

For many inside the Freedom Convoy, faith fuels the resistance

Some protesters say they went to Ottawa on God's instruction

<https://www.cbc.ca/player/news/tv%20shows/the%20national/at%20issue> January 27-28

<https://www.cbc.ca/player/news/tv%20shows/the%20national/at%20issue> February 10

At Issues panel discussing whether politicians are doing enough about the protests and blockades

<https://ottawacitizen.com/news/local-news/truck-convoy-day-18-in-ottawa-noon-deadline-in-mayors-deal-with-convoy-pm-talking-to-premiers> What the local Ottawa Citizen newspaper says about the truck convoy protest

Questions

From the news reports viewed and cited above have students address the following questions:

1. Do we learn what are the clear demands of the truckers in the Ottawa convoy?
2. Do we know clearly know who the organizers are?
3. Do we have a better understanding of what are the key issues at stake?
4. How is the situation and the federal government's response uniting or dividing the Canadian people? Have the opposition parties in Parliament received any critique from the press?
5. Are there dangers to Canadian democracy? Does the danger come from the truckers or from the government's response?
6. What are the different motivations of the truckers? Economic? Political? Spiritual? Social? Patriotism? Anger? Distrust?
7. Has the protest evolved over the duration of three weeks plus?
8. Has media coverage evolved over the same period of time? Explain.
9. Why has there been international attention paid to this Canadian event, where normally Canada is never in the news internationally?
10. Has the media helped to clarify the issues or exacerbated the situation with the content and the style of its reporting?
11. Does the reporting reflect the news media's attitude toward the pandemic itself?(general support for the narrative presented by the government, health authorities, pharmaceuticals companies) rather than an objective, measured approach respectful of a variety of opinions and allowing transparent presentation of facts that may contradict that same majority narrative?
12. Some critics complain that Canadians have to rely on foreign sources for news because the Canadian sources are too biased and not trustworthy. Would you agree or disagree with this characterization? Why or why not?

A Special Case of Bias: Social Conservatism in Canada

We have already seen in the section on audiences the importance of trying to reach all sectors of the public if the newspaper or broadcasting network wishes to be representative of the full range of public opinions on any number of public issues. But it appears that certain public social issues receive short shrift, no attention or consistently biased negative coverage. It is not healthy for a pluralist democracy if the secular, progressive world view is dominant everywhere, on all digital platforms, television and remaining newspapers when it comes to issues like abortion, pornography, medical interventions, euthanasia, freedom of the press, free speech, parental rights, freedom of religion, religious persecution, and other serious social issues. As some critics put it, the choir may have tenors, baritones and bass, altos, contraltos and sopranos, but if all sing the same tune from the same limited, pre-approved song repertoire there is no real learning, no genuine reflection of the many rich and varied songs sung in the land. If one excludes people from the public songfest the society loses much of its flavour, harmony and freedom. How did “equality”, “inclusion”, “diversity” and “tolerance”, for example, important as these values are, become the priorities over truth, love, real compassion, social justice and the common good of society? With respect to social issues, is it the case that the audience does not want to hear or read about them, or is it the case that the media deliberately chooses to



disregard those issues because the issues do not reflect their own world view?

Decades ago there was robust debate and frequent coverage of social conservative views especially around election times. But such values and opinions are today dismissed as if they do not belong in polite company and hence not worthy of any real attention in the public square. Most political pundits present the social conservative sector as an obstacle to the full development of progressive policies and programs in Canada; and they also attribute the failure of the Conservative Party to win elections, and therefore the privilege of governing, to its inability to harness the social conservative base of that

party. One of the few times that a columnist has been given an opportunity to opine on this topic was March, 2021 in the pages of the National Post newspaper. (see the article below). But many pieces of legislation have been passed in the past five years

by the Canadian parliament and some observers charge that virtually nothing has been said by MSM in opposition to those bills passed into law – whether it was euthanasia, then expansion of same, laws to ban ‘conversion therapy’, laws establishing bubble zones around hospitals, regulations denying summer jobs to organizations unless they signed an attestation on the application form, or upcoming moves like threatening to take away charitable status from crisis pregnancy centres, laws overriding the conscience rights of doctors and other health personnel, or simply ignoring the well-attended Marches for Life in Ottawa, or the refusal of municipalities to permit pro-life advertising on buses, or concealing abortion statistics, etc. The pretense is that these social and moral issues are of no interest and no consequence in the public square. Therefore, print and broadcast journalism need not take them into account.



