

UNISMUNC XI



Committee: New York Times Board of Directors (2003)
Topic: Jayson Blair

Committee Type:
Crisis

December 7th, 2025



Image from "The New York Times Layouts" by Travis Vargas, via Behance

Director: Brendan Gieseke

Chair: Alma Laine

Conference Schedule

Registration

8:00 am - 9:00 am

Opening Ceremonies

9:00 am - 10:00 am

Committee Session I

10:00 am - 12:00 pm

Lunch Break I

12:00 pm - 1:15 pm

Lunch Break II

1:15 pm - 2:30 pm

Committee Session II

2:30 pm - 5:30 pm

Closing Ceremonies

5:30 pm - 6:30 pm

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Committee Procedure

Moderated Caucuses are structured discussions where delegates sign themselves up to give short, regulated speeches. The speaking time and topic of discussion are set when the motion is proposed, and delegates take turns to speak.

Unmoderated Caucuses are divided between a regular unmoderated caucus and a gentleman's unmoderated caucus where everybody remains seated. A regular un mod entails a period free of structured, regulated debate, where delegates can mill about the committee and work with their blocs.

Some actions that are carried over from the usual committee procedure:

- Point of Order
- Point of Information
- Appeal to the Chair
- Suspension of Debate
- Adjournment of Debate
- Closure of Debate
- Roll Call Vote
- Set the Speaker's Time
- Call a guest speaker

Instead of resolutions, the crisis will debate and pass **directives**. Directives are actions or communications undertaken by the entire committee as a group and are passed by a simple majority. Unlike resolutions, which may only be entertained at the end of a session, directives should be created and debated on as much as possible. The different types of papers used in crisis committees are explained in detail in the next section.

The Committee may call for external speakers to address the body. To do so, a committee member must move to invite the guest; that motion requires a majority vote to pass.

Written Papers

Crisis Notes: Crisis notes are notes used in order to take personal action from a delegate, without the need for committee approval. Crisis notes are therefore bound by a character's individual portfolio power. There are a myriad of ways to write Crisis notes, but be sure to sign your character's name at the end and address it to CRISIS on the front of your folded note.

Directives: A directive is a formal written instruction or order given by a delegate or a group of delegates to the chair or to other delegates. Directives are used to propose specific actions or solutions to address the crisis at hand. They can range from proposing specific policies or strategies to calling for specific actions by other delegates or bodies within the simulation. Directives are passed frequently throughout the debate and are a lot shorter than most resolutions. They are not restrained by a specific format, and while they do need signatories and sponsors, they do not require a distinction between preambulatory and operative clauses.

Press Releases: As the name says, press releases are committee documents addressed to the public. They can be used to inform or even misinform the public according to the desires of the committee. Similar to Directives and Comunique's, Press Releases will require a minimum of three people on the document, with one sponsor and two signatories.

Letter From the Director

Welcome to the UNISMUNC XI United Nations NYT Editorial Board! As our love for Model UN unites us in December, we at UNIS dearly wish for the best conference possible. On a day of intense passion, critical thinking, and problem-solving, I hope that we will all enjoy a productive and fun conference. Model UN is, as we all know, the simulation of the real United Nations, a crucial aspect of UNIS, as we are a branch of the United Nations, a catalyst for justice; resolving international issues through international relations and diplomacy. At UNIS, we take pride in the people of various cultures and backgrounds who call UNIS their school, providing students with a diverse daily experience. As we welcome you to UNIS in the upcoming days, we hope we can provide a sense of our cultural diversity, providing you with an enriching international experience that emulates an authentic parallel to the United Nations.

Before UNIS, I had often felt alienated as a child for how my Japanese-American background made me different. Since coming to the school, I have been able to cherish a sense of belonging and pride in my cultural identity since joining the community in second grade. Learning to embrace the benefits of living in New York and Japan has taught me, UNIS has helped nurture me into who I am today. To introduce myself, I am Brendan Gieseke, a 16-year-old junior. I started off with my Model UN journey as a freshman in 2023. My interest primarily stemmed from my love of debating and my goal of becoming an international lawyer. As Model UN has provided me with perspectives on universal dilemmas and how to disentangle such situations, being a part of Model UN has given me opportunities for great practice in simulating various aspects of international law. I also take a role within our club's community as the Under Secretary General of PR.

