

## ROUND TABLE

### SHOULD WE BE TOLD THE WHOLE TRUTH?

The world we live in is becoming increasingly globalized, or 'flat' as some scientists call it. Information crosses borders in a matter of seconds. Threats such as terror attacks, epidemics, economic downturns are no longer local. Should media facilitate the spread of the news of catastrophes and calamities or rather they should engage in preserving order in a given country? Where is the line between investigation and trespass on privacy? This round-table discussion will help to find out.

#### Stage1: Prepare a Lead-in

Study the cases of media coverage of the following events: Chernobyl disaster (1986), Fukushima nuclear disaster (2011), epidemic of coronavirus in China (2019-2020), terror attack in Beslan (2004), 9/11 attack (2001). Was it explicit and transparent enough? Was the disaster/attack/etc. over-reported? Choose the case you would like to use in the lead-in as an introduction into the matter. The lead-in is down to the moderator, but the discussion stage is to be done as a group. Google Docs will come in handy when you need to share your findings with the other team members.

#### Stage 2: Topic-related vocabulary

While preparing for the round table, you will be reading articles on the subject and watching related videos. Whenever you come across a word or a collocation pertaining to the topic (within the topic of excessive/insufficient media coverage these could be words and phrases like *air time*, *hype*, *overhyped*, *to silence*, *to lowball*, etc.), write it down in your topic vocabulary list. This is best done at Google Docs, where you group all of your findings in a table, as shown in the example below.

Name	Word/collocation	Definition	Example
Student 1	-	-	-
Student2	-	-	-

In order to have a clear understanding of when and how these new words and phrases can be used, please, consult the English language corpora online, following the links below. (A corpus is a compilation of authentic written and spoken language, which enables learners to trace patterns of grammar and vocabulary usage)

<https://www.english-corpora.org/bnc/>

<https://www.english-corpora.org/coca/>

#### Stage 3: Define perspectives for the discussion

At this stage, students do not assume roles yet, they rather speculate on the variety of opinions that could be voiced on the subject and do Internet and other media research.

It is better if the number of perspectives equals the number of attendees, which does not exclude the possibility of some of the speakers having points of convergence.

Here are some examples of the perspectives on Media Coverage of Calamities:

- With threats and challenges going global, population of the world has to be warned of a potential threat and have a clear picture of what is happening.
- Excessive coverage of calamities, such as terror attacks, technogenic disasters or epidemics, is far from being reasonable as it only breeds panic and may entail more casualties.

Report on your progress in class.

#### Stage 4: Assume roles and prepare for the role-play

Choose a public figure whose views you would like to present and prepare a set of arguments to support your stance. This task requires both analytical and critical skills.

1. **Chairperson** makes an opening statement and offers a lead-in, sets the tone of the discussion focusing on the following questions
  - Do media act to the advantage of terrorists when they explicitly cover terror attacks?
  - How to provide a comprehensive and truthful coverage without breeding panic?
  - How to draw the line between journalist investigation and invasion of privacy?

The list of questions and points for discussion is to be continued by the student that assumes this role (use Google Docs).

2. **Dennis Wecker, researcher of violent extremism, university of London.** Extensive coverage of terror attacks gives the perpetrators ‘the oxygen of publicity’ and contributes to their initial purpose - spreading fear and panic.

3. **Adam Higginbotham, journalist and author of *Midnight in Chernobyl: the Untold Story of the World's Greatest Nuclear Disaster*.**

(see more at <http://adamhigginbotham.com/Archive/About.html>), Propaganda and secrecy obscured the real scale of the disaster. People tended to exaggerate the death toll. Hiding the truth can result in even more panic as people are prone to play up the scale of a threat when they do not have a clear picture. Learn more at <https://www.kalw.org/post/media-roundtable-untold-story-chernobyl-disaster-attacks-abortion-rights#stream/0>

4. **Richard Sambrook, former director of BBC News, professor of journalism.** See more at <https://www.cardiff.ac.uk/people/view/182960-sambrook-richard> Journalism is all about informing people and telling them the truth. Everyone’s voice must be heard, otherwise we risk resorting to censorship.

5. **Elana Newman, professor of Psychology, co-director of the Dart Center for Journalism and Trauma.** See more at <https://dartcenter.org/about/people/elana-newman>  
<https://www.apa.org/monitor/2014/02/psychology-record>

Journalists should work in close cooperation with psychologists to cover sensitive issues in an ethical way.

6. **Jahan Mahmoud, anti-extremism adviser.** See more at <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2016/mar/18/deradicalising-britain-the-activists-turning-young-muslims-away-from-extremism>

Disproportionate coverage of terror attacks committed by Muslims leads to further exclusion and radicalization of minority groups in the British society.

**7. Luke Temple, Dr, University of Sheffield.**

<https://www.sheffield.ac.uk/news/nr/speri-newspaper-neoliberal-study-1.534767>

Newspapers help defuse anger about austerity measures and economic downturn. It is not what you tell, but how you tell it and what terms you use that matters.

**8. Raymond Zhong , journalist, NYtimes.** At the age of social media it is becoming increasingly difficult to cover up the truth. The Chinese Government opts for ‘planned and controlled publicity’ in covering the coronavirus 2020.  
<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/01/27/technology/china-coronavirus-censorship-social-media.html>

**9. John Engle, graduate of Trinity College, Dublin, president of Almington Capital Inc.** Being in public service implies having more responsibilities than rights. Politicians do not deserve privacy and should not be free of personal scrutiny. See more at <https://blog.heartland.org/2014/06/politicians-do-not-deserve-privacy/>

Stage 5: Roleplay the round-table discussion in class