CURRENT EVENTS RESEARCH TOPICS

CIVICS, GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS: U.S. Presidential Campaign 2016

TOPIC: With the Iowa Caucuses and New Hampshire primary coming up, candidates for the 2016 presidential election are starting to focus on these two areas. Who are leading the polls for the Democrats and the Republicans, and why? What have been some of the more notable statements made during the recent debates? What candidates have recently dropped their campaigns, and why?

SEARCH TERMS: 2016 AND presidential AND Iowa AND (candidate OR candidates)

CIVICS, GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS: Saudi Executions and Responses

TOPIC: Saudi Arabia has executed 47 people, including Shia cleric Sheikh Nimr al-Nimr, an act which prompted demonstrations across the Middle East and condemnations from other countries. In Tehran, a crowd stormed the Saudi embassy and set it on fire. Saudi Arabia has broken relations with Iran. What was al-Nimr’s crime? Where did demonstrations occur? What is the message that Saudi Arabia seems to be sending with their executions? How did Western countries react?

SEARCH TERMS: Saudi Arabia AND Iran AND Nimr al-Nimr

ECONOMICS: Saudi Arabia and Oil

TOPIC: Saudi Arabia announced a deficit of $98 billion, caused in part by the decline in the price of crude oil. It has raised domestic oil prices, though they are still far lower than in most other countries in hopes of raising more revenues. Why did the Saudis choose to maintain their production of oil rather than raise prices and curtail production? What has happened to their hard currency foreign reserves during this time?

SEARCH TERMS: Saudi Arabia AND oil prices AND budget

ECONOMICS: Fed Raises Interest Rates

TOPIC: The U.S. Federal Reserve has raised interest rates for the first times since 2006. What was the percentage of increase, why was that percentage used and how was it decided? What are the economic concerns and the economic benefits of raising the rate at this time? What is the overall significance of the Fed manipulating the interest rates on the overall economy?

SEARCH TERMS: (Fed OR Federal Reserve) AND interest rates

CRIME AND LAW: Standoff in Oregon

TOPIC: An armed militia took over a federal building in the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge in Burns, Oregon to protest the treatment of ranchers who have been convicted of arson. Who is leading these protests, what are their specific complaints and what is the general political and philosophical outlook of the protesters? What events of 2014 are related, and what were the primary contested issues in those events?

SEARCH TERMS: Oregon AND Malheur National Wildlife Refuge AND Bundy

SOCIAL STUDIES RESEARCH TOPICS

BUSINESS: DuPont and Dow Merger

TOPIC: The DuPont chemical company has announced that it will be merging with the Dow Chemical Corporation. What could be some complications with this merger? What impact would this have on the chemical industry?

SEARCH TERMS: DuPont and Dow
BUSINESS: Uber Union
TOPIC: Seattle has passed a law that allows Uber drivers to unionize. What are the specifics of it? What do the Uber drivers and management think about it? What were the issues that brought about this law?
SEARCH TERMS: Uber AND union

BUSINESS: Coffee Consolidation
TOPIC: JAB Holdings Co. has made an offer for Keurig Green Mountain, who make single serving coffee machines. JAB has other properties in the international coffee field. What family controls JAB Holdings? What other coffee holdings do they control? What is environmentally controversial about the Keurig machine?
SEARCH TERMS: JAB Holdings AND Keurig

CIVICS, GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS: Term Limits Defeated
TOPIC: Voters in Rwanda have decided to end the term limits on their president, Paul Kagame, leading outside observers to wonder if Rwanda will become a democracy in name only. Kagame, who has ruled since 2000, could be in office for years to come. What could lead voters to support the end of term limits in Rwanda? What has Kagame said when pressed about the possibility of his ruling for life?
SEARCH TERMS: Rwanda AND term limits AND Paul Kagame

CIVICS, GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS: Women's Rights in Saudi Arabia
TOPIC: Saudi Arabia has allowed women to vote in municipal elections and to run for office for the first time ever. What caused this change to occur? What other restrictions still remain in place for women? What percentage of the electorate were women? Did any women win office in these elections?
SEARCH TERMS: Saudi Arabia AND voting AND women

CIVICS, GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS: Surprise Attack
TOPIC: Armed gunmen infiltrated and attacked the Indian air force base at Pathankot. This base is located near Kashmir and Pakistan. Who were the gunmen believed to be and what was their presumed motive in making this attack at this time? Why did it take so long for Indian forces to put an end to this attack?
SEARCH TERMS: India AND Pathankot air force base

