Unit 2 Project – Science in the News
What does scientific discovery look like?

Choose a press release that summarizes a recent scientific discovery. In groups of 2-3, write a news article about this discovery that is addressed toward a particular audience. Lastly, write an analysis of the writing choices you made to present this discovery to your audience.

Part 1: News Article (35 points)

Press releases are addressed to journalists, who combine them with additional research to craft it into news stories that fit the interests of a specific audience. Write a 500-750 word news story in which you introduce a scientific discovery to a specific audience, as well as provide some potential impacts or implications of this discovery.

You must choose your own audience. Some options include specific age groups, such as young children (5-12), young adults (18-24), or retirees (55+). You could also choose a niche audience, such as the eco-friendly community, businessmen looking for investment opportunities, or technology enthusiasts.

Your purpose in writing this news article is to inform. This means that you must clearly distinguish between fact and opinion. To do this, keep the following points in mind (thanks to http://www.abcteach.com/free/w/writing_newsarticle_middle.pdf):

- Be factual, truthful, and objective. Write only statements that can be proven or disproven. If you cannot prove whether or not a statement is true, then be sure to cite the source of this information. For example, the following paragraph is an acceptable submission:

  The scientists of ABC Labs have recently developed a new method for targeting and destroying liver cancer cells. According to Dr. John Doe, the head of the oncology department at Johns Hopkins Medical School, “This method has the potential to revolutionize how we treat not only liver cancer, but all types of cancer.”

  Every statement in the above paragraph is factual. The scientists did, in fact, develop a new method for destroying cancer cells. Dr. John Doe does, in fact, say that this has the potential to revolutionize cancer treatment. However, Dr. Doe’s statement is itself an opinion and thus cannot be specifically proven or disproven. Therefore, the paragraph directly quotes Dr. Doe to clearly distinguish between fact and opinion.

  On the other hand, the following paragraph blends fact with opinion and thus is considered unacceptable:

  The scientists of ABC Labs have recently developed a revolutionary method for treating liver cancer. This new method of targeting and destroying liver cancer cells will transform cancer treatment strategies worldwide.
Do you see the difference? The references to a “revolutionary method” and “transforming cancer treatment strategies worldwide” are not statements that cannot be specifically proven or disproven. The author has blurred the line between fact and opinion.

- **Be interesting** while remaining **impersonal**. Your choice of vocabulary and background information will have the greatest influence over these considerations. It is possible to be factual and formal while being engaging! Let the discovery, and the stories/issues behind it be the focus of your article, not your choice of impressive-sounding words or flowery sentence structure.

- **Avoid jargon**. The press release will probably use specific jargon related to that field of research. Your job is to translate jargon into terms understandable for your audience.

Make sure that your news story contains the following important components (again, thanks to [http://www.abcteach.com/free/w/writing_newsarticle_middle.pdf](http://www.abcteach.com/free/w/writing_newsarticle_middle.pdf)):

- The **headline**: a short title intended to catch the attention of your audience. It need not be a complete sentence, but it should summarize the main idea or subject of the article. Capitalize the major words, and use a larger font. As with the article text, keep things factual: “Scientists Discover Potential Link Between Chicken Broth, Cancer” is quite different from “Chicken Broth Causes Cancer.” This is NOT part of your 500-750 word count!
- The **byline** and **location**: the authors of the article, and the bold-print location corresponding to where the action of the story takes place. This is NOT part of your 500-750 word count!
- The **lead paragraph**: briefly answers the five Ws and one H (who, what, when, where, why, and how). This is the framework for the rest of the story.
- The **supporting paragraphs**, or **nutgraf(f)**: this is the heart of your story. Here, you develop the ideas from the lead, and provide additional explanation, details, or quotes to put the discovery into context for the audience. **The supporting paragraphs must contain relevant background information about the general topic (gleaned from lecture) and quotations from external sources – you may not rely solely on the press release to write your news story!** A few words on quotations are necessary here. You must cite any direct quote sources by name in your article. Furthermore, even though this is not normal practice for journalism, you must include a source list at the end of your article for each quote you include (Web references are perfectly permissible here; again, do not use Wikipedia).

**Part 2: Analysis Essay (40 points)**

After choosing a packet, write an essay (typed, double-spaced) in which you analyze the choices you made in order to translate your scientific discovery from the press release to a news article for a particular target audience. Your essay must contain the following:

1. A one-paragraph introduction containing a clear thesis statement.

   - What research agency/agencies is/are responsible for these findings?
   - What were the objectives and conclusions of the study? **Note: your goal is to summarize the scientists’ findings, NOT to critique them. A critique is well beyond the scope of this course.**
3. 4-5 paragraphs regarding the choices you made for your audience.
   - Who was your audience? Are they a particular age group, or a specific niche population? How did this specifically inform your choice of vocabulary?
   - How does your story make this particular scientific discovery relevant to your audience? (For example, if you chose a press release on an anti-aging discovery and you wrote your article for young children, you probably have a lot of explaining to do here!) To address this point, here are several specific things to consider:
     o How does your headline/lead paragraph attract the attention of your target audience?
     o What specific background information did you include for your audience, and why is this information necessary/of interest to this audience?
     o Whom did you quote? Why did you choose to quote these people? In what context were their statements made? Defend your choices; in particular, demonstrate that you have not misrepresented your sources by taking their words out of context.

4. A one-paragraph conclusion containing a clear summary of main points and a very nice restatement of the thesis.

Part 3: Peer Review Event (15 points)
You will be asked to complete an extensive peer review of a fellow group’s work.

Part 4: Group Assessment and Self-Assessment (10 points)
At the end of this unit, you will be asked to evaluate your own contribution to your group, as well as the contributions of your other group members. Be honest, and remember that you are accountable to your group members for the quality of your finished work, as well as on their evaluations.

Project Timeline
   - Wednesday, Jan. 16: choice of press release and audience due
   - Monday, Jan. 21: Drafts of parts 1-2 due.
   - Tuesday, Jan. 22: Peer review session.
   - Wednesday, Jan. 23: final drafts and group/self assessment due by 3:00 p.m.

Project Rubric
The grading rubric for this project is attached. Make sure that you adequately address all categories to receive full points for each part.

A Caution about Source Material
Internet research is acceptable and encouraged; however, exercise care in choosing your sources. Wikipedia is not an acceptable citation for source material. Some better places to start are:

   - The BBC (www.bbc.co.uk), the New York Times (www.nytimes.com) and the Christian Science Monitor (www.csmonitor.com) are three reputable news sources with vibrant science blogs, as well as extensive news coverage of science and its interfaces with society. These are good places to begin looking for good examples of news articles, as well as more general information about the issues surrounding your press releases.
# Grading Rubric for Unit 2: Science in the News

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<tr>
<th>Group and press release:</th>
<th>Points</th>
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## News Story (35 pts total)

**Draft:** complete and on time? ____/5 pts

**Final product:**
- Free of grammar and spelling errors? ____/3 pts
- Appropriate distinction between fact and opinion? ____/5 pts

**Headline**
- Short and attention-grabbing? ____/2 pts
- Appropriate to audience? ____/1 pts
- Summarizes main idea/subject of article? ____/2 pts

**Byline** included? ____/1 pts

**Location** included ____/1 pts

**Lead paragraph** briefly and sufficiently answers all 5Ws/1H? ____/3 pts

**Supporting paragraphs**
- Develop the information from the lead? ____/2 pts
- Provide enough background information? ____/2 pts
- Provide appropriate amount/level of background information for audience? ____/4 pts
- Provide at least one quotation with name of source? ____/2 pts
- List of background sources and quotations provided? ____/2 pts

## Analysis Essay (40 pts total)

**Draft:** complete and on time? ____/5 pts

**Final product:** see detailed essay rubric below ____/35 pts

## Peer Review Activity (15 pts total)

- Comments are constructive? ____/5 pts
- Comments are substantive? ____/5 pts
- Peer review completed in an appropriate amount of class time (at least 60 minutes)? ____/5 pts

## Group and Self-Assessment (10 pts total)

- Group members’ average evaluation of you (0=non-contributing, 4=excellent group member) ____/4 pts
- Self-evaluation agrees (within reason) with group members’ evaluation of you? ____/3 pts
- Honest and constructive evaluations of other group members provided by you? ____/3 pts

