

NEWSBANK HOT TOPICS
February 2012

CURRENT EVENTS RESEARCH TOPICS

CIVICS, GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS: South Carolina and Florida Primaries

TOPIC: Newt Gingrich has won the South Carolina primary and Mitt Romney has won the Florida primary in what seems to have refined to a two-man Republican primary race. What are the major policy similarities and differences between Romney and Gingrich? What are super PACS and what has been their impact on this primary season?

SEARCH TERMS: (Florida OR South Carolina) AND primary AND Republican

ECONOMICS: Facebook IPO

TOPIC: The popular social networking site, Facebook, has issued its first sale of stock to the public, called an initial public offering or IPO. What is the process a company has to go through to initiate an IPO? What is the value of Facebook's IPO and how was that determined?

SEARCH TERMS: Facebook AND (initial public offering OR IPO)

HISTORY: Black History Month

TOPIC: February is Black History Month in the United States. Identify some significant black pioneers in the following fields: Science, education, government and military. What was the arc of their careers? What were the key pieces of legislation and events on the timeline of the struggle to end racial inequality in the United States?

SEARCH TERMS: (black OR African-American) AND pioneer

SPORTS: Egyptian Melee

TOPIC: Home town fans stormed the field in Port Said, Egypt, following their team Al-Masry's victory over a popular, Cairo-based side, Al-Ahly. Over seventy people were killed in the ensuing violence. How did people die? Why are some blaming the police and the government for this? What was the political role of Al-Ahly's hardcore fans, called the ultras, in the demonstrations in Tahrir Square? What has the government response been?

SEARCH TERMS: Egypt AND soccer AND (violence or riot)

SOCIAL STUDIES RESEARCH TOPICS

CIVICS, GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS: Seal Team 6

TOPIC: Seal Team 6, the same unit of the U.S. Navy Seals that killed Osama bin Laden last May, has successfully raided a Somali compound and rescued American Jessica Buchanan and Dane Paul Thisted who were being held hostage on the compound by pirates. What were the two foreigners doing in Somalia? What is the most recent history of Somali pirates and what are their goals? What kinds of training and responsibilities do established U.S. Navy Seals experience?

SEARCH TERMS: Seal Team AND Somalia

CIVICS, GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS: Coup Failure in Papa New Guinea

TOPIC: An abrupt attempt to overthrow the government and seize political power, also known as a coup, has failed in Papa New Guinea. The officer who led the action was trying to replace Prime Minister Peter O'Neill with PNG's former leader, Sir Michael Somare. The PNG Supreme Court ruled last December that O'Neill should vacate his office. How was the coup resolved? What has happened to the coup leader?

SEARCH TERMS: Papua New Guinea AND Michale Somare OR Peter O'Neill

CIVICS, GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS: An Unhappy Anniversary in Egypt

TOPIC: The first anniversary of the Egyptian protests that eventually overthrew Hosni Mubarak was celebrated with massive demonstrations against the military government that overthrew him a year ago. What are some of the complaints against this government? What are the larger factions among the demonstrators?

SEARCH TERMS: Egypt AND protests OR demonstrations

CRIME AND LAW: Dutch Boy Threats Real-life Violence Versus Virtual Opponent

TOPIC: The Dutch high court has upheld the conviction of a boy for violently threatening another boy to surrender items found within in the online game RuneScape. The judges assigned a value to the virtual items equal to the time taken to earn them in the game. Should this have been a crime in the real world? What was the offender's sentence? Does it seem to fit the crime?

SEARCH TERMS: RuneScape AND court rulings

CIVICS, GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS: State of the Union

TOPIC: President Obama has defined his governing agenda in his State of the Union address. What key points did he make about his foreign policy? What are the key points of his economic plan? What key points did Indiana Governor Mitch Daniels make in the Republican response to the speech?

