

Spring 2016 Syllabus
JOUR 160 – Understanding News Media
ONLINE

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Office Hours: Tuesdays 12:30PM to 2:30PM (I'm also available via email as well as by appointment)

Objectives:

The purpose of this course is to broaden and deepen student understanding of news media production, distribution, and interpretation practices in the digital age. Students will examine how journalistic processes work and learn how to recognize and critically question news media narrative patterns, hidden meanings, and stereotypes. Throughout the semester, students will watch television news reports; listen to radio newscasts, read printed news articles, and access online news sources to become more discerning news consumers. At a time when the digital revolution is spawning an unprecedented flood of information and disinformation each day, the course, which is based in part on a model of news literacy developed by educators at the Stony Brook University School of Journalism, ultimately seeks to help students recognize the differences between news and propaganda, news and opinion, bias and fairness, assertion and verification, and evidence and inference.

Learning Outcomes:

By the end of this course, students will have gained experience in:

- Developing a sophisticated understanding of forces which are reshaping news standards & practices
- Discussing the traditional mission of the press in democratic societies
- Examining the First Amendment and exploring issues of freedom of expression in the digital age
- Distinguishing between legitimate journalism and other kinds of information
- Describing how news decisions are made
- Analyzing the key elements of a news account, including weight of evidence, credibility of sources and verification steps, to judge its credibility and reliability
- Connecting current news stories to course concepts
- Sharpening written communication skills
- Enhancing critical thinking capacities about news and individual information-seeking choices

Required Texts:

Hermida, A. (2014). *Tell Everyone. Why We Share & Why It Matters*. Toronto: Doubleday Canada.

Kovach, B. and Rosenthal, T. (2011). *Blur: How to Know What's True in the Age of Information Overload*. New York: Bloomsbury.

Required Video Rentals (available through AmazonPrime and/or iTunes):

Citizenfour (2015)

Citizen Kane (1941)

Other readings and viewings will be assigned throughout the term and made available on BeachBoard.

Methods:

The class will blend lecture and seminar formats online to emphasize critical thinking, discussion, and writing as a means to discovery. Students will do well if they think critically and deeply about the material, craft carefully their written assignments and discussion forum contributions, and engage fully in online exchanges. Students are expected to be thoughtful and active participants. Viewings, readings, homework assignments, and discussion forum activities are intended as starting points for an understanding of news media. Students will enhance this understanding through establishing connections between readings, class discussions, personal experiences, and coverage of current events.

Evaluation Procedures and Grading Policy:

Class activities are designed to demonstrate competency of the course learning outcomes. Students will be graded based upon the quality of performance in meeting the following course requirements:

Course Requirements	Points
News Log/Homework Assignments (6 X 25 points)	150
Participation/Discussion Forum Activity (8 X 25 points)	200
Book Review #1	150
Book Review #2	150
Final Assessment	100
Total:	750

At the end of the course, grades will be converted to a percentage and designated as follows:

A=90% - 100% B=80% - 89% C=70% - 79% D=60 - 69% F=below 59%

Assessment of Written Work:

Students will be graded on how well they articulate an understanding of course material as well as how they express their own ideas and arguments. Simply put, grades depend a great deal on a student's ability to write with clarity and logic in formal assignments as well as in discussion forums. In general:

“**A**” assignments are exceptionally written, cogently argued, intelligently analyzed, and brilliantly synthesized; they need little or no rewriting.

“**B**” assignments are superior in argument, analysis, synthesis and writing; they require minor editing or rewriting.

“**C**” assignments are average in argument, analysis, synthesis and writing; they show a grasp of subject matter, but need heavy editing or rewriting.

“**D**” assignments show poor grasp of subject; there are serious problems with argument, analysis, synthesis, and writing.

“**F**” assignments demonstrate weak grasp of subject or do not meet basic standards of accuracy and academic integrity.

Assessment of News Logs:

Students will be required to complete six homework assignments of no more than 500 words. Each of these “news logs” will be evaluated out of 25 points. News logs will be assessed on the ability of a student to think critically, write clearly, apply course concepts, follow directions, and meet deadlines.

Assessment of Participation Online:

Participation is essential to succeeding in this course and participation in an online instructional environment is demonstrated by discussion forum activity. There will be eight discussion forum assignments over the course of the semester. Each will be evaluated out of 25 points. Consult the discussion forums themselves for topics, directions, and deadlines. It's important that you post thoughtful messages that move the conversation forward in some way. "Yeah, I agree," and "Me, too" are not acceptable postings and will not earn any points. After the due date for the discussion, you will be graded on your overall participation in that discussion thread in addition to the questions you came up with, when applicable. Late posts are welcome for their intellectual value but will not be considered in your grade. The following chart represents the rubric employed for grading the threaded discussion entries and factors that are considered when evaluating participation:

