

# History of Journalism in the United States

Journalism 61-371

(9:40 to 11:10 a.m., Tuesday and Thursday; Swart 326)

Fall semester 2007

Mike Cowling, professor

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Office hours: Tuesday and Thursday, 8-9:30 a.m., 3-4 p.m.;  
Wednesday, 8 a.m. to noon; by appointment

## COURSE DESCRIPTION:

This class is designed to give students an overview of the historical development of today's U.S. journalism and news media systems. During the semester, the class will explore the philosophical bases of our mass communication system as well as technological developments and some of the legal precedents that affect us today. Students also will learn about some of the more interesting characters and important contributors in American journalism.

This will not be a names-and-dates approach to history, although understanding the journalism history timeline will be important. The class will look at the media as cultural artifacts—products of our culture, institutions, beliefs and prejudices. News media institutions have an impact on history and, in turn, are affected by history.

In addition, this will not strictly be a lecture class. In order to gain the most from this class, everyone will need to get involved. Students are expected to keep up with the readings and be prepared to discuss pertinent materials. Students are encouraged to bring in topics of current journalistic importance in the news so they can be explored from a historical perspective.

## STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES:

A tentative course schedule, including reading assignments, is provided. The readings are critical to understanding the issues, so keep up with them. The class will be more useful if everyone uses that material to contribute to the discussions.

You also are expected to keep up to date on events happening in the world, whether they involve so-called soft news or hard news, with an eye toward how they are related to events covered

in the textbook and in class discussions. Expect additional reading assignments during the semester.

Class participation is essential. You will gain much more from this course if you share your views with others.

Late assignments will be subject to a penalty of one letter grade for each calendar day after the deadline. Make-up exams will not be given, except in cases of confirmed illness or an emergency. It is the responsibility of the student to contact the instructor immediately in such instances, as attendance is important for this course.

#### TEXTBOOK:

Wm. David Sloan (editor), *The Media in America: A History*, Sixth Edition, 2005, Vision Press.

#### COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

##### **EXAMS**

**\*\*** Two during the semester (50 points each)

**\*\*** Final (100 points)

The exams will consist mostly of essay questions, with some multiple choice questions included. In the essay questions, students will be expected to display their knowledge, in detail and using facts and examples, of the historical significance of an individual, a publication or media outlet, terminology, or article, essay or book.

##### **GROUP PRESENTATIONS**

**\*\*** Students will be assigned to small groups that will give presentations on topics being covered in class. The presentations should be from 15 to 20 minutes in length, and include handouts and/or visual elements such as PowerPoint displays. They will be evaluated on the depth of research done, knowledge of the topic, and quality of the presentation. Sources must be cited, and presenters should be prepared to answer questions from the class (30 points).

##### **HISTORY THEN AND NOW PAPER ASSIGNMENT**

**\*\*** Students will write a 10- to 12-page paper examining and analyzing an aspect of journalism history (an important individual, publication, development, period or concept) and discuss the impact that has had on the media today. This will involve detailed research on the topic, both then and now, and an assessment of how a historical figure or development is intertwined with elements or events of the news media today. It also will require the use of several sources of information, and the paper must include a

detailed bibliography. More details on this writing assignment will be provided well in advance of the date the paper is due (70 points).

#### GRADING

Grades will be determined by your performance on the two scheduled exams and the final (about 65 percent of the course grade), group presentations (10 percent) and diversity history paper (about 25 percent). The course grade will be determined as follows: 92 percent average and above, A; 90 to 91, A,B; 83-89, B; 80-82, B,C; 73-79, C; 70-72, C,D; 65-69, D.

#### ACADEMIC HONESTY

Students are expected to follow ethical practices, which means that plagiarism and cheating will not be tolerated. In a field that values high ethical standards, truth and fairness, there is no excuse for anything less than personal and professional honesty. University rules on cheating and plagiarism will be strictly enforced.

#### **HISTORY OF JOURNALISM COURSE SCHEDULE**

Sept. 6	Introduction; syllabus review Readings: Chapters 1, 2, 3
Sept. 11, 13	Readings: Chapters 4, 5
Sept. 18, 20	Group presentation Readings: Chapters 6, 7
Sept. 25, 27	Group presentation Readings: Chapter 8
Oct. 2, 4	<b>Exam I</b> Readings: Chapters 9, 10
Oct. 9, 11	Group presentation Readings: Chapters 11, 12
Oct. 16, 18	Group presentation Readings: Chapter 13
Oct. 23, 25	Group presentation Readings: Chapters 14, 15

Oct. 29, Nov. 1	Group presentation Readings: Chapter 16
Nov. 6, 8	<b>Exam II</b> Readings: Chapter 17
Nov. 13, 15	Group presentation Readings: Chapter 19
Nov. 20	<b>History Then and Now paper due</b> Group presentation Readings: Chapters 20, 21
Nov. 27, 29	Group presentation Readings: Chapter 22
Dec. 4, 6	Group presentation Readings: Chapter 23
Dec. 11, 13	Prepare for final exam <b>Final exam</b>