SEARCH TERMS: State of the Union AND Obama

CRIME AND LAW: GPS Tracking

TOPIC: The Supreme Court has ruled that there are limits on how law enforcement can use GPS systems to track suspects. What are these specific limits? What were the specific circumstances of Antoine Jones vs. the United States, the case that was brought before the Supreme Court?

SEARCH TERMS: Antoine Jones AND Supreme Court

CRIME AND LAW: Mississippi Pardons

TOPIC: As he was preparing to leave office, Mississippi Governor Haley Barbour issued unconditional pardons for over 200 people, among them several convicted murderers that were still serving prison sentences. What was the reason given by Governor Barbour for issuing these unusual pardons? What are some other controversial pardons issued by politicians in the past and what were the reasons behind them?

SEARCH TERMS: Mississippi AND Barbour AND pardon*

ECONOMICS: SOPA

TOPIC: The SOPA bill (Stop Online Piracy Act), which was introduced in the U.S. Congress to stop Internet violations of copyrighted content, has been postponed for review. What are the most and least controversial pieces of this bill? What are the groups that have come out most strongly against this bill and why? What are some ways groups or companies have protested SOPA?

SEARCH TERMS: SOPA OR Stop Online Piracy Act

ECONOMICS: General Motors

TOPIC: General Motors has reclaimed its role as the world's biggest carmaker. How did General Motors revive their finances? What other automakers experienced trouble a few years ago, what is their financial status now, and how did they revive? What two major non-auto US companies have recently filed for bankruptcy?

SEARCH TERMS: General Motors

ECONOMICS: Eurozone Crisis Continues

TOPIC: 25 European countries have signed a treaty in agreement to stop overspending. Only Britain and the Czech Republic did not sign. What were their reasons for not becoming signatories? What was the reasoning behind the countries that signed on?

SEARCH TERMS: debt AND treaties AND Europe

ECONOMICS: According to Barclays Report, Building Boom Leads to Bust

TOPIC: Barclays Capital has released a report showing that in the past, construction of skyscrapers has preceded an economic downturn. Both India and China are currently in a building boom. Why would this construction herald economic misfortunes? What examples did the Barclays report use?

SEARCH TERMS: Barclays Capital AND skyscrapers

EDUCATION: Attempt to Rebrand Pinochet's Government Fails

TOPIC: Chile's Education Minister proposed that textbooks replace the term dictatorship with military regime when referring to Pinochet's government. What was the response to this suggestion? What are the arguments relating to the change?

SEARCH TERMS: Chile AND textbooks

EDUCATION: Prepaid College Plans

TOPIC: Many prepaid college plans, or popular college savings tax-advantage investment plans, are now heavily underfunded because of declining market returns and rising tuitions. What are other vehicles used for college savings? What are some of the ways states are trying to address this problem?

SEARCH TERMS: prepaid college plans

HISTORY: President Kennedy Tapes

TOPIC: The John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum has released the last tapes of President Kennedy's secretly-recorded conversations and telephone calls. What is the most interesting piece of information found within this last-tape release? What are the most interesting pieces from the previously released tapes?

SEARCH TERMS: President Kennedy AND tape*

HISTORY: Tomb of Female Singer Found in Egypt

TOPIC: A recently discovered tomb in the Valley of the Kings contains the mummy of a female singer named Nehmes Bastet. She was not a member of a royal family. How rare is it to find the tomb of a woman in Egypt? Where do they think Nehmes Bastet sang?

SEARCH TERMS: Nehmes Bastet AND tomb

SOCIAL ISSUES: Cruise Ship Goes Aground in Italy

TOPIC: The Costa Concordia, a cruise ship, went aground in Italy and led to an immediate evacuation along with the deaths of some of its passengers and crew. The captain did not stay with his ship to organize the evacuation. What is the most recent thought regarding the cause of the crash? Should the captain be prosecuted for his behaviors?

SEARCH TERMS: Costa Concordia AND shipwreck

SOCIAL ISSUES: Happy New Year, China!

TOPIC: The Chinese New Year has just past and we are now in the Year of the Dragon. It is thought that many couples may try to birth a child this year. What is auspicious about the Year of the Dragon?

SEARCH TERMS: Year of the Dragon

SOCIAL ISSUES: Church Discrimination Ruling

TOPIC: The U.S. Supreme Court has ruled that churches can discriminate in decisions involving employment of their leaders. What were the specifics of the case, what are the parameters on this decision, and how does the constitution support it? Does this ruling have any impact on public funding of religious institutions and if so, how?

SEARCH TERMS: Hosanna-Tabor AND Supreme Court

SCIENCE AND HEALTH RESEARCH TOPICS

ENVIRONMENT: New Forest Rules

TOPIC: The Obama Administration has announced new rules for management of U.S. National Forests that will replace the rules that were overruled by a federal court in 2009. What were the old rules and criteria for the ruling? What are the specific changes that the new rules will enforce? What overall policies of the Obama Administration do these new rules reflect?

SEARCH TERMS: rules AND National Forest

ENVIRONMENT: Monkey Lost, Monkey Found

TOPIC: Miller's Grizzled Langurs, an endangered monkey-species thought to be extinct, were recently captured by remote cameras in Borneo. What species were the cameras looking for? What are the next steps for researchers in terms of determining the size of the population?

SEARCH TERMS: Miller's Grizzled Langurs

HEALTH: Mental Illness

TOPIC: The Birmingham Maple Clinic has issued a report revealing that mental illness is on the rise in the United States and currently impacts 1 in 5 people. What are some of the key reasons given for this rise? What are the most common forms of mental illness? What are some ways in which treatment for mental illness has improved in the last 30 years?

SEARCH TERMS: Birmingham Maple Clinic AND report AND mental illness

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY: Invisibility Cloak

TOPIC: Scientists at Cornell University have discovered a way to bend the speed of light around an event, creating a cloak that can make the event briefly invisible to the eye. What are the cloaking limits in time and size for this experiment? What implications does this discovery hold for the future?

SEARCH TERMS: Cornell AND invisibility AND cloak

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY: Stephen Hawking- Beating the Odds

TOPIC: Stephen Hawking has turned 70 years old. At the age of 21, he was diagnosed with ALS, more commonly known as Lou Gehrig's disease. Most people die within a few years of being diagnosed. What is ALS? What are its symptoms? Is there any palliative treatment available? What is Hawking's main contribution to scientific knowledge?

SEARCH TERMS: ALS OR Lou Gehrig's disease AND Stephen Hawking

SPORTS RESEARCH TOPICS

SPORTS: Super Bowl

TOPIC: The New York Giants and the New England Patriots have survived the playoffs and will face each other in this year's Super Bowl. What was the surprising upset when they last played each other in a Super Bowl? Who are the key players on each team and what are the predictions for the game?

SEARCH TERMS: Super Bowl AND Patriots AND Giants

SPORTS: Australian Open Makes History

TOPIC: The first tennis major of the year, the Australian Open, has taken place. What was historic about the men's final? Who played and what was the outcome? Which woman won this tournament?

SEARCH TERMS: Australian Open

SPORTS: Canadian Skier Dies in Half-Pipe Crash

TOPIC: Sarah Burke, a Canadian freestyle skier, died after crashing during a half-pipe run. What is freestyle skiing? What competitions had she won? How was she regarded by her fellow competitors?

SEARCH TERMS: Sarah Burke

SPORTS: Swiss Skier Retires on Top

TOPIC: Swiss skier Didier Cuche announced his retirement from the sport, which will follow this season. He announced this at Kitzbuhel, and then won the downhill race there for a record 5th time. What are some of the other highlights of his career? Is the race at Kitzbuhel difficult?

SEARCH TERMS: Didier Cuche

SPORTS: European Soccer Clubs Experience Debt

TOPIC: A UEFA study shows that financial losses are mounting among European soccer clubs. How large is the combined debt? What are its causes?

