

environmental journalism

LEARNING OBJECTIVE: To explore the potential for journalism and media to inform the public and shed light on issues that demand further action.

VIDEOS:



A Climate Reporter (Bangladesh) Hasan Kutubi, a local reporter on a remote island of Bangladesh, explains the urgency of building an adequate embankment to manage worsening floods.



Resisting Arctic Oil (Norway) Silje Lundberg, a youth activist, warns that oil drilling in Arctic Norway endangers the largest arctic coral reef in the world.



Forecasting Change (India) In the aftermath of two devastating storms Maharashtra learns to forecast weather to help her fishing community in Southern India.

QUESTIONS:

Journalists can play a powerful role in steering public, social, and political agendas.

- How can this role—and the journalistic objective of impartiality—change in different settings or for different audiences? For example, how might a national or an international journalist cover a story differently than a local journalist?
- What different questions would they ask to frame the issue for their respective audiences?
- Is there a role for advocacy in journalism, and how would you describe this role? Use “A Climate Reporter” to inform this discussion.

KEYWORDS:

journalism; environmental journalism; community journalism; social media; alternative media; public service journalism

ACTIVITIES:

PROBLEM SOLVING:

- In Southern India, Maharashtra is using media technologies to inform her community about important weather changes; discuss how her work fulfills a model of public service journalism and information dissemination.
- If you were to contribute to building a public information system like that seen in the video, what would you need to know about the media technologies that people in your community use?
- In class, sketch out: (1) an issue related to your community’s safety and the environment, and why members of the public need to receive regular updates; (2) a series of questions about local media use that would inform your selection of a media platform for providing updates (i.e., who are you trying to reach? what media platforms do they use regularly?); (3) an outline of groups that could support or contribute to realizing a public information system (i.e., who might have the information that needs to be shared or resources available to support sharing this information? what organizations or institutions might also see a need for this information to be shared?).

SOCIAL MEDIA:

- In a group, discuss The Shore Line videos that have stayed with you. Why have these stories resonated? How were they told? What did they focus on? How do they connect with you or your community?
- List new questions you have about water, shorelines, or the environment.
- Share a link to a specific video with your social media community, express your thoughts, or send questions you want answered to a local politician, journalist, company, institution, or organization. Include us in your conversation by tagging us on Twitter (@theshorelinedoc) or Facebook (@theshorelineproject).

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ACTIVITIES:

WRITING

- In “Resisting Arctic Oil,” Silje Lundberg is interviewed by a reporter who asks, “How can we make a living in this country without oil?” Given her answer, write a follow-up question. A solid interview question would be open-ended (so the interviewee cannot answer “yes” or “no”) and stay on-topic, but also might shift the conversation.
- Lundberg is working to trouble a “mainstream” media narrative about oil’s importance in Norwegian life. How do you think media narratives can be challenged by individuals or organizations? Write a paragraph about opportunities you see for intervening in media coverage or experiences you have had doing just this.
- Public editors turn a critical eye on in-house journalism practices, writing columns about where their organizations may have miscalculated or where more work needs to be done to serve the audience. Adopting the voice of a public editor for your local newspaper, write a column (about 500 words) about how this publication could rethink its narrative or approach to environmental, shoreline, or climate coverage. Acknowledge what the publication does well already, but highlight areas of needed improvement. Consider, for example, what stories have been under-reported, or who else reporters should be talking to.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Journalism Tipsheets (International Center for Journalists)

- icfj.org/sites/default/files/Journalism_Tipsheets.pdf

Ten Practical Tips for Environmental Reporting (International Center for Journalists),

- icfj.org/sites/default/files/Environmental_Reporting.pdf

Teaching Journalism for Sustainable Development (UNESCO),

- unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0023/002338/233878e.pdf

Reporting in Indigenous Communities,

- riic.ca/

Knight Center for Environmental Journalism,

- j-school.jrn.msu.edu/kc/

Environment, The Guardian,

- theguardian.com/us/environment

READINGS:

- Sandra Gabriele and Lisa Lynch (2011). Journalism. In Will Straw, Sandra Gabriele, and Ira Wagman (Eds.), *Intersections of Media and Communications: Concepts and Critical Frameworks* (pp. 239-266). Toronto: Emond Montgomery Publications Ltd.
- Michael Meadows (2013). Putting the community back into journalism. *Journalism* 14(1): 43-60. DOI: 10.1177/1464884912442293
- Robert Hackett (2016). Alternative media for global crisis. *Journal of Alternative and Community Media* 1(1): 14-16. URL: <https://joacm.org/index.php/joacm/article/view/851/739>
- Patricia Audette-Longo (2016). Freedom Train: Mobilizing Alternative Media. *International Journal of Communication* 10: 4368-4388. URL: <http://ijoc.org/index.php/ijoc/article/view/4907/1773>