CIVICS, GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS: Funding Bill
TOPIC: President Obama and the U.S. Congress have passed the 2016 federal funding bill that will fund the government until September 2016. What are some of the key issues addressed in this bill and what will be the impact on the federal deficit? What were the most controversial parts of it? What were some of the predicted consequences if it was not passed?
SEARCH TERMS: federal funding bill

CRIME AND LAW: San Bernardino Terror Attack
TOPIC: A county public health department event in San Bernardino became the target of a terror massacre when two terrorists gunned down 14 employees. How was the plot planned and carried out? Who were the attackers and what help did they have? How did security measures fail to discover their plot? What police action was taken and what discovered in the investigation regarding this case?
SEARCH TERMS: San Bernardino AND terror AND Farook
CRIME AND LAW: Chicago Police Department

**TOPIC:** Chicago Mayor Rahm Emanuel has announced some changes in the Chicago police department’s equipment and practices. What are these changes and how are they expected to end the department’s recent pattern of excessive force and improve community relations? What have been the recent tragic events that have created urgency for the Mayor to address practices in the police force?

**SEARCH TERMS:** Chicago AND police

CRIME AND LAW: Pretorius Appeal

**TOPIC:** The South African Supreme Court of Appeal has determined that Oscar Pretorius is guilty of the murder of his girlfriend Reeva Steenkamp and has directed the trial court to re-sentence him. He had previously been convicted of manslaughter in this case. What lead the original judge to find him guilty of the lesser charge? What was the reasoning of the Appeals court judge? How did the Steenkamp family react to this?

**SEARCH TERMS:** Oscar Pistorius AND murder

EDUCATION: Every Child Succeeds

**TOPIC:** President Obama has signed into law a replacement for the troubled *No Child Left Behind Act* called *The Every Child Succeeds Act*. What does the new act do to fix issues with the previous ones? What are the overall goals of the new act and how does it work to meet them?

**SEARCH TERMS:** Every Child Succeeds

EDUCATION: Cecil Rhodes Statue

**TOPIC:** Oxford’s Oriel College has been the scene of protests asking the removal of a statue of Cecil Rhodes. Rhodes, who founded the Rhodes Scholarships, was a colonialist in Africa in the late 1800s. Do you agree that the statue should be moved because of modern sensibilities towards Rhodes’ actions in the past? Should there be a time limit on how far back such public accounting for attitudes show go? Does Rhodes’ contributions to education now outweigh his imperial ambitions?

**SEARCH TERMS:** Oriel College AND Cecil Rhodes

HISTORY: Sykes-Picot Anniversary

**TOPIC:** The 100th anniversary of the Sykes-Picot agreement, which dictated post-World War I settlement of the Middle East when it became part of the Treaty of Versailles, has just occurred. One of the goals of ISIS is to completely overthrow the Sykes-Picot. What did Sykes-Picot mandate? How did that differ from pre-existing conditions in the region? How successful was the Treaty of Versailles in keeping Europe out of war?

**SEARCH TERMS:** Sykes-Picot AND anniversary

HISTORY: Vichy Revealed

**TOPIC:** France will release the archives of the Vichy government, the collaborationist government that oversaw the south of France for the Nazis from the city of Vichy. It will also release the documents from the initial post-war governments as well. Who formed this government and what happened to them after the war? How did Vichy deal with its Jewish citizens? What was their policy about the French Resistance?

**SEARCH TERMS:** France AND Vichy AND archives

HISTORY: Rosa Parks

**TOPIC:** It has been 60 years since Rosa Parks was arrested for refusing to give her seat to a white man on a bus in Montgomery, AL. What kind of boycott went into effect in reply to the arrest and how effective was it? How did these events inspire a national civil rights movement?

**SEARCH TERMS:** Rosa Parks
SOCIAL ISSUES: Thai Labor Practices
TOPIC: A multi-article Associated Press investigation revealed that the Thai shrimp industry runs on slave or forced labor, particularly the fishing boats and the shelling stations. What did the AP find? How did the Thai industry respond to the accusations? Which U.S. grocery chains stock Thai shrimp and which do not? Was this the first time problems in the industry have come to light?
SEARCH TERMS: Thailand AND shrimp industry AND slavery

SOCIAL ISSUES: Kentucky Marriage Licenses
TOPIC: Kentucky will now issue marriage licenses without the name of the clerk on them. Why was this change made? What has been the best arguments for and against making this change?
SEARCH TERMS: Kentucky AND clerk AND gay AND license

