

**Science of Science Communication
PSYC 601b**

Prof. Dan Kahan
Spring 2015

Session 12—Science journalism

Questions

1. *“Balance.”* Science-informed policy advocates often complain that the news reporting norm of “balanced coverage” overstates the strength of scientifically unsupportable positions (e.g., climate change skepticism). What is the norm on “balanced coverage”? What value is served by the norm? Is the charge a reasonable one?

2. *Civic function.* What contribution does science journalism make to informed democratic deliberations over science-informed policy debates? What contribution should it make? Is it consistent with that role for journalists to advocate particular positions?

3. *Audience.* Generally, who consumes science journalism? What do consumers value in it? Are there identifiable subgroups of consumers, and if so, what distinguishes them? Are there interests served by distinct elements of the science journalism community? Do you think there is any potential subgroup of consumers that isn’t being adequately served?

4. *Evidence-based science journalism.* Science journalists’ craft norms rest on empirical assumptions about the aims of science journalism, about its consumers’ interests, and about how to effectively attain the former and satisfy the latter. Are you satisfied that those assumptions are all well founded? Do science journalists themselves all agree on them? Do they discuss them amongst themselves and compare their experiences? Are you satisfied with the amount and quality of evidence that would help to evaluate those assumptions? With the institutions that collect it and the methods they use? Do you think it would be of value to journalists to participate (or increase their participation) in collecting evidence that bears on these assumptions?

Readings (indexed to pagination of course readings)

1. Boykoff & Boykoff, Balance as bias, <i>Globan Environmental Change</i> , 14, 125-36 (2004).....	905
2. Boykoff & Boykoff, Climate change & journalistic norms, <i>Geoforum</i> (2007).....	917
3. Shehata, A. & Hopmann, D.N. Framing Climate Change: a Study of US and Swedish Coverage of Global Warming. <i>Journalism Studies</i> 13, 175-192 (2012).	932
4. Kahan, Climate change & the media: what’s the story?	950
5. Silver, <i>Signal & Noise</i>	952
6. Mann, 538: The number of things Silver gets wrong	988
7. Kahan, <i>Wisdom from Signal & Noise part 2</i>	992
8. Revkin, <i>On Frankenstorms & Tribalism</i>	997
9. Roberts, <i>Hawks vs. Scolds</i>	1000
10. Revkin, <i>A closer look at moderating views</i>	1006
11. <i>Economist</i> , <i>A sensitive matter</i>	1010
12. Romm, <i>Making sense of climate sensitivity</i>	1018
13. Schiermeir, <i>IPCC: Despite Hiatus, Climate Change Here to Stay</i> , <i>Nature</i> , Sept. 27, 2013.....	1025