


THE CONVERSATION

Academic rigor, journalistic flair

University of Washington and The Conversation

Academics and
Public Discourse

- 1. Why write for the public?**
2. Think like an editor
3. Working with The Conversation
4. Resources and support
5. Q+A

wikipedia brown, chiberian tiger 

@eveewing

Follow 

academics: yes, let's meet in 7 months
and 6 days, at 2:08 PM

journalists: hi can you comment for this
article, it's due in 47 seconds. also i've
left you seven voicemails

8:15 PM - 20 Feb 2019

3,780 Retweets 26,480 Likes



- A new model that brings together best of both academic and journalistic worlds
- International network, launched in US, Oct. 2014
- Independent nonprofit, supported by 12 foundations and 64 institutions

Editors in
Boston, Atlanta,
DC, New York
and Seattle



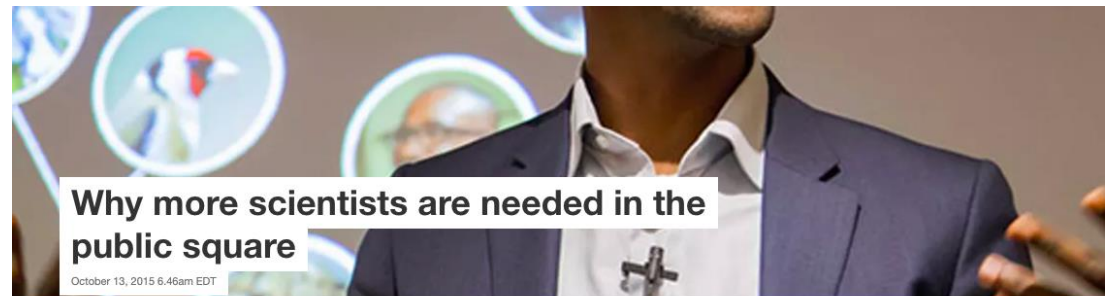
“We have not just an opportunity, but a responsibility to share the knowledge we develop with a wider world that is hungry for it. ... I encourage members of our community to share knowledge beyond the bounds of the academy, whether it be with policymakers looking for testimony on a given subject or with a public looking for insights.

**President Ana Mari Cauce,
University of Washington**



“As the president of one of our country’s leading research university systems, I believe it is now incumbent on the academic community to ensure that the work and voices of researchers are front and center in the public square.”

Janet Napolitano,
University of California



UCSF neuroscience grad student Sama Ahmed, whose three-minute talk on 'how to know your species' won first place at the campuswide contest, will compete for the Grad Slam championship in Oakland May 4. Susan Merrell/UCSF, Author provided

- Email
- Twitter 458
- Facebook 2.3k
- LinkedIn
- Print

In this presidential election season, one thing is certain: candidates will rarely – if ever – be asked what they would do to keep this nation at the forefront of science and innovation.

That’s a shame.

The public dialogue about science is perhaps the most vital and most fraught national conversation not taking place in our country, and the ramifications are profound.

Author



Janet Napolitano
President, University of California,
Office of the President

Disclosure statement

Janet Napolitano served in President Barack Obama’s cabinet as Secretary of Homeland Security.

- Enrich the public discourse on major news stories
- Help people make better decisions
- Explain big problems – or offer big solutions
- Share with the public the work funded by their tax dollars
- Spark curiosity

- Increase the visibility of your research
- Enhance your reputation and institutional prestige
- Improve communication skills
- Demonstrate public engagement and impact of your research and teaching to university or funders

“I was notified this morning by Rep. James P. McGovern’s legislative aide that he would be referencing one of my co-authored studies on the House Floor this morning.”

*Lindsey Haynes-Maslow,
North Carolina State
University*

“The article was cited by Pennsylvania Senator Gene Yaw in his advocacy for that state's victims of the opioid epidemic.”

*Paul R. Sanberg
University of South Florida*



In an age when both parents work, the U.S. needs to do better by helping families instead of punishing them.
[theconversation.com/the-us-is-stin](https://theconversation.com/the-us-is-stingier-with-child-care-and-maternity-leave-than-the-rest-of-the-world) ... via [@ConversationUS](https://twitter.com/ConversationUS)



The US is stingier with child care and maternity leave than the rest of the world
Research suggests that government spending on very young children is a good investment.
theconversation.com

7:20 PM - 24 Apr 2018

Article “The US stingier with child care and maternity leave than the rest of the world” shared by former US NATO Supreme Allied Commander Wesley Clark



The Trump administration recently declared the war on poverty over. Well I have news for President Trump. It is not. Millions of Americans are struggling economically. In America today despite low unemployment, some 40 million people still live in poverty, more than 30 million have no health insurance, over half of older workers have no retirement savings, 140 million Americans are struggling to pay for basic living expenses, 40 percent of Americans cannot afford a \$400 emergency and millions of Americans are leaving school deeply in debt.



THECONVERSATION.COM
Why the war on poverty in the US isn't over, in 4 charts
A White House Council concluded that the war on poverty is "largely..."

