CIVICS, GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS: Iowa Caucus

TOPIC: Who were the winners of the Iowa Caucus for the Republican and Democratic parties? What issues resonated most with Iowans and how did that impact their voting? How does the Iowa Caucus work and in what ways is it different from the primaries held in other states?
SEARCH TERMS: Iowa Caucus AND (Republican OR Republicans OR Democrat OR Democrats OR GOP)

HEALTH: Zika Virus Emerges

TOPIC: The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention are warning pregnant women that they shouldn’t travel to the Latin American countries that are currently battling the Zika virus. The virus is thought to be responsible for the surge in children born with microcephaly, a brain defect, in Brazil. How is the disease spread? Have cases been found in the U.S.? What is microcephaly? How is Brazil responding to this? How sure are scientists that Zika is the cause of this surge?
SEARCH TERMS: Zika virus OR microcephaly

BUSINESS: Falling Oil Prices

TOPIC: The oil industry, already suffering decreased per barrel prices, is poised for the flood of Iranian oil that has been kept off the market for years due to sanctions. The sanctions were lifted as Iran kept up its end of the nuclear deal it signed last fall. Why had the price of oil been falling before the sanctions were lifted? How do analysts think other oil producing nations will respond to the advent of Iran oil back into the market?
SEARCH TERMS: Iran AND oil AND prices

SOCIAL STUDIES RESEARCH TOPICS

BUSINESS: iPhone Sales

TOPIC: Apple has announced the slowest growth of their iPhone sales in their history and warned that sales may yet drop further. What have been the reasons for the long-standing success of the iPhone and why are the sales now slowing down? What is the usual arc of a product’s popularity and what are some other products that had a long run of popularity? How and why did their popularity slow down?
SEARCH TERMS: iPhone AND sales

BUSINESS: Wal-Mart Closings

TOPIC: Wal-Mart is closing 269 of its stores, including 154 in the United States. What is the impact of these closings on local communities and local economies? Why are they closing so many stores?
SEARCH TERMS: (Wal Mart OR Wal-Mart OR Walmart) AND (close OR closings)

CIVICS, GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS: Taiwan Elections

TOPIC: The Democratic Progress Party has won the presidency of Taiwan and has gained control of the legislature as well. Tsai Ing-wen will be the first female president of the island nation. Among the elected legislators is the New Power Party’s Freddy Lim, the leader of the black metal band Chthonic. What are Tsai’s domestic policies? What are her policies concerning China? What was Lim’s connection with Amnesty International? How popular is his band across Asia?
SEARCH TERMS: Taiwan AND (Tsai Ing-wen OR Freddy Lim)
CIVICS, GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS: A New Start in Myanmar

TOPIC: Members of the National League for Democracy (NLD) took their seats as a majority in Myanmar’s legislature. It is the first freely elected group in 55 years. Many of the new parliamentarians are former political prisoners. What percent of the parliament remains serving military officers? What will be the role, if any, in the government of Aung San Suu Kyi?

SEARCH TERMS: Myanmar AND (National League for Democracy OR NLD)

CIVICS, GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS: U.S. and Iran Relations

TOPIC: A small group of American sailors that had been picked up when their ships sailed into Iranian waters were released within days after heavy negotiations between U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry and Iranian Foreign Minister Javad Zarif. What were the reasons the sailors were being held and what terms were negotiated for their release? What are other political factors between Iran and the U.S. that could have been impacted if these negotiations became hostile?

SEARCH TERMS: (America OR U.S. OR United States) AND Iran AND sailors

CRIME AND LAW: Oregon Militia

TOPIC: A group calling itself the Oregon Militia staged an armed occupation of the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge outside Burns, Oregon but was finally apprehended by the FBI who arrested militia leader Ammon Bundy and others in the group. What was the reason the militia occupied the refuge and what are the most compelling arguments for and against their views? When the FBI apprehended the militia, who was shot and killed and what were the circumstances? What were the specific charges brought against the group?

