

# **JOURNALISM 190 INTRODUCTION TO JOURNALISM & COMMUNICATION**

**Spring 2013**

Tuesdays, 4:00-6:20pm

***Lead Instructor:***

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## **Course Description and Objectives**

As we start this course, here is a question for you to ponder: What is journalism? In one sense, the answer seems obvious; but in the world today, it actually represents a problem, a challenge, and an opportunity. There are several related questions: What was it; what is it; has it changed; can it survive; is it being replaced? Can journalism be defined as information in the public interest – or is that definition too narrow, too broad, or both? Those questions befuddle the industry, but they will enrich our conversation. Similarly, journalism educators are asking what they (that is, *we*) should be teaching students. What are the implications of evolving technologies, business structures, and reading and viewing habits? While educators everywhere try to solve that riddle, we (that is, hopefully, *you*) can have fun playing around with some possible answers. And we will simultaneously ask a similar set of questions about the world of public relations.

During a time of dramatic developments at all levels of society, and a time of rapid changes in journalism and the news industry, this course will provide a quick and (we hope) engaging and memorable exploration of several areas of current and enduring importance. We will use some of the most important news events of the day – from international affairs and

American politics to sports, fashion and entertainment – as the backdrop for our readings and discussion. Putting the news of the day into the context of history, we will find opportunities to ask whether the way that reporters and news outlets select or cover stories is affected, consciously or subconsciously, by their social, ethnic, political, or economic status or bias – and whether that phenomenon has changed over time or as the result of economic pressures or evolving technologies. And we will ask how public relations practitioners approach a range of similar issues.

This class will meet for two and one-half hours each week for **the first ten weeks of the semester**. As a rule, each class will devote the first 90 minutes to a discussion of one or two major topics, using one or more of the stories in the news as a way of exploring that subject and delving further into the issues set forth in the reading material and commentary (or blog) that will be posted on our class website at [blackboard.usc.edu](http://blackboard.usc.edu). The final hour will generally feature guest speakers who are journalists, news industry leaders, public relations experts, newsmakers – or members of our school's remarkable faculty and staff. Guests in recent years who may be invited this fall include photojournalist David Hume Kennerly, broadcast journalist Julie Chen, documentary filmmaker Davis Guggenheim, Fox Sports president David Hill, staff from the Huffington post, the editor of *The Los Angeles Times*, *La Opinion* editor and publisher Monica Lozano, and the editors of the fashion blog Go Fug Yourself.

The class will include:

- 1) A quick survey introduction to all major forms of news media,**
- 2) A critical examination of those media, and**
- 3) An analysis of what it means to be a professional journalist or public relations professional.**

Throughout the course, we will also examine a series of issues about the role of the press and public relations in our society. In that connection, we will spend time on the following five topics.

**1) Because a strong background in the liberal arts is central to the work of good journalists, the course will explain and provide a critical examination of the context of news events and news stories. It will examine the ways in which journalists learn about, cover, and have an impact on several vital and topical areas, such as government, politics, business, news, religion, health, medicine, science, sports, books, ideas, technology, the arts, and popular culture;**

**2) Through the lens of a series of topics that have led to raging debates in recent years, we will look at issues such as fairness, national security, common sense, gossip, the publication of government secrets, the use of anonymous sources - and, where applicable - the law. In that same vein, we will consider issues of objectivity, commentary, and bias, as well as the responsibility of journalists to the diverse, democratic society they serve, and to the people they cover;**

**3) Using some current case studies, we will explore the role of public relations and, particularly, strategic public relations – in cases involving individuals, governments, non-governmental organizations, and corporations;**

**4) We will also try to understand a bit about the opportunities and challenges presented by changing technology, changing tastes, globalization, and by the business of the news business; and**

**5) Finally, we will explore the meaning and responsibilities of leadership and the public trust.**

We will spend some of our time trying to keep track of the business of the news business. In recent years, several major news organizations have changed ownership, made changes in their operations, and even closed shop. More cheerfully, we will also explore some of the new outlets and new forms of journalism that are emerging every day.