👍👎😬 Khalil A. Cassimally and 4.8K others 524 Comments 1.3K Shares

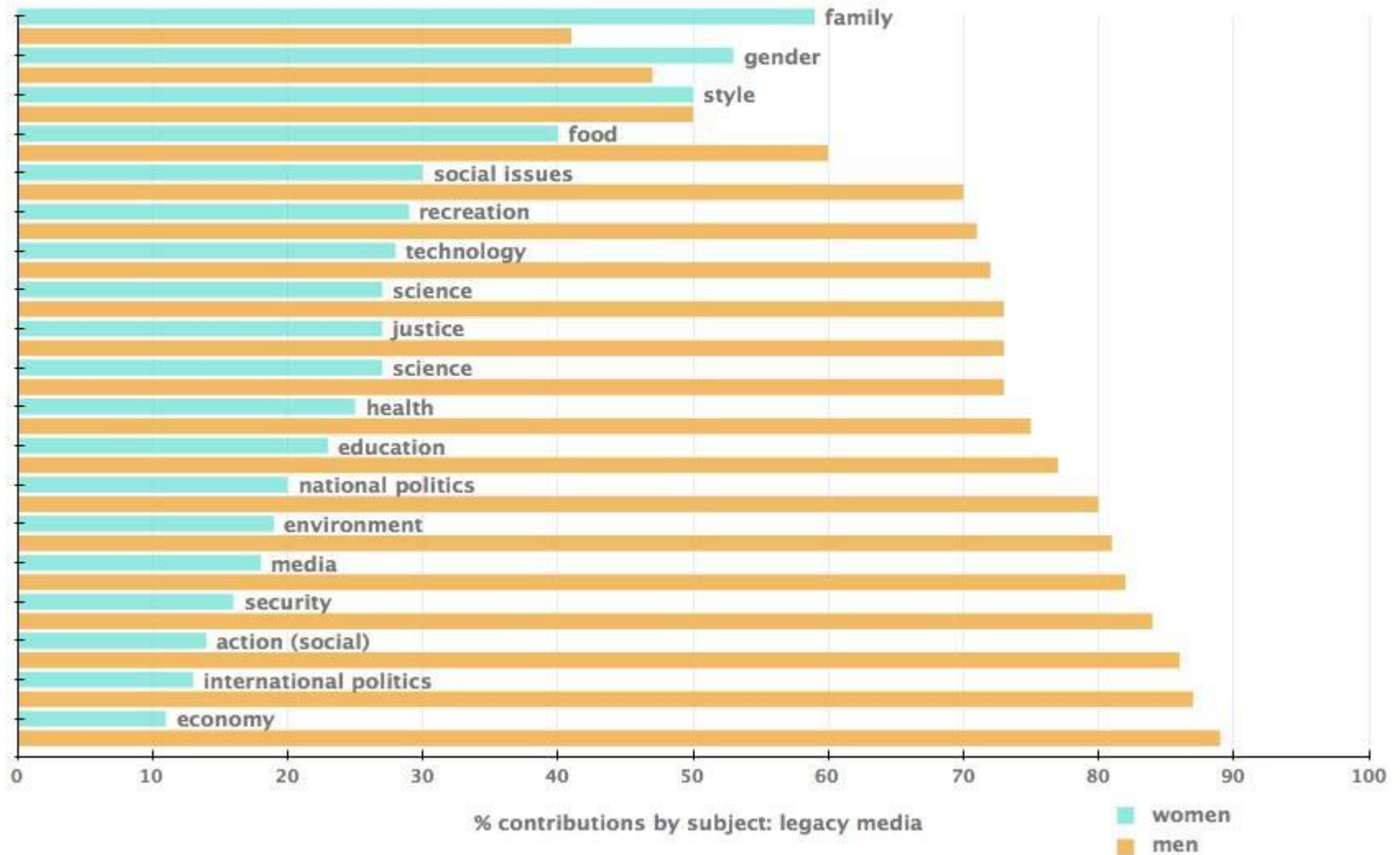
Article “Why the war on poverty in the US isn't over, in 4 charts” shared by US Senator Bernie Sanders

- 43%** Approached for other academic collaborations
- 31%** Increased citations of scholarly articles
- 23%** Used article/metrics as part of a grant or other funding
- 14%** Influenced policy by a decision maker
- ~7%** Book proposal or other book publishing

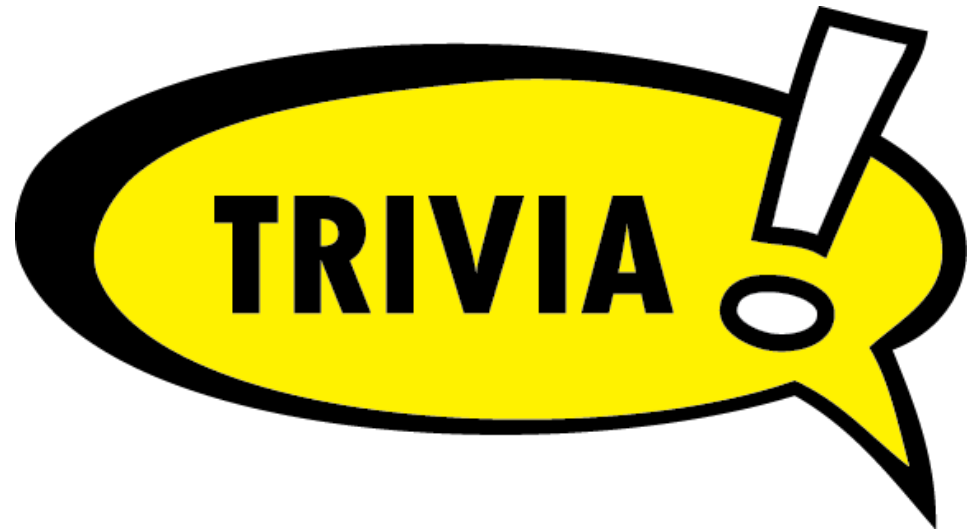
- 51%** Request for a radio interview
- 38%** Request for print outlet interview
- 27%** Request to write for a different outlet
- 17%** Request for a TV interview

**Post-publication outcome survey
of The Conversation US authors,
457 respondents**

Contributions by Women and Men by Subject: Legacy Media



1. Why write for the public?
- 2. Think like an editor**
3. Working with The Conversation
4. Resources and support
5. Q+A



In what year did the New York Times begin publishing the first modern op-ed page?



