

College Guild  
PO Box 6448, Brunswick ME 04011

# JOURNALISM CLUB

## Unit 1 of 6

### Thinking Like a Journalist

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Welcome, graduates of Creative Language! Completing the Creative Language course makes you eligible for an advanced course where you can specialize in a specific area of writing: poetry, drama, short story, or journalism. All four courses have these in common:

- Good writing takes hard work to make it the best it can be, and that means stepping back, rereading, and editing your work – often over and over again!
- These are considered “advanced” courses. That means that we’re going to be tough and tell you where your work can be better.
- Though journalism is non-fiction and based on fact, creativity is important. Your aim is to present your work in a new or compelling way so that your readers pay attention to what you have to say.

In Journalism Club, you will think critically about the field of journalism and write many of your own articles! Though you are welcome to report on real events, the goal of this course is to work on writing in the style of journalism. Therefore, for any article you write you are welcome to make up stories, characters and quotes. For example, if you want to write a news story about aliens visiting Earth that includes an interview with the president, go for it!

#### Introduction

Journalism, or the act of gathering and sharing of information, has many purposes. To think like a journalist, it is essential to understand why journalism is so important. Journalists educate the public on current events and issues. They share facts and sometimes opinions to create dialogue. They hold public officials accountable for their actions. Sometimes, journalists entertain. They connect towns, cities, and countries to one another.

1. **Would you like to be a journalist? If so, what kind of journalist?**
2. **Describe a situation where a journalist holds a public official accountable. It can be national or local and real or fictional.**

For this course, College Guild interviewed two local journalists. The first, Greg Kesich, is the opinion editor of the Portland Press Herald, a print newspaper. The second, Pat Callaghan, is an anchor at News Center Maine, a television network. Throughout this course, we’ll be using these interviews to understand how journalists look at their jobs and what the profession of journalism is really like.

## The Freedom of the Press

The motto of The Washington Post, a major American newspaper, is “Democracy Dies in Darkness”. With this motto, The Post implies that its primary purpose is to inform American citizens so that they are not “in the dark” and can make educated decisions in elections.

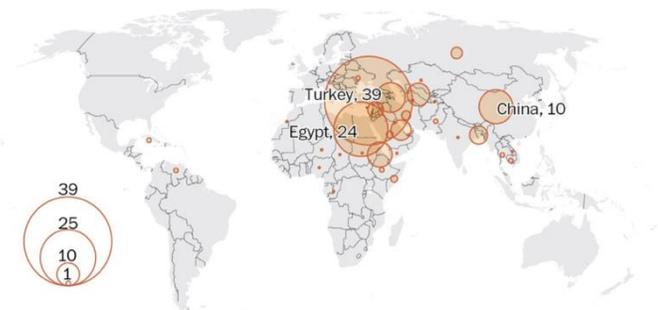
Pat Callaghan notes that journalism is the only profession codified in the Bill of Rights, making the press as important as every branch of government. The First Amendment to the US Constitution says, “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.”

Greg Kesich says that the freedom of the press is really about the freedom of the people to know what is going on. He says that the press is just the intermediary between the government and the people, and that the relationship between the government and the press should be “as open as it possibly can be short of damaging the people” at all levels of government. Pat Callaghan adds that politicians actually hurt themselves when they shun the press for short term personal gain, because they don’t reach the general public. He says, “openness is always better”.

3. How could something done by the press cause immediate harm to the people?
4. Do you think there should be any limits on the freedom of the press? Why or why not?

In many countries, the freedom of the press is limited. Journalists can be imprisoned for portraying the government in an unfavorable manner. They can also be killed. The maps below show where journalists were killed and imprisoned in 2017.

**Journalists imprisoned in 2017**



Source: Reporters Without Borders

THE WASHINGTON POST

**Journalists killed in 2017**



Source: Committee to Protect Journalists

THE WASHINGTON POST

Even if journalists don’t live in countries where their freedom is limited, they may put their lives in danger by reporting in war zones. Marie Colvin was an American journalist who worked as a war correspondent for The Sunday Times, a British newspaper. She wore an eye patch after losing sight in one of her eyes due to a grenade blast while reporting on the Sri Lankan Civil War. This incident did not deter her from continuing to work. When reporting on the siege of Homs in Syria, she was killed by an IED. Her family’s lawyers claimed they had proof that the Syrian government had ordered her assassination.

David Rohde was a reporter for The New York Times doing research in Afghanistan in 2008 when he was kidnapped by the Taliban, the political movement waging war there. The New York Times worked with other news outlets to keep the kidnapping secret from the public in hopes that this would help Rohde’s chances for survival and release. Rohde escaped after 7 months in captivity and made it home safely. The following is an excerpt from a news article about his escape.

