

NEWSBANK HOT TOPICS
July 2014

CURRENT EVENTS RESEARCH TOPICS

CIVICS, GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS: Presidential Power

TOPIC: The U.S. Supreme Court has struck down three recess appointments that President Obama had made to the National Labor Relations Board. What was the reason behind the decision and what implications does it hold for the presidential process? Why did House Speaker John Boehner recently threaten the President with a lawsuit? How does the use of power in the Speaker's complaint compare to the power in making recess appointments?

SEARCH TERMS: (Supreme Court AND recess appointments) OR (Boehner AND lawsuit)

SPORTS: World Cup

TOPIC: The World Cup continues in Brazil. What teams that lost in the group stage were the biggest surprises? Which teams that advanced were also surprises? Which players are doing well and which players are not? How is your team doing?

SEARCH TERMS: World Cup

SOCIAL ISSUES: Illegal Immigrants

TOPIC: Thousands of illegal immigrants are trying to cross the Mediterranean Sea to get to Italy, just as thousands of Central Americans try to cross Mexico in order to illegally enter the U.S. What are the similarities in social conditions in these countries? What are the differences? Why are so many children trying to reach the U.S.? Why is Italy the choice destination?

SEARCH TERMS: refugees OR illegal aliens AND Italy OR U.S.

HEALTH: Ebola Outbreak

TOPIC: Ebola is spreading in West Africa, with over 300 dead in Guinea, Sierra Leone and Liberia. This is the worst outbreak of the disease since its emergence. What is Ebola? What are its symptoms? Can it be treated? What is the recommended way to deal with its victims? How are the governments of those countries coping with this outbreak?

SEARCH TERMS: Ebola virus AND (Sierra Leone OR Guinea OR Liberia)

SOCIAL STUDIES RESEARCH TOPICS

BUSINESS: General Motors Recall

TOPIC: The number of autos recalled by General Motors so far this year has surpassed 20 million. Which autos have been recalled and why? What is the economic impact, and what is the company doing to fix the problems?

SEARCH TERMS: General Motors AND recall

BUSINESS: Coke Labeling

TOPIC: The U.S. Supreme Court has ruled that Coca-Cola can be sued for misleading labels. Who sued them and on what grounds? What are some common examples of product labeling that could be challenged after this court ruling?

SEARCH TERMS: (Coke OR Coca Cola OR Coca-Cola) AND Supreme Court

BUSINESS: Samsung Earnings Decline

TOPIC: Korean conglomerate Samsung has issued an earning preview that predicts a 7.1 billion for its most recent quarter. This is a decline of 24% from the same quarter last year. What percent of the global smartphone market does Samsung hold? What pressures on its smartphone sales help account for this decline? What has happened to its sales of tablets?

SEARCH TERMS: Samsung AND earnings

CIVICS, GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS: Islamic State and New Caliphate

TOPIC: The Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (also known as Islamic State of Iraq and Syria) has renamed itself Islamic State and declared that the territory under its control is a new Caliphate. What do other regional actors think about this? Does the emergence of this group heighten the chances of region-wide warfare and if so, what do you think will happen? What is the Caliphate, when did it originate, how did it spread and how did it end? Where did the modern boundaries in the Middle East come from?

SEARCH TERMS: Islamic State AND Caliphate

CIVICS, GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS: Robert McDonald

TOPIC: Proctor and Gamble CEO Robert McDonald has been nominated by Barack Obama to be the next Secretary of Veterans Affairs. What qualifications does he bring to the job? What have been the arguments for and against his nomination and by whom?

SEARCH TERMS: (Veterans Administration OR VA) AND Robert McDonald

CRIME AND LAW: TSA and Inbound Flights

TOPIC: The Transportation Security Administration (TSA) is working with some foreign airports to see that cell phones are inspected before passengers board flights to the United States. What is the purpose of these inspections? What intelligence information prompted the TSA to do this?

SEARCH TERMS: TSA AND (cellphone* OR cell phone*) AND (airport OR flight)

CRIME AND LAW: Cell Phone Searches

TOPIC: The U.S. Supreme Court has unanimously ruled that the police do not have the right to search the information captured on a cell phone without a warrant. What was the reasoning behind the decision? What is an argument in favor of phone searches?