In what year did the New York Times begin publishing the first modern op-ed page?

ANSWER: 1970

What do editors want?

Length: 750 words – fits on a newspaper page

Copy that adds a new perspective on the news coverage and editorials



1. What do you know?

2. What's unique about your perspective?

3. Why should we care?

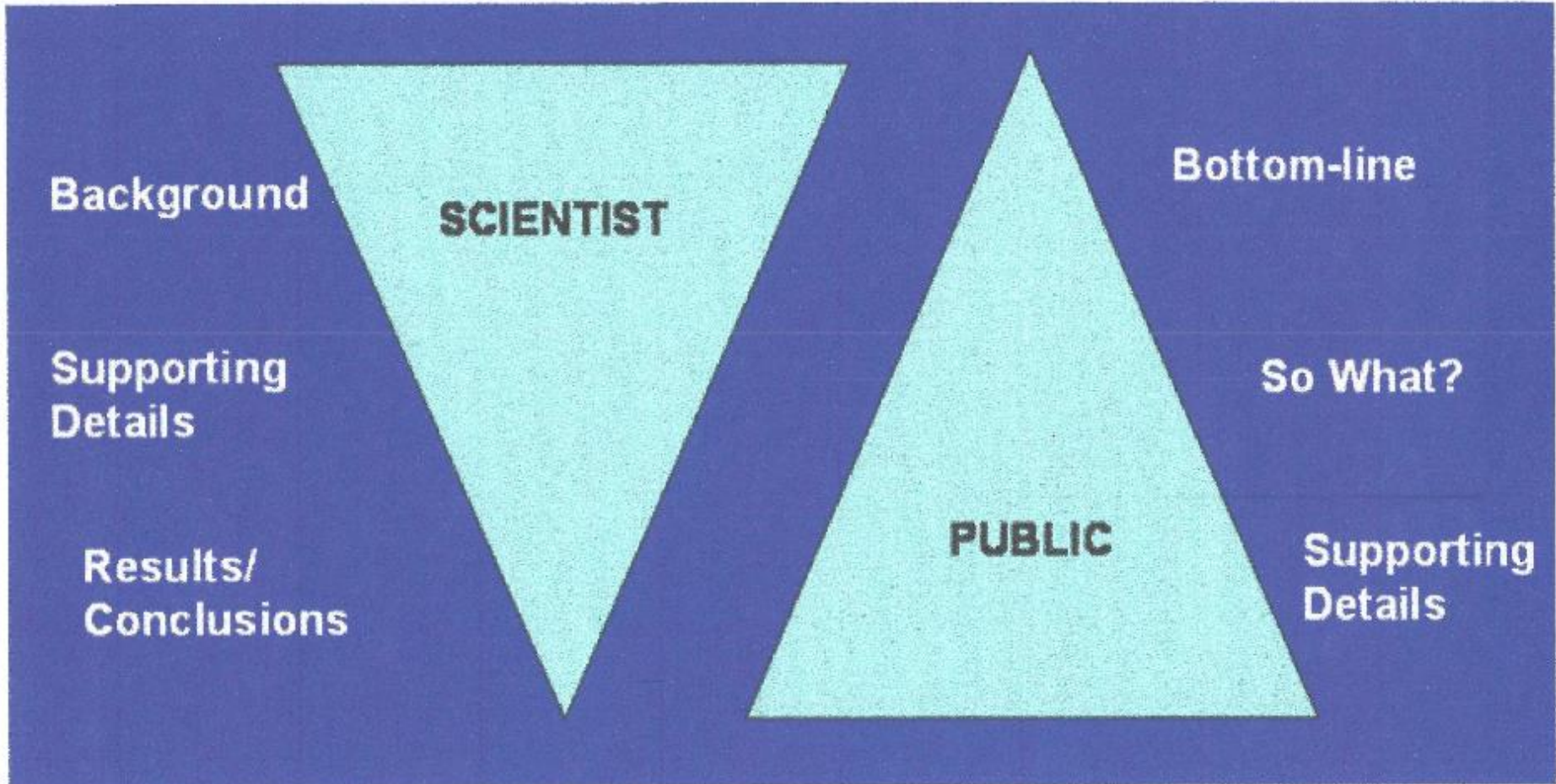


"I don't know why I don't care about the bottom of the ocean, but I don't."

4. Why now?

**5. Can you cover it
in 750 words?**

- Try writing the headline before you pitch
- Search the site. Have they already covered this angle?
- Consider the audience. Who reads/listens/watches? Regular folks, community members, fellow specialists, policymakers, funders...
- Don't write before you've communicated with an editor.



Start with a hook.

- Timely
- Personal
- Relatable
- Surprise
- Inside information
- Provocative statement



Examples that work:

“The 2020 U.S. Census is still two years away, but experts and civil rights groups are already disputing the results.”

Emily Klancher Merchant, UC Davis

“Most Americans associate fall with football and raking leaves, but in the Arctic this season is about ice.”

Donna Hauser, University of Alaska Fairbanks, and Harry Stern and Kristin Laidre, University of Washington

“People think they know everything about slavery in the United States, but they don’t.”

Daina Ramey Berry, University of Texas at Austin

Examples that work:

“When I looked at my appointment book for the day, I thought something must be wrong. Someone who worked in the fitness industry was bringing his cat in to the Tufts Obesity Clinic for Animals. Did he confuse us for a different kind of weight management clinic? Is he looking to get muscle on his cat or maybe kitty protein shakes?

I was utterly surprised when I called for my appointment in the lobby and an athletic man stood up with an almost 20-pound cat!”

Deborah E. Linder, Tufts University

Tell us why we should care.

Nut graf (from nut or kernel): the promise of the story or “why we invited you to this party.”



Examples that work:

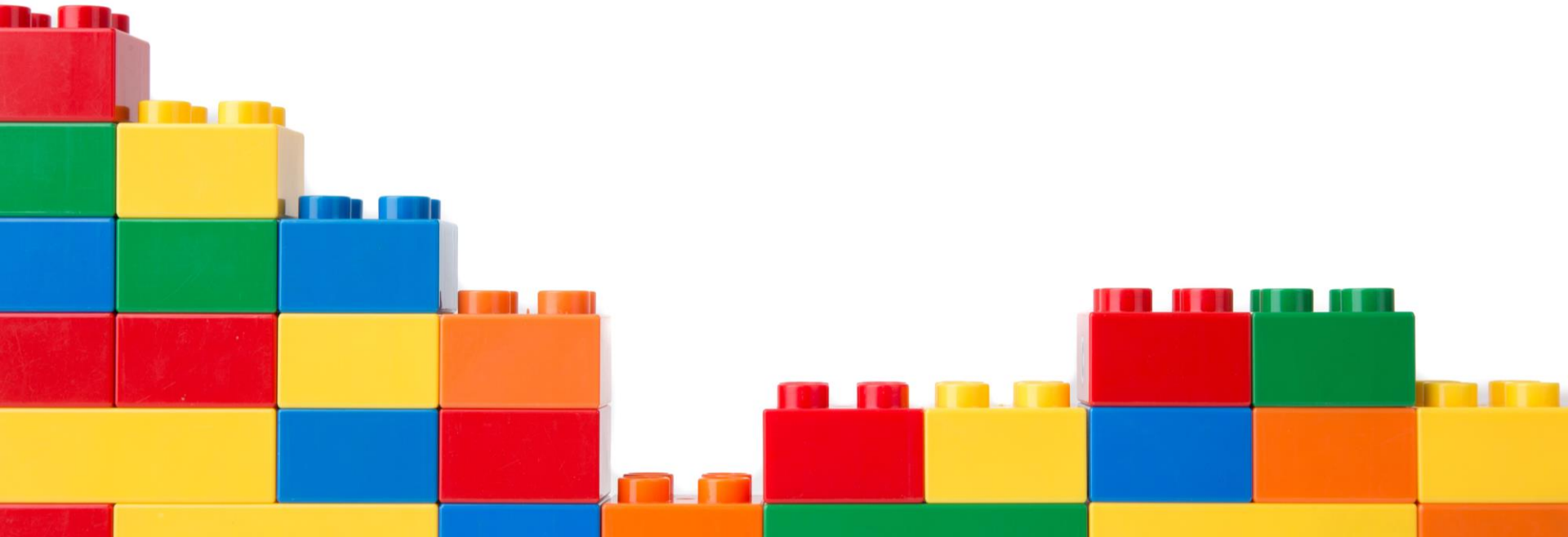
“Many Americans find themselves bombarded by expert advice to limit their screen time and break their addictions to digital devices – including enforcing and modeling this restraint for the children in their lives.

However, over 15 years of closely observing people and talking with them about how they use technological tools, I’ve developed a more nuanced view: Whether a technology helps or hurts someone depends not just on the amount of time they spend with it, but on how they use it.”

Margaret E. Morris, University of Washington

Anticipate pushback.

Note caveats and acknowledge other points of view.



A few other thoughts:

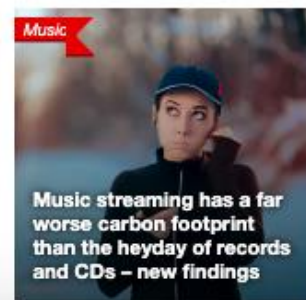
- Avoid jargon
- Stick to active voice
- Keep sentences and paragraphs short
- Use metaphors and specific examples
- Cite your sources
- Consider other media that you can provide (images, graphs, maps, videos, etc.)

1. Why write for the public?
2. Think like an editor
3. **Working with The Conversation**
4. Resources and support
5. Q+A

