

NewsBank Hot Topics

March 2009

CURRENT EVENTS RESEARCH TOPICS

ECONOMICS - Economic Recovery

TOPIC: The economic distress in the United States continues to be extremely alarming. Are we being optimistic about the recovery plan? Why, after several bailouts, does the economy continue to stubbornly remain in a badly damaged state?

SEARCH TERMS: economic recovery plan AND budget

CIVICS, GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS - The War in Iraq: The Beginning of the End

TOPIC: President Obama has announced that he will withdraw all combat forces from Iraq by August 2010 and the remaining 35,000 - 50,000 support troops will be home by December 2011. President Obama says that he intends to complete the exit transition "with responsibility," and that he would accept nothing less than a "complete and final victory." How is Mr. Obama intending to reach these contradictory goals?

SEARCH TERMS: Barack Obama AND troop withdrawals AND Iraq

SPORTS - Sri Lankan Cricket Team

TOPIC: The Sri Lankan cricket team substituted for the Indian team for a match held in Lahore, Pakistan. Before they got to the stadium, their bus was attacked by terrorists. Two of the athletes were shot and six policemen and bystanders died in the assault. What were the reasons for the attack?

SEARCH TERMS: cricket AND terrorism

CIVICS, GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS - Changes in Cuba

Topic: Raul Castro ended his first year in power by removing some members of the cabinet under his brother Fidel's administration and replacing them with his choices. What are his reasons for doing this? Will these changes alter Cuba's relations with the rest of the world, including the U.S.?

Searches: Raul Castro AND government officials

CIVICS, GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS - President of Sudan

Topic: The International Criminal Court issued an arrest warrant for the President of the Sudan, Umar Hasan al-Bashir for the atrocities in Darfur. What is he charged with? What is unusual about the court's decision? What will happen in Sudan as a result of it?

Searches: Umar al-Bashir AND International Criminal Court

SOCIAL STUDIES RESEARCH TOPICS

CIVICS, GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS - New Political Party in South Africa

TOPIC: The ruling African National Congress has dominated South African politics since the end of apartheid. Now some members have formed a new party, Congress of the People, to oppose the ANC in the presidential elections. What spurred the creation of this party, and what is its platform?

SEARCH TERMS: South Africa AND political parties

CIVICS, GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS - The Comeback of Bibi Netanyahu

TOPIC: Benjamin Netanyahu has been given the task by the president of Israel to form a new coalition government following legislative elections which the Likud party won. What parties will join this new coalition government? How will the new government affect the Middle East peace process?

SEARCH TERMS: Benjamin Netanyahu AND coalition governments

CRIME AND LAW - The Trial for Rafiq al-Hariri

TOPIC: The trial of four military officers suspected in the assassination of Rafiq al-Hariri in Lebanon is underway in The Hague. Who was Rafiq al-Hariri, and why was he murdered? Why is the trial being held in The Hague?

SEARCH TERMS: Rafiq al-Hariri AND assassination

CRIME AND LAW - Mexico and Drug Trafficking

TOPIC: Mexico, especially in its northern state near the American border, is plagued by drug traffickers at war with each other and with police. As the death toll mounted, President Felipe Calderon enlisted the Mexican army in the fight against the drug cartels. What tactics do the cartels employ? What progress has been made? What factors impede the law enforcement effort?

SEARCH TERMS: Mexico AND drug trafficking

CRIME AND LAW - Final Exit Network Members Arrested

TOPIC: In Georgia, the FBI has arrested members of the Final Exit Network charging them with assisting suicide. Assisted suicide is against the law in the state of Georgia. The organization says that they are not aiding suicide but are there to support and guide those who have decided to end their lives. Is the Final Exit Network guilty of murder or are they helping people die gracefully?

SEARCH TERMS: assisted suicide AND right to die AND ethics

ECONOMICS - How will the Stimulus Stimulate?

TOPIC: President Obama, in presenting his new stimulus package, says that government spending needs to increase in order to revive the economy. His spending plan makes significant investments in alternative energy, education, and health care. People who earn high wages--as well as the oil and gas companies--will pay higher taxes. Why will these investments jump-start the economy? How will these proposed changes impact your future?

SEARCH TERMS: Barack Obama AND economic policy

ECONOMICS - The Economic Impact on Skyscrapers

TOPIC: What became a competition among countries to build the tallest building in the world has now fallen into a move to stop the construction of many of them due to the global economic downturn. How will these shutdowns affect the eventual construction cost when, and if, the buildings are completed?

SEARCH TERMS: Economic conditions AND skyscrapers

EDUCATION - Schools in Zimbabwe

TOPIC: A UNESCO investigation has found that schools in Zimbabwe are a disaster. Attendance is approximately 20 percent and rural schools have closed due to a lack of teachers. How will poor access to education affect life in the future in Zimbabwe? Given the political crisis in the country how can this problem be solved?