SEARCH TERMS: Supreme Court AND (cellphone* OR cell phone*)

CRIME AND LAW: Kidnapping Crisis

TOPIC: Three Israeli teens hitchhiking on the West Bank were kidnapped and later found dead. Israeli security forces detained 400 Hamas members during the search for them. Hamas denied involvement in the kidnapping, but has not condemned it. Jets have attacked Hamas sites in Gaza. Can any good come out of this example of the violence between Palestinians and Israel?

SEARCH TERMS: Israel AND kidnapping AND Hamas

ECONOMICS: Union Option and Fees

TOPIC: The U.S. Supreme Court has ruled that home health care workers in Illinois who choose not to join a public sector union do not have to pay union dues. How broad are the implications of this decision and what are the most compelling arguments for and against it? What are some previous court rulings on union practices?

SEARCH TERMS: Supreme Court AND union* AND Illinois

EDUCATION: Teacher Tenure

TOPIC: A recent ruling by a California Superior Court judge has declared that teacher tenure laws in California are unconstitutional. What is tenure and what is the legal reasoning behind this ruling? What are the implications of this ruling to other states?

SEARCH TERMS: tenure AND California AND court

HISTORY: The Star Spangled Banner

TOPIC: July 2014 marks the 200th Anniversary of the Star Spangled Banner. Who wrote it, and what are some of the interesting facts about his life? What war and battle inspired the song, and what is the song describing?

SEARCH TERMS: Star Spangled Banner

HISTORY: Crown Prince Franz Ferdinand

TOPIC: The 100th anniversary of the assassination of Crown Prince Franz Ferdinand in Sarajevo has just passed. This event would lead to the start of World War I. Who shot him and why? How did this spiral into a shooting war? Are there any subsequent major events in Europe that were not an offshoot of this act?

SEARCH TERMS: Franz Ferdinand AND assassination

SOCIAL ISSUES: Burka Ban Upheld

TOPIC: The European Court of Human Rights has found that the French ban on the use of burkas in public is not a violation of the European Convention of Human Rights. What was the case made against the ban by the plaintiff's lawyers? What were the French counterarguments? What have critics said about this ruling? Which side do you agree with and why?

SEARCH TERMS: European Court of Human Rights AND burkas

SOCIAL ISSUES: Hobby Lobby Case

TOPIC: The Supreme Court has ruled that some corporations can be exempt from laws that put them in a position of violating their religious beliefs. What were the specifics of Burwell vs. Hobby Lobby and what was the reasoning behind the ruling? What are some other examples of religious principles that could impact company policies?

SEARCH TERMS: Hobby Lobby AND Supreme Court AND contracept*

SOCIAL ISSUES: Child Migrant Crisis

TOPIC: So far, more than 50,000 minors traveling alone have been caught on the Mexican-U.S. border in 2014. What nationalities are most of them, and what has caused this increase in unaccompanied youth illegally crossing the border? What federal and state policies have been instituted to deal with this influx and how are they working? What has been popular opinion on this issue and what have been some acts of protest?

SEARCH TERMS: (children OR youth OR minors) AND illegal AND immigra*

SOCIAL ISSUES: Buffer Zone for Protesters

TOPIC: The U.S. Supreme Court has ruled that the buffer zone around abortion clinics for anti-abortion protestors is unconstitutional. What is the reasoning behind this decision? What is the primary concern about the lack of a buffer zone? What are some other examples in the U.S. where security concerns have resulted in buffer zones for protesters?

SEARCH TERMS: Supreme Court AND protests AND abortion

SCIENCE AND HEALTH RESEARCH TOPICS

ENVIRONMENT: Greenhouse Gas Regulations

TOPIC: The U.S. Supreme Court has upheld the power of the Environmental Protection Agency to regulate greenhouse gas emissions but in a limited way. What are the specifics of the ruling and what was the reasoning behind it? What have been some other Supreme Court rulings regarding environmental regulation?

SEARCH TERMS: (Environmental Protection Agency OR EPA) AND Supreme Court

HEALTH: Autism and Pesticides

TOPIC: A recent study by the MIND Institute at the University of California at Davis has linked autism with pesticides. How was the study conducted, and what were the specifics of the findings? What are some ways in which a mother can protect her fetus or her children if she lives in an area that is rich in pesticides?