The committee I will be hosting is intended to be an intense dive into the world of journalism. I hope you all, as delegates, can experience the atmosphere and enjoy the beauty of media within our conference. See you soon: journalists, reporters, interns, etc. Please feel free to email me with any questions.

Brendan Gieseke

27bgieseke@unis.org

A Brief Overview of Committee

Founded on September 18th of 1851, the *New York Times* (NYT) is seen as a powerhouse within the journalism sector. Combining many topics of popular interest— politics, lifestyle, business, international news—the company started as a penny newspaper, founded under George Jones and Henry Raymond. Despite the *Times*' modern-day eminence (including 5,900 employees and a grand 135 Pulitzer Prizes), the company did not reach mainstream success until the 1870s, primarily achieving initial recognition with the Tweed Ring Scandal heavily covered by the *Times*. (Bill of Rights Institute) Pleading to “seek the truth and help people understand the world,” (“Ethical Journalism”), the *Times* is heavily noted as an investigative and reliable source (Britannica). In addition to its journalistic presence, the *Times* is also iconically known for some of its cultural impacts. Made popular in 2022, the *Times* offers daily games such as “*Wordle*,” a word-guessing game played by millions of people daily (CBS), or its traditional crossword puzzles, published daily since 1942 (Dunlap), often using modern-day culture within the puzzle. The *NYT* also controls the “*New York Times Bestsellers List*,” which provides rankings on which books are the most popular in the United States through measured statistics of unit sales nationwide. (“About the Best Sellers”)

Still, outside of its public appearance of a well-established company, its merits do not come without strategic organization. Working as the institutional foundation for the company, the *NYT* Board of Directors—whose members you will be delegating—has a responsibility of “overseeing the direction, affairs and management of the company to ensure that they are aligned with the long-term interests of our stockholders.” (“Board of Directors”) Henceforth, the Board of Directors is the committee responsible for the executive decisions that may affect the company's stock value. Scandals such as the Jayson Blair scandal are thus a direct responsibility of this board. For your reference, in the interest of creating an engaging Model UN debate, our committee will include non-traditional board members such as journalists, writers, and interns.

Topic Background

On the 29th of April in 2003, all hell broke loose for the *New York Times*. It was discovered that the *Times* writer, Jayson Blair, had plagiarized a story about a military family who had lost their serving son to the war in Iraq. Originally titled, “Valley Mom Awaits News of MIA Son,” the story was covered by the San Antonio Express-News reporter, Macarena Hernandez. Seeing Jayson’s version of the story, “Family Waits, Now Alone, for a Missing Soldier,” and the uncanny similarities to her own reportage, Hernandez’s editor contacted the editors of the NYT, unfolding all of Blair’s truths. (EBSCO) On April 29th, Blair met with his editors and was forced to resign from his position on May 1st, lacking any evidence proving Blair as the article’s author. Following his resignation, the *Times* releases a front-page account of Jayson’s fabrications and lies. Whereas the NYT was (and still is) seen as a reliable source meant to publish “all the news that’s fit to print” (EBSCO), the negligence of the *Times* created many ethical questions within the journalism sector among other publishing companies as well.

Yet, in reality, the scandal is seen as more than just an accident: it was a *reckless* act of negligence that was often considered avoidable. The *Times* wasn’t the first company where Blair attempted his fabrications; in fact, many red flags were prominent in Blair’s career. Born on March 23rd, 1976, Blair was always passionate about journalism. Writing for his high school paper and interning for the *Centerville Times*, *The Washington Post*, and *The Boston Globe*, “fellow students and faculty alike were impressed with his charismatic manner and his enthusiasm for finding stories.” (EBSCO) Yet, despite a seemingly successful upbringing, he often missed deadlines for articles and began to raise concerns about the authenticity of his articles. (EBSCO) At his college, the University of Maryland, he rose to become the editor of the university paper, *The Diamondback*, eventually resigning due to an alleged plagiarism scandal.