Throughout, we will be mindful that this is an overload class for most students – designed to offer a quick, stimulating overview of a series of

topics that will affect your lives and careers in the years ahead. We hope that it will also serve as a warm introduction to Los Angeles, USC, and the Annenberg School – and to your classmates – as well as an engaging glimpse into a very important and rapidly changing field.

## **Readings**

**Blackboard:** No books have been assigned for this class, but we will expect you to keep abreast of whatever material we distribute in class or post on Blackboard. Between classes, Blackboard will be our primary means of communication. We will use it for a range of functions:

- \*to notify you of reading and/or viewing assignments, describe upcoming class guests, and announce extra credit opportunities; and

- \*to let you know of any changes in the syllabus that we decide to make as opportunities arise or events warrant.

In short, Blackboard represents our primary and indispensable means of communication with you between classes. Please be sure to read our pages on Blackboard at least twice a week, including every Sunday.

Some of you will be using Blackboard for the first time. You can find it on the web at [blackboard.usc.edu](http://blackboard.usc.edu).

**News Sources:** We will expect each student to select at least four news sources to follow on a regular basis. One source should be the New York Times, Los Angeles Times, or the Wall Street Journal. Be sure to read one of those papers on the day of class to be prepared for our discussion. The second major news source should be a leading broadcaster – a nightly network newscast, National Public Radio, or Jon Stewart. The third source should be a “new media” outlet – not the web site of a traditional news outlet, but rather a site that was created for the web such as the Daily Beast, Slate, Salon, the Huffington Post, Talking Points Memo, or the Drudge Report. The fourth should be an international news source, such as the BBC, the Guardian, the Times of London, the Times of India, or Al Jazeera.

You can follow your news source online if that proves most convenient. We don’t expect you to read all of the stories in your publications, but we will

want you to be able to discuss and compare the way in which they treat certain key topics that we will identify, such as those listed in the first paragraph of this syllabus.

You will not be quizzed on the news, but for a class on journalism – and for students of journalism and communication – it is important to stay reasonably current, at least with the major stories of the day.

For a wealth of background and current material on journalism, you may want to visit and browse through the Poynter Institute's website at <http://www.poynter.org> and/or the Project on Excellence in Journalism's website at [www.journalism.org](http://www.journalism.org). To get an idea of what people in the profession are doing and/or thinking, you may want to visit Jim Romenesko's widely read column at [www.jimromenesko.com](http://www.jimromenesko.com), and you can find fascinating daily updates in Editor and Publisher at [www.editorandpublisher.com](http://www.editorandpublisher.com).

### **Grading: Exams and Other Assignments**

Your letter grade will be determined based on your relative performance in the course - that is in comparison with your classmates. The relative weight of assignments in this course is divided as follows:

**Autobiographical Essay (5 %)**

**Blogs and in-class quizzes (10%)**

**Essay on a favorite journalist (30 %)**

**Final essay (40%)**

**Participation and Attendance (10 %)** Students will be evaluated on their attendance and participation in both halves of the class, the lecture and the guest presentations. Your TA often will follow up with you after the class to get your comments, feedback, and questions about that day's class and guests. If for any reason you need to miss part or all of the class, please notify your TA. Approved athletic competitions and other university obligations, as well as medical excuses, will count as excused absences. In order to receive an excused absence for athletic competition or other

university obligations, please turn in all excuse form requests to your TA at least 48 hours prior to missing class. Medical excuses must be verified by a note from a physician.

**School and Community Events (5%)** All students will also be expected to attend and write one paragraph on at least two events at USC to be selected from a list that will be distributed and/or discussed by the instructors. These events must be attended within the 10 weeks of the course and the write-up must be submitted within one week of the event. The write-up should be emailed to Ev Boyle at [eboyle@usc.edu](mailto:eboyle@usc.edu).

### **Use of Computers and Cell Phones**

For this class will use what might be called the Harvard Business School Rule: students will not be allowed to use laptops or wireless connections. Unless permitted by the instructor, cell phones must always be turned off during class.

### **Visions and Voices**

To enjoy the excitement of the USC experience, you should also plan to go to some of the events listed in the USC Arts and Humanities Initiative which can be found at [www.usc.edu/visionsandvoices](http://www.usc.edu/visionsandvoices). To find out if any of the events on the Arts and Humanities calendar would count for our class, please check with Professor Cowan or your TA.

