Does News Find Me?

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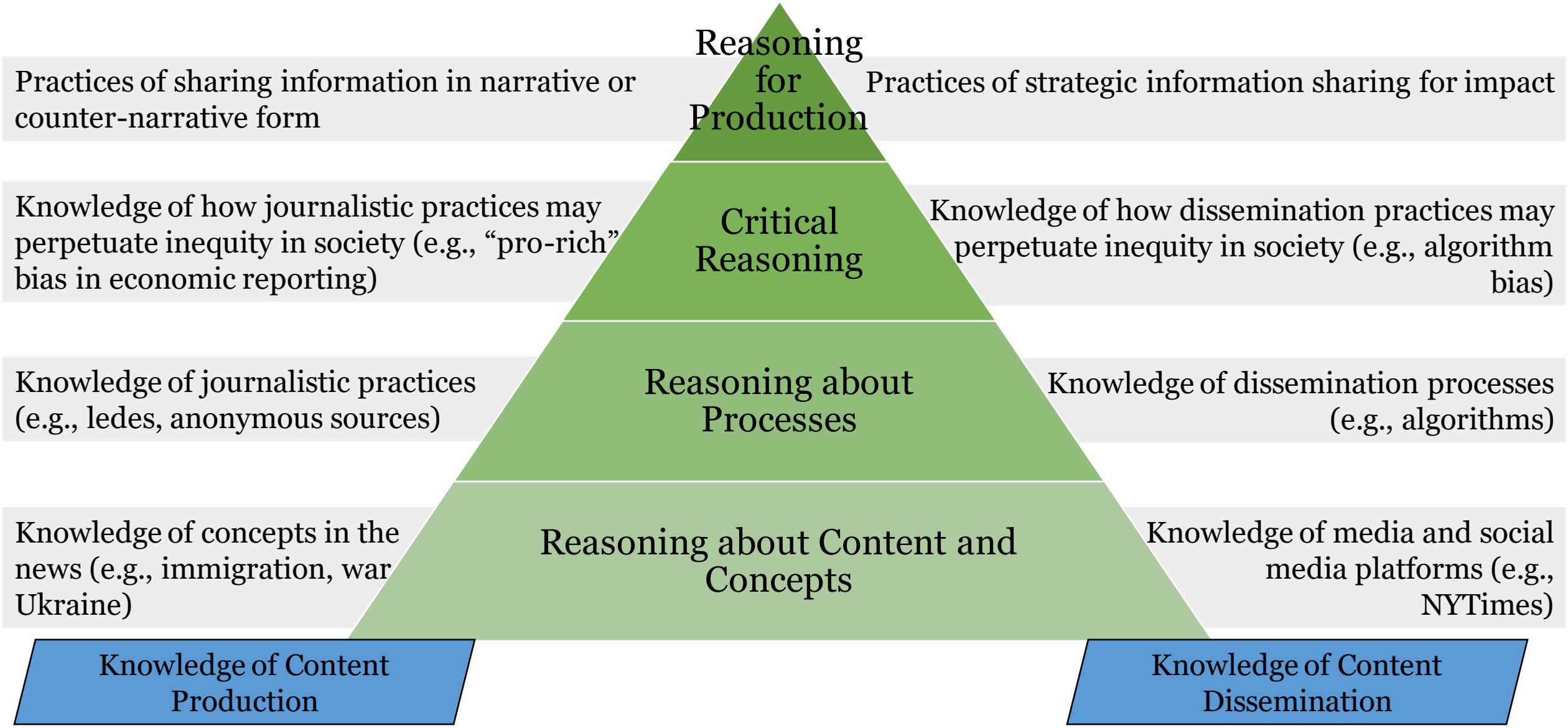
Framework for Critical Media Literacy



Materials

Understanding Algorithms Lesson Plan

Student Handouts

Headlines + A/B Testing Lesson Plan

Student Handouts

A/B Example Headlines

Please circle the headline you would be more likely to click on in each case:

	A	B
1.	$2 Billion Worth of Free Media for Trump	Measuring Trump's Media Dominance
2.	Soul-Searching in Baltimore, a Year After Freddie Gray's Death	Baltimore After Freddie Gray: The 'Mind-Set Has Changed'
3.	Is Everything Wrestling?	It's Not Just Wrestling That's Fake. It's the World.
4.	Saying Her Life was Less a Fairy Tale, Meghan Markle Described the Cruel Loss of Her Freedom and Identity	Meghan Says Life with the U.K. Royals Almost Drove Her to Suicide
5.	SpaceX Mars Rocket Prototype Explodes, But it Lands First	SpaceX to Test Launch Another Prototype of Rocket to Mars
6.	Speak Softly, and Carry a Big Agenda	Biden is the Anti-Trump, and It's Working
7.	Under Siege Over Sex Harassment Claims, Cuomo Offers Apology	Cuomo Attacked Over His Plan for Review of Sex Harassment Claims

Did you notice any patterns in which headline(s) you preferred? What factors made you prefer one headline over another?

Headlines + A/B Testing Lesson Plan

Student Handouts

Directions: Please identify at least one benefit and at least one drawback of A/B Testing Headlines for editors and for readers.

