

Research Topics & Ideas: Journalism

About this document

This PDF contains 50 **journalism research topics** for dissertations and theses, organized into 10 areas of journalism, from broadcast, podcasting and audio journalism to sports and entertainment journalism. Each topic is written as a researchable question and linked to a completed dissertation (2022–2026, 24 universities), so you can see how it was studied in practice. Use it to shortlist journalism dissertation topics and thesis ideas, then narrow one down to your own population, setting and timeframe.

By [Derek Jansen](#) (MBA) · Reviewed by [Eunice Rautenbach](#) (DTech) · Grad Coach · October 2026

Online version: gradcoach.com/research-topics-journalism/

© 2026 Grad Coach. Free to share and adapt under [CC BY 4.0](#) with credit to Grad Coach and a link to gradcoach.com/research-topics-journalism/. Research questions and thesis titles quoted here remain their authors'; each dissertation keeps its own license.

Contents

Broadcast, podcasting and audio journalism · 5 topics	2
Conflict, crisis and international reporting · 5 topics	2
Data journalism and computational methods · 5 topics	3
Journalism ethics and professional practice · 5 topics	3
Local news, democracy and civic life · 5 topics	4
Media, politics and public opinion · 5 topics	4
Misinformation, fact-checking and trust · 5 topics	5
News framing and coverage analysis · 5 topics	5
Race, gender and representation in news · 5 topics	6
Sports and entertainment journalism · 5 topics	6
How to turn a topic into your research question	7

Broadcast, podcasting and audio journalism

1. How much does a narrative podcast owe the person whose life it is telling?

See it in a real dissertation: [Nonfiction Narratives and Journalism Ethics in Podcasts: A Narrative and Burkean Analysis of the Podcast S-Town](#) · Kayla Hastrup · Louisiana State University · 2022

2. How did radio build a shared identity across places that had never met?

See it in a real dissertation: [Radio broadcasting and identity in the southern British world 1929-1939](#) · Stephen Hocking · University of Oxford · 2025

3. What survives of a tradition once a colonial broadcaster decides how it is transmitted?

See it in a real dissertation: [Radio Kurdistan: Iraqi Kurdish Music, Colonial Power, and the Transmission of Tradition](#) · Jon Edward Bullock · University of Chicago · 2022

4. How much does a commissioning brief shape the documentary that gets made?

See it in a real dissertation: [Position, commission and production: a self-reflexive investigation into the generation of ethnographic knowledge through documentary production for BBC Alba](#) · Diane Maclean · Edinburgh Napier University · 2026

5. How does regional broadcast news frame a health crisis for the community it serves?

See it in a real dissertation: [Appalachian Broadcast News Coverage of the Coronavirus: A Content Analysis of Media Framing in the Midst of a Health Crisis](#) · Jensen M Mills · West Virginia University · 2022

Conflict, crisis and international reporting

6. How differently do two national outlets cover the same war on the same days?

See it in a real dissertation: [A New Test of the News: An Examination of the New York Times and CNN Coverage of the War in Ukraine](#) · H R Ross · Louisiana State University · 2023

7. When does a news outlet start using the word genocide, and what changes first?

See it in a real dissertation: [“Genocidal Intent:” News Media Outlets and Coverage Using the Term “Genocide” During the Israeli-Hamas War in Palestine](#) · Lauren Rhodes · University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill · 2026

8. Which frames does a national press reach for when security and humanity pull apart?

See it in a real dissertation: [Between Security and Humanity: British Newspaper Coverage of the Gaza War, 2023–2024](#) · Dikhanbayeva, Diana · University of Westminster · 2025

9. How is a country represented in the coverage of its own disaster?

See it in a real dissertation: [Representations of Haiti in Western News Media: Coverage of the January 2010 Earthquake in Haiti](#) · Hillary L Brown · Georgia State University · 2022

10. Are women who commit political violence written about as terrorists at all?

See it in a real dissertation: [Analysing gendered news media constructions of terrorists](#) · Sophy Daneault · Loughborough University · 2026

Data journalism and computational methods

11. Which stories does an eviction dataset surface that a reporter in the courthouse cannot see?

See it in a real dissertation: [The Geography of Eviction: A Data-Driven Reporting Project on Eviction Disparities in Urban and Rural North Carolina Counties](#) · Jessica Baugh · University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill · 2026

12. How well does bot detection work on the shape of a network alone?

See it in a real dissertation: [Twitter Bot Detection using NLP and Graph Classification](#) · Warada Kulkarni · San Jose State University · 2023

13. Do readers trust a news feed more or less once they know it was personalized for them?

See it in a real dissertation: [Artificial Influence? A Reflexive Thematic Analysis of Ai-driven Personalization and the Trustworthiness of Online News](#) · Wong, Haiman · Purdue University · 2025

14. Which sentences from an earnings announcement get quoted, and which get dropped?

See it in a real dissertation: [Media Bias and Selective Quotations from Corporate Earnings Announcements](#) · M. S. Hossain · University of North Texas · 2025