At the *New York Times*, Blair once wrote 137 within 5 months and was praised for his work ethic. He was hired for, thus, being an excellent writer, while his being of a minority was also a cited reason for his hiring (the *Times* was increasingly focusing on diversity within its staff population). Due to his success and workplace acclaim, he was shortly promoted by Gerald M. Boyd, a then-deputy managing editor, despite opposition from another editor, Jonathan Landman,

who at one point said, “We have to stop Jayson from writing for the *Times*. Right now.” (EBSCO) Yet, even with his promotion, Blair’s work performance started to decline. Dealing with personal problems, including substance abuse, he eventually took two leaves of absence and received multiple warnings for creating articles with numerous mistakes, often even more than a cub (a rookie reporter). Never even graduating from the University of Maryland (the *Times* failed to research this properly), having multiple *Times* readers report the fabrications in his articles, and having expense reports that did not match the amount of traveling he did for his stories, there were multiple eminent signs of Blair’s inauthenticity. (EBSCO) And, as follows, Blair was found guilty of his unethical journalism. Due to the scandal’s avoidability, the *Times* had received severe criticism, and in reality was forced to reconsider its journalistic procedures, especially under public pressure.

Current Situation

Currently, as members of the board of directors and the *New York Times* staff, there are multiple pressing issues that must be addressed to preserve the future of the *Times*. As a result of the unethical actions of Jayson Blair, the stock price for the *NYT* has plummeted. Moreover, over 100 of the staff at the *Times* have decided to quit, often citing a desire to maintain their own images within the journalism industry by avoiding further affiliation with the *Times*. In accordance with multiple lower-ranking members of the company fleeing the scene, it seems that there are many rumors circulating of board members and editors *also* wanting to resign their positions.

Yet, if such pressing issues weren't already catastrophic enough, more havoc breaks out: the company has received a court order. The plaintiff? A group of multiple journalism companies, including the *San Antonio Express* and the *Washington Post*, both companies which've had respective articles plagiarized by Blair. As the *New York Times* Board of Directors set off into a day of debate, such issues must be resolved with quick thinking to determine the best courses of action. The people who have cost the company's reputation must pay the price. The company must somehow restore its public image. Above all, journalism *must* be defended.

Committee Members

Gerald Boyd



Joining the *New York Times* in 1983, Gerald Boyd was the first African-American metropolitan editor of the *Times*. In 2002, Boyd won the National Association of Black Journalists "Journalist of the Year" award for his leadership on a biographical piece on the 9/11 attack victims. His role within the Jayson Blair scandal was evident. Boyd was the editor who approved of Blair's promotion. Despite receiving much criticism from his colleagues, Boyd continued to advocate for Blair, despite many red flags, as further discussed in the "Topic Background." In reality, he resigned due to the scandal, but for the purpose of this simulation, we ask you to assume he did not.

Howell Raines

A journalist, editor, and writer, Howell Raines was the executive editor of the *New York Times* from 2001. Starting his career with the company in 1978, he slowly climbed the ranks and even won a Pulitzer Prize in 1992 for his memoir titled "Grady's Gift." He is critiqued as a main reason for the Blair scandal, with an internal report claiming 36 of 73 of Blair's stories were marked with errors approved by Raines and allegedly ignored his colleague, Jonathan Landman's, requests to halt Jayson from writing. While Raines resigned due to the scandal, within this committee, we ask you to assume he did not.



Jonathan Landman



With a journalism degree from Columbia University and a B.A. degree from Amherst College, Jonathan Landman worked at the *New York Times* from 1987, starting as a copy editor, until 2005, when he was the assistant managing editor of the newspaper's masthead. Currently, since 2013, he is the editor-at-large for *Bloomberg View*. Landman persistently advocated against Jayson Blair, at one point telling Howell Raines, "We have to stop Jayson from writing for the *Times*. Right now,"

Arthur Ochs Sulzberger Jr.

The chairman of *The New York Times* during the Jayson Blair scandal, Arthur Ochs Sulzberger Jr. held his position between 1997 to 2017. Sulzberger is part of the Ochs-Sulzberger Family. After Blair was exposed, Sulzberger Jr. oversaw the 7500 word front-page exposé on Jayson Blair. Sulzberger promoted the continuation of diversity within the *Times* staff despite the failure of Jayson’s diversity hire.



