
The Rise of Citizen Journalists

Segment Length: 4:43 minutes

Lesson Description:

Where do *you* get your news, from traditional media or from the new, digital media? How is media changing? And who classifies as a journalist these days? Is this new media “journalism”? What does digital media offer that traditional, mainstream outlets do not? In this segment John Stossel interviews Tim Pool about his involvement in digital journalism and his reporting on Antifa.

Concepts & Key Terms:

Antifa – short for “anti-fascist;” loosely-associated left-wing, militant anti-fascist groups and individuals in the United States who prefer direct action over electoral strategy and who often employ violent tactics in opposition to capitalism, offensive speech, white supremacy, among other things they consider far-right fascism.

New Media – an alternative to traditional media outlets that has emerged in the digital age; “new media” generally refers to independently produced news videos, livestreams, podcasts, and other web content.

Zealot – (noun) a fanatically committed person devoted to and vehement in support of a cause; a person with eagerness and ardent interest in pursuit of something; a person with fervor.

Objectives:

Students will be able to:

- describe new media.
- discuss Antifa and its tactics.
- differentiate between traditional journalism and new media journalism.
- assess the impact of the rise of new media.

Preview Activity:

Have students answer the following question in their notebooks:

What does it take to be a journalist?

Use Think, Pair, Share to have students answer the preview question. After a few minutes, poll the students. Ask the students to discuss their answers.

Viewing Guide:

We recommend that teachers show the video segment twice: once to allow students to view the video and focus on the issues presented, and once to allow them time to complete the viewing guide. After they complete the viewing guide, allow students a few minutes to work in pairs sharing and verifying answers.

Answers to Viewing Guide

1. reporting
2. American flag
3. narrative
4. fund
5. torches

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Viewing Guide

Name _____

Date _____

Class _____

Teacher _____

Directions: As you watch the video, fill in the blanks with the correct words.

1. I'm not going to let them bully me out of _____ on what they're doing.
2. You look at this protest in Portland. A Bernie Sanders supporter showed up with an _____ to protest against the fascists. And so, what did Antifa do? Cracked him over the head with a club and put him in the hospital with a concussion.
3. The initial _____ that we heard from the activists was that this kid got in this man's face. You have just seen right now, it's actually the other way around. No one else watched the video.
4. I want to know why things are happening. Some people don't trust the media. I don't know who to believe. Why don't I just go there and I can see for myself. And then it turns out there's one good way to _____ that: tell people what you saw.
5. When I was growing up, it was the religious conservatives that had the moral panic about music and swear words. But today the moral panic is coming from the left. What happened to the Left at Berkeley holding up signs saying free speech? Today, the left shows up with _____ and burns free speech signs.

Now, take a few moments to reflect on the video and answer the questions below:

At the end of the video, John Stossel said, "Pool is one of many new media people who are changing how reporting is done." How so? _____

Is new media in the digital age good for journalism? _____ Why / Why not? _____

Is new media in the digital age good for the country? _____ Why / Why not? _____

Discussion and Analysis:

1. What do you think the term “citizen journalist” means? Aren’t all journalists citizens?
2. Now that many of us can video record and write and publish on social media, does that make us all potential journalists, or is there more to being a journalist?
3. Why did Tim Pool become a reporter?
4. Why would people bully and harass reporters?
5. What is Antifa? What do they claim to do? What tactics do they use?
6. Based on what you’ve seen in the video and what you’ve heard about Antifa, how do some Antifa members behave? Why does Antifa have a de-escalation team?
7. Tim Pool says Antifa is helping actually helping President Trump. How?
8. If reporters report from their own perspective and with their own biases, who reports the truth?
9. Why do you suppose so many journalists got the story about Covington Catholic High School students wrong?
10. Tim Pool said his coverage of so-called “no-go zones” in Sweden was popular with his viewers for its nuance. What does this say about some news consumers?
11. Tim Pool said he was a supporter of Democrat Bernie Sanders, but that groups such as Antifa want to paint him as a conservative. Why?
12. What is a zealot? Why is Tim Pool a zealot for free speech?
13. John Stossel said that while he doesn’t agree with everything they say, he is glad these new media such journalists exist. Why?
14. John Stossel says reporting is changing. How so?
15. Is it easier to become a new media journalist than to make it in the mainstream media? Why / Why not?
16. Tim Pool dropped out of high school. He found an interest, set about doing it, and learned how to monetize it. What do you think was most important? Did Tim recommend others to drop out? What would you say to a friend who wanted to drop out of high school?

Discuss These Lines from the Video:

1. The news you’re getting comes straight from me and straight from the source on the ground.
2. A Bernie Sanders supporter showed up with an American flag to protest against the fascists. And so, what did Antifa do? Cracked him over the head with a club and put him in the hospital with a concussion.

3. All of these big news outlets—even the Washington Post, CNN—they immediately made the assumption, “he must be a racist sneering at this Native American man.” I didn’t make that assumption. I just see a guy banging a drum and a kid with a weird look on his face.
4. Instead of going to college and taking on debt, Pool just started videotaping what interested him.
5. But you know, one side will have you believe it’s the end of the world and the other will have you believe nothing’s happening at all.
6. What happened to the left at Berkeley holding up signs saying, “free speech”? Today, the left shows up with torches and burns free speech signs.

Quotes for Discussion:

The need for gatekeeping in today’s media environment is stronger than ever, as there needs to be an honest public sphere which provides academic, cultural, historic, and ethical news, which has been filtered through by gatekeeping journalists.... Professional journalists need to assert control over news construction and protect their statuses among the public.

– Gabrielle Tutheridge

More voices, more sources, more access, more perspectives in news is better, and that’s what the internet age has given us, and that’s good for consumers of news....