15. Where in a network should a correction be injected to stop a false story spreading?

See it in a real dissertation: [Enhancing Interventions Against Misinformation Propagation in Social Networks](#) · R. S. Pathak · Boise State University · 2025

Journalism ethics and professional practice

16. What ethical corners does a freelance reporter cut when nobody is paying properly?

See it in a real dissertation: [Not a do-or-die affair: Freelance Journalists in Nigeria and Ethical Dilemmas](#) · Tolulope O. Olasoji · West Virginia University · 2023

17. How do journalists build professional legitimacy where no institution grants it?

See it in a real dissertation: [Congolese Journalists: Professional Identity and Legitimacy](#) · Hannah L Heiskell · West Virginia University · 2026

18. Will readers pay more for investigative work if they can see how it was done?

See it in a real dissertation: [The Fourth Wall: Understanding the Role of Strategic Transparency in Audience Perceptions and Willingness to Pay for Investigative Journalism](#) · Nicola J. Redl · University of Colorado Boulder · 2026

19. What does online abuse cost a journalist, and what does it cost the reporting?

See it in a real dissertation: [The Cost Of Her Journalism: Technology-Facilitated Gender-Based Violence Against Women Journalists In The Former Soviet Union Countries](#) · Kamila Eshalieva · Clemson University · 2026

20. Where do the careers of women in newsrooms diverge from the men beside them?

See it in a real dissertation: [Gender Dynamics in Newsroom Leadership: The Influence of Gender Norms on the Career Trajectories of Women Journalists](#) · Hackett, Isabella L. · University of South Florida · 2025

Local news, democracy and civic life

21. What happens to civic life in a county after its local newsroom closes?

See it in a real dissertation: [Does Democracy Die in Darkness: A County-Level Analysis of Local News and Civic Shifts](#) · Serena Sherwood · University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill · 2025

22. How does one owner come to control the pipeline everyone else's news travels through?

See it in a real dissertation: [License to Steal: John Malone and the Making of Pipeline Entrepreneurialism](#) · Ben Dwertman · University of Virginia · 2026

23. Which judges get written about, and what does that reveal about the incentives of the press?

See it in a real dissertation: [Who Gets Covered? Media Incentives and Attention to Supreme Court Justices, 1980-2024](#) · Max Kareem Boland · Harvard University · 2026

24. Does where you get your news change how much you trust the Supreme Court?

See it in a real dissertation: [Judicial Activism and Media: Examining the Impacts of Ideological Asymmetry and News Sources on Supreme Court Confidence](#) · Carson Prather · University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill · 2026

25. How are private prisons written about, and who gets quoted when they are?

See it in a real dissertation: [Media portrayal of private prisons and inmates](#) · Ladye Anna Adams · University of Louisville · 2022

Media, politics and public opinion

26. Why does attention to one issue raise the temperature on a different one?

See it in a real dissertation: [Cross-Issue Agenda Setting from Racism to Immigration: Spreading Activation or Group Threat?](#) · Martina Santia · Louisiana State University · 2022

27. Does a candidate gain anything by appearing live on a gaming platform?

See it in a real dissertation: [Going Live: How Twitch Appearances Shape Voter Perceptions of Political Candidates](#) · Leah H Ross · Syracuse University · 2026

28. Do the color grade and the music bed of a news package change what viewers conclude?

See it in a real dissertation: [Subordinate Frames: Testing the Political Effects of Color and Music in Television News](#) · Clark, Nate · Harvard University · 2023

29. What did one platform do to political communication in a country with a fragile press?

See it in a real dissertation: [The role of Twitter in shaping political communication: a case study of Pakistan](#) · Naheed Akhtar · University of the West of Scotland · 2026

30. Can satire do the work of criticism when the audience is already in on the joke?

See it in a real dissertation: [In the Culture of Truthiness: Comic Criticism and the Performative Politics of Stephen Colbert](#) · Justine Schuchard Holcomb · Georgia State University · 2022

Misinformation, fact-checking and trust

31. How do reporters fact-check in a country where the press itself is under attack?

See it in a real dissertation: [A Study of Mexican Journalists' Professional Practices and Fact-Checking Habits During Misinformation and Anti-Press Times](#) · Merlina San Nicolás Leyva · San Jose State University · 2023

32. What did fake news look like before anyone called it that?

See it in a real dissertation: [News\(?\)papers: A Typology of Fake News, 1880-1920](#) · Olivia Romaguera · Louisiana State University · 2023

33. Who gains from a fact-check label, the reader or the platform showing it?

See it in a real dissertation: [Who is benefitting from fact-checking on social media – user or platform? Examining the impact of different fact-checking approaches on social media platforms on user's perception of trust](#) · Acht, Alexander · Harvard University · 2024

34. How easily can an automatic fake news detector be talked out of its verdict?

See it in a real dissertation: [Transformer Reinforcement Learning Approach to Attack Automatic Fake News Detectors](#) · Chandler Underwood · Boise State University · 2023