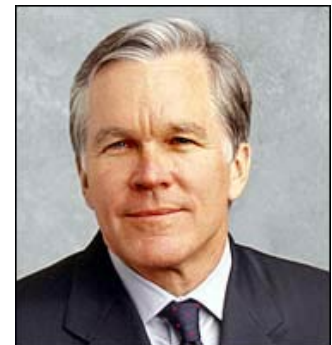
The Ochs Sulzberger Family



Consisting of multiple members, including the *Times* chairman of 2003, the Ochs Sulzberger Family controls a majority of the company’s power, holding 95% of NYT Class B shares as of 2022. In 1896, a family member, Adolph Ochs, invested \$75,000 into the NYT during a time of financial struggle for the *Times*, and has been able to pass on *Times* ownership to descendants.

Bill Keller

Joining the *Times* in 1984, Bill Keller was a senior editor for the company during the Jayson Blair incident. With the potential to be offered a promotion to executive editor by helping to “rebuild” the company’s broken image, the Jayson Blair scandal gives Keller an opportunity to portray his leadership. While in reality, Keller received the promotion in July of 2003, we ask you to pretend he did not (yet) throughout the committee session.



Matt Bai



Joining the *New York Times* in 2002, Matt Bai wasn’t as high-ranking a journalist as he is seen today, in 2025. Yet, while he was a low-ranking writer at the time, he focused on political topics and is known for his analytical and in-depth style of reporting.

Alan M. Siegel

Born and raised in New York City, Alan M. Siegel joined the *Times* in 1960 as a simple copy boy. Yet, by 2003, Siegel made his mark on the journalism industry: he co-authored the *New York Times*' stylebook and was the lead editor in investigating the Jayson Blair scandal. It is rumored that a new position, 'Standards Editor,' may be offered to Siegel to improve ethical journalism within the *Times*.



Jim Roberts



The contributing editor of 74 in the present day, 2025, Jim Roberts worked at the *New York Times* since 1987. While Roberts had no direct correlation to the Jayson Blair scandal, he was a writer who had an advocacy for digital journalism (and today—in its early days—video journalism.)

Jill Abramson

Joining the *New York Times* in 1997, Jill Abramson was the Washington bureau chief of the *Times* in 2003. Within a predominantly male-dominated industry, Jill was becoming more and more noticeable since 2003, one of the only women to stand out during her career timeline. Similar to Jayson Blair, she represented a minority demographic within the company and symbolized *The Times*' gradual move toward greater diversity in its leadership.



Michiko Kakutani



In 2003 and even today, Michiko Kakutani is seen as one of the most influential book critics—*every word* she said had the power to sway the entire public's opinion. Starting her career with the *Times* in 1979, her career has spawned a "Pulitzer Prize for Criticism" in 1998, and has flaunted a writing style that isn't afraid to point out pretension. Being a woman and of Japanese descent, Michiko had achieved much despite most minority demographics like hers typically being hindered.

Serge Schemann



Born in France, and joining the *New York Times* in 1980, Serge Schemann was an editorial page editor for the International Herald Tribune in Paris during the Blair scandal. Serving as the deputy foreign editor between 1999 and 2001, receiving a Pulitzer Prize in 1991 for his work about the reunification of Germany and an Emmy in 2003 for his participation in a documentary about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, Schemann's career was focused on global politics. The Iraq war story, which Jayson Blair "covered," would likely be of his interest.

David Barstow

Transferring to the *New York Times* in 1999 after working at the *St. Petersburg Times*, David Barstow quickly made a reputation for himself as a rigorous, skeptical, and strictly evidence-based reporter (the polar opposite of Jayson Blair.) Essentially, he was one of the most promising employees and therefore greatly admired by his colleagues. Later in his career, he would go on to win four Pulitzer prizes (the highest number given to any writer at the *Times*).



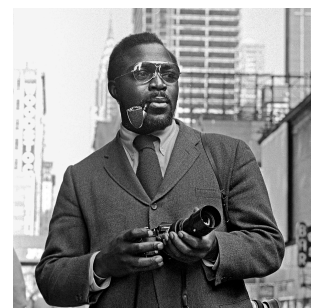
Dan Barry



Working at the *Providence Journal* for seven years before joining the *New York Times* in 1995, Dan Barry worked exclusively on the *Times*' "This Land" column: travelling the United States for hidden and well-known gems. He has co-written multiple *Times* documentaries and advocates for journalism that can "make people smile," and loves covering current events and the human condition.