SCIENCE AND HEALTH RESEARCH TOPICS

ENVIRONMENT: Midwest Flooding
TOPIC: The American Midwest is having severe floods especially in Missouri and Illinois. What was the cause of these floods and what is being done to help the people affected by them? What are the best ways to prepare for a flood?
SEARCH TERMS: (Midwest OR Illinois OR Missouri) AND flood*

ENVIRONMENT: Paris Summit on Global Warming
TOPIC: The Paris Summit Meeting on global warming has concluded with an agreement to limit the warming of the Earth to under 2 degrees Celsius. What else was agreed upon? Are there enforcement mechanisms in place in this agreement? Will this be effective in the long run to slow global warming?
SEARCH TERMS: (global warming OR climate change) AND Paris Summit Meeting

HEALTH: Vaccine Approved
TOPIC: Mexico has approved a vaccine for the four strains of dengue fever, the tropical disease also known as breakbone fever. Though the vaccine is only 66% effective against all four strains, it is over 90% effective against dengue hemorrhagic fever, which is the most dangerous of the strains. What symptoms give dengue fever its popular name breakbone fever? How dangerous is the fever, especially the three strains with the lower effectiveness rates? Was Mexico right to approve a drug with a lower percentage of success against the most prominent strains?
SEARCH TERMS: Mexico AND dengue fever AND vaccine

HEALTH: Robotic Legs for Vets
TOPIC: The Veterans Administration has agreed for the first time to pay for robotic legs for veterans who need them. What specifically is the change in guidelines? Who makes these robotic legs and how do they work? What 2014 FDA decision helped clear the path for this change?
SEARCH TERMS: (VA OR Veterans Administration) AND robotic legs

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY: SpaceX
TOPIC: SpaceX has successfully launched and landed a Falcon rocket on a mission that put 11 small satellites into orbit. What was unique about the landing of the rocket and what are the implications of this for the future? What are some recent incidents where the landing did not work?
SEARCH TERMS: SpaceX

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY: CERN Leadership Change
TOPIC: Fabiola Gianotti has become the leader at CERN, who’s Large Hadron Collider has been responsible for advances in physics. What in her career led to this appointment? How does she differ from the typical stereotypes of scientists? What role did she play in the discovery by CERN of the Higgs boson, the so-called God particle?
SEARCH TERMS: Fabiola Gianotti AND CERN
SPORTS RESEARCH TOPICS

SPORTS: BCS Series
TOPIC: Oklahoma will play Clemson at the Orange Bowl and Michigan State will play Alabama at the Cotton Bowl. What is the significance of these bowl games for the college football championship game? What are the strengths and weaknesses of each of these teams?
SEARCH TERMS: Orange Bowl and Cotton Bowl

SPORTS: Yachting Triumph
TOPIC: The Sydney to Hobart race that goes from Australia to Tasmania was won by a U.S. 100-foot super-maxi, Comanche. It is the first win by a U.S. yacht since 1998. Who owns the Comanche and who captained it? What is a 100-foot super-maxi? What were the weather conditions during the race and how did they impact its outcome?
SEARCH TERMS: Sidney to Hobart race AND Comanche

SPORTS: Stein Eriksen
TOPIC: Stein Eriksen was a Norwegian Olympic skier. He won the gold medal in giant slalom and was the first skier from outside the Alps to win a gold. How did his parents help foster his skills? What were some of his notable achievements in skiing? What did he do after retiring from competition?
SEARCH TERMS: Stein Eriksen AND skiing

SPORTS: Meadowlark Lemon
TOPIC: Meadowlark Lemon was a key member of the Harlem Globetrotters. Who were the Harlem Globetrotters? What were some of his key strengths as a basketball player, and what were some of his most popular moves? What did Wilt Chamberlain famously say about Lemon’s playing?
SEARCH TERMS: Meadowlark Lemon

SPORTS: Derrick Henry
TOPIC: As running back for the University of Alabama’s Crimson Tide, Derrick Henry has won the 2015 Heisman Trophy. What are his key strengths? What have been some of his major college football triumphs over the past years?
SEARCH TERMS: Derrick Henry AND Heisman

ARTS AND LITERATURE RESEARCH TOPICS

FILM AND TELEVISION: The Force Awakens
TOPIC: The latest film in the Star Wars series, Star Wars: The Force Awakens by J.J. Abrams has been well received by both critics and the public. What records has this film broken? What are the qualities that the critics and public like about the film? What are some common themes in the Star Wars films and how does the Force Awakens use them in comparison and contrast to other films in the series?
SEARCH TERMS: Star Wars AND The Force Awakens

FILM AND TELEVISION: Coming Attractions
TOPIC: As 2015 came to a close, film critics started looking ahead to 2016 movie releases. Which movies seemed most important to them? Which films seem most interesting to you? Which ones would you avoid, and why?
SEARCH TERMS: 2016 and films and (preview or upcoming)
FINE ARTS AND ARCHITECTURE: Changing Names

**TOPIC:** The Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam is renaming artwork. An example is changing the name of the painting Young Negro Girl to Young Girl with a Fan. Curators note that often names of artworks are not made by the artists themselves, but by others. What are some of the other offensive words that they’ll be altering in these titles? Do you agree with this effort or do you think the original titles should be kept?