8 – 10 original articles daily

Articles average 800 – 1,000 words

Authors from more than 500 colleges and universities



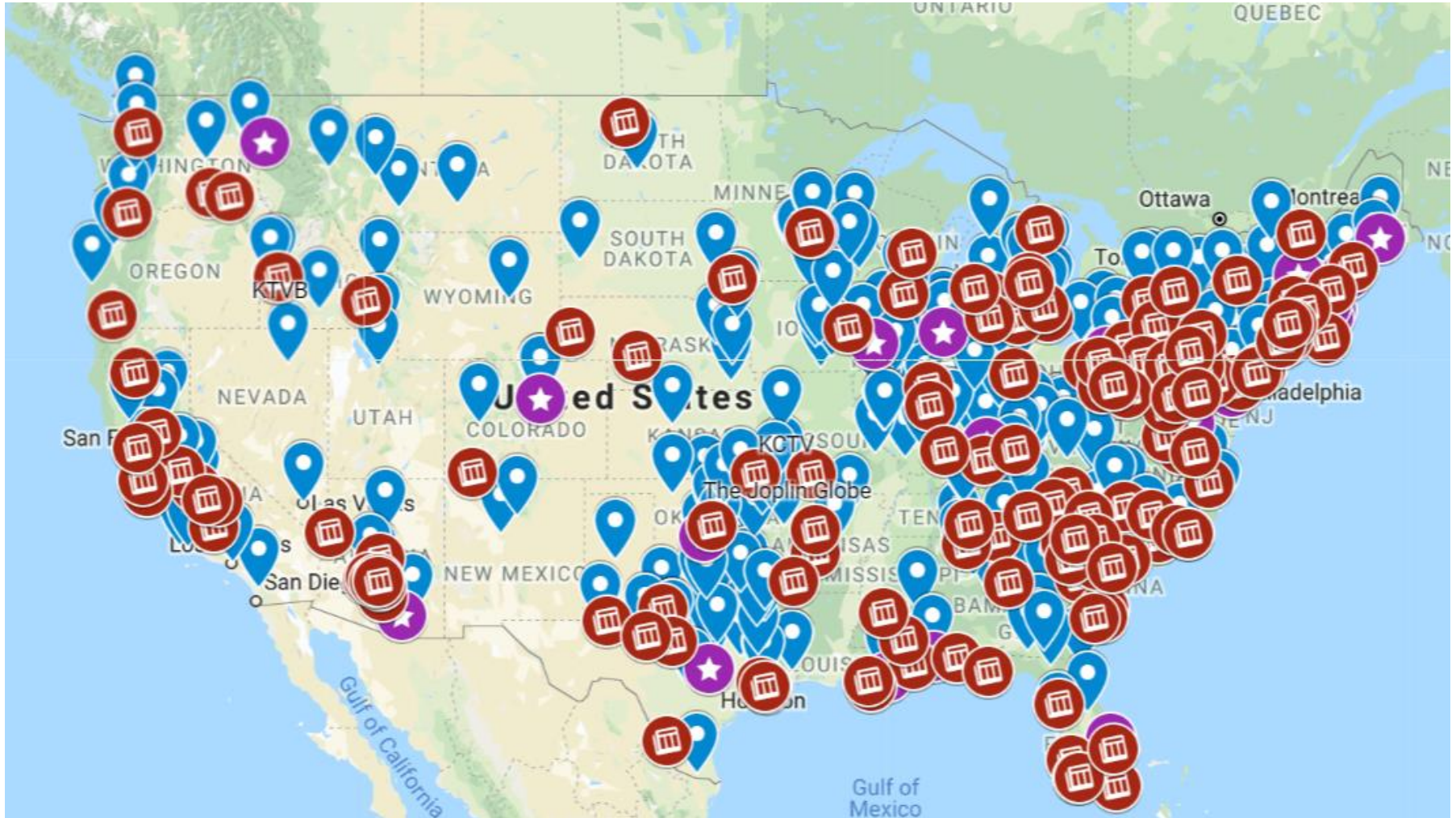



- Monthly unique visits to site: **~2 million**
- Through republication: **~7-9 million reads per month**
- Daily TCUS newsletter recipients: **60,000+**
- Dedicated audience development team promote stories with republishers and on social



Smithsonian Magazine







From gay Nazis to 'we're here, we're queer': A century of arguing about gay pride

June 22, 2017 3:12pm EDT

2016 San Francisco pride parade. REUTERS/Elijah Nouvelage

Email

Twitter

Facebook

LinkedIn

Print

This month, hundreds of thousands of people around the world will join gay pride marches in cities big and small. In many cities, pride marches are controversial. In some – [like Moscow](#) – they are even banned. But for many people in North America, parts of Europe, [Latin America](#) and [elsewhere](#), attending the local pride march has become an unremarkable ritual of summer.

There are still good reasons to march. Few countries around the world have [robust protections for gay and transgender rights](#). And pride marches, the LGBTQ political rallies that take the form of exuberant, outrageous parades, often meet hostile [counterdemonstrators](#).

Author



Laurie Marhoefer

Assistant Professor of History,
University of Washington

Disclosure statement

Laurie Marhoefer has received funding from the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) and the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation.



Sections

The Washington Post
Democracy Dies in Darkness

TELL WASHINGTON NOT TO STAND IN THE WAY



PostEverything • Perspective

From gay Nazis to 'we're here, we're queer': A century of arguing about gay pride

The communities pride marches represent aren't always in agreement.



Pride marches haven't always been unanimously welcomed by the communities they're supposed to represent. (Andrew Caballero-Reynolds/AFP/Getty Images)

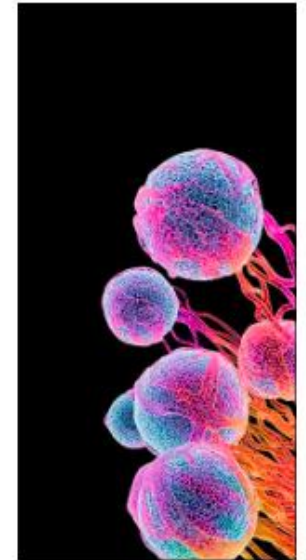


By **Laurie Marhoefer**

Laurie Marhoefer is assistant professor of history at the University of Washington.

