Journalism 200: News Media and Society – Fall, 2014

Tues/Thurs 9:00-10:15   INTC 230

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Office Hours: Tues/Thurs 10:30-12  or by appointment

Course Description

In this course, “news” is considered as a social artifact, and the news media as social institutions. We will learn about potential sources of influence on news coverage. We will also discuss the conflicts provoked by our national allegiance to free expression -- a rehearsal for full citizenship in a democracy.

Texts

There are three streams of reading and viewing material for News Media and Society:

• Frequent emails with reading/viewing assignments attached.

• Books

The Elements of Journalism, William Kovach and Tom Rosenstiel

Busted, Wendy Ruderman and Barbara Laker

• The online edition of The New York Times. Sign up for a subscription: • Here's the link for the student discount: https://myaccount.nytimes.com/verification/education

Standing assignment: Each weekday, click on TODAY'S PAPER, at the top of the opening screen. You are responsible to read at least the first ten paragraphs of stories that begin on the front page, and on the first page of the Business Day and Science sections (Science is only on Tuesdays). You are also required to
read any opinion columns. Be sure to check the Opinion section each weekday.

Final exam date: Monday, December 8, 2-5 pm

Make travel plans accordingly -- no exceptions.

Decorum

Be on time. Respectfully requested:

• Do not use your laptop in class -- it's a distraction for you and for others.
• Turn off your cellphone and bury it someplace.
• Finish with eating, and other bodily necessities, before you arrive.
• Refrain from leaving class and then returning -- also distracting.

You are expected to attend each class and to take notes on readings and on all material presented in class in whatever form (lectures, discussions and videos, for example). It is your responsibility to find out what you missed in any class you do not attend.

Grading

Homework assignments make up a portion of your semester grade, as noted below. They are not graded, but they're awarded credit. I will usually only respond to them if they are incomplete or exhibit some other problem.

Save all homework assignments to study for the exam, and in case questions arise later. Homework deadlines are 5 p.m. of the day before the next class, unless otherwise noted.

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Semester Project</td>
<td>25 points</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final exam</td>
<td>15 points</td>
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<tr>
<td>Homework, quizzes, tests</td>
<td>50 points</td>
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<td>Discussion, participation</td>
<td>10 points</td>
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Points are approximate and subject to revision. You are encouraged to contact the instructor at any time during the semester to check on your grade.

92-100%=A; 90-91%=A-; 88-89%=B+; 82-87%=B; 80-81%=B-, etc.

Expectations: To be successful in this course, you will have to devote, on average, 10 to 14 hours each week to preparing for class, attending class, studying course-related materials and completing course assignments.

Extra credit: Be the first to localize a national news story to this campus, and you can earn one point for each acceptable item, up to a limit of 5 points. One submission per week maximum.

Here’s how it works: as you read the New York Times or any other news outlets during the rest of the semester, look for news topics that could conceivably apply to readers at UR. Explain and email to me in about a hundred words (that's half a page):

• how that news story could be covered so as to interest the UR community;

• what sources a journalist could call to interview for this story, and their phone numbers and/or email addresses.

Hypothetical examples:

New York Times, 11/31/14  Science section, A new study shows that a cancer-causing agent, nitrosamine, occurs in beer, sometimes at levels that might cause concern among heavy drinkers. Interview the researchers cited in the Times story, figure out what the risk of cancer is -- one in a million, or what? - - and how much you’d have to drink, for how long, to get in trouble.

www.msnbc.com, 10/14/14, governors debate coverage
In a series of dueling statistics, the two men tussled over Pell Grants, which assist college students, proving that each side
can find the numbers for putting the best gloss on their case. Sen. Grassley said that "they've cut the Pell Grants ... they're not getting the $5,100 the president promised them." Obama countered: "He said we cut Pell grants. We've increased Pell grants by a million students." -- Figure out which candidate was closer to the truth, and interview UR financial aid people to find out what is happening with these grants, and who is affected.

www.slate.com 10/03/14
"The Selective Service System, the Obama Administration, and the Pentagon have been quietly moving to fill draft board vacancies nationwide in order to prepare for a military draft that could start as early as June 15, 2015. In preparation several million dollars have been added to the 2014 Selective Service System (SSS) budget." First, find out if any of this is true. If it is, or if the draft is under discussion at all, contact national legislators, especially those from Virginia, for analysis and comment. See if there are advocacy groups out there who are promoting a draft, or opposing it. Be sure to say how this might affect UR students, and how current military service over-recruits among minorities and poorer people.

Deadlines

No late assignments will be accepted except in cases of illness or family emergency. Non-valid excuses are often generated when students begin work too near a deadline. Examples of non-valid excuses: erased computer file, broken or busy computer. Anticipate such problems, start early, get the assignment in on time. If any of these instructions are unclear to you, ask me about them!

Plagiarism

Plagiarism is representing someone else's work, words, ideas or data as your own. It's plagiarism whether you use a whole document, a paragraph, a single sentence, a distinctive phrase, specific data, or a graphic element of any kind without attribution or acknowledgement of the source. It's also
plagiarism if you use an idea developed by another as if it were your own. If you use any work created by someone else as your own without acknowledging the creator, and if you hand in the work -- whether it is a news story or a research paper -- with your name on it, thus implying that it is your work, then you commit plagiarism. On the other hand, when you carefully acknowledge your sources, you demonstrate the range and depth of your research and reporting.

-- Adapted from the Virginia Tech English Department's statement on plagiarism: "Wonder Where They Got It?"

News Media and Society is a social analysis field-of-study course in the general education curriculum at the University. From the Undergraduate Catalog:

Social analysis is the systematic study of individual and social behavior. This field of study involves a self-conscious examination of what are generally taken-for-granted assumptions regarding the nature of social life. It draws upon a variety of approaches, both theoretical and empirical, in order to discern patterns of meaning in behavior. In establishing social analysis as a required field of study, the faculty decided that the focus of courses in this area must be on human behavior in particular. They also want these courses to familiarize students with a variety of theories and methods of analysis.

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