SEARCH TERMS: Oregon AND Militia AND (Ammon Bundy OR Malheur OR FBI)

CRIME AND LAW: Center for Medical Progress

TOPIC: A federal grand jury has indicted members of the anti-abortion activist group Center for Medical Progress for tampering with government records during its efforts to discredit Planned Parenthood. What records were tampered with and why? What did this group accuse Planned Parenthood of doing and what did a count find in regard to their charges?

SEARCH TERMS: Center for Medical Progress AND grand jury

CRIME AND LAW: Alexander Litvinenko Poison Investigation

TOPIC: An inquiry into the death by poisoning of Alexander Litvinenko has published its results in London. It stated that the murder was state-sanctioned, and that the Russian President Putin probably authorized or was aware of it. What in the nature of the poison lent itself to the theory it was state-sanctioned? Why would Putin seek Litvinenko’s death? What other claims were made in the report? How did Russia respond to this report?

SEARCH TERMS: Alexander Litvinenko AND (inquiry OR report)

ECONOMICS: Negative Rates

TOPIC: Japan’s central bank hopes to encourage banks to loan more money by charging a negative interest rate on new commercial deposits in the Bank of Japan. This fee will be 0.1 percent. The BOJ is seeking to get to a 2% inflation rate. How are they dealing with existing deposits? Is this likely to succeed in its goals?

SEARCH TERMS: Bank of Japan AND interest rates

ECONOMICS: New Tax Deal

TOPIC: President Obama and Speaker of the House Paul Ryan have worked out a tax cut agreement. What are the details of this agreement and how will it impact the federal deficit according to the Congressional Budget Office? What were the compromises made to come to this agreement and what spurred the agreement?

SEARCH TERMS: Obama AND Ryan AND (tax or taxes) AND (cut OR deal)
EDUCATION: Student Fee Protests

TOPIC: Last fall’s demonstrations in South Africa against an increase in university student fees led to an announcement by President Zuma that fees will be frozen for 2016 and the setting up of a panel to look into the idea of free university education for all. Minister of Education Blade Nzimande announced a new model of student aid would begin in 2017. What caused these protests? What beyond fee increases were students demonstrating about? How did people outside the education sphere view the protests?

SEARCH TERMS: South Africa AND fees AND students AND (demonstrations OR protests)

EDUCATION: New SAT

TOPIC: The last test using the old Scholastic Aptitude Tests (SATs) is taking place and the new version will be in use from now on. What are the differences between the two versions and why was the test changed? What has been the reaction from the education field and from the public regarding these changes?

SEARCH TERMS: (SAT OR Scholastic Aptitude Test) AND new

HISTORY: Margaret Sanger

TOPIC: It has been 100 years since Margaret Sanger’s first birth control clinic opened up in Brooklyn, New York City. How was this birth control clinic initially treated by the community and the country? How did family planning centers evolve?

SEARCH TERMS: Margaret Sanger

HISTORY: Prehistoric Bones Found

TOPIC: Bones discovered in Kenya seem to show an example of group-on-group violence and may be the result of prehistoric warfare. There were 12 individuals whose remains were relatively complete and a further partial remains of 15 others. What is the evidence of violence that was found on the bones? Why do they think this is intergroup violence? What type of society were these people from and how do they differ from other old examples of warfare?

SEARCH TERMS: Kenya and (remains or skeletons or bones) and (violence or warfare or warlike)

HISTORY: The Age of Folklore

TOPIC: Researchers Sara Graca da Silva and Jamshid Tehrani have used a new technique to date fairy tales and folk tales and have determined that they are far older than they seem. One, The Smith and the Devil, may be 6,000 years old. What type of analysis commonly used in biology underlies their conclusions? Do their conclusions seem plausible?

