

NAME:

Radio Broadcasting--homework assignment #1
Boston Area Radio Stations sampler

BLOCK:

FM radio: The Boston area is rich in FM radio stations--in fact, every available frequency on the FM dial is taken. Radio station ownership and operation ranges from commercial for profit (music, sports, talk radio, news) to nonprofit (college radio, National Public Radio, and a couple of high school stations--including ours WYAJ 97.7 FM)

Commercial stations that play music are generally fairly limited in their playlists--most stick to a list of one or two hundred songs. Some commercial stations are a bit wider in their offerings (95.5 FM "The River" plays a wider selection of music than most commercial stations). Others play a specialized niche of music--for example, 100.7 FM WZLX, plays classic rock--music of the sixties and seventies that were top 40 hits then and still popular today. WJMN 94.5 FM specializes in Hip Hop and R&B. 101.7 WFNX plays mainly alternative and indie rock. While these stations offer different genres and types of music, they are still fairly limited in the amount of different songs that they play. In this assignment you'll find a much wider range of content with the nonprofit stations than with the commercial ones. Both commercial and nonprofit stations rely on on-air personalities--who talk between songs and sometimes over them. Often these personalities have a sidekick or a few people who appear on their programs, with an occasional guest. Talking tends to be more prevalent in the early morning until 9 AM and during the early afternoon-evening (3-6 PM). You probably will hear more ads during this time period as well--can you figure out why that is?

Nonprofit radio are those radio stations owned and operated by either schools or not for profit organizations such as WGBH Boston or WBUR FM (which is owned and operated by Boston University). These two stations are part of the National Public Radio network (NPR) which includes many national radio programs that tend to go deeper in their coverage and analysis of news than the commercial stations do. Within the nonprofit realm, there are several college stations--WERS 88.9 FM at Emerson College is one of the most powerful and can be picked up in Sudbury. Others such as 91.5 WMFO at Tufts University can only be picked up near their Medford Mass campus. While nonprofit radio stations do not include private advertising, they do include ads in the sense of public service announcements and from time to time have on-air telethons to ask for listeners to send in money to support them. They might also mention corporate sponsors of their programs. Operating a radio station is expensive and while nonprofit organizations have the support of the schools that own them, or through the Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB) or The Public Broadcasting Service (PBS), that usually isn't enough to fully fund the quality programming that these stations carry. Many of the smaller college stations offer a wider range of programming and music that you wouldn't tend to hear on commercial radio. This includes jazz, folk, world music, alternative and indie rock, old school rap, and so on.

AM radio tends to be more limited to news and talk with very few that play much music. This is mainly because the AM signal doesn't carry stereo signals and the sound quality isn't as good as FM. Prior to the widespread use of FM radio, AM radio carried music, talk, drama, news, sports. With the widespread use of FM radio beginning in the 1960's, AM radio shifted to more news and talk and away from music. This is because FM radio can carry a stereo signal, has much less static, and is subject to much less atmospheric interference than AM is. While AM radio is less widely used today, it is still used because the signal can cover a much wider area. WBZ AM 1030 can be picked up in Montreal, Toronto, and Nova Scotia, distances up to 600 miles away. This radio station shifted from

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entertainment/music to an all news and talk format in the mid 1970's. Today millions still tune in to hear traffic reports every ten minutes, the day's headlines, stock reports and weather. If you listen to WBZ you will notice that they play a lot of commercials. Can you figure out how they might get away with that?

For this assignment you will listen to two radio stations and compare and contrast them. One of them should be a noncommercial station such as WGBH, WERS, or WBUR FM. The other should be a commercial station such as WZLX FM, WFNX, Kiss 108 or WAAF on the FM dial. On the AM dial you could sample WBZ AM, WEEI or WRKO. Many if not all of these stations offer internet broadcasts--so you don't have to tune in with a radio. Some of the websites allow you to tune in live and some offer both this option or the ability to listen to programming recorded earlier. Follow the directions on the attached worksheet to complete the assignment.

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Radio Station Sampling and Comparison Worksheet

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DIRECTIONS:

1. On the internet go to

<http://taxonomist.tripod.com/fun/bostonradio.html>. This list contains most of the Boston area radio stations. Some have weblinks to check out either their home pages or online listening. If you listen to or know of radio stations that are not included in this listing you may use them in this assignment--you are not limited to the listings at this website.

2. Select TWO radio stations to sample. One must be commercial and one must be nonprofit. Those owned and operated by colleges are all nonprofit as is WGBH 89.7 FM. You may sample the radio stations that you select either by tuning in with a radio set or by listening online. You may wish to sample several radio stations before selecting two to compare and contrast. Select TWO radio stations and **remember that one must be commercial and one nonprofit.**

3. Listen to each radio station for at least 15 minutes. Do not mute commercials or channel surf. You should spend your time listening and not be jumping back and forth with instant messaging, facebook, myspace or any other distractions. For this exercise you should focus and concentrate on the radio programming and content. Fill out the attached worksheet completely.

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	Radio station #1	Radio Station #2
date and time of original broadcast		
call letters: (examples: WBZ-AM, WBUR FM)		
broadcast frequency: AM or FM (examples: 1030 AM, 90.9 FM)		
commercial or nonprofit?		
owned and operated by:		
station format/ types of programming		
brief description of what you listened to: (show title, baseball game, news, talk)		
approximate number of commercials per 15 minute block		
frequency of commercials (how often every 1, 2, 5, or 10 minutes?)		

Concluding paragraph: In the space above or on a separate sheet of paper, write a paragraph that includes a comparison and contrast of the two radio stations. Conclude with explaining which station you preferred and why. **EXTRA CREDIT:** Use the completed worksheet and concluding paragraph to present a discussion of your findings as if you were broadcasting on air!

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GRADING RUBRIC

	excellence 3	satisfactory 2	substandard 1
assignment completed on time	on time or early! 3 x 11 =33	1 class late 2 x 13 =26	2 classes late (note: no assignments accepted after this time)! 1 x 19 = 19
directions completed	all information asked for is provided and your choices included commercial and nonprofit radio 3 x 11 = 33	not all information is provided OR choices do not include comparison of commercial and nonprofit radio 2 x 13 = 26	not all information is provided AND choices do not include comparison of commercial and nonprofit radio 1 x 19 = 19
essay	well written, complete & concise. This could be read on air! 3 x 11 = 33	skimpy, incomplete, awkwardly written-- needs more work! 2 x 13 = 26	only one or two sentences, lacks depth and interest 1 x 19 = 19
extra credit?			

Teacher comments: