

NewsBank Hot Topics

May, 2009

CURRENT EVENTS RESEARCH TOPICS

ECONOMICS- Unemployment Rate

TOPIC: The Federal Government released its monthly figures showing the numbers of unemployed and it had gone up. Why did some people see this as good news? What are the inherent problems in statistics?

SEARCH TERMS: unemployment rate

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY - The New Kindle

TOPIC: Amazon has introduced a new version of its popular Kindle electronic book viewer with a larger screen. Newspapers are supporting this by offering their subscriptions via it. Textbook publishers are also signing up with Amazon to distribute their works. What made the Kindle so popular? Is the popularity of this device likely to help the ailing newspaper industry? Will college students see it as a way to save money on textbooks?

SEARCH TERMS: Kindle AND newspapers AND textbooks

HEALTH - Swine Flu (H1N1)

TOPIC: The most recent strain of influenza, initially labeled as swine flu, comes from the H1N1 influenza virus. It combines the strains of flu endemic in birds, swine and humans. It initially broke out in Mexico and quickly moved around the world. This is the same type of flu responsible for the 1918 influenza outbreak. What makes this virus different is its ability to mutate with other viruses and jump from animal to human and back. Do you think there is a possibility this flu could mutate into a real serious influenza virus? Will it reappear during the oncoming winter season, when it can supposedly cause more harm? What has been the response in individual states and countries? What are the specific hazards of this flu and what are some of the best ways to avoid it?

SEARCH TERMS: swine flu

ECONOMICS - Chrysler Bankruptcy

TOPIC: After existing on government loans from the stimulus package, the Chrysler Corporation has filed for bankruptcy. What are the financial considerations and overall purpose in filing for bankruptcy? What has been the reaction of the Obama Administration and the public to this?

SEARCH TERMS: bankruptcy and Chrysler

HISTORY - History of U.S. and Cuba Relations

TOPIC: Cuba and the U.S. have had a long, contentious relationship throughout the years. New presidents of both countries are looking for an opportunity to revisit the state of their diplomatic relations. What would be the benefits for Cuba of improved relations? What would be the benefits for the U.S. of improved relations?

SEARCH TERMS: Cuba AND U.S. AND history

CRIME AND LAW - Somalia Pirates

TOPIC: Investigators hired by a shipping industry that has paid almost 80 million dollars to pirates from Somalia discover most of the money is being laundered by crime syndicates. Some is actually going to terrorists. Will the hunt for the money aid in curbing piracy in the seas off Somalia? Who are members of the money laundering group? Who is most guilty the pirates, or their financiers?

SEARCH TERMS: piracy AND investigations

SOCIAL STUDIES RESEARCH TOPICS

CIVICS, GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS - Tax Loopholes

TOPIC: President Obama has presented a plan to end many of the tax loopholes, or, legal ways in which people and companies can avoid paying specific taxes. What are some common tax loopholes and how do they work? What are some examples of U.S. presidents addressing this issue in the past and what was the result of their efforts?

SEARCH TERMS: tax loopholes AND Obama

CIVICS, GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS - Moldova Returns to the Past

TOPIC: Moldova is a communist state surrounded by democracies. Recent elections that returned President Vladimir Voronin and the communists to power have given rise to demonstrations and political violence. Who are the protesters? What are they protesting? What changes do they seek?

SEARCH TERMS: Moldova AND demonstrations

CRIME AND LAW - Georgian Mutiny

TOPIC: Military personnel in the Georgia Republic have put down an attempted mutiny started by a tank battalion that supposedly involved an assassination attempt on the president of the country. Georgian authorities believe there was Russian involvement. How will this affect the negotiations between the two countries? What is Russia trying to do with this action?

SEARCH TERMS: Georgia Republic AND mutinies

CRIME AND LAW - Torture Memos

TOPIC: President Obama has authorized the declassification of memos from the Department of Justice explaining the Bush Administration's legal reasoning behind hard interrogation techniques that have brought accusations of torture. What techniques have been most criticized and what are the specific legal grounds on which the Bush Administration relied on to conduct them? What are the controversial issues surrounding President Obama's decision to release these memos? How is torture defined, and what is the policy that is to be employed by the American government?

SEARCH TERMS: memos AND CIA AND Obama

ECONOMICS - Ukraine's Partnership with the EU

TOPIC: European Union members suffered natural gas shortages as a result of the dispute between Russia and Ukraine over natural gas prices and gas pipeline transit fees. What actions has the European Union taken? What are the implications of this contract for Russia?