Points	
21-25	Demonstrates excellence in grasping key concepts; contributes interesting, insightful comments; stimulates discussion and builds on comments of others; raises good questions; readily offers new interpretations of discussion material; presents good examples of concepts being discussed. Ideas are expressed clearly, concisely; uses appropriate vocabulary; meets all deadlines.
16-20	Shows evidence of understanding most major concepts; will offer an occasional insightful comment; shows some skill in support for opinions. Some signs of disorganization with expression; transition wording may be faulty; overuse of the simple sentence and a redundancy with words and commentary.
10-15	Shows shallow grasp of the material; offers inadequate levels of support of positions. Poor language use garbles much of the message; only an occasional idea surfaces clearly; expression seems disjointed; paragraphs often appear unrelated to each other.
0-9	A minimal posting of material; shows no significant understanding of material; fails to meet deadlines and/or follow directions; language is mostly incoherent.

Class Policies/Statements:

Assignments, Deadlines and Grading

All assignments should be handed in when they are due. Deadlines are listed on the class schedule. If you must miss a deadline for a *legitimate* reason, contact me as soon as possible. Work handed in late without a legitimate reason will earn a 0. Please note that I do not accept email assignments. Work must be uploaded into the applicable Dropbox and/or posted inside the applicable discussion forum.

CSULB Cheating/Plagiarism/Fabrication Policy

CSULB takes issues of academic dishonesty very seriously. If students use any deceptive or dishonest method to complete an assignment, take an exam, or gain credit in a course in any other way, or if students help someone else to do so, they are guilty of cheating. If students use someone else's ideas or work and represent it as their own without giving credit to the source, they are guilty of plagiarism. This does not apply if the ideas are recognized as common knowledge, or if students can show that they honestly developed the ideas through their own work. Students should use quotation marks and bibliographic references to give credit to their sources according to established citation formats.

Students with Disabilities

Students needing support services or accommodations should establish their eligibility for assistance by contacting the Disabled Student Services Office (Brotman Hall 270) at (562) 985-5401. Students are to provide me verification of their disability and appropriate alternatives from Disabled Student Services.

Assistance

If students think they might need help with some aspect of the course, they probably do. I strongly encourage students to talk with me by phone if they have questions. I'm available on Tuesdays for phone or face-to-face appointments between 12:30PM and 2:30PM. Please include "JOUR 160" in the subject line of all e-mails to me (Jennifer.Fleming@csulb.edu) regarding this class.

Spring 2016
JOUR 160-UNDERSTANDING NEWS MEDIA
Lecture, Reading, Viewing, and Assignment Schedule

Note: This schedule is subject to change.

Week	Readings and Viewings	Assignments, Activities, and Deadlines
#1 Introduction (Jan 19-Jan 24)	Readings: State of News Media 2015 Report (http://www.journalism.org/2015/04/29/state-of-the-news-media-2015/)	Discussion #1: Photo, Introductions & News Habits, What's the most surprising from report Due: Sunday, January 24 @ 11:30PM
#2 News Literacy and Why It Matters (Jan 25-Jan31)	Readings: What Is Journalism For? <i>The Elements of Journalism</i> (chapter in Week 2 folder on BB) Viewings: "News Literacy & Why It Matters" Lecture <i>Citizen Kane</i> (rent from AmazonPrime or find another source online)	Discussion #2: <i>Citizen Kane</i> Comments and questions due: Thursday, January 28 @ 11:30PM Responses due: Sunday, January 31 @ 11:30PM
#3 The Power of Information (Feb1-Feb 7)	Readings: Introduction and Chapter 1: The News Now, Tell Everyone Chapter 2: Why We Share, Tell Everyone Chapter 3: OMG! I Have to Tell You, Tell Everyone Viewings: "The Power of Information" Lecture	News Log #1: News Blackout Due: Sunday, February 7 @ 11:30PM
#4 The Mission of the American Press (Feb8-Feb14)	Readings: Chapter 4: The Daily We, <i>Tell Everyone</i> Chapter 5: Voices That Rise Above the Noise, <i>Tell Everyone</i> Chapter 6: A Nervous System for the Planet, <i>Tell Everyone</i> Viewings: "Mission of the American Press" lecture How Facebook Changed the World (BBC)	Discussion #3: How Facebook Changed the World Comments and questions due: Thursday, February 11 @ 11:30PM Responses due: Sunday, February 14 @ 11:30PM