SEARCH TERMS: Zimbabwe AND education

EDUCATION - Looking Beyond High School

TOPIC: In his new stimulus plan, President Obama suggests that every high school graduate should attend at least one year of post-high school education. Why does he suggest that a post-high school education is a matter of *patriotic duty*? What are the options for post-high school education schooling?

SEARCH TERMS: Barack Obama AND education reform

HISTORY - 200th Birthday

TOPIC: Celebrations and commemorations honoring Abraham Lincoln took place in February. What is Abraham Lincoln's legacy in American history? Why has there been a recent surge of interest in him?

SEARCH TERMS: Abraham Lincoln

SOCIAL ISSUES - Women's Rights in Iran

TOPIC: At the 30th anniversary of the Iranian revolution women are still waiting for equality in many aspects of life. What rights would women like to obtain? How will women's rights in Iran affect the quality of life in the country?

SEARCH TERMS: Iran AND women's rights

SOCIAL ISSUES - Facebook Backs Off

TOPIC: Facebook, a social networking tool, has 175 million users from around the world. In early February they established a new policy that stated that if a user left Facebook, the company would continue to own that user's content. Many protests took place, and Facebook has discontinued the policy. What are the benefits to online networking? What risks are involved? Why are online networks popular today?

SEARCH TERMS: Facebook.com AND personal information AND consumer protection

SCIENCE AND HEALTH RESEARCH TOPICS

ENVIRONMENT - The National Guard goes Green

TOPIC: The National Guard's new mission is to go green. Every building being constructed on National Guard bases in the U.S. must meet green building standards. This includes bases utilizing solar panels, wind turbines and other alternative energy mechanisms. Vehicles being used are now using biofuels and ethanol. Why is the National Guard committed to going green? What are the economic and environmental benefits of green technologies?

SEARCH TERMS: environmental-friendly technologies AND energy conservation

HEALTH - More Kids Opt Out of Eating Meat

TOPIC: More and more, children across the country are becoming vegetarians. Some are choosing a meatless diet because they love animals. Some choose it because of health reasons, and some choose it for environmental reasons. How can young people ensure that they are getting the nutrition they need when they don't eat meat? What aspects of nutrition need to be watched carefully when one becomes a vegetarian?

SEARCH TERMS: children AND vegetarianism

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY - Space Junk

TOPIC: In early February, two satellites collide over Siberia and created enough space debris to threaten other satellites orbiting the planet for the next 10,000 years. What has NASA's response been to the accident? How much space junk is orbiting around our planet? What are the plans to prevent any further collisions in space?

SEARCH TERMS: space debris AND satellites

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY - Europe to Mars

TOPIC: The European Space Agency, in a joint venture with NASA, is planning for a manned mission to Mars in about 30 years. The ESA and NASA have selected astronauts for an experiment in isolation which will last 105 days, followed by another which will last 520 days, the time it would take to reach the planet in a spacecraft. Are these human experiments necessary for the eventual trip to Mars? How does one plan for and survive isolation?

SEARCH TERMS: Europe AND Mars

SPORTS RESEARCH TOPICS

SPORTS - Tiger Woods Returns

TOPIC: Tiger Woods returned to the world of golf after having reconstructive surgery on his left knee. Why is Tiger Woods such a crowd pleaser? What makes him one of the best golfers in the game?

SEARCH TERMS: Tiger Woods

SPORTS - NASCAR in the New Economy

TOPIC: NASCAR racing teams are heavily dependent upon corporate sponsorship monies. With corporate profits falling in the recession, their ability to devote funds to sports events has diminished. Has any NASCAR team been effected by this? What precautions, if any, are NASCAR teams taking?

SEARCH TERMS: NASCAR AND corporate sponsorship

SPORTS - Can Beckham Bend his Contract?

TOPIC: Soccer star David Beckham is playing for AC Milan of Italy on a loan from the Los Angeles Galaxy as his wish was to stay in shape and be considered for a place on England's National Team in their quest for the World Cup. He did much better than expected and now both he and the Italians want his contract to be transferred to AC Milan. What would be the best outcome for soccer? What would be the best outcome for the Los Angeles Galaxy?

SEARCH TERMS: David Beckham AND contracts

SPORTS - Alex Rodriguez

TOPIC: Alex Rodriguez acknowledged his steroid use while he was a Texas Ranger in advance of a magazine article in Sports Illustrated. He is the highest profile active player to do so. Why would highly paid professional athletes resort to using steroids and other performance enhancing drugs? What do steroids do that make athletes want to take them?

SEARCHES: steroids AND Alex Rodriguez

ARTS AND LITERATURE RESEARCH TOPICS

FILM AND TELEVISION - The Academy Awards

TOPIC: Slumdog Millionaire won eight academy awards and brought life in India to the cinema. Danny Boyle, the film's director, has received some criticism in India about fair treatment and pay to the actors of the film. What responsibilities do directors have when filming in impoverished countries? Why have critics claimed that Slumdog sensationalizes India's dysfunctions?