June 23, 2017

This month, hundreds of thousands of people around the world will join gay pride marches in cities big



- What does your research contribute to the discussion about something that's in the news now?



Are we overreacting to US withdrawal from the Paris Agreement on climate?

June 1, 2017 9:35pm EDT Updated November 15, 2017 1:42pm EST

There's strong support for wind power, which aids in addressing climate change, in Kansas and other red states for economic reasons. AP Photo/Charlie Fiedel

- Email
- Twitter
- Facebook
- LinkedIn

The Trump administration has announced the U.S. will withdraw from the Paris Agreement on climate change. Should we expect any substantive effect on global climate efforts or changes to other U.S. climate policies?

Some suggest there will be [additional emissions of up to three billion metric tons of carbon dioxide in the air a year](#). Others point to higher U.S. emissions due to potentially [diluted auto fuel efficiency standards and changes to rules to restrict methane leaks](#) from the oil and gas industry.

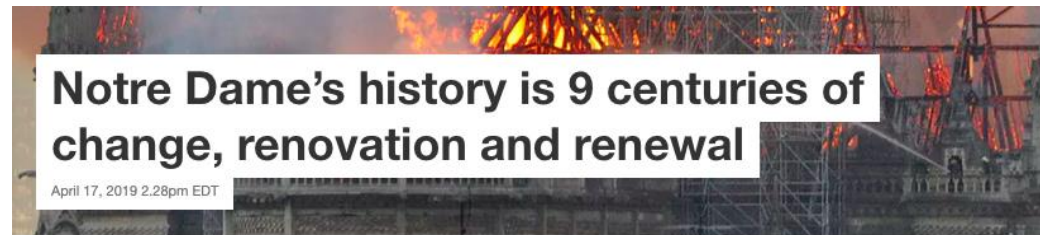
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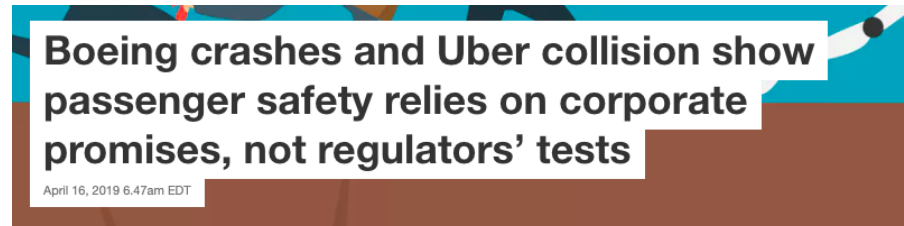


Aseem Prakash
Walker Family Professor and
Founding Director, Center for
Environmental Politics, University
of Washington



Notre Dame's history is 9 centuries of change, renovation and renewal

April 17, 2019 2:28pm EDT



Boeing crashes and Uber collision show passenger safety relies on corporate promises, not regulators' tests

April 16, 2019 6:47am EDT

Automation can often get ahead of safety regulators' efforts. Tanikdz/Shutterstock.com

- Pegged to recent events
- Based on your expertise
- Gets the readers up to speed
- Can be “evergreen”



A 'no border wall' sign is held during a rally to oppose the wall the US government wants to build. AP Photo/Eric Gay

Email

[Leer en español.](#)

Twitter 16

Facebook 115

LinkedIn

Print

The past few weeks have seen widespread outrage over the Trump administration's now-defunct policy of [separating migrant families at the border](#). Four members of the president's Homeland Security advisory council have resigned in protest, citing the "[morally repugnant](#)" practice.

Author



Michael Blake
Professor of Philosophy, Public Policy, and Governance, University of Washington

Disclosure statement



- What can classics, history, psychology, etc. teach us about the major decisions that people face today?



Must the president be a moral leader?

February 15, 2019 6.46pm EST

President Donald Trump, former President Barack Obama and former President Bill Clinton, during the funeral for former President George H.W. Bush. AP Photo/Alex Brandon, Pool

Email

Twitter

Facebook

LinkedIn

The best presidents – including figures such as [Abraham Lincoln](#) and [George Washington](#) – are celebrated not only as good leaders, but as good men. They embody not simply political skill, but personal virtue.

Why, though, should anyone expect a president to demonstrate that sort of virtue? If someone is good at the difficult job of political leadership, must they demonstrate exceptional moral character as well?

Author

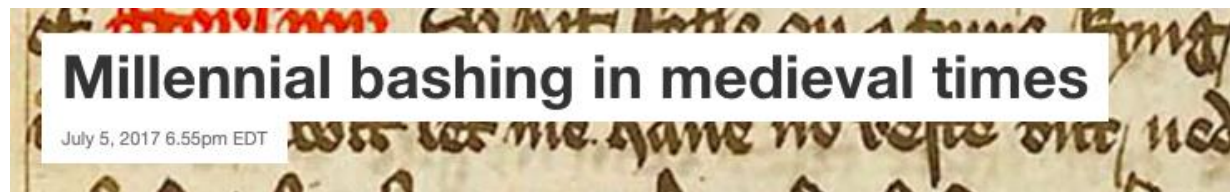


Michael Blake

Professor of Philosophy, Public Policy, and Governance, University of Washington

Disclosure statement

Michael Blake receives funding



Millennial bashing in medieval times

July 5, 2017 6.55pm EDT



A trans soldier in the ancient Roman army?