<https://nationalpost.com/opinion/opinion-why-social-conservatism-is-the-only-true-conservatism>

Why social conservatism is the only true conservatism *The pandemic has exposed serious social and economic challenges that conservatives should be ready to address*

Ben Woodfinden March 17, 2021

A concern for the “social” should be at the centre of any substantive conservative agenda, writes Ben Woodfinden in advance of the Conservative Party of Canada’s policy convention scheduled for March 18 - 20, 2021.

Party conventions present both opportunities and potential perils for parties and their leaders. It looked like the latter scenario was a possibility for the upcoming Conservative party convention, with social conservative groups poised to make a big splash



after significant efforts to organize convention delegates. But no particularly controversial resolutions, and no resolutions concerning abortion, made it into the convention policy debates, temporarily averting some of the inevitable questions Erin O’Toole will continue to face about social conservatism within the Conservative party. Had the issue of abortion made its way into the policy discussions, an inevitable round of the frequently recurring “is there a place for social conservatives in the Conservative party?” debate would likely have flared up. These debates are repetitive, and social conservatives are the consistent scapegoats for Conservative electoral defeats.

photo by getty images

conservative “albatross” and becomes a fiscally conservative, socially progressive organization. Social conservatives meanwhile insist they are a crucial part of the Conservative coalition and that the addition/subtraction approach is a losing strategy that won’t lead to an electoral bonanza. *There’s got to be more to conservatism than this.*

The only viable path forward for the Conservatives, according to many, is a party that dumps the social

These debates go nowhere. They obfuscate what conservatism is and ought to be about, built on top of a misguided, siloed approach to politics that reduces politics to “economic” and “social” issues and then divorces them from one another. Social conservatism in Canada is narrowly defined, both by opponents and by some of its vocal proponents, as largely being about two hot-button topics: abortion/life issues and LGBTQ issues. But reducing the entirety of conservative concerns with the “social” to a few hot-button issues does no one any favours.

It’s not that these debates don’t matter or that social conservatives can or should just be ignored, it’s that it produces stunted and superficial debates within conservatism, and makes being a “respectable” conservative about little more than being a liberal who prefers marginally lower levels of public spending. There’s got to be more to conservatism than this, and returning to what the broader conservative concern for the “social” is really about helps us get beyond these dead ends and tired tropes. Social conservatism, properly understood, is about a concern for the health and well-being of the social world, and with the fabric and institutions that help people lead good lives in a free and flourishing society. This is perhaps the foundational and central insight of anglo-conservatism, and if we’re conservatives it’s because we’re ultimately trying to conserve something. We live in the social world, this is where we learn how to be free and how to live well. It’s in these institutions where we ultimately find meaning and purpose. Preserving and maintaining the health of these social institutions should be among the most fundamental goals of serious conservatism.

But a recognition of the centrality of social institutions should also involve a recognition that social conditions cannot be divorced from economic and material conditions. Economic and social conservatism cannot just be separated from one another. Starting with this more classical conservative insight not only makes social conservatism about more than a few single issues, it means we should consider an economic question with a concern for the social in mind. Conservatives have no

problem applying structural talk and insights about things like incentives to purely economic issues, things like labour markets and taxation, but don't spend nearly as much time applying similar insights into the social realm.

Take a classic conservative issue: family formation. You can't seriously say the family is the bedrock of civilization and then *prima facie* reject, for ideological reasons, a proactive government role in supporting families. If you're concerned with family formation and helping ensure Canadians are easily able to start families, you can't just wax lyrical about family values, you've got to make sure the conditions under which people are making decisions and choices are ones that encourage and don't discourage family formation.