**Excerpt from The New York Times: “Times Reporter Escapes Taliban After 7 Months”**

By The New York Times | June 20, 2009

*David Rohde, a New York Times reporter who was kidnapped by the Taliban, escaped Friday night and made his way to freedom after more than seven months of captivity in the mountains of Afghanistan and Pakistan.*

*Mr. Rohde, along with a local reporter, Tahir Ludin, and their driver, Asadullah Mangal, was abducted outside Kabul, Afghanistan, on Nov. 10 while he was researching a book.*

*Mr. Rohde was part of The Times’s reporting team that won a Pulitzer Prize this spring for coverage of Afghanistan and Pakistan last year.*

*Mr. Rohde told his wife, Kristen Mulvihill, that Mr. Ludin joined him in climbing over the wall of a compound where they were being held in the North Waziristan region of Pakistan. They made their way to a nearby Pakistani Frontier Corps base and on Saturday they were flown to the American military base in Bagram, Afghanistan....*

This article is a news article, which means that the authors do not include their personal opinions, focusing on the facts of the story. There is a time and a place for opinions, but when an article is presented as a news article, it should be as unbiased as possible.

**5. Write a news article about something you have an opinion on. Present this topic in a way that a reader wouldn’t be able to tell how you feel about the subject.**

In an opinion article (also known as an editorial or op-ed), there should be facts to support the opinion. However, the purpose of the story is not to present facts but instead to convince the reader of something. Below is an article about an attack on journalists that occurred not in a war zone, but in the United States.

**Excerpt from The Miami Herald: “As America celebrates freedom, remember blood has been spilled to ensure that you have a free press”**

By Leonard Pitts | July 3, 2018

*This one feels different.*

*And what does it say about this country when one has seen enough mass shootings to have become a connoisseur of them? But yes, what happened last week in the newsroom of the Capital Gazette newspaper in Annapolis does feel different. It feels too close for comfort.*

*Part of it is that a colleague lost his brother and that a friend of mine says a friend of his knew another of the victims. Part of it is that I’m familiar with the area where it happened; I bought my wife a Christmas gift at the mall across the street. But the bigger part, I think, is that the killer targeted a profession of which I have been proud to be a part for 42 years. He attacked journalism....*

*I will not blame the murders of Rob Hiaasen, Wendi Winters, Gerald Fischman, John McNamara and Rebecca Smith on the toxic, anti-media environment so gleefully fostered by the president and his*

followers. I prefer to blame the killings on the killer, a 38-year-old man who, we are told, nursed a years-long grudge against the paper.

I will, however, say that in routinely denigrating reporters, in advocating violence against them, in wearing T-shirts calling for them to be lynched, the president and his people did set the stage for what happened, creating a toxic atmosphere that could only have encouraged it. They are not guilty of these murders, but they are not wholly innocent, either.

And it seems fitting that we're having this discussion now. This week, after all, we celebrate the 242nd birthday of these dysfunctional, disjointed and disunited States. So it's a good time to remind ourselves that there's a reason the Founders made the press the only profession protected by name in the Constitution. They understood its critical role as the people's watchdog. They understood, as Thomas Jefferson famously noted, that you'd rather have a free press without a government than a government without a free press....

[Journalists] attend the meetings, dig through the court papers, pin down the public officials, run toward the disaster, work long hours for often modest pay in service to a hoary, cheesy and utterly sacred ideal: the people's right to know. Even when the people hate them in response....

I used to tell my journalism students that any explanation they brought me for missing a deadline better involve blood loss....

Well, last week, even with actual blood loss, actual death all around, Capital Gazette journalists were working on laptops in the parking lot, doing their often-thankless job. Reporter Chase Cook tweeted: "I can tell you this: We are putting out a damn paper tomorrow."

And they did. Of course they did.

6. How did you feel after reading this article, and how did Pitts achieve that feeling?
7. What was the effect of having the first and last paragraph be one or two short sentences?
8. Why do you think Capital Gazette journalists were so determined to put out a paper the day after this tragedy?

See the appendix for two excerpts, one from an opinion article and one from a news article. As practice, read them and see if you can tell which one is which.

9. Write an opinion article about the same topic that you wrote on for question 5.
10. Of the news article and the opinion article, which did you find more challenging to write and why?

### One-Sided Stories

Even if an article is not an opinion article, it can still be written in a biased way. By only giving facts that support one side of the story, a writer can skew opinions of readers. Pat Callaghan emphasizes how a TV network can gain their viewers' trust by presenting both sides of a story.