SEARCH TERMS: UEFA AND clubs AND debt

SPORTS: Dwight Howard Free Throws

TOPIC: In a game against the Golden State Warriors, Orlando Magic's Dwight Howard surpassed Wilt Chamberlain's record for free-throw attempts in a single game. What were the circumstances that sent Howard to the free-throw line so many times? What other record by Wilt Chamberlain has Dwight Howard broken?

SEARCH TERMS: Dwight Howard AND Wilt Chamberlain AND record

SPORTS: University of Alabama BCS Win

TOPIC: The University of Alabama has beaten Louisiana State University in the Bowl Championship Series and became the new college football champion. Who won the MVP award and why? Who were the other leading players in the game?

SEARCH TERMS: Crimson Tide AND BCS AND LSU

ARTS AND LITERATURE RESEARCH TOPICS

FILM AND TELEVISION: Screen Actors Guild Awards

TOPIC: The film *The Help* was the big winner at this year's Screen Actors Guild Awards. What is *The Help* about and what qualities of the film impressed the critics the most? Who were the other major winners and what were the qualities of their performances that most impressed the critics?

SEARCH TERMS: (Screen Actors Guild OR SAG) AND awards

FILM AND TELEVISION: Golden Globe Awards

TOPIC: At this year's Golden Globe Awards, *The Descendants*, *The Artist* and the TV show *Homeland* won multiple awards. What qualities in each of these works most impressed the critics? What association runs the Golden Globes and how do they impact films? What other nominees won several Golden Globe awards at this year's ceremony?

SEARCH TERMS: Golden Globe* AND awards

FILM AND TELEVISION: Desert Island Discs

TOPIC: The BBC radio show, Desert Island Discs, has celebrated its 70th year of production. Guests on the show were asked to name which songs they would take to desert isle with them and the meaning behind each of their choices. What songs would you take to a desert isle? What books or movies would you also want to bring with you?

SEARCH TERMS: Desert Isle Discs

FILM AND TELEVISION: China News Station Hoping to Expand

TOPIC: China's state-controlled CCTV News is looking to expand overseas. It is opening bureaus in Africa and Washington, DC. How much does the Communist Party control its coverage? Will the party's control and knowledge minimize the trust of covering certain topics?

SEARCH TERMS: CCTV News

FINE ARTS AND ARCHITECTURE: Two of a Kind

TOPIC: The Spanish museum the Prado cleaned a copy of the Mona Lisa that has long been in its collection and decided it was made in Leonardo's studio by one of his students and might have been done at the time the da Vinci portrait was being painted. Why did they come to this conclusion? Which student do they think painted it? Who is thought to have been the sitter and how good is the Spanish portrait of her? What details have been revealed by the cleaning?

SEARCH TERMS: Mona Lisa

FINE ARTS AND ARCHITECTURE: Modernity Restored in Czech Republic

TOPIC: Villa Tugendhat, a private house in Brno, Czech Republic, is due to open to the public after two years of restoration under the direction of Mies van der Rohe. Who did he build it for? How are the vicissitudes of the 20th Century reflected in its history? What features reflect the architect's vision and also the modernist movement?

SEARCH TERMS: Villa Tugendhat AND Mies van der Rohe

FINE ARTS AND ARCHITECTURE: American Paintings Now in Paris's Louvre

TOPIC: A show of 19th Century American paintings has opened at the Louvre in Paris. It features works by Thomas Cole and others of the Hudson Valley School. What was the Hudson Valley School? What are some of Coles' most famous works? Who else was a member of the Hudson Valley School?

SEARCH TERMS: Louvre AND American art OR Thomas Cole OR Hudson Valley School

FINE ARTS AND ARCHITECTURE: Video Mapping Art

TOPIC: 3-D-projection mapping, which creates an illusion of 3-D movement of large video images across a surface, has become a high-tech alternative of graffiti for guerilla artists in major urban cities. What are some types of images that have been projected onto buildings and how have they been cleverly manipulated? How does the technology work to align images with building facades?

