

## The what, why, and how of journalistic objectivity

### I. What is journalistic objectivity?

#### A. As principle:

1. "Scientific," factual orientation
2. Neutrality (which may or may not be "fair and balanced") or nonpartisanship

#### B. As practice:

1. Two sides to any story (rarely any more than that)
2. Focus on "facts"
  - a) *Easily knowable* numbers and details (E.g., types of fighter planes to be used in a battle, but not the question of whether or not Saddam Hussein has WMD's)
  - b) Quotes as facts (which jives with the "two sides to any story" practice)
  - c) Statements by official sources treated as facts

### II. What is its function?

#### A. Proponents say it's to relay truth

#### B. Skeptics say:

1. It helps define journalism as an expert profession
2. It helps distinguish journalists from parajournalists
3. It works as a strategic ritual that supports journalists against opposing forces (e.g., their bosses, politicians, etc.)
4. It makes journalism subject to dominant power relations in society