## Final Grade for Project 2: __________/ 100 pts
## Analysis Essay Rubric

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<th>3 points</th>
<th>2 points</th>
<th>1 points</th>
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<td><strong>Overall Concerns</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Organization</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>Introduction (w/thesis statement), body, and conclusion are clearly defined</td>
<td>Introduction, body and conclusion are clearly defined, thesis statement vague</td>
<td>One of the requested sections is missing OR thesis statement not clearly identifiable</td>
<td>Essay has no introduction or conclusion; it is only body</td>
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<tr>
<td>Spelling/Grammar</td>
<td>0 spelling/grammar errors</td>
<td>0-3 spelling/grammar errors</td>
<td>3+ spelling/grammar errors</td>
<td>5+ spelling/grammar errors</td>
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<tr>
<td>Writing Style</td>
<td>Well-formulated paragraphs with clear topic sentences; first- (&quot;I,&quot; &quot;we&quot;) or second- (&quot;you&quot;) person are used sparingly (&lt;once/paragraph)</td>
<td>Mixed style: topic sentences are difficult to discern; first person (I/we) or second person (you) used often</td>
<td>No topic sentences; first person (I/we) or second person (you) used very often in the body</td>
<td>Poorly formulated paragraphs or no paragraphs at all</td>
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<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
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<tr>
<td>Highlights main points</td>
<td>Highlights main points without going into too much detail; thesis is clear, concise, and relevant to essay; smooth flow between sentences</td>
<td>Highlights main points to follow; thesis is clear, concise, and relevant to essay; fairly smooth flow between sentences</td>
<td>Some overview of main points presented; thesis requires reworking to improve clarity and relevance; poor flow between sentences</td>
<td>Main points to follow not clearly presented; thesis may be vague or unrelated to parts of the essay; choppy flow</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Body</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Summary of findings</td>
<td>Source research agency identified; study’s objectives and conclusions are clearly and concisely summarized</td>
<td>Objectives and conclusions stated, but no description of research agency OR summary of study’s objectives, conclusions are too brief or too wordy</td>
<td>No objectives and conclusions stated, no description of research agency OR summary of study’s objectives, conclusions are too brief or too wordy</td>
<td>Section missing</td>
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<tr>
<td>Audience and vocabulary</td>
<td>Audience identified; relationship to vocabulary choice specifically described</td>
<td>Audience identified; relationship between audience and vocabulary is somewhat vague</td>
<td>Audience identified; relationship between audience and vocabulary is very vague</td>
<td>Not included/can’t tell</td>
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<tr>
<td>Audience and headline/lead</td>
<td>Specific connections are drawn between the headline/lead paragraph and the interests of the audience</td>
<td>Specific connections are drawn between either the headline or the lead and audience interests, but the other is vague or missing</td>
<td>Vague connections drawn between headline/lead and audience interests</td>
<td>Not included/can’t tell</td>
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<tr>
<td>Audience and background</td>
<td>Background information is identified, specific connections are drawn between background information and the needs/interests of the audience</td>
<td>Background information is identified, but specific connections to audience needs/interests not provided</td>
<td>Background information is not identified OR connection between information and needs/interests of audience is vague</td>
<td>Not included/can’t tell</td>
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<td>information</td>
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<td>Audience and Quotations</td>
<td>Connection between choice of quote sources and audience needs/interests is clearly identified</td>
<td>Connection between choice of quote sources and audience needs/interests is vaguely identified</td>
<td>Not included/can’t tell</td>
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<tr>
<td>Choice of Quotations - Naming</td>
<td>People quoted are specifically identified; sources’ affiliations stated</td>
<td>One of level 3 requirements incomplete or missing</td>
<td>Two of level 3 requirements incomplete or missing</td>
<td>All three level 3 requirements incomplete or missing</td>
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<td>Choice of Quotations – Defense</td>
<td>Original context for quotations provided; clearly describes why quotes are not misrepresented</td>
<td>Original context for quotations provided; vaguely describes why quotes are not misrepresented</td>
<td>Original context for quotations not provided; vaguely describes why quotes are not misrepresented</td>
<td>Not included/can’t tell</td>
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<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>Very nicely restates thesis; clearly summarizes main points (with no new information added); smooth flow of summary points</td>
<td>Nicely restates thesis; clearly summarizes main points (with no new information added); fairly smooth flow of summary points</td>
<td>Thesis restated but somewhat unclear/poorly worded; summary of main points unclear or incomplete; choppy flow between summary points</td>
<td>Thesis not restated; summary of arguments not provided; stylistic elements poor</td>
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Total score (max. 35)