

Some initial concepts

- **Critical thinking**
 - Look critically at news from any source
 - Don't accept everything at face value
 - Skepticism, not cynicism
- **Does news story pass the 'smell test'?**
 - Accuracy, but also completeness
 - Check it out from multiple sources
- **Context**
 - Does story provide background for fuller understanding?
 - Does it only take an outsider's point of view?
- **Is the story misleading?**
 - Does it invite false inferences?
 - Does the headline match the story?
 - Does the coverage seem to sensationalize the story?

Today's news environment

- Previous generations – news came mostly from established local & national news outlets
- Now – an ocean of information
- Hundreds of outlets, most available to everyone
- Instant coverage (or expectation of it)
- Professional and non-professional
- Participate, not just consume
- Less established news hierarchy
- More difficult to stand out
- More opinion-driven material
- More difficult to know what to believe

**Let's back up
a little...**

What is news?

- Verified information that is relevant to public life.
 - *Ellen Hume, media analyst*
- That which protrudes from the ordinary.
 - *Walter Lippmann, columnist & political advisor*
- The departure from normal.
 - *Leo Rosten, author and humorist*
- What I say it is.
 - *David Brinkley, longtime NBC news anchor*

Begin with background info

- Fully understanding current media landscape requires knowing how we got here
- Connective threads across many decades
- It's not all about technology
- Numerous elements of today's news environment can be traced to previous practices & trends
- Focus on key elements, individuals, turning points

Human nature vs. technology

- Theory of **Technological Determinism**
 - Technology shapes our lives
 - Technology changes how society operates
 - Technology changes how people think, feel, act
 - Society evolves in directions defined by technology
- Are there aspects of life that tech doesn't change?
- Scholarly research: Technology constantly changes, but human nature does not