11. Do you think it's possible for a story to have only one side? If so, can you think of an example?

The following news article presents one side of a story. As you read, imagine what the other side could be.

**Excerpt from Daily Mail: “'Heartless' motorist runs over two ducklings at McDonald's drive-thru in front of horrified mother-of-two and her children”**

By Anthony Joseph | June 1, 2018

*A mother-of-two and her children were left 'gobsmacked' when an 'evil' driver ran over two ducklings who were on the road at a McDonald's drive-thru.*

*Vicky Smith watched on in disbelief as the heartless motorist ploughed into the ducklings after placing their order at the Grand Parade restaurant in Skegness yesterday.*

*Two of the young ducks were crushed underneath the wheel of the Renault Megane - and the driver showed no hint of remorse, driving to the next window without looking back.*

*Ms Smith, who was with her seven-year-old son, Saul, and her five-year-old daughter, Eve, said it upset the whole family....*

*She added: 'She placed her order and then just drove through them. We thought that it wouldn't matter if she had to wait a few minutes for them to move so she could drive forward. She obviously saw them.'...*

*Pictures of the ducklings moments before the incident took place were posted online and sparked anger.*

*People used a number of choice words to describe the driver, with the most common being 'evil'.*

*Many people said she should report the incident to the RSPCA or the police, while others said they would have taken the law into their hands if they saw it happen.*

The writer of this story was not able to talk to the motorist who hit the ducklings. It's possible that this person didn't see the ducklings or thought they were out of the way.

**12. What is the effect of including at the end what “people” in general thought of this story?**

**13. What are some factors that could limit a writer's ability to tell another side of a story?**

Though this story probably didn't do any damage to the driver who hit the ducklings, a one-sided story could harm someone's reputation. For example, in articles about crime, the person who committed the crime is not often given the opportunity to comment. The focuses on victims. Phrases like “he showed no remorse” are common and reduce people to heartless monsters without allowing them to defend themselves.

**14. How could an article acknowledge that there could be another side to a story without condoning a crime?**

### **Headlines and Details**

Readers have a lot of options when they are choosing an article to read. A good headline has the power to catch a reader's attention. What makes an interesting headline depends on the subject and the reader. A few strategies for writing headlines are described on the next page.

Strategy	When to Use It	Examples from <u>The New York Times</u>
Straightforwardness: simply stating what the article is about	When the topic is interesting to readers on its own	“Four Underground Rescue Efforts That Riveted the World” “A Black Man Wore Socks in the Pool. After Calling the Police on Him, a Manager Got Fired.”
Analysis: giving a clue as to the angle the author will take on the subject	When the author is expressing an opinion or the interesting part of the article is the author’s analysis	“A Photography Prize That Shows the World as It Is, and Hopes to Change It” “This World Cup, Remember the Russian People”
Wordplay/Humor: using creativity to introduce the story	When the topic is not too serious and there’s a good opportunity	“Partying in South Beach Like It’s \$19.99” “49ers Feel Joy, if Not Their Toes”
Intrigue: creating a mystery that the reader will be drawn to	When readers will have lots of questions and will read for the answers	“This Asteroid Shouldn’t Be Where Astronomers Found It” “What Barbershops Can Teach About Delivering Health Care”

**15. Try your hand at each of the four strategies mentioned above by writing one headline about any topic for each strategy.**

**16. Which strategy was your favorite and why?**

With a great headline, the article should live up to a reader’s expectations! The most important thing is to include all of the basic details of the story. These basic details are the 5 ‘W’s and 1 ‘H’: who, what, when, where, why and how. Read the next article with this in mind.

### **The Times Record: “Motorcyclist injured in Brunswick crash”**

July 3, 2018

*BRUNSWICK--A Phillips man was taken to Maine Medical Center after crashing his motorcycle along the Exit 28 northbound on ramp to Interstate 295 in Brunswick late Sunday night.*

*The crash was reported to Brunswick police just before 11:30 p.m. Officers found a motorcycle off on the northern shoulder down over an embankment and the rider laying next to it, according to Brunswick Police Cmdr. Tom Garrepy.*

*Garrepy said Aaron Williams, 36, was driving a 1996 Harley Davidson, “and he was attempting to negotiate the curve on the ramp and missed.”*

*Police say Williams was not wearing a helmet at the time of the crash.*

*Williams received what police initially thought were potentially life-threatening head injuries. He was taken by Brunswick Rescue to Maine Medical Center in Portland where he was listed this morning in satisfactory condition.*

*The crash is under investigation.*

17. Identify the 5 'W's and 1 'H' in the above article. Also, look back at your news article from question 5. Which of the 5 'W's and 1 'H' did you include?
18. Imagine a different kind of accident for activity from roller skating to surfing. What are the 5 'W's and 1 'H' in this story?
19. Write an article using your brainstorming work from the previous question. Be sure to include a headline!