SEARCH TERMS: fairy tales AND Tehrani

SOCIAL ISSUES: Hunger in the Middle East

TOPIC: The turmoil in the Middle East that is driving part of immigration crisis is Europe is coupled with its impacts on the lives of those caught up in its violence. Hunger and lack of drinking water are becoming more prevalent, particularly in Syria where the various fighting forces control who gets what. What are the conditions in individual countries around the region and what has caused them? Is the use of starvation tactics a war crime?

SEARCH TERMS: Middle East OR individual country names AND (hunger or starvation)

SOCIAL ISSUES: Facebook Relationships

TOPIC: A study of Facebook social media users in the Royal Society Open Science journal show that offering more accurate definitions of many online relationships would require adding an acquaintance status in addition to the current friend status. What is the difference between a friend and an acquaintance and why would it matter on social media? What are some of the specifics of the study and how did it explore online relationships?

SEARCH TERMS: Facebook AND Royal Society Open Science
SCIENCE AND HEALTH RESEARCH TOPICS

ENVIRONMENT: License Ban in South Africa

**TOPIC:** South Africa has announced that it will issue no licenses to hunt leopards in 2016. The Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) allows South Africa to issue 150 licenses to hunters who are seeking trophy animals. What is it about the way leopards live that make keeping track of their population difficult? How important to the South African economy is hunting? Do you think this ban makes sense?

**SEARCH TERMS:** South Africa AND hunting AND leopards

ENVIRONMENT: Flint Water

**TOPIC:** Corrosive water from the Flint River has caused contamination of the drinking water of Flint, Michigan when lead from the pipes leached into the water supply. What are the mayor of Flint and the governor of Michigan doing to resolve this problem? Why are Flint’s problems a good warning to many other cities with aging pipes and what can other cities do to prevent the same thing from happening?

**SEARCH TERMS:** Flint AND water AND pipes

ENVIRONMENT: East Asian Cold Snap

**TOPIC:** A cold snap hit East Asia, causing deaths in China, Japan and Taiwan. Subtropical places experienced their first snowfall in decades, and northern Japan had heavy snow. How did people cope with this radical weather change? Why were the fatalities blamed on the weather? Do they know what caused it?

**SEARCH TERMS:** cold snap AND Asia

HEALTH: Clinical Trial Disaster

**TOPIC:** A clinical trial in France goes bad when one participant dies and others suffer brain damage. The Portuguese firm Bial had contracted with a French firm Biotrial to run the tests. Have researchers been able to determine what went wrong for these individuals, while others were taking the drug without problems? Is it ethical to test new drugs on paid volunteers?

**SEARCH TERMS:** (Bial OR Biotrial) AND clinical trials AND fatalities

HEALTH: Overuse of Antibiotics

**TOPIC:** The long overuse of antibiotics in the United States has increased the number of antibiotic-resistant bugs. What is being done to address this problem and what are the most difficult aspects of resolving this? What are antibiotics and how do they work?

**SEARCH TERMS:** antibiotics AND overuse

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY: AlphaGo

**TOPIC:** Google’s software AlphaGo has defeated a human opponent in the ancient Chinese strategy game of go. This is seen as an advance in artificial intelligence. It has also played multiple games against other programs that play go and defeated them. How do you play go? How difficult is it to become a good player and how good was the player AlphaGo defeated? Why is this achievement an advance in AI?

**SEARCH TERMS:** go AND AlphaGo

SPORTS RESEARCH TOPICS

SPORTS: Australian Open

**TOPIC:** The tennis world has held its first major of the year, the Australian Open. Who has won it? Were there any upsets along the way? Based on the finishers, will this tennis season unfold in different ways than last year’s?

