

One Institution at a Time

The institutions of America are crumbling, it says here, but none so time-honored and none so precipitously as the Fourth Estate.

I'm not sure when I stopped reading newspapers, but they fell out of my favor when I was a freshman in college. My professor for Advanced Composition used the local papers in every class to present to us examples of horrendously poor writing. Sometimes he would even use the eminences such as the New York Times, the Washington Post, or the Louisville Courier-Journal. He implied that eventually we would become dolts, as a national population, because of the habitual trashing of the language. And, no, he wasn't a grammar zealot. Rather, he was one who suggested that the media were pursuing false ideals.

For the next decade, I got my news from Rolling Stone and National Lampoon. We did not own a television. News was like tuning in to a soap opera every year or so — the plot lines were still the same, as were the lack of quality.

But my purpose here is not to write a history, but to examine where we are today. To do this, I have decided to review a typical day's throughput on popular WWW newsfeeds.

Here are the headlines, except for sports-related ones which could be written by reassembling confetti:

- [A celebrity] pleads not guilty to multiple charges of criminal sexual abuse — Undeveloped Sex Drama (to be continued)
- [An alleged disruptor] was carrying toy gun, police reveal after shooting him dead — Jackboot Drama (to be continued)
- [National] police detain hundreds in [provincial] sweeps — Jackboot Drama (to be continued)
- Pro-life movie 'Unplanned' gets unexpected R rating — Divisiveness Drama (to be continued)
- A stern memo about [a convict to be sentenced] says he 'brazenly violated' law — Veiled Courtroom Drama (to be continued)
- Every Angle of the 2019 [new product] — Untried Consumer Product Drama (to be continued)
- [A country's] [royal personage] becomes country's first [female] ambassador with [another country] role — Veiled Foreign Relations Drama (likely to be continued)
- The [nationality] do not have a moral compass in the way they do business — Abstractly Referenced International Commerce Drama (to be continued)
- AOC: 'Is It Still Okay to Have Children' in the Age of Climate Change —

AOC/Fear/Climate Drama (to be continued, incessantly)

- ‘Unhinged madman’: Former U.S. budget director says [POTUS] is ‘conducting 4 wars on the economy’ — Opinion on Opinion (to be continued, incessantly)
- Airlines admit having cameras installed on back of passengers’ seats — Anti-Corporate Drama (to be continued, incessantly)
- [A national capital city] Postcard: Children hope to give [a leader] comradely welcome — Opinion on Sideshow / Foreign Relations Drama (likely to be continued)
- Oscars 2019: The worst-dressed stars including [celebrities A, B, and C] — Opinion on Sideshow / Celebrity Drama (likely to be continued, incessantly)
- Tunnels, civilians slow capture of [militant group]’s last [a nation] pocket — Pseudo-concrete Foreign Relations Drama (likely to be continued)
- [A celebrity]’s alleged plan to manufacture outrage diminishes impact of real hate crime — Opinion On Hate Crime Drama (to be continued)
- Tornado tears through [a locale] leads to first tornado death of 2019 — Weather / Fatality Drama (to be continued, forever)
- Flood threat persists in [a region] while severe storms diminish in the [larger region] — Weather Futurism Drama (to be continued, forever)
- Snow emergencies in [northern latitude] — Weather Persistence Drama (to be continued, forever)
- [A military] officer, self-described white nationalist, planned terror attack to ‘kill almost every last person,’ feds say — Terror / White Nationalism / Fed Drama (to be continued, forever)
- Harry and Meghan meet Moroccan girls during official tour — Royal Drama (never ending)
- [A politician] attracts crowds in [a primary state], but leaves questions about what she believes — Unsupported Assertion / Unverified Supposition Political Drama (never ending)
- [A country] breaks diplomatic relations with [another country] over aid, [a politician] says — Pseudo-concrete Foreign Relations Drama (likely to be continued)
- Iceberg twice the size of New York City about to break off Antarctica, says NASA — Help me! I’m melting! (Every earthly ice mass has an edge from which pieces break)
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As Cliff Arquette might have said, “it goes on ... ”

I once lived in Manhattan, NYC, for 3 months in 1985. It was the apparent practice of every “news” outlet to have at least one story every day for both Donald Trump and Rudolph Giuliani. I learned subsequently that each of those egomaniacs probably planted those stories. Today’s news mavens, it seems, have taken pages from those books by making sure that certain genre of accounts appear in every release.

— Verbal Vol