It's important to note that even if an article is well written and includes the basic details, it can still be boring. Some short articles are purely meant to inform, so Greg Kesich says you don't have to waste peoples' time trying to engage them. However, with a longer story, it's important to start with an interesting "hook", add extra details and quotes and craft a thoughtful conclusion. Kesich points out that "since caveman times, how we best process information is in a story." Therefore, the best way to get readers to absorb what you say is to tell them a story.

20. What do you think it means to "think like a journalist"? How might you practice this type of thinking in your everyday life?

*Remember: First names only & please let us know if your address changes*

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 Sources: <https://www.wikipedia.org>, <https://www.nytimes.com>, <https://www.timesrecord.com>, <http://www.dailymail.co.uk>

## Appendix

### Excerpt from The New York Times: "With a Sniff and a Signal, These Dogs Hunt Down Threats to Bees"

By Tejal Rao | July 3, 2018

*JARRETTSVILLE, Md. — Cybil Preston stretched her bare hands into a noisy beehive and pulled out a frame of honeycomb, its waxy cells filled with nectar, its surface alive with bees.*

*"This girl right here was just born," she said, pointing out a bee with a silvery thorax. "See how her hair is still matted down like a teddy bear?"*

*Ms. Preston, the chief apiary inspector for the Maryland Department of Agriculture, was on a routine survey of registered colonies northeast of Baltimore. "I'm always looking for signs and signals," she said, as she examined a worker bee with a misshapen wing. "It's like 'CSI.'"*

*Honeybees are a vital, invisible work force in the food industry, pollinating about a third of the nation's crops, and Ms. Preston leads a team that tracks their well-being. She pays close attention to Maryland's commercial colonies, which beekeepers lease out to work blooms across the country — almonds in California, blueberries in Maine and New Jersey, citrus in Florida.*

*Ms. Preston, 45, certifies that each beehive crossing the state line is free of American foulbrood, bacteria that are harmless to humans but can spread quickly from hive to hive, decimating bee populations....*

Four years ago, Ms. Preston trained a dog to help her find foulbrood, figuring it out as she went along. She recently received a grant through the federal farm bill to expand her canine detection program, which could serve as a model for other states.

Unlike human inspectors, dogs don't need the hives opened up to check them for foulbrood. They can trot by, sniffing at the comb, and tell if the bacteria have killed off any larvae. Four people working full time cover less than half of what her dog can, Ms. Preston said.

Her Labrador retriever, Mack, inspected about 1,700 honeybee colonies last fall and winter. In the cold, when the bees were clustered and the comb was hard to inspect visually, Mack used his nose. This allowed Ms. Preston to continue certifying hives for shipment to warmer climates.

### **Excerpt from The New York Times: "There's an App for Wrecking Nannies' Lives"**

By Alex Rosenblat | July 12, 2018

*Domestic workers are, in a sense, the original gig workers. Before smartphones and the internet, nannies, housecleaners and elder care workers have had to juggle multiple schedules, clients and skills and manage their work independently. And they have long faced the challenges associated with the gig economy: precarious employment, low pay and a lack of workplace protections.*

*But this industry has, until recently, operated largely informally, with jobs secured by word-of-mouth. That's changing, as employers are increasingly turning to Uber-like services to find nannies, housecleaners and other care workers. These new gig economy companies, while making it easier for some people to find short-term work, have created hardships for others...*

*In our comparative research on gig economy workers, sociologist Julia Ticona and researcher Alexandra Mateescu interviewed domestic workers in three cities over the last year, as I interviewed drivers for Uber and other ridehail companies in four cities. We conducted over 100 interviews and also spent hours in online forums for these workers.*

*Care.com and similar companies like CareLinx or UrbanSitter are "marketplace" platforms, which promise employers their choice of workers.... Uber, by contrast, simply dispatches ride requests to drivers automatically. Marketplaces require a lot more effort from workers and families, who have to send multiple messages to test the waters... Job seekers need to be constantly online and responsive to secure work.*

*This presents new problems. Nannies, elder care workers, and housecleaners might have years of experience, but that isn't enough to thrive on a marketplace platform. They also need access to a smartphone and reliable internet access, as well as skills in personal branding and internet communications....*

*To be sure, care work jobs have historically been stratified along racial, ethnic and class lines: White, "professionalized" nannies are hired with better pay and working conditions, while lower-status work goes to immigrants and women of color. Gig economy platforms are adding another dimension to these divides and may worsen them.*