**SEARCH TERMS:** tennis AND Australian Open
SPORTS: IAAF Scandal
TOPIC: A report on the International Association of Athletics Associations (IAAF) stated that its former leader, Lamine Diack, had created a culture of corruption, had ignored the Russian doping scandal, and had extorted athletes who had used drugs. The report was compiled by the World Anti-Doping Agency. How is this similar to and different from the FIFA scandal? Do these two scandals speak to the need to replace the heads of institutions like these more frequently?
SEARCH TERMS: IAAF AND Diack

SPORTS: Match Fixing Scandal
TOPIC: Even as one of its premier events occurred, tennis found itself caught up in a match-fixing scandal, allegedly involving lower level players in the earlier rounds of tournaments. How did the match fixing occur? Who benefitted from it?
SEARCH TERMS: tennis AND match fixing

SPORTS: Kathryn Smith
TOPIC: Kathryn Smith is starting as the first female assistant coach in the National Football League (NFL), working for the Buffalo Bills. What is her background as a coach and other experiences in sports? What are the skills noted in her coaching?
SEARCH TERMS: Kathryn Smith AND coach AND Bills

SPORTS: Rams to L.A.
TOPIC: The Saint Louis Rams professional football team is moving back to Los Angeles. Why are they moving? What has been the reaction of both cities?
SEARCH TERMS: Rams AND Los Angeles

SPORTS: Crimson Beats Clemson
TOPIC: The University of Alabama’s Crimson Tide has beaten the Clemson University Tigers for the college football national championship. Who were the major players for each team in the game and what were the best plays? How did this win distinguish University of Alabama football coach Nick Saban?
SEARCH TERMS: Alabama AND Crimson AND Clemson AND championship

ARTS AND LITERATURE RESEARCH TOPICS

FILM AND TELEVISION: Screen Actors Guild Awards
TOPIC: Leonardo DiCaprio and Brie Larson were the top winners respectively for their roles in The Revenant and Room at the SAG Awards? Who were the other big winners and what most impressed the critics about their work? What comic actress was given a Life Achievement award and what were her major accomplishments? What aspects of this year’s Academy Award nominations were a focus and how did the ceremony address them?
SEARCH TERMS: (Screen Actors Guild OR SAG) AND awards AND DiCaprio AND Brie Larson

FILM AND TELEVISION: Race and Oscar Nominations
TOPIC: The nominating process for this year’s Academy Awards is being criticized for the lack of racial diversity among nominees for the second year in a row. What performances have been noted for being unfairly overlooked? What announcement has the Academy issued in response to this controversy?
SEARCH TERMS: (Academy Awards OR Oscars) AND (nominations OR nominees) AND (race OR ethnicity OR diversity OR black OR African-Americans)
FILM AND TELEVISION: British Broadcaster Shows
**TOPIC:** A study of major British broadcasters shows that women are underrepresented on TV and that there is endemic ageism in casting and sexism in content. The study looked at 500 hours of primetime shows. Soap operas have the most equal casts in gender terms, sports programming the least. How surprising are the conclusions of this study? Do you think that studies like this in other countries would yield similar results?
**SEARCH TERMS:** television AND women AND sexism AND (studies or research) AND Communication Research Group

FINE ARTS AND ARCHITECTURE: Exhibition Cancelled
**TOPIC:** Ai Weiwei, in response to a recently passed Danish law that takes from refugees valuables worth over $1500 to be applied to their resettlement costs, has withdrawn his artwork from two Danish institutions. Did he do the right thing? Should refugees who can afford it be asked to contribute to their resettlement? Or is merely the state piling more misery on already battered people?
**SEARCH TERMS:** Ai Weiwei AND Denmark

FINE ARTS AND ARCHITECTURE: Prize Winner
**TOPIC:** Chilean architect Alejandro Aravena has won the Pritzker Prize. Who established this prize and how is it regarded in the profession it honors? Why was Aravena chosen for this honor? What are his buildings like and are there any in the United States?
**SEARCH TERMS:** Pritzker Prize AND Alejandro Aravena