SEARCH TERMS: autism AND pesticides

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY: The Past Informs the Future, Again

TOPIC: DNA sequencing shows that Tibetans received a gene that helps them to live at high altitudes from the Denisovans by regulating their oxygen intake. How did the researchers find this gene? How does it help regulate oxygen? What other populations have these genes in their DNA?

SEARCH TERMS: Tibetans AND Denisovans

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY: Satellite to Monitor Global Warming

TOPIC: NASA is launching a satellite called the Orbiting Carbon Observatory – 2 (OCO2) to study the impact of carbon dioxide on global warming. What happened to the first satellite attempt to study global warming? How will the OCO2 satellite be used to gather and study data?

SEARCH TERMS: satellite AND (global warming OR climate change)

SPORTS RESEARCH TOPICS

SPORTS: Kings Win Stanley Cup

TOPIC: The Los Angeles Kings have beaten the New York Rangers to win the Stanley Cup hockey championship. What was unique about the number of playoff games this season? What were the most exciting plays in the finals and who were the top players?

SEARCH TERMS: Stanley Cup

SPORTS: Spurs Win NBA Championship

TOPIC: The San Antonio Spurs have beaten the Miami Heat to become the new champion team in the National Basketball Association (NBA). What unique status does this win give to Spurs teammates Tim Duncan, Manu Ginobili and Tony Parker? What are some key attributes to the Spurs game that had them beat a younger powerhouse like the Miami Heat?

SEARCH TERMS: San Antonio Spurs AND Miami Heat AND (title OR win OR championship)

SPORTS: Winter Olympics Site Selection

TOPIC: Ukraine has dropped its bid to have Lviv host the Winter Olympics in 2022 because of unrest in the country. What other cities are trying to host the same Olympics? Which ones dropped out of the process? Why? What are the strengths and weaknesses of each host city and country?

SEARCH TERMS: Winter Olympics 2022 AND host city

SPORTS: Tim Howard

TOPIC: In spite of the loss to Belgium by the U.S. national team in the FIFA World Cup, U.S. soccer goalie Tim Howard was awarded man of the match. What was the record that he broke and what was astounding about some of his plays? What is his background in soccer and what are some of the previous high points in his career?

SEARCH TERMS: Tim Howard AND (soccer OR football OR futbol) AND FIFA

SPORTS: Michelle Wie

TOPIC: Michelle Wie has won the U.S. Women's Open Golf Championship. What were some of her best shots in the tournament? Who were her closest rivals, and what were their strongest challenges to her? What is the significance to her replicating her sub-par first round?

SEARCH TERMS: Michelle Wie AND Women's Open

ARTS AND LITERATURE RESEARCH TOPICS

FILM AND TELEVISION: Aereo

TOPIC: The Supreme Court has ruled that the Internet streaming company Aereo cannot rebroadcast live shows without paying retransmission fees. Who sued them, and what were their primary concerns about a precedent if Aereo won the case? What are some other cases involving the Internet and copyright law?

SEARCH TERMS: Aereo AND Supreme Court

FILM AND TELEVISION: Missing Vindicated

TOPIC: The 1982 movie Missing portrayed U.S. involvement in the arrest and execution of Charles Horman in post-coup Chile in 1973. Now a Chilean judge has agreed with that theory, ruling that former U.S. Navy Captain Ray E. Davis had supplied information to the Chilean intelligence agencies that led to Horman's death. Who made this movie back in the 1980s? What other films did he direct? How was it received when it was released? What else did it get correct?

SEARCH TERMS: Missing AND Charles Horman

FINE ARTS AND ARCHITECTURE: Jan Vermeer

TOPIC: A painting sometimes attributed to Jan Vermeer has been scientifically tested and proven to be his work. Saint Praxedis was defended as his work by some critics and denied by others. What was the test and what did it find? How similar in style is Saint Praxedis to his other works? What are some of the qualities of his works that makes them popular today? Which do you like best?