Headlines + A/B Testing Lesson Plan

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	Benefits	Drawbacks
Editors		
Readers		

	Benefits	Drawbacks
Editors	Can determine which story headline is most popular Can encourage readers to "try" a story, even if it's not one they're specifically interested in Editors **always** try to write stories in a way that appeals to the reader; this is a way to do so more effectively	Time and effort needed to write multiple versions of headlines Can determine whether one or headline is *more* popular than another, but readers still may not be very interested in a particular story Authors may have different (if less popular) ideas for what the headline should be.
Readers	Headlines are written in a way that appeals to readers More popular headlines may better summarize a story or otherwise be better for the reader	May be seduced into reading a story that they would not have otherwise (e.g., if it had a more informational headline) **Headlines are important. Readers are introduced to quantitative/popularity-driven, not reporter-judgement-driven, headlines** There is an "experiment," being conducted on readers, that they are not aware of. However, media companies are always trying to attract more readers.

Headlines + A/B Testing Lesson Plan

Student Handouts

Exit Ticket: Headings and A/B Testing
Write a headline for today's lesson:
What are two characteristics that make headlines effective: **(1)** **(2)**

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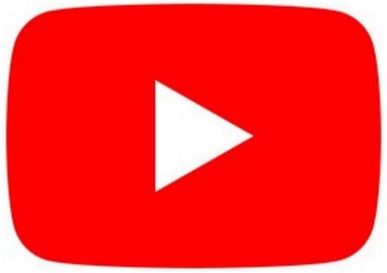

Understanding Algorithms Lesson Plan

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Directions: Classify each algorithm you learned about according to its function, goals, and other characteristics.

Algorithm Website	**Function:** What does the algorithm do?	What information about **you as a user** does the algorithm consider?	What information about **other people** does the algorithm consider?	How does the algorithm consider information quality?	**Goals:** What are the goals of the algorithm? How do you think the algorithm is improved or evaluated?
Google					
YouTube					
Instagram					
TikTok					

What are two patterns that you notice in the algori

Algorithm Website	**Function:** What does the algorithm do?	What information about **you as a user** does the algorithm consider?	What information about **other people** does the algorithm consider?	How does the algorithm consider information quality?	**Goals:** What are the goals of the algorithm? How do you think the algorithm is improved o evaluated?
Google	Rank websites	Context and settings: location, search history	N/A	Prominent websites – if other websites refer to this	Present more useful content, as quickly as possible: "to present the most relevant, useful results in a fraction of a second."
YouTube	Recommends videos to see next	What you find satisfying: Clicks, watch time, survey responses, shares/likes/dislikes	What videos other people, like you, watch	Decide if video is "authoritative" or "borderline" for conspiracy theories and misinformation; use certified experts	Individuals watch more videos that give them "value"
Instagram	Ranks/orders feed and stories	Activity – how many posts you've liked; History of **interactions** with other people/posts	Post popularity, How much you interact with person who posted the image	If misinformation, use third-party fact-checkers and apply a label. Do not take post down.	Unclear – individuals viewing more interesting posts. "get better at surfacing what you're interested in." → so that you'll spend more time on the site
TikTok	Recommends video	View time; Rewatches	Popularity of the video	N/A (for harmful content: Computer analysis + human moderator + videos reported)	"Engagement" – people spend more time on TikTok

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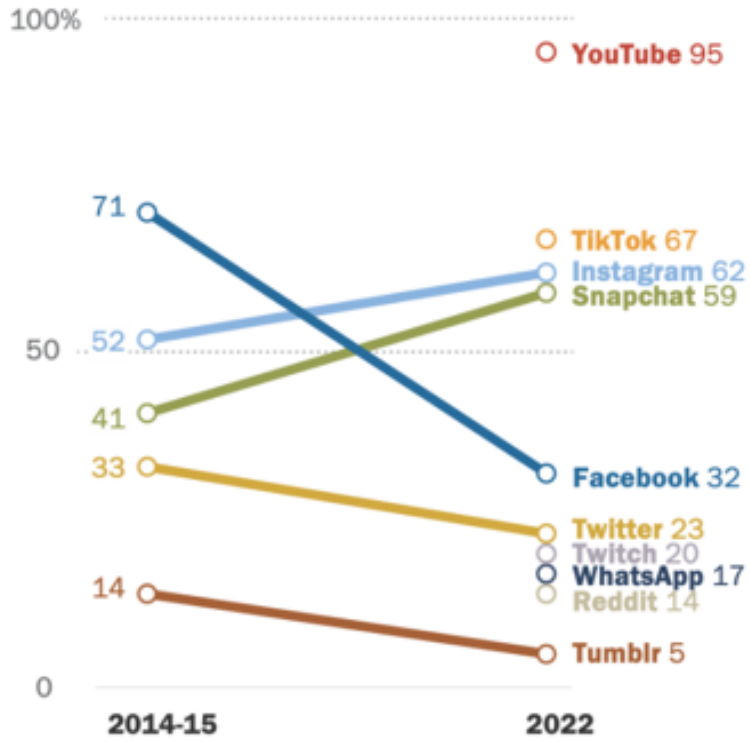
Exit Ticket: Design an Algorithm
You have a website that recommends content (e.g., news stories, jokes, vide want to build an algorithm to determine what content to recommend to use **What are three features that you would consider in developing your algorithm:** **(a)** **(b)** **(c)**
Which feature did you consider to be most important for your algorithm? Why?

Since 2014-15, TikTok has arisen; Facebook usage has dropped; Instagram, Snapchat have grown

% of U.S. teens who say they ever use any of the following apps or sites



Note: Teens refer to those ages 13 to 17. Those who did not give an answer are not shown. The 2014-15 survey did not ask about YouTube, WhatsApp, Twitch and Reddit. TikTok debuted globally in 2018.
Source: Survey conducted April 14-May 4, 2022.
"Teens, Social Media and Technology 2022"

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Reach out!

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