35. What has to exist, practically, for a conspiracy theory to keep circulating?

See it in a real dissertation: [The Infrastructure of Conspiracy Theories](#) · Winston Berg · University of Chicago · 2024

News framing and coverage analysis

36. Did the press frame the heroin epidemic and the opioid crisis as the same story?

See it in a real dissertation: [A Comparative Content Analysis of How Print Media Framed the Heroin Epidemic and the Opioid Crisis](#) · Quincy Hodges · Louisiana State University · 2022

37. How does news coverage of a blockbuster film decide what the film is about?

See it in a real dissertation: [Framing Barbie: A Thematic Analysis of News Media](#) · McKenzie Muskett · University of South Florida · 2024

38. What changes in the coverage of an unfamiliar candidate over a single campaign?

See it in a real dissertation: [Depicting The Donald: How Framing of Donald Trump in Media Changed Throughout the Course of His 2015-2016 United States Presidential Campaign](#) · Jakob O Janoski · West Virginia University · 2024

39. Why does one endangered population get news coverage and a nearly identical one not?

See it in a real dissertation: [Analyzing the Differential News Coverage of the North Atlantic and North Pacific Right Whales: A Case Study of Agenda Setting, Framing, and Tone in Endangered Species Communication](#) · Colette Soulier · University of Rhode Island · 2022

40. Does watching mainstream news move racial attitudes, or only track them?

See it in a real dissertation: [Some Things Change and the News Stays the Same: Contextual Factors of Mainstream News Viewing and Racial Attitudes](#) · Audon Archibald · University of North Texas · 2022

Race, gender and representation in news

41. How did one press cover a lynching that another reported as a civic event?

See it in a real dissertation: [Counter Framing the Majoritarian Narrative: A Hermeneutical Analysis of the Media Coverage of the Lynching of Jesse Washington](#) · Kaiyah Clarke · West Virginia University · 2025

42. How is anti-Asian violence explained in the news, and what is left out of the explanation?

See it in a real dissertation: [Critical Analysis of Anti-Asian Hate in the News](#) · Benardo Relampagos · Portland State University · 2023

43. Which parts of a music journalist's working life never reach the copy she files?

See it in a real dissertation: [Not What "Almost Famous" Made It Out to Be: Gendered Harassment of Female Music Journalists](#) · Simone Carter · University of North Texas · 2022

44. Does a byline's gender change how much a reader trusts the story under it?

See it in a real dissertation: [Source Credibility and Trust of Media Information Based on Gender of Reporter](#) · Madison R Urse · West Virginia University · 2023

45. When does antifeminism become a workable campaign strategy rather than a liability?

See it in a real dissertation: [Antifeminism as a winning political strategy: a case study of the 2022 Korean presidential election campaign](#) · Munui Park · Temple University · 2026

Sports and entertainment journalism

46. What changes in how a female athlete is described when the sport itself is the story?

See it in a real dissertation: [Media Framing of Female Athletes and Women's Sports in Selected Sports Magazines](#) · Stacey Nicely · Georgia State University · 2022

47. Which teams get the main channel, and which get the overflow stream?

See it in a real dissertation: [Who Is Seen?: Media Representation of Women's College Soccer Teams on ACCN and ACCNX](#) · Mittermair, Linda · University of Virginia · 2025

48. Why do people pay to stream sport rather than watch it on television?

See it in a real dissertation: [Watching Sports Online: Evaluating the Viewing Motivations of Sports Streaming Service Users](#) · Jordan Dove · Louisiana State University · 2023

49. What turns a tournament marketing campaign into something people call a movement?

See it in a real dissertation: [How FIFA's We Are 26 Campaign, Turned the 2026 World Cup Into a Global Movement](#) · Allison Moxley · University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill · 2026

50. What does a public figure actually say during a controversy, and what do they not?

See it in a real dissertation: ["Call it What you Want" Analyzing Taylor Swift's Communication Strategies During Public Controversies](#) · Cuello, Isabella · University of South Florida · 2025

How to turn a topic into your research question

A topic is a starting point, not something you can research yet. These four steps take you from a topic on this list to a focused question you can actually answer.

- 1. Shortlist three, not one.** Pick three topics from this list that genuinely interest you and fit the access you have to people and data.

Recommended reading: [How to find and choose a dissertation topic](#)

- 2. Read the dissertation behind each one.** Its literature review and its "recommendations for future research" section show you what is already known and what is still open.

Recommended reading: [How to find a research gap](#)

- 3. Narrow it to your setting.** Name one population, one setting and one thing you will measure or explore. That turns a broad topic into a question you can finish.

Recommended reading: [How to write a research question](#)

- 4. Line up your aims, objectives and questions.** Your committee will check that they agree.

Recommended reading: [Research aims, objectives and questions](#)

Work through these once and you will have a focused question rather than a broad topic, which is what the rest of your proposal is built on.