News Media and Society – JOUR 200  
University of Richmond  
Department of Journalism  
Spring, 2016  
Tuesday and Thursday – Section 1: 9:00 a.m. to 10:15 a.m.  
Section 2: 1:30 p.m. to 2:45 p.m.  
Weinstein Hall 306

Instructor: Shahan Mufti  
Email: smufti@richmond.edu  
Office: 425 Weinstein Hall  
Office hours: Thursday 3 p.m. to 5 p.m. or by appointment

COURSE DESCRIPTION

In this course, we consider “news” as a social artifact, and the news media as social institutions. Through the examination and exploration of various cases of news coverage, and the study of scholarly and professional material about the media, we will explore how news defines and molds political and social conversations and trends, and how the make-up of society and the newsroom itself can feed into the process of news production. We will also examine how journalists and the news media position themselves in relation to other citizens and formal and informal political and social institutions to maintain or harm the ideal of American democracy. We will understand these dynamics, and more, as they occur in print, TV, radio and online journalism, while also studying how each technology and medium works in its own particular way.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

To be successful in this course, you should expect to devote an average of 10 to 14 hours each week to prepare for class, participate in class sessions, study course related materials, and complete course assignments. By the end of the semester you will possess the knowledge and skills of writing and critical thinking required to thoughtfully process news, and to recognize the quality and merit of the journalism you encounter and produce. You will be able to analyze and articulate how a particular case of news coverage fits into the larger societal conversations and recognize the potential sources of influence on news coverage. All in all, you will be much more astute readers of news and users of social media, with a much more refined understanding of their important place in society.

READINGS

- “The Elements of Journalism,” by Bill Kovach and Tom Rosenstiel (2014)  
- Book chapters, articles and web-links will be available on Blackboard
ASSIGNMENTS & COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Weekly Responses: 20 percent
Every week you are required to select a set of news that appeared in the national news media and examine it in light of the content of the course and comment on how the news might affect life on the campus of the University of Richmond. You might also choose to discuss how the story might impact or touch you personally as a reader of the news. Limit your response to 250 words and post it to Blackboard before 5 p.m. on Monday. All your reports and responses will be graded (check, check minus, check plus). Late entries will not receive a grade. Your graded reports and responses will be returned to you at the end of each week.

Participation: 20 percent
Attendance and active participation are essential for you to do well in this course. You will need to spend many hours each week following the news. You will be required to keep abreast of major local, national and international news through television, radio, newspapers, news magazines and news websites (a list of sources is posted on Blackboard). A dynamic and informed classroom will allow all members of the course to extract most benefit from the course with the exchange of fresh ideas, questions and criticisms. You are required to attend all class sessions. For every three sessions that you miss, your final grade will drop by one letter grade.

Mid-term presentation: 15 percent
At the beginning of the semester you will pair up with a classmate and get started on reporting and producing a 5-minute TV, radio, or multimedia news segment about some issue on the university campus. Before spring break, you will submit this piece and make a formal presentation in which you will explore the process of reporting the story and its intended and real effects on campus life. You will be graded on 1) the quality of your produced news content, 2) your observations of your own work as a journalist and the ways in which it was effected by your environment and 3) your analysis of how the news piece has the ability to direct or effect change in society.

News quizzes: 15 percent
You will routinely be tested in class on details from major local, national and international news stories as well as the Kovach and Rosenstiel text.

Final Research Paper: 30 percent
At the end of the semester you will submit a 3,000-word paper in which you will explain and analyze a set of news coverage and how it developed over a defined period of time. A separate final exam assignment will be distributed later in the semester.

WRITING GUIDELINES

You are required to meet all deadlines on the syllabus without exception. A late submission will not be read and may receive an “F” grade. On the first page of each assignment, in the upper left corner, please list your name, a one or two word title description, the date and the word count. This can all be done in the “header” space on a Microsoft Word document.

Example: Richards — Healthcare website – 1/16/14 – 1005 words

Include your name in the title of the Word document.

Please include page numbers at the bottom of each page.
ACADEMIC HONESTY

Observe the honor code. You need to cite all the sources you use in papers and reports (including those that we are reading for this class). You must include citations within your paper any time you quote someone or simply paraphrase his or her idea. You may use any style for citations as long as you are consistent. All work submitted should be done by you in preparation for this specific course. (You may not, for example, hand in a paper for this class that you are also preparing for another course). Evidence of plagiarism or cheating of any kind will result in an “F” on the assignment and this may be reported to the university administration for further consideration. If you have difficulty understanding how to cite sources or have questions concerning any of the above contact me immediately.

DISABILITY ACCOMMODATION

Students with disabilities who have been formally granted accommodations by a University of Richmond Disability Advisor must show their “Disability Accommodation Notice” to me within the first week of the academic term. The student and I will agree upon an accommodation in advance for each scheduled major assignment. You must meet with me at least one week prior to any deadline to discuss your accommodation.

IMPORTANT DATES AND DEADLINES

Pair-up for presentations: by Thursday 1/21
Submit story idea: Thursday 1/28 by 10 p.m. via email
Deadline for mid-term news story: Monday 2/22 by 10 p.m.
Mid-term presentations: Tuesday 3/1 and Thursday 3/3
Final paper topic deadline: Monday 3/28 by 10 p.m.
Final paper deadline: Friday 4/29 by 10 p.m. via email

Reading Schedule

Week 1 – Kovach & Rosenstiel Introduction
Week 2 – Kovach & Rosenstiel Ch. 2
Week 3 – Kovach & Rosenstiel Ch. 3
Week 4 – Kovach & Rosenstiel Ch. 4
Week 5 – Kovach & Rosenstiel Ch. 5
Week 6 – Kovach & Rosenstiel Ch. 6
Week 7 – Group meetings
Week 8 – Mid-term presentations
Week 9 – Spring break
Week 10 – Kovach & Rosenstiel Ch. 7
Week 11 – One-on-one meeting about final paper topics
Week 12 – Kovach & Rosenstiel Ch. 8
Week 13 – Kovach & Rosenstiel Ch. 9
Week 14 – Kovach & Rosenstiel Ch. 10
Week 15 – Kovach & Rosenstiel Ch. 11