SEARCH TERMS: Ukraine AND European Union AND natural gas

EDUCATION - Cities Curb Dropout Rate

TOPIC: A recent study by the Editorial Project in Education Research Center shows that the dropout rate is improving in many of the cities where it has been the biggest problem. What have been the reasons for this reversal? What are some of the various reasons for the high dropout rates and what were the specific issues in cities that have caused high dropout rates?

SEARCH TERMS: dropout rates AND research

EDUCATION - Open University

TOPIC: England's Open University has its own YouTube channel and learning materials can be downloaded to iphones, ipods and laptops. Their technology allows students to perform lab work on their computers, and to participate in virtual field trips. Is online learning the wave of the future in distance learning? How will this online university improve education for students in other countries?

SEARCH TERMS: Open University

HISTORY - Abraham Lincoln and the Cancer Theory

TOPIC: A test of Abraham Lincoln's DNA suggests that he could have had cancer when he was assassinated. What is the condition that President Lincoln may have had and how is it related to cancer? How does DNA testing work?

SEARCH TERMS: Lincoln AND DNA AND cancer

SOCIAL ISSUES - Barack Obama at Notre Dame

TOPIC: President Obama's invitation to speak at Notre Dame University and receive an honorary degree has upset some of the people there. What are the issues that have caused controversy? What have been the positions of some of the most outspoken critics of this choice?

SEARCH TERMS: Notre Dame AND Obama

SOCIAL ISSUES - Lebanese get lesson on domestic workers from Mimi

TOPIC: A children's books series, *Mimi and her Magic Globe*, was published in Lebanon in an effort to make the population aware of the 200,000 foreign domestic workers who often suffer abuse in that country. Published in Arabic, it takes the young reader on a journey to the Philippines, Sri Lanka and Ethiopia, source countries for most of the foreign workers. Do you think this type of effort will improve the treatment of foreign domestic workers in Lebanon? Why were the books directed at children?

SEARCH TERMS: Mimi and her Magic Globe AND Lebanon

SCIENCE AND HEALTH RESEARCH TOPICS

ENVIRONMENT - Ethanol Test for Obama

TOPIC: President Obama is investigating the impact of ethanol on the environment. Why is this research so politically sensitive? What are the known benefits/hazards of using ethanol as a source of fuel?

SEARCH TERMS: Ethanol AND global warming AND Obama

ENVIRONMENT - China's Coal Industry

TOPIC: China has both enormous coal deposits and an enormous coal industry marred by many mine accidents resulting in frequent fatalities. Now a coal mining national park and museum are being created. Where is this project being constructed? What is its environmental impact? What are the consequences of coal mining in China?

SEARCH TERMS: China AND coal industry

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY - Super Silk

TOPIC: Scientists in Germany have made spider's silk stronger than steel by infusing it with other metals. Although they do not believe that the reinforced silk has any practical applications they do see value in other areas for these types of infusions. Can you think of any applications for these stronger materials?

SEARCH TERMS: spider webs AND research

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY - U.S. Cyber Warfare Assessment

TOPIC: A recently published report by The National Research Council shows the U.S. policies on cyber warfare lack proper oversight and suggests that they be open for public debate. What specific problems does the NRC find with the system? What are some of the tactics in cyber warfare and how does the technology work?

SEARCH TERMS: National Research Council AND cyber warfare

SPORTS RESEARCH TOPICS

SPORTS - Kentucky Derby

TOPIC: The surprising upset victory in this year's Kentucky Derby goes to a horse named Mine That Bird. What has been some other the career highlight of this horse? What have been some of the most exciting races in the history of the Kentucky Derby?

SEARCH TERMS: Kentucky Derby

SPORTS - Winning the Masters

TOPIC: Forty years ago, Roberto De Vincenzo, an Argentine golfer, lost a Master's playoff opportunity by an error on his score card. That loss has been vindicated somewhat now because this year's Masters has been won by his fellow countryman Angel Cabrera. What other tournaments has Angel Cabrera won? Should errors on score cards cause a tournament loss?

SEARCH TERMS: Angel Cabrera

SPORTS - Polo Pony Deaths

TOPIC: The deaths of 21 elite polo horses owned by a Venezuelan millionaire was caused by an overdose of selenium, a common mineral that helps muscles recover from fatigue, according to toxicology tests by local vets. The horses started dying as they were unloaded from trailers at the match site. Should these horses be given drugs or allowed to recover on their own? What do you know about the game of polo?

SEARCH TERMS: polo AND horses AND animal deaths

SPORTS - Greg Page

TOPIC: Former heavyweight boxing champion Greg Page has died. What was the cause of Mr. Page's death? What are some historic examples that outline the hazards of boxing?

SEARCH TERMS: boxing AND Greg Page

ARTS AND LITERATURE RESEARCH TOPICS

FILM AND TELEVISION - Tribeca Film Festival

TOPIC: New York's annual Tribeca Film Festival has announced their winners. What are the films that won and what impressed the voters about these films? What were the topics of this year's panel discussions and what ideas on those topics were explored and why?

