

Science in the News Assignment

ASSIGNMENT

The public often turns to science to help them answer several important questions, including everything from losing weight to immigration policy. While the media strives to keep up with the latest research, the reality is that some topics are complex, and scientists don't always effectively communicate their ideas. As a result, misunderstandings abound on many subjects, and people are regularly fooled by pseudoscience and organizations with a vested interest in twisting the truth. The next assignment asks you to explore how the news has dealt with a recent piece of research. With another person, I want you to browse through the news for a study in your area of interest. Read through both the original paper and the reports on the topic. Then, **your task is to deliver a short presentation (with a PowerPoint) where you summarize the research and discuss how effectively the media handled the topic.** The discussion should be aimed at a general audience—in other words, as you go through the presentation, you probably will need to explain the key concepts and methodological choices to help us understand the gist of the research.

You might consider looking in the following places for news about recent scientific research:

www.reddit.com/r/science

www.iflscience.com

www.nytimes.com/section/science

www.theatlantic.com/science/

<https://www.vox.com/science>

www.discovermagazine.com

www.nationalgeographic.com

www.scientificamerican.com/

SCHEDULE

We will have one presentation each class period for the vast majority of the term. Once you've signed up for a time, **make sure to clear a topic with me at least one week in advance**, mainly so we can avoid repeat topics during a particular week. I'm looking for recent research, although I'm purposely allowing the definition of "recent" to be vague to allow presentations on a variety of topics. However, as a general rule, try to avoid topics that have been out of the news for a month.

LENGTH

About 10-15 minutes