### **Extra Credit**

There will be occasional opportunities for extra credit. Please try to take advantage of some or all of them.

## **SCHOOL OF JOURNALISM ACADEMIC POLICIES**

### **STATEMENT ON ACADEMIC INTEGRITY**

USC seeks to maintain an optimal learning environment. General principles of academic honesty include the concept of respect for the intellectual property of others, the expectation that individual work will be submitted unless otherwise allowed by an instructor, and the obligations both to protect one's own academic work from misuse by others as well as to avoid using another's work as one's own. All students are expected to understand and abide by these principles. *Scampus*, the Student Guidebook, contains

the Student Conduct Code in Section 11.00, while the recommended sanctions are located in Appendix A:  
[www.usc.edu/dept/publications/SCAMPUS/gov/](http://www.usc.edu/dept/publications/SCAMPUS/gov/). Students will be referred to the Office of Student Judicial Affairs and Community Standards for further review, should there be any suspicion of academic dishonesty. The Review process can be found at: [www.usc.edu/student-affairs/SJACS/](http://www.usc.edu/student-affairs/SJACS/).

**When quoting from another source, be sure to put all of the material in quotations and to cite the source in a footnote.**

#### STATEMENT FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

Any student requesting academic accommodations based on a disability is required to register with Disability Services and Programs (DSP) each semester. A letter of verification for approved accommodations can be obtained from DSP when adequate documentation is filed. Please be sure the letter is delivered to me as early in the semester as possible. DSP is open Monday through Friday, 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. The office is located in Student Union room 301 and their phone number is 213-740-0776.

#### INTERNSHIPS

The value of professional internships as part of the overall educational experience of our students has long been recognized by the School of Journalism. Accordingly, while internships are not required for successful completion of this course, any student enrolled in this course who undertakes and completes an approved, non-paid internship during this semester shall earn academic extra credit herein of an amount equal to one percent of the total available semester points for this course.

To receive instructor approval, a student must request an internship letter from the Annenberg Career Development Office and bring it to the instructor to sign **by the end of the third week of classes**. The student must submit the signed letter to the media organization, along with the evaluation form provided by the Career Development Office. The form should be filled out by the intern supervisor and returned to the instructor at the end of the semester. No credit will be given if an evaluation form is not turned in to the instructor by the last day of class.

Note: The internship must be unpaid and can only be applied to one journalism class.

## CLASS ATTENDANCE

Students are advised to attend the first class meetings of their journalism classes or the instructors may drop them from their classes. The School of Journalism adheres to the university policy, which states “an instructor may replace any student who without prior consent does not attend...the first class session of the semester for once-a-week classes. It is then the student’s responsibility to withdraw officially from the course through the Registration Department.”

## GRADING POLICIES

The School of Journalism expects its students to maintain at least a 2.7 (B-) grade point average in all journalism classes. Those who fall below this will receive additional counseling from faculty and advisement staff. Students are required to complete each journalism class with at least a grade of C-. Journalism courses with a grade of D+ or below must be repeated. Please note that the university's cumulative grade point average will include both grades in its calculations and students must maintain a minimum 2.0 grade point average to graduate from USC.

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## Schedule of Classes

January 15      *Introduction*

January 22      *Why Journalism Matters*

Readings to be announced and/or distributed

**Autobiographical essay due.**

January 29      *Print Journalism*

Readings to be announced and/or distributed

February 5      *New Media*



Readings to be announced and/or distributed

February 12      *Broadcasting*

Readings to be announced and/or distributed

February 19      *The Importance of Context, History, Fairness, Ethics, Perspective, National Security, An Informed Public, Common Sense, and the Law- and the special case of Photography*

Readings to be announced and/or distributed

February 26      *Objectivity, Bias, Perspective, Commentary And Tone of Voice – and sports*

Readings to be announced and/or distributed

March 5      *Local, National and International Coverage*

Readings to be announced and/or distributed

**Essay on a favorite journalist due**

March 12      *Local, National and International Coverage*

Readings to be announced and/or distributed

March 26      *Conclusion*

Readings to be announced and/or distributed

April 2      **Final essay due**