– Brian Doherty

Our social media friends have become the “managing editors” deciding what we see. An article needs to be “liked” and shared multiple times before many people see it in their feed.... There are also many “fake news” websites that compete for attention with sensational headlines and ridiculous storylines that tend to get shared more often due to the lack of readers fact checking or reading more than the headline. That means that authentic content is hard to come by now. In fact, fake news is actually more likely to spread than the truth.

– Nicole Martin

Eyewitnesses to breaking news can tweet pictures from scenes, when professional journalists aren’t always present. People who are victims of oppressive regimes can publish text, videos and photos from the world’s conflict zones instantaneously, bearing witness as citizen journalists and allowing the masses to see and consume history, unfiltered.

– Daniel Petty

I am grateful to journalism for waking me up to the realities of the world.

– Eduardo Galeano

Activities:

1. Have students complete the accompanying Quotes Activity and Stakeholders Chart.
2. Read and write a summary of one of the following articles:
 - A) “Three Major Ways Social Media is Changing Journalism” by Kurt Wagner
<https://www.scu.edu/illuminate/thought-leaders/kurt-wagner-12/three-major-ways-social-media-is-changing-journalism.html>
 - B) “Distrust of Social Media is Dragging Traditional Journalism Down” by James Ball

<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2018/jan/22/distrust-social-media-traditional-journalism-fake-news>

C) “The Role of the Citizen Journalist in Today’s World is Changing” by Mary Bock
<https://news.utexas.edu/2016/10/19/role-of-the-citizen-journalist-is-changing/>

D) “How Podcasting is Changing the News Media” by Geoffrey James
<https://www.inc.com/geoffrey-james/will-podcasting-save-the-news-media-industry.html>

E) “How Social Media Has Changed How We Consume News” by Nicole Martin
<https://www.forbes.com/sites/nicolemartin1/2018/11/30/how-social-media-has-changed-how-we-consume-news/#6b7997d93c3c>

3. Write a persuasive essay in which you explain possible benefits and drawbacks of independent, new media journalism. Offer your opinion as to whether its advantages outweigh the downsides of more decentralized news media.
4. Produce a “man-on-the-street” video in which you ask people where they get their news, and why. Follow up by asking how much they trust various news sources such as newspapers, TV networks, YouTube videos, cable broadcasting, and online articles.
5. Conduct a classroom debate on the topic of whether independent, new media journalism or established, mainstream news outlets are better at reliably informing the public.
6. In a group of 3-4, make a short video explaining the difference between cable broadcast news reporting and new media journalism.
7. Research and write a report on Antifa, focusing on its history, motivation, and tactics. Include an overview of the different perspectives commentators across the political spectrum have of Antifa.
8. Tim Pool points to media coverage of the Covington Catholic High School incident as an example of poor journalistic practices. Research the incident and write a report on what happened, and what media coverage at the time got right and wrong.
9. Read and summarize or take Cornell Notes while reading: “The Media Wildly Mischaracterized That Video of Covington Catholic Students Confronting a Native American Veteran” by Robby Soave.

<https://reason.com/2019/01/20/covington-catholic-nathan-phillips-video>

10. Research and create a slideshow presentation to explain how social media suspensions and YouTube demonetization affect new media journalism. End with a slide with your perspective on this controversy.
11. Watch “Tim Pool: The Journalism Revolution” by Brett Novak and write a summary of the video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SEVNA8EnTeA>
12. Research and report on Tim Pool, via an essay, slideshow presentation, or other means. Be sure to use his social media accounts and website (timcast.com) to explain or demonstrate what he does, why he does it, problems it might cause him, and how he makes money doing it.

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Quotes Activity

Name _____

Date _____

Class _____

Teacher _____

Directions: First, read each quote and place a P on the line to indicate the quotation is pro (in favor of) new media journalism and an A to indicate the quotation is anti (against) new media journalism. Then, either write a persuasive essay in which you take a position on new media journalism vs. traditional journalism. Be sure to address the opposing argument in your essay, or complete the accompanying Stakeholders Chart.

_____ The need for gatekeeping in today's media environment is stronger than ever, as there needs to be an honest public sphere which provides academic, cultural, historic, and ethical news, which has been filtered through by gatekeeping journalists.... Professional journalists need to assert control over news construction and protect their statuses among the public. – Gabrielle Tutheridge

_____ More voices, more sources, more access, more perspectives in news is better, and that's what the internet age has given us, and that's good for consumers of news.... – Brian Doherty

_____ Our social media friends have become the “managing editors” deciding what we see. An article needs to be “liked” and shared multiple times before many people see it in their feed.... There are also many “fake news” websites that compete for attention with sensational headlines and ridiculous storylines that tend to get shared more often due to the lack of readers fact checking or reading more than the headline. That means that authentic content is hard to come by now. In fact, fake news is actually more likely to spread than the truth. – Nicole Martin

_____ Eyewitnesses to breaking news can tweet pictures from scenes, when professional journalists aren't always present. People who are victims of oppressive regimes can publish text, videos and photos from the world's conflict zones instantaneously, bearing witness as citizen journalists and allowing the masses to see and consume history, unfiltered. – Daniel Petty

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Stakeholders Chart

Name _____

Date _____

Class _____

Teacher _____

Directions: Fill in the chart below based on the video, the quotes supplied in the Quotes Activity, your perceptions of the stakeholders, those impacted by traditional and new media journalism.

Stakeholders	Possible Point of View	Your Reasoning / Explanation
Traditional journalists		
New media journalists		
Viewers who want the truth		
Viewers who want the media to reassure them they are right		
Antifa		
What conclusions can be drawn about the debate over new media journalism?		