August 1, 2017 9.18pm EDT Updated August 27, 2017 4.01pm EDT

- Based on your expertise
- Sharing cutting-edge scholarship with non-experts
- Could be embargoed research



An Oregon wildfire in August 2018. U.S. Forest Service - Pacific Northwest Region

Email

Twitter 26

Facebook 122

LinkedIn

Print

Over the last decade, the U.S. has seen an average of [70,512 wildland fires every year](#), annually burning about 6.8 million acres. With climate change, scientists expect fires to become [more frequent and more severe](#).

However, some people are more affected by these events than others. [Our work](#), published on Nov. 2, shows that racial and ethnic minorities are significantly more vulnerable to the effects of these natural disasters. The results provide a new perspective on where resources to mitigate wildfire threats are best allocated.

We were inspired to study this question by Hurricane Katrina, the

Authors



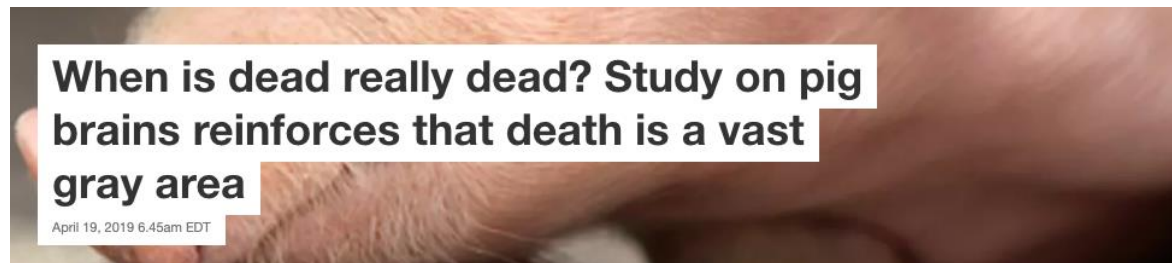
Phil Levin
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Ian P. Davies
M.S. Candidate, University of
Washington

Disclosure statement

Phil Levin is affiliated with The



- What are the issues that news outlets should be covering?
- What's the latest thinking on major, long-running problems or issues?



Tiny Paley Park, surrounded by skyscrapers in New York City, introduced the concept of a 'pocket park' in dense urban centers. Aleksandr Zykov/Flickr, CC BY-SA

Email

Twitter 68

Facebook 465

LinkedIn

Print

In cities, [access to parks](#) is [strongly linked](#) with [better health](#) for both [people and neighborhoods](#).

Children suffer higher rates of [obesity](#) when they grow up in urban areas without a park in easy reach. Because low-income neighborhoods have [fewer green spaces](#), poorer children are most likely to face other health problems, too, including [asthma](#) due to poor air quality.

Author



Thaisa Way
Professor, Landscape Architecture, History, and Evans School of Public Policy and Governance, University of Washington



- Is there an upcoming anniversary? Holiday? Is it graduation season, the last day of summer, first day of the Supreme Court's new term...?



5 ways life would be better if it were always daylight saving time

March 4, 2019 6:38am EST

It's almost time to 'spring forward.' Pair Srinat/shutterstock.com

Email

Twitter 97

Facebook 3.6k

LinkedIn

Print

In [my research](#) on daylight saving time, I have found that Americans don't like it when Congress messes with their clocks.

In an effort to avoid the biannual clock switch in spring and fall, some well-intended critics of DST have made the mistake of suggesting that the abolition of DST – and a return to permanent standard time – would benefit society. In other words, the U.S. would never “spring forward” or

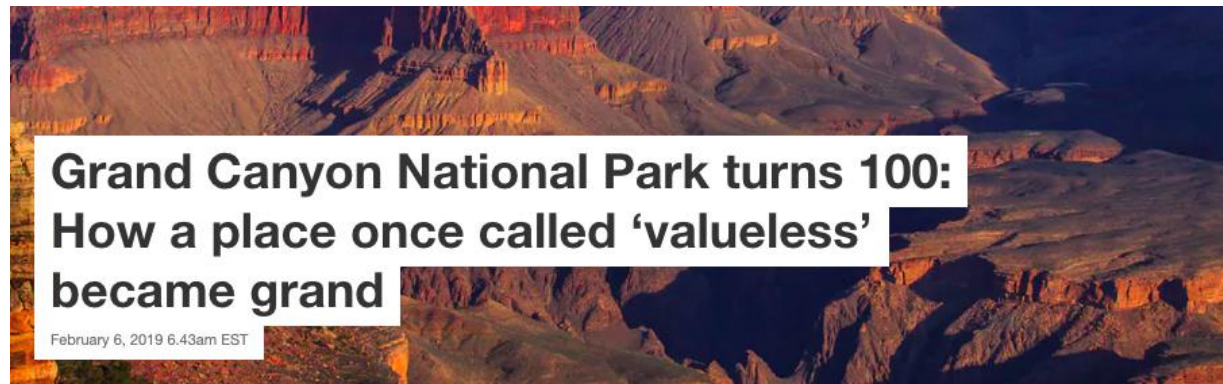
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Steve Calandrillo
Jeffrey & Susan Brotman
Professor of Law, University of
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Disclosure statement