We face social challenges exacerbated and exposed by the pandemic — from a baby bust to a loneliness epidemic to the appalling state of long-term care homes — that point to an underlying fragility of our social institutions and fabric that needs to be addressed. Conservatives should be among the loudest voices in trying to deal with these social challenges. But debates around social conservatism stunt the development of such an agenda, and conservatives would do well to move beyond siloed economic and social thinking and reintegrate their social concerns with a focus on economic conditions as well. Debates around hot-button social issues aren't just going to disappear and they are debates conservatives should be having, but they can't distract conservatives from a concern for the broader social fabric. A concern for the "social" should be at the centre of any substantive conservative agenda and we shouldn't even need to call this social conservatism, it should simply be conservatism.

Ben Woodfinden is a doctoral candidate and political theorist at McGill University in Montreal. This column has been adapted from a longer essay in the author's newsletter, The Dominion.

Questions

1. How does Woodfinden define social and social conservatism? How is his definition broader, more inclusive and more accurate than the usual impression created by political observers of whatever stripe?
2. How does he connect the economic question to the social institutions in need of conservation?
3. How does the example of family formation bring this problem into relief?
4. What is the basic plea that Woodfinden is making?
5. Would one expect to find an article like this in the pages of the Toronto Star? Explain.
6. What about in the Toronto Sun? Explain.
7. Is there a social conservative streak running in the truck convoy protest?
8. Are social conservatives the target group in the declaration of the Emergencies Act?
9. Assess the treatment of social conservative issues within the media framework presented in the introduction to this learning resource – content, technology, etc.
10. Is the Canadian media serving the full gamut of opinions and values to be found among the Canadian populace? Explain.

Afterthought

We introduced the theme of media bias with an article by Sr. Helena Burns. Perhaps it's fitting to hark back to her writings and note her February 13 article in the same Catholic Register (<https://www.catholicregister.org/opinion/columnists/item/34016-sr-helena-burns-divide-and-conquer-never-in-canada>). In this most recent article Sr. Helena raises the spectre of a collusion between some news sources and governments. She suggests that any society needs to be vigilant about the relationship of the news business to government, various elites, corporations, financial institutions, big tech companies. She cautions about the creation of fear and the use of psychological warfare to divide and control society. Is this what is happening in Canada as we speak? Is there a national crisis and what are the prospects for handling it successfully? What is the responsibility of media?



Father Ted Colleton Scholarship: Reaching the Youth Where They Are



At the beginning of February the essay writing competition known as *The Father Ted Colleton Scholarship* concluded for the 2021-2022 academic year. The sponsor of the program, *Niagara Region Right to Life*, believes that if a new culture of life is to flourish in Canada, the youth of the nation have to be inspired to love and treasure life and taught to secure and protect it at its most vulnerable stages. The boundless energy and promise of our youth must be marshalled in favour of pro-life principles. They recognize that it is a daunting task and will take decades to effect such a dramatic spiritual, cultural change. As part of its own mandate *Niagara Region Right to Life* has been offering secondary school learners a unique and challenging opportunity to research and write about things that matter and impact all Canadians, present and future.

Three winners were selected and awarded prizes following an exhaustive evaluation process conducted by a volunteer committee. The prize winners are: **Angelica Vecchiato** of Woodbridge, ON who attends Loretto Abbey High School in Toronto (\$2000 for first place); **Kyah Kang** of Langley, B.C who attends Crredo Christian High School in Langley (\$1500 for second place); and **Caleb Thompson** of Winchester ON who attends St. Thomas Aquinas High School in Russell ON (\$1000 for third place). Over the past 21 years more than 1060 senior high school students have participated in the scholarship program.

The essay topic this year was the following:

Describe how one could help build a *culture of life* (one that uncompromisingly respects and cherishes the dignity of all human life from conception to natural death). Your suggestions may range from a plan to protect the conscience rights of both current health professionals and of those contemplating medical studies - to more effective regulations regarding biomedical research, or from new peaceful public activism - to more effective strategies in the various fields of communication. This is an open-ended, non-exhaustive list.

The essays of the prize winners are to be published in a national monthly newspaper over the next three months. The next edition of the scholarship program is slated for the fall of 2022. The topic for the essay and all pertinent information regarding applications will be posted at both theinterim.com/category/fr-ted-colleton-scholarship/ and the website of the sponsor niagararegionrighttolife.ca/projects/ . Check those sites for information in early September, at the beginning of the new school year.