<p>#5 News Neighborhoods (Feb15–Feb21)</p>	<p>Readings: Chapter 7: When Consumers Strike Back, <i>Tell Everyone</i> Chapter 8: Truth, Lies and Rumours, <i>Tell Everyone</i> Chapter 9: The Political Power of the Shared Story Chapter 10: The Way Ahead, <i>Tell Everyone</i></p> <p>Watch: “News Neighborhood” Lecture</p>	<p>Book Review #1: <i>Tell Everyone</i> Due: Thursday, February 18 @ 11:30PM</p>
<p>#6 What Is News and Who Decides? (Feb22-Feb28)</p>	<p>Readings: The Role of Journalist and the Performance of Journalism: Ethical Lessons from “Fake” Journalism (Seriously), <i>Journal of Mass Media Ethics</i> (on BB) Mocking the News: How the Daily Show with Jon Stewart Holds Traditional Broadcast News Accountable, <i>Journal of Mass Media Ethics</i> (on BB)</p> <p>Viewings: “What Is News and Who Decides” Lecture Jon Stewart on <i>Crossfire</i></p>	<p>News Log #2: Is Jon Stewart a Journalist? Due: Sunday, February 28 @ 11:30PM</p>
<p>#7 Edward Snowden (Feb29-Mar6)</p>	<p>Viewings: <i>Citizen Four</i> (rent on iTunes or Amazon Prime)</p>	<p>Discussion #5: Is Edward Snowden a Journalist?</p> <p>Comments and questions due: Thursday, March 3 @ 11:30PM Responses due: Sunday, March 6 @ 11:30PM</p>
<p>#8 Fairness, Balance, and Bias (Mar7-Mar13)</p>	<p>Readings: Chapter 1: How to Know What to Believe Anymore, <i>Blur: How to Know What’s True in the Age of Information Overload</i> Chapter 2: We Have Been Here Before, <i>Blur</i></p> <p>Viewings: “Fairness, Balance, and Bias” lecture</p>	<p>News Log #3: Censorship in China Due: Sunday, March 13 @ 11:30PM</p>
<p>#9 Truth and Verification (Mar14-Mar20)</p>	<p>Readings: Chapter 3: The Way of Skeptical Knowing: The Tradecraft of Verification, <i>Blur</i> Chapter 4: Completeness: What Is Here and What Is Missing?, <i>Blur</i> Society of Professional Journalists Code of Ethics</p>	<p>Discussion #6: <i>A Hidden Life</i> Comments and questions due: Wednesday, March 16 @ 11:30PM Responses due: Sunday, March 20 @ 11:30PM</p>

	<p>Viewings: “Truth and Verification” Lecture <i>A Hidden Life</i> (PBS)</p>	
<p>#10 Evaluating Sources (Mar21-Mar27)</p>	<p>Readings: Chapter 5: Sources: Where Did This Come From?, <i>Blur</i> Chapter 1: Tsunami Washed Away, <i>Dispatches from the Edge</i>, pp. 19-25 (in week 9 folder on BB)</p> <p>Viewings: “Evaluating Sources” Lecture Anderson Cooper on President’s trip to Asia Viewings:</p>	<p>News Log #4: Anderson Cooper Due: Sunday, March 13 @ 11:30PM</p>
<p>SPRING BREAK</p>		
<p>#11 Deconstructing the News (Apr4-Apr10)</p>	<p>Readings: Chapter 6: Evidence and the Journalism of Verification, <i>Blur</i> Chapter 7: Assertion, Affirmation: Where’s the Evidence, <i>Blur</i></p> <p>Viewings: “Deconstructing the News” lecture <i>Buying the War</i></p>	<p>Discussion #7: <i>Buying the War</i> Comments and questions due: Thursday, April 7 @ 11:30PM Responses due: Sunday, April 10 @ 11:30PM</p>
<p>#12 Deconstructing the News (Apr11-Apr17)</p>	<p>Readings: Chapter 8: How to Find What Really Matters, <i>Blur</i> Chapter 9: What We Need from the “Next Journalism”, <i>Blur</i> Epilogue: The New Way of Knowing, <i>Blur</i></p> <p>Viewings: None</p>	<p>Book Review #2: <i>Blur</i> Due: Sunday, April 17 @ 11:30PM</p>
<p>#13 Deconstructing TV News (Apr18-Apr24)</p>	<p>Readings: TBD</p> <p>Viewings: “Deconstructing TV News” Deconstructing TV News Webinar</p>	<p>News Log #5: Deconstructing TV News Due: Sunday, April 24 @ 11:30PM</p>

<p>#14 Deconstructing Social Media (April25-May1)</p>	<p>Readings: TBD</p> <p>Viewings: “Deconstructing Social Media” Lecture Monika Lewinsky TED Talk</p>	<p>News Log #6: Code of Ethics Due: Thursday, April 28 @ 11:30PM</p>
<p>#15 The Future of News (May2-May8)</p>	<p>Readings: <i>State of News Media</i> Report</p> <p>Viewings: “Future of News” Lecture</p>	<p>Discussion #8: Online Ethics for Journalists and Citizens Comments and questions due: Thursday, May 5 @ 11:30PM Responses due: Sunday, May 8 @ 11:30PM</p>

Final Assessment Due: TBD