SEARCH TERMS: Vermeer AND Saint Praxedis

FINE ARTS AND ARCHITECTURE: Jeff Koons

TOPIC: New York City's Whitney Museum is holding a retrospective exhibit on the work of artist Jeff Koons. What kind of artist is he, and what are some examples of his most famous pieces? What has been controversial about his work? Where is the Whitney Museum going to move after this exhibit?

SEARCH TERMS: (9/11 OR September 11) AND museum

LITERATURE: Hard Choices

TOPIC: Hillary Clinton has written a memoir about her career as Secretary of State called Hard Choices. What are some of the most interesting passages in the book and what can be gleaned from it as to her philosophy of government? What has been the reception of this book in the U.S. and abroad?

SEARCH TERMS: Hillary Clinton AND Hard Choices

LITERATURE: Rowling, Galbraith and Scotland

TOPIC: J.K. Rowling has published a new novel under her pseudonym Robert Galbraith and has donated one million pounds to an anti-Scottish independence campaign. What types of novels does Robert Galbraith write and what have critics said about them. What were her reasons not to support the Scottish independence referendum and do they make sense to you? If not, why not?

SEARCH TERMS: J.K. Rowling AND (Scottish Independence OR Robert Galbraith)

PERFORMING ARTS: Monty Python

TOPIC: The surviving members of the Monty Python troupe played a series of live performances at London's O2 Arena. The final performance will be broadcast to 1,800 movie theaters around the world. How did critics like the show? How did fans? Did they perform any new material?

SEARCH TERMS: Monty Python AND O2 Arena

PERFORMING ARTS: CMT Music Awards

TOPIC: Carrie Underwood, Blake Shelton and Miranda Lambert were the major winners at the Country Music Television (CMT) Awards. For what works did each of them win, and what qualities in the work impressed the critics most? Who were some of the other winners and what was impressive about their work?

SEARCH TERMS: CMT Awards

PEOPLE RESEARCH TOPICS

PEOPLE: Eric Cantor

TOPIC: House Majority Leader Eric Cantor has been defeated in the Virginia Republican primary election by Randolph Macon College economics professor Dave Brat. How does their political philosophy differ? What is the political significance of this upset to the Republican Party and to the nation? What are other Republican primary results that show an establishment candidate loss?

SEARCH TERMS: Eric Cantor

PEOPLE: Bowe Bergdahl

TOPIC: U.S. Army soldier Bowe Bergdahl has been released from captivity by the Haqqani network, a group affiliated with the Taliban. How was he released and what was controversial about it? What is the Haqqani network and how are they affiliated with the Taliban?

SEARCH TERMS: Bowe Bergdahl

PEOPLE: Luis Suarez

TOPIC: Luis Suarez has been banned from football activity four months for biting an opponent during a World Cup game against Italy. He will miss the rest of the World Cup and several games in the fall. Should his club be penalized for his actions when playing for his national team? What previous actions caused the severity of this ban?

SEARCH TERMS: Luis Suarez

PEOPLE: Eugenie Bouchard

TOPIC: Eugenie Bouchard was the first Canadian woman to play in the finals at Wimbledon where she met Petra Kvitova. It was her first time in the finals of a major. How long has she been on the tennis tour? What is her career highlight? How did she do at Wimbledon?

SEARCH TERMS: Eugenie Bouchard

PEOPLE: Eduard Shevardnaze

TOPIC: Eduard Shevardnaze was a president of post-Soviet Union Georgia. He came to prominence as the Foreign Minister of the Soviet Union in the Gorbachev era. What were the highlights of his term as the foreign minister? How did he come to power in Georgia? How and why did he leave office there?

SEARCH TERMS: Eduard Shevardnaze

PEOPLE: Tony Gwynn

TOPIC: San Diego Padre right fielder Tony Gwynn was one of the best hitters in the history of professional baseball. What were some of the batting awards he won and what are some examples of his most memorial hits? How does he rate against other major hitters in the game and what are some of his unique strengths as a batter?

SEARCH TERMS: Tony Gwynn AND baseball

PEOPLE: Ruby Dee

TOPIC: Actress Ruby Dee was often remembered for her film roles in Do the Right Thing and A Raisin in the Sun. What are some of her other strong film and theater roles? What other artistic fields was she active in and what are some examples of her best work in these fields? What did she do in the cause of civil rights?

SEARCH TERMS: Ruby Dee