SEARCH TERMS: video mapping AND art

LITERATURE: Children's Literature Awards

TOPIC: The winners of the two most prestigious awards in children's literature have been announced by the American Library Association. Jack Gantos' *Dead End in Norvelt* has won the John Newbery Medal for Best Children's Book and Chris Raschka's *A Ball for Daisy* has won the Randolph Caldecott award for Best Illustrated Story. What are some key qualities that are taken into account when considering a piece of children's literature for these awards? What are some famous children's books that have won these awards in the past?

SEARCH TERMS: Newbery AND Caldecott AND literature

LITERATURE: Stay Back, Rushdie

TOPIC: Salman Rushdie was not allowed to attend the Jaipur Literature Festival in India due to fears of possible violence caused by his presence. A video talk by him was also cancelled. Why was violence threatened? What role did the late Ayatollah Khomeini play in this?

SEARCH TERMS: Jaipur Literature Festival AND Salman Rushdie

PERFORMING ARTS: Pioneer Ruth Fernandez Dies

TOPIC: Puerto Rican singer Ruth Fernandez was a Puerto Rican singer who lived to be 92 years old. What barriers did she break while pursuing her music career? What political role did she fill?

SEARCH TERMS: Ruth Fernandez

PERFORMING ARTS: Kenny Chesney

TOPIC: Kenny Chesney has received nine Country Music Award nominations due to the success of his duet with Grace Potter in the song You and Tequila. What have been some of the highlights of Kenny Chesney's career? What are some of the major hits for Grace Potter and what have been the highlights of her career?

SEARCH TERMS: Kenny Chesney

PEOPLE RESEARCH TOPICS

PEOPLE: Joe Paterno

TOPIC: Penn State football coach Joe Paterno held the record for most wins of any college football coach. What were the qualities that made Joe Paterno such an outstanding coach?

SEARCH TERMS: Joe Paterno

PEOPLE: Etta James

TOPIC: Etta James was known for her heartfelt blend of blues and R&B music. What songs made her most famous? What other genres did she incorporate in her music?

SEARCH TERMS: Etta James

PEOPLE: Gabrielle Giffords

TOPIC: Arizona Representative Gabrielle Giffords, who has recovered from critical wounds after a violent assassination attempt, is retiring from the House of Representatives. What are some of the key pieces of legislation that Rep. Giffords sponsored during her career? What injuries did Rep. Giffords endure and what kind of surgery saved her?

SEARCH TERMS: Gabrielle Giffords

PEOPLE: Ko Stands as Youngest Winner

TOPIC: Lydia Ko has won a professional golf tournament at the age of fourteen. She is the youngest winner of a match. Where is she from? What event did she win? Who are some other golfers that have won at a young age?

SEARCH TERMS: Lydia Ko

PEOPLE: Aston Covers Ground in Antarctica

TOPIC: Felicity Aston has skied across the continent of Antarctica. She was unaccompanied and used only her muscle power to cross the 1,084 miles. What are the dangers of going solo in the Antarctic? What logistical support did she have in her endeavor? What other expeditions took place in Antarctica this summer?

SEARCH TERMS: Felicity Aston

PEOPLE: Mashaal Steps Down

TOPIC: It has been announced that Hamas leader Khaled Mashaal will step down from his position, although the group's Shura Council might ask him to stay. What has been Mashaal's response to the Arab Spring? Could this event have prompted his decision?

SEARCH TERMS: Khaled Mashaal

PEOPLE: William Daley and Jack Lew

TOPIC: President Obama's Chief of Staff William Daley has announced his resignation and is being replaced with Budget Director Jack Lew. Why did William Daley resign and what were some of the key accomplishments he achieved as Chief of Staff? What other government roles did Daley own during his career and what major accomplishments did he achieve in those roles? What are some major accomplishments that Jack Lew has achieved as budget director?

SEARCH TERMS: William Daley AND Jack Lew