Don Hogan Charles

Joining the *New York Times* in 1964, Don Hogan Charles was the first African-American photographer at the company. By 2003, he had a reputation for his visual artistry: pictures of Malcolm X, Muhammad Ali, and the civil rights movement. Similar to Jayson Blair, Hogan Charles was one of the very few Black or African-American staff members at the *Times*.



Amanda Hesser



In 1997, after publishing her first book, Amanda Hesser was hired to the *New York Times* as a food reporter, where she would write more than 750 stories. Her contributions to the *Times* include stories about Costco and its influence on the wine industry and the Farmer Consumer Advisory Committee's correlation with the New York City Greenmarket. While the Blair Scandal is drastically different from her column about cuisine, the *Times'* loss of credibility overall also reflects badly on the company's reliability regarding food.

During her time at the *New York Times*, Judith Miller often focused on stories depicting terrorism: 2001 coverage of international terrorism before and after the 9/11 attacks (winning a Pulitzer Prize) and Iraq's alleged weapons of mass destruction program in 2003. She was even a victim of a hoax anthrax letter due to her coverage of terrorism. Unfortunately, like Jayson Blair, her stories were later discovered as fabricated (while at the time of the scandal, her truths weren't yet exposed).

Judith Miller



Alessandra Stanley

With the *Times* since the late 1980s, Alessandra Stanley has made her career by analyzing media trends and pop culture, creating her reputation as a television and culture critic by the time of the Jayson Blair scandal. As is required with her area of expertise, Stanley understands the correlation between media ethics and its influence on a company's public reputation. She is known for her sharp insight and critical eye.



Intern #1

Joining the *New York Times* in the summer of 2002, Intern #1 has returned for the summer of 2003, just as the Jayson Blair scandal still unfolds. Born and raised in New York City, they currently attend the University of Columbia. Naive and eager to learn everything about journalism, he quickly befriended Jayson Blair and saw him as a mentor, despite learning in school that honesty was the most important part of journalism.

Intern #2

Graduating from Georgetown with a degree in journalism, Intern #2 has a passion for the aspect of softer journalism: lifestyle, culture, travel, and literature. While only an intern, Intern #2 is an outstanding writer and quick learner. She has swiftly understood the inner workings of the *Times*, to an extent even better than some of the full-time staff. They receive much praise and some envy from colleagues as a result.

Intern #3

Intern #3, only a freshman in college, is one of the youngest interns at the *New York Times* and one of the most well-read in the relatively new invention of computers. Intern #3 is known for their good looks and usually has someone flirting with them (something that annoys their senior staff). During high school, Intern #3 suffered home life problems, fueling a dependence on alcohol and fabricating much of his school work. In college, they decided to rebuild themselves and pursue a career in journalism.

Assistant to Chairman

Working for the Chairman of the Board of Directors, Arthur Ochs Sulzberger Jr., for three years, the Assistant to Chairman is an aspiring journalist who is currently using her assistant job to fund her college education. They have a relatively close and professional relationship with Arthur: they manage his schedule, contacts, etc. They admire Arthur's presence and would defend him in any situation.

Defendant's Legal Counsel

This group of lawyers, paralegals, and other legal advisors serve as the in-house legal team for the *New York Times*. Their job is to advise the board on the law at the international, national, and state level, while integrating their knowledge on how to publicly present their company after a scandal like Jayson Blair. In attempts to allow the *Times* to leave the scandal as unscathed as possible, they must therefore engage in a legal battle against the Plaintiff's Legal Counsel.

Plaintiff's Legal Counsel

The only character who is not a part of the *New York Times*, the Plaintiff's Legal Counsel consists of the lawyers who have decided to sue the *Times*. The goal of this group is to receive as much compensation and insider information on the *Times*. As part of trying to reestablish the company's transparency, it was the chairman, Arthur Ochs Sulzberger Jr., who invited the counsel to the meeting with the Board of Directors.

Questions to Consider

- How can the Times recover its journalistic reputation despite losing severe credibility? Should new rules of regulation be considered?
- Should the ethics of the journalism industry be considered? How can the New York Times make up for what it breached?
- In order to preserve the reputation of the Times, must there be members who resign?

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