

**ST. JOSEPH’S COLLEGE (AUTONOMOUS), BENGALURU-27**

**END-SEMESTER EXAMINATION: JULY-AUGUST 2022**

**JNE 221 – Journalism and Writing**

**II SEMESTER BA-EJ/JP**

**(For Optional English and Journalism & Journalism and Psychology)**

**Time: 2 hours                                                                          Max Marks: 60**

**Instructions:**

**1.  This paper is for students who have chosen the Journalism major along with English or Psychology.**

**2.  This paper has FOUR printed pages.**

**3.  Please DO NOT exceed the suggested word limit. Also indicate word count after each response.**

**4. You are allowed to use a dictionary.**

**I. Read the following excerpt from an essay titled ‘The Death of Subscription, Rebirth of Media Manipulation’ by Ryan Holiday and answer the questions that follow:**

For most of the last century, the majority of journalism and entertainment was sold by subscription (the third phase). It is now sold again online a la carte – as a one-off. Each story must sell itself, must be heard over all the others, be it Google News, on Twitter, or on your Facebook wall. This One-Off Problem is exactly like the one faced by the yellow press a century or more ago, and it distorts today’s news just as it did then – only now it’s amplified by millions of blogs instead of a few hundred newspapers. As Eli Pariser put it in *The Filter Bubble*, when it comes to news on the internet,

*Each article ascends the most-forwarded lists or dies an ignominious death on its own…The attention economy is ripping the binding, and the pages that get read are the pages that are frequently the most topical, scandalous, and viral.*

People don’t read one blog. They read a constant assortment of many blogs, and so there is little incentive to build trust. Competition for readers is on a per-article basis, taking publishers right back to the (digital) street corner, yelling, “War Is Coming!” to sell papers. It takes them back to making things up to fill the insatiable need for new news.

The Pulitzer Prize-winning biographer Robert Caro (a former reporter for *Newsday*) was interviewed by a blog called *Gothamist* around his eightieth birthday. The reporter explained to him how journalism worked these days,

*There’s something called Chartbeat – it shows you how many people are reading a specific article in any given moment, and how long they spend on that article. That’s called “engagement time”. We have a giant flatscreen on the wall that displays it, a lot of publications do.*

Caro’s response was perfect: “What you just said is the worst thing I ever heard.”

The interview continues:

*[Interviewer:] Headlines and other tools…are used to get people to click on an article. It reduces what might be a piece of nuanced writing to the most salacious tidbit. So The Power Broker might be headlined, “Robert Moses Is A Racist Whatever.” Or — and someone did this recently – you might try something like, “The 11 Most Shocking Things In The Power Broker.” It just crushes all nuance.*

*[Caro:] What you just told me, I’m thinking about when I was a reporter and they were reading something of mine, and if the engagement time or whatever was two seconds, I’d shoot myself!*

He says that because he actually cares about what he writes! Because his hugely important books were designed to last, what I call “perennial sellers” – not get a short spike of attention and disappear. But sadly, the current system and the current tools with which to measure them don’t encourage that kind of thing.

Think about how we consume content online. It is not by subscription. The only viable subscription method for blogs, RSS, is long dead.

This is great news for a media manipulator, bad news for everyone else. The death of subscription means that instead of attempting to provide value to you, the longtime reader, blogs are constantly chasing Other Readers–the mythical reader out in viral land. Instead of providing quality day in and day out, writers chase big hits like a sexy scandal or a funny video meme. Bloggers aren’t interested in building up consistent, loyal readerships, whether it’s via paid subscription or even e-mail, because what they really need are the types of stories that will do hundreds of thousands or millions of pageviews. They need stories that will sell.

(Ignominious: deserving or causing public disgrace or shame)

**I.A. Answer the following questions in 5-8 sentences each: (4x5=20)**

1. “Each article ascends the most-forwarded lists or dies an ignominious death on its own”. What do these lines mean? What can it tell us about the way in which we consume news online?
2. “People don’t read one blog. They read a constant assortment of many blogs, and so there is little incentive to build trust”. Does reading multiple blogs or hopping from one link to the next mean that no readership develops for a blog or a news website? What do you think?
3. “What you just said is the worst thing I ever heard”. Why did Caro respond this way to the idea of engagement time? How would you calculate the same?
4. Who are the Other Readers? How is the idea of the other reader connected to the death of subscription?

**I.B. Answer the following question in about 150 words: (10 marks)**

1. The above excerpt has references to a kind of reading that moves from one website to the next through links and clicks. Jorge Luis Borges references a labyrinth in *The Garden of Forking Paths*. Are the two ideas related in any way? Explain. You can also use other essays you discussed in your Journalism Readings hours for your response.

**II. 6**. Given below are some of the headlines that appeared after the repeal of the three farm laws in November 2021, following a year of protest. Pick the one most appropriate for a 250-word news article on the front page of a newspaper. Do you think the same headline would work for a news article online? Why/Why not? Which among the following would you pick for an online news source? Explain your reasoning in **150 words**: **(1x10=10 marks)**

1. Indian PM Narendra Modi repeals controversial farm laws
2. India formally repeals controversial farm laws after year of protests

# PM Narendra Modi says sorry, announces repeal of three farm laws

1. Narendra Modi government relents, decides to spike farm laws

# India’s farmers confronted Modi and won. What happens now?

**III. 7.** Compose a twitter essay using a set of six tweets in response to **ONE** of the following prompts. Each tweet should be of 280 characters. **(10 marks)**

* + - 1. Veg biriyani is not biriyani
      2. Bengaluru weather is your uninvited relative

III. 8. Survey your understanding of the Russia-Ukraine conflict in terms of how you sourced your information, and the time you have spent in following up on this region. What does this tell you about yourself as a reader of the news? **Answer in about 10 sentences. (05 marks)**

III. 9. How do you obtain news about your home state, if at all you do? Would you describe such news as important to you? Why/why not? **Answer in about 10 sentences. (05 marks)**