FINE ARTS AND ARCHITECTURE: Angry Birds Artist
**TOPIC:** Seattle artist Juli Adams has won a settlement after she sued because her concept and design for Hartz Mountain Corporation’s Angry Birds pet toys was licensed to Rovio Entertainment without her permission and then went on to become a hugely popular video game. What are the intellectual property laws regarding the use of artwork and design that were a key part of this case? What determined the size of the settlement?
**SEARCH TERMS:** Juli Adams AND Angry Birds

LITERATURE: Youngblood
**TOPIC:** Former Army Captain in Iraq Matt Gallagher has published his first novel called Youngblood that is about an idealistic Lieutenant and his unit fighting in the Iraq War. What in the novel draws on Gallagher’s own war experiences? What other books has he written and what were the qualities in those books that the critics took note of?
**SEARCH TERMS:** Matt Gallagher AND Youngblood

LITERATURE: A New Beatrix Potter Book
**TOPIC:** It has been announced that a new book by Beatrix Potter will be published this coming September. Apparently she began working of The Tale of Kitty-in-Boots right before the First World War, finished the text and was working on illustrations for it before setting it aside. How was this tale discovered and who discovered it? What characters from her previous books make a return in its pages? What was your favorite Beatrix Potter book?
**SEARCH TERMS:** Beatrix Potter AND The Tale of Kitty-in-Boots

PERFORMING ARTS: Pierre Boulez
**TOPIC:** Pierre Boulez was a French composer and conductor. He composed in the 12-tone serialist style and as a conductor championed 20th Century music. What was his early career like, who did he study with and with what theater was he associated? How were his works received in the 1940s and 1950s? What orchestras was he associated with as a conductor? Does his music sound interesting to you?
**SEARCH TERMS:** Pierre Boulez
PERFORMING ARTS: Paul Kantner
TOPIC: Guitarist Paul Kantner is best remembered as a founding member of the Jefferson Airplane and its spinoff, Jefferson Starship. What musical trends did the Jefferson Airplane help establish and what are some of their most memorable songs? What songs did Kantner write and what other musical projects has he worked on?
SEARCH TERMS: Paul Kantner AND Jefferson Starship

PEOPLE RESEARCH TOPICS

PEOPLE: Abe Vigoda
TOPIC: Actor Abe Vigoda was best known for his television roles in the popular situation comedies Barney Miller and Fish as well as his small role in The Godfather film. What qualities of his acting impressed the critics and what types of characters did he play? What theater did he do? How did the rumors of his death start in 1982 and how did they continue?
SEARCH TERMS: Abe Vigoda

PEOPLE: Glenn Frey
TOPIC: Glenn Frey was a founding member of the hugely popular California rock band The Eagles as well as a producer and actor. What are some of the major hits of the Eagles and which ones did Frey write? What were his major roles as an actor?
SEARCH TERMS: Glenn Frey

PEOPLE: Alan Rickman
TOPIC: British actor Alan Rickman was memorable as Severus Snape and the terrorist Hans Gruber in Die Hard. How did he get into the acting profession and what had he been doing before that? What were some of his most memorable roles on stage and screen?
SEARCH TERMS: Alan Rickman

PEOPLE: David Bowie
TOPIC: David Bowie released a new album, Lazarus, on his birthday. He had been known for the changes in his persona and music throughout his career. How did his final album differ from his preceding work? What different styles did his career encompass?
SEARCH TERMS: David Bowie

PEOPLE: Jacques Rivette
TOPIC: Jacques Rivette was a French New Wave film director. He was known for his lengthy films. What was the French New Wave? Why did his films seem so innovative? Who were his fellow directors? From their descriptions, which of his films seem most interesting to you?
SEARCH TERMS: Jacques Rivette

PEOPLE: Buddy Cianci
TOPIC: Buddy Cianci is best known as a former mayor of Providence, Rhode Island who was twice forced to resign after felony convictions for racketeering? What were his specific crimes? What other careers did he have?
SEARCH TERMS: Buddy Cianci AND Providence AND mayor