**SEARCH TERMS:** Rijksmuseum AND titles

FINE ARTS AND ARCHITECTURE: Ellsworth Kelly

**TOPIC:** Ellsworth Kelly was a painter and sculptor. What was his style of painting and what were the qualities in his work that most impressed the critics? What are some of his most famous works and why were they famous? What is hard edge painting and who else works in this style?

**SEARCH TERMS:** Ellsworth Kelly AND (painter OR painting)

LITERATURE: Relic Master

**TOPIC:** Christopher Buckley has come out with a new comic novel called The Relic Master about 16th century religious and political intrigue that involves the seeking of religious relics. What are some of the qualities of this novel that most impressed the critics? What are some of his other popular books?

**SEARCH TERMS:** Christopher Buckley AND Relic Master

LITERATURE: Salman Rushdie

**TOPIC:** Salman Rushdie has been awarded the Mailer Prize. The prize, named for the late U.S. author, is for lifetime achievement. What are Rushdie’s notable works? What is noticeable about his writings?

**SEARCH TERMS:** Salman Rushdie AND Mailer Prize

PERFORMING ARTS: Lemmy Kilmister

**TOPIC:** Lemmy Kilmister was the founder of the band Motorhead, its bass player, and the only member who was in every version of the band. How could Motorhead’s music be best described? What was Lemmy known for in his off-stage life? How well regarded was he in the music community?

**SEARCH TERMS:** Lemmy OR Motorhead

PERFORMING ARTS: King Charles III

**TOPIC:** British playwright Mike Bartlett's play King Charles III is now in New York. The play imagines Charles, the current Prince of Wales as king and is written in blank verse, similar to a Shakespeare play. What are the qualities of this play that most impress the critics? What are some recent events that are worked into the play and how are they made relevant to the story? What are some other acclaimed plays by Bartlett and what was it about them that impressed the critics?

**SEARCH TERMS:** Mike Bartlett AND King Charles III

PEOPLE RESEARCH TOPICS

**PEOPLE:** John Trudell

**TOPIC:** John Trudell was a Native American political activist, author, actor, musician and poet. What incident involved him on the island of Alcatraz in 1969 and how did the situation resolve? What Native American rights group was he the chairman of? After what tragic event in 1979 did he turn to writing, music and film?

**SEARCH TERMS:** John Trudell
PEOPLE: Tim Peake
TOPIC: British astronaut Tim Peake is on the International Space Station. He has made a long distance phone call to Earth that was a wrong number. What athletic event does he hope to participate in and how will he do so? What scientific experiments will he do in space? How was he selected from the current batch of British astronauts?
SEARCH TERMS: Tim Peake

PEOPLE: Person of the Year
TOPIC: German Chancellor Angela Merkel was named Time Magazine’s Person of the Year. She is only the fourth woman to be chosen for this honor. Why did they choose her? Do you agree with this choice?
SEARCH TERMS: Angela Merkel AND Time Magazine

PEOPLE: Dr. Alfred Gilman
TOPIC: Dr. Alfred Gilman was a Nobel Prize winning researcher, famous for his discoveries with G-proteins. What are G-proteins, how do they work and what did Dr. Gilman discover about them? What are some of his other interesting discoveries?
SEARCH TERMS: Nobel AND Alfred Gilman

PEOPLE: Natalie Cole
TOPIC: Natalie Cole was a popular rhythm and blues singer who rose to fame in the mid-1970s. Who was her father, and what was his influence on her work? What were some of her most famous songs, and what in her style was most prized by the critics?
SEARCH TERMS: Natalie Cole

PEOPLE: Scott Weiland
TOPIC: Scott Weiland was the lead singer for the popular grunge band the Stone Temple Pilots as well as singing with super-group Velvet Revolver. What were the qualities of his singing and writing that most impressed the critics? What is grunge music and how and where did it come about?
SEARCH TERMS: Scott Weiland AND Stone Temple Pilots