SEARCH TERMS: Tribeca Film Festival

FILM AND TELEVISION - Cannes Film Festival

TOPIC: Global economic conditions have affected the Cannes Film Festival and the festivities will be low-key this year in keeping with the downturn. Event participants will be served sparkling wines instead of champagne and there will be no caviar. Can the festival maintain its relevance despite the economy?

SEARCH TERMS: Cannes Film Festival

FINE ARTS AND ARCHITECTURE - Zumthor wins Pritzker, Nobel of Architecture

TOPIC: Swiss architect Peter Zumthor has been awarded the Pritzker prize, known as the Nobel for architects. What buildings and sites is he famous for? Why are architects important to a city's development?

SEARCH TERMS: Peter Zumthor

FINE ARTS AND ARCHITECTURE - Luftwaffe photos

TOPIC: The impact of the Luftwaffe's WW2 bombing on Warsaw is made clear in a Warsaw exhibition of photos taken by the Luftwaffe over the time of the bombing. What are some other examples of historic wartime photo documentation? What are some specific points of interest made clear in these photos?

SEARCH TERMS: Warsaw AND Luftwaffe AND photographs

LITERATURE - Pulitzer Prizes

TOPIC: The 2009 Pulitzer Prizes have been issued have been awarded. Who were the big winners this year and why? What is an ironic factor of one journalist's winning on covering the economic crisis?

SEARCH TERMS: Pulitzer Prizes

LITERATURE - World Digital Library

TOPIC: With the aid of the Library of Congress librarian, UNESCO has posted tens of thousands digitized images and pages of information translated from all the languages of the United Nations creating a global digital dictionary. The web site offers free access to rare books, maps, manuscripts, films and photographs from around the world. Would you use this site? How does this site compare to others such as the Library of Congress and Google sites?

SEARCH TERMS: World Digital Library

PERFORMING ARTS - Ekaterina Maximova

TOPIC: The Bolshoi Ballet announced that Ekaterina Maximova, a legendary Bolshoi Theatre ballerina and Soviet dance superstar has died in Moscow. She was a robust 70 and was still involved in the theater with coaching. What were some of the highlights of her career?

SEARCH TERMS: Ekaterina Maximova

PERFORMING ARTS - Tony Nominations

TOPIC: The nominations for this Year's Tony Awards have been announced. What play has been awarded the most nominations? Why? What were some other plays to be awarded nominations?

SEARCH TERMS: Billy Elliot

PEOPLE RESEARCH TOPICS

PEOPLE - Jack Kemp

TOPIC: Jack Kemp was a New York congressman, Republican vice-presidential candidate, and quarterback for the Buffalo Bills. What were some of the political position and political achievements that Representative Kemp was best known for? What were some of Representative Kemps greatest achievements in professional football?

SEARCH TERMS: Jack Kemp

PEOPLE - Roberto Marchionne

TOPIC: The chief executive officer of Fiat in Italy, who is currently in merger talks with Chrysler and GM of the United States and Opel of Germany, envisions building an automobile industry giant which will grab a substantial share of the global market. He foresees an alliance via mergers, acquisitions and joint ventures. Can this be the salvation of the auto industry? How will this new enterprise affect the individual automobile manufacturers?

SEARCH TERMS: Fiat SPA AND Roberto Marchionne

PEOPLE - Ricardo Martinelli , Panama's Business President

TOPIC: Panamanian voters elected Ricardo Martinelli, a millionaire entrepreneur who a heads a business empire including supermarkets, banks and agricultural firms. He wants to run Panama like a corporation, and has promised that he can help share the economic benefits of a widened canal with all Panamanians. How does his election differ from recent elections in Latin America? What will be his economic policy?

SEARCH TERMS: Ricardo Martinelli

PEOPLE - Mayawati

TOPIC: Her Bahujan Samaj Party represents India's millions of Dalits, or untouchables, who are the lowest of the castes, or ranks, in the social system. What problems do the Dalits face? What is Mayawati's position? What does she hope to achieve?

SEARCH TERMS: India AND Mayawati

PEOPLE - Bea Arthur

TOPIC: Bea Arthur was an actress. What role was Ms. Arthur most known for? What are some of the career highlights of Ms. Arthur?

SEARCH TERMS: Bea Arthur

PEOPLE - Dom DeLouise

TOPIC: Dom DeLouise was a comic actor. What were some of the more famous films Mr. DeLouise acted in? What director did Mr. DeLouise work with frequently? For what will he be best remembered?

SEARCH TERMS: Dom DeLouise