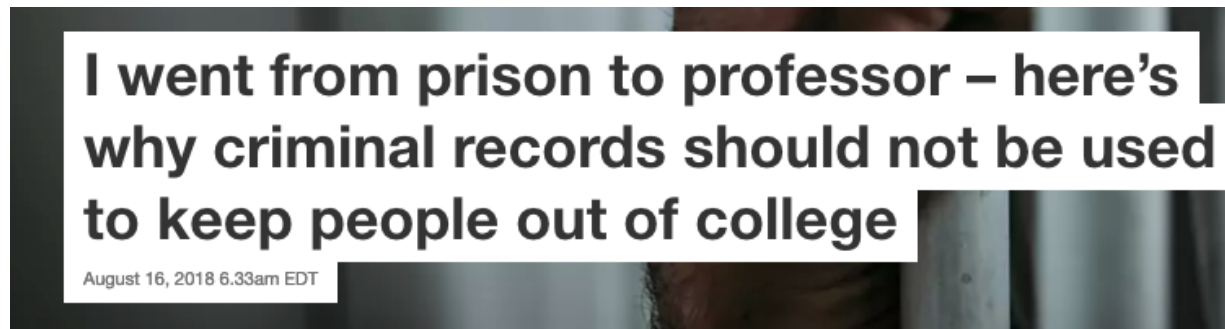
Is winter miserable for wildlife?



Grand Canyon National Park turns 100: How a place once called 'valueless' became grand

February 6, 2019 6:43am EST

- What's it like to be a scientist?
- If you could tell America one thing about your job, what would it be?
- How have your experiences influenced your research?



1. Why write for the public?
2. Think like an editor
3. Working with The Conversation
4. **Resources and support**
5. Q+A

Within the University of Washington, the communications team is available to:

- Discuss ideas
- Polish copy
- Brainstorm which media outlet to approach

The pitch: What's your story?

Story *

In one sentence, what's your story? (50 word limit)

Significance *

Why is it interesting or significant for non-academic readers? (100 word limit)

Other key points

Any other key points to mention? (150 word limit)

Multimedia

Do you have any photos, video, audio, graphs or other material to help illustrate your story? If so, please describe them. (200 word limit)

Timeliness *

- Relevant now
- Relevant in the future
- Timeless ("Explainer")

Is this issue particularly relevant now, or looking ahead? Or are you suggesting this as a timeless **explainer** of a commonly misunderstood issue?

Section *

- Arts + Culture
- Economy + Business
- Education
- Environment + Energy
- Health + Medicine
- Politics + Society
- Science + Technology

Submit

theconversation.com/pitches/new

Form goes directly to the section editor.

Use your university relations team! They are here to help you craft your pitch.

You can also email an editor directly, if you know who you're trying to reach.

- Sent daily to Communications Team
- Topics we'd like to cover, but haven't yet identified the right scholar
- Rely on media relations' deep knowledge of faculty to help us connect

THE CONVERSATION

Academic rigor, journalistic flair

Welcome to The Conversation's expert request. [Click here for best practice suggestions](#) from our editors on how to use these requests most effectively.

Today, our editors are looking for scholars on the following topics:

New Expert Requests

1. Venezuela and oil: In light of the Trump administration's [sanctions against PDVSA](#), Venezuela's state-owned oil company, we are seeking scholars who can explain the significance of U.S.- Venezuelan trade and how it has changed over time, as well as the history of PDVSA.
Contact: Emily Schwartz Greco, emily.schwartz.greco@theconversation.com
Timeline: Contact editor ASAP

2. Repairing and rebuilding America's schools: In search of a scholar who can speak to the state of America's school infrastructure. This issue will get a fresh airing on Wednesday when House and Senate Democrats formally introduce the \$100 billion "Rebuild America's Schools Act." This is an opportunity to provide perspective on the physical condition of America's schools and what it means for America's schoolchildren.
Contact: Jamaal Abdul-Alim, jamaal@theconversation.com
Timeline: ASAP

3. Mueller investigation, legal angles: As the end of the Mueller investigation approaches, we are looking for legal scholars who are willing to be called on short notice to respond to developments in the case, from writing analyses of any conflict over the release of the report to analysis of the content of the report.
Contact: Naomi Schalit, naomi.schalit@theconversation.com
Timeline: ASAP for contact, later for stories

- Offer your expertise through social media sites like Twitter or Reddit
- Connect with local journalists who write about your field
- Check out free training materials from COMPASS, The People's Science, AAAS, Open Notebook...

THE CONVERSATION

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Contact us!

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- Online real-time editor
- Shared draft document pre-publication

The screenshot shows a web-based collaborative editing interface. At the top, there's a navigation bar with a home icon, 'Edition: United States', a 'Donate' button, and social media icons for email, Facebook, Twitter, and RSS. A 'Dashboard' link and a user profile for 'Aviva Rutkin' are also visible. Below this is a dark blue toolbar with buttons for 'History', 'Edit', 'Preview', and 'Mobile', along with 'Save' and 'Update' buttons. The main editing area features a 'Headline' section with the text: 'Police kill about 3 men per day in the US, according to new study'. Below the headline is a rich text editor toolbar with icons for bold, italic, link, unlink, list, and other formatting options. The word count is '887 words' and there is a 'Readability' indicator. The main text area contains two paragraphs. The first paragraph discusses police-related deaths in the U.S. with red squiggly lines under 'U.S.' and '1,000'. The second paragraph references 'our study' and 'Fatal Encounters' with blue links. On the right side, there are three panels: 'Requirements', 'Collaborators' (listing Aviva Rutkin as Editor, Frank Edwards as Lead Author, and Michael H. Esposito as Author), and 'Interviewees'. A 'Disclosures' section at the bottom right shows that both Frank Edwards and Michael H. Esposito have 'Nothing to disclose'.