SEARCH TERMS: Slumdog Millionaire AND Academy Awards

FILM AND TELEVISION - Violence and Films

TOPIC: A film depicting race riots in Sydney, Australia four years ago between whites and Lebanese gangs has incited violence in the theaters and was withdrawn from them. Now the cinema group has decided to run the film titled The Combination again at special screenings with extra security measures and an address by the director, George Basha. What can be accomplished by showing this film in Australian theaters? Should films be banned to prevent violence?

SEARCH TERMS: The Combination AND films

FINE ARTS AND ARCHITECTURE - The Yves Saint Laurent Collection

TOPIC: Yves Saint Laurent was one of the most important French fashion designers of the Twentieth Century and an art collector. Now the entire collection is going to auction in Paris? Is there anything special about this collection? What objects are included in it? How will the proceeds from the sale be used?

SEARCH TERMS: France AND Yves Saint Laurent

FINE ARTS AND ARCHITECTURE - Ownership of Bronze Sculpture

TOPIC: The art collection of French fashion designer Yves Saint Laurent, which went to auction this week in Paris, included two bronze animal head sculptures said to have been looted from Beijing in the 19th Century. China claims ownership. Pierre Berge, the partner of Saint Laurent, has possession. What does Berge propose as a solution? What has been the Chinese response?

SEARCH TERMS: Pierre Berge AND China

FINE ARTS AND ARCHITECTURE - Green Architecture

TOPIC: Green buildings and facilities can be beautiful, light-filled, places that use our natural resources in a productive, non-intrusive manner, some say. Others say that green design has a long way to go to be useful and pleasing to the eye. What are the challenges in building green? How does green design affect our habits in the way that we use indoor facilities?

SEARCH TERMS: architecture AND environment-friendly technology

LITERATURE - Wimpy Kid

TOPIC: *Diary of a Wimpy Kid*, one of the most successful kid series of books to be published, reads like a journal of comic and prose. Now the journal writer, Greg Heffley, is about to come to life on the silver screen. Auditions call for someone who is *slight and skinny, physically unprepossessing, and not overly cute or precious*. Why are these books popular? Why do kids love to read about Greg Heffley's adventures in middle school?

SEARCH TERMS: Wimpy Kid OR Jeff Kinney

PERFORMING ARTS - Jonas Brothers

TOPIC: The tween world is in love with the Jonas Brothers. Three brothers-- two who had appeared in Broadway productions, one who taught himself to play guitar--play to sold-out crowds around the world. They also appeared at the Youth Ball during the presidential inauguration festivities. Why is this band so popular? What are some of the messages in their lyrics that inspire their audience?

SEARCH TERMS: Jonas Brothers

PERFORMING ARTS - Buena Vista Musicians

TOPIC: Orlando Cachaito Lopez, the bassist of the famed Buena Vista Social Club has died in Havana, Cuba. What will happen to the group now that most of the original musicians involved in the famous movie of the same name have died? Did the performances by this group of Cuban musicians help in bringing their music to the international scene? How will this group affect the work of younger talent in the country?

SEARCH TERMS: Orlando Lopez OR Cachaito

PEOPLE RESEARCH TOPICS

PEOPLE - "Hello Americans, this is Paul Harvey! Stand by for the news!"

TOPIC: The voice of Paul Harvey many will remember as hypnotic and dramatic. His broadcasts were one of the most popular programs on radio from the 1950s through the 1990s with audiences as high as 22 million listeners. He loved human-interest stories and was known for his comic one-liners. What was controversial about his broadcasts? What will be his legacy to radio broadcasting?

SEARCH TERMS: Paul Harvey

PEOPLE - Fayez, Norah al-

TOPIC: The government of Saudi Arabia now has its first woman government official. How important is this nomination to the women's rights movement in Saudi Arabia where women are not allowed basic privileges such as driving? How will this nomination open the way for more opportunities in government and business for women in Saudi Arabia?

SEARCH TERMS: Fayez, Norah al-

PEOPLE - Abhisit Vejjajiva

TOPIC: After months of demonstrations and blockades of government buildings by opposition parties, Thailand has a new prime minister: Abhisit Vejjajiva. Who is he? What policies is he likely to follow to bring stability to Thailand?

SEARCH TERMS: Thailand AND Abhisit Vejjajiva

PEOPLE - Sharif Ahmed

TOPIC: Somalia has been a failed state since the 1991 overthrow of its dictator, Muhammad Siyad Barre. Now Sharif Ahmed, leader of the moderate Islamic faction, has been elected president. What obstacles does he face in bringing the rule of law to war torn Somalia?

SEARCH TERMS: Somalia AND Sharif Ahmed

PEOPLE - Roland Burris

TOPIC: Junior Senator Roland Burris continues to fight for his senate seat that was established by former Governor Rod Blagojevich. Many of his colleagues are calling for Burris to resign. Why is Burris being asked to resign? What are the issues that Senator Burris is facing in his political future? How can a senator be effective at his job while trying to defend his merits?

SEARCH TERMS: Roland Burris