

**JOUR 460: Social Responsibility of the News Media**

**Units: 4**

**Fall 2017 – Thursday – 2-5:20 p.m.**

**Section:** 21287R

**Location:** ASC 331

**Instructor: Professor Philip Seib**

**Office:** ASC 307A

**Office Hours:** Thursday, 12-2 p.m.; various other times, best by appointment

**Contact Info: (**213) 740-9611; Email: seib@usc.edu

Course description

In this course we will consider the role of the news media as monitors of humanitarian and justice-related issues, as well as addressing the ethical responsibilities of news organizations and individual journalists. News coverage can provide a voice for those who otherwise cannot make themselves heard and can stir the public’s conscience. We will examine how the news media perform these duties and how this kind of journalism coexists with conventional standards of “objectivity.” We will also scrutinize the relationship between the news media and political process, as well as with other societal institutions that concern themselves with social responsibility. In addition, we will analyze how social responsibility extends to journalists’ dealings with individuals in matters such as privacy, race, and sexual orientation.

Assessment

By the end of the course, students will be able to:

* Understand why social responsibility is an inherent journalistic value.
* Recognize how social responsibility is the foundation of journalism ethics.
* Cite cases that exemplify successes and failures of journalistic responsibility.
* Analyze ways that journalists might better pursue these responsibilities.
* Understand the importance of addressing diversity issues, privacy, compassion, and a journalist’s individual responsibilities and motivations.

Required readings

Lynsey Addario, *It’s What I Do: A Photographer’s Life of Love and War* (Penguin, 2015).

John Lloyd, *Journalism in an Age of Terror* (I. B. Tauris, 2017).

Marian Meyers, *African American Women in the News: Gender, Race, and Class in Journalism* (Routledge, 2013).

Philip Seib, *The Global Journalist: News and Conscience in a World of Conflict* (Rowman & Littlefield, 2002).

[additional readings will be sent to you by email]

Course requirements

PAPERS: 3 @ 33.3 percent. Students will write three papers, each about 2,000-2,500 words (approximately 6-8 double-spaced pages). The papers are due in class on **September 21**, **November 2**, and **the final exam date**.

CLASS PARTICIPATION: Bonus Points. These points will be added to your papers’ average score at the end of the course. This covers general class discussion and performance in assigned presentations. Students with unexcused absences will, in effect, be penalized due to their lack of participation.

Course outline *(where no readings are listed, they will be sent to you by email)*

Aug. 24 Introduction: should the news media be socially responsible?

Aug. 31 The compassionate journalist I.

Sept. 7 Reporting the world I. Seib, chapters 1-3 (pp. 1-65).

Sept.14 Reporting the world II. Seib, chapters 4-5 (pp. 67-107). **Team 1.**

Sept. 21 Race, class, and gender I. Meyers, chapters 1-3 (pp. 1-46). **Paper 1 due.**

Sept. 28 Race, class, and gender II. Meyers, chapters 4-5 (pp. 47-97).

Oct. 5 Race, class, and gender III. Meyers, chapters 6-8 (pp. 98-145). **Team 2.**

Oct. 12 Secrecy, privacy, and security I. Lloyd, preface (vi-ix), chapter 2 (34-93).

Oct. 19 Secrecy, privacy, and security II. Lloyd, chapter 3 (pp. 94-135).

Oct. 26 Secrecy, privacy, and security III. Lloyd, conclusion (pp. 215-226).

Nov. 2 Covering government: the Trump presidency. **Paper 2 due.**

Nov. 9 Images and getting them. Addario, all (pp. 1-269).**Team 3.**

Nov. 16 The compassionate journalist II.

Nov. 23 No class: Thanksgiving.

Nov. 30 Where do we go next? Can social responsibility survive?

Dec. 7 Exam day **Paper 3 due**

Paper guidelines

Length: about 6-8 double-spaced pages (approximately 2,000-2,500 words).

Form: standard footnotes or endnotes and bibliography in proper form are required. The particular style of citation you choose doesn’t matter, as long as you are consistent.

Due dates and general topic areas:

PAPER 1, **due September 21**. Topic: Covering the world. Address some aspect of the news media’s role/responsibility in public understanding of issues related to international affairs – war, terrorism, refugees, famine, efforts to build peace,etc.

PAPER 2, **due November 2**. Topic: The news media’s coverage of race, class, and gender issues. Identify and research a case or several cases and use this to evaluate how American (or other) news media deal with these matters.

PAPER 3: **due December 7 (exam day)**. Topic: your choice; anything related to the course that you have not addressed in earlier papers.

For all the papers, submitting specific topic ideas and/or outlines in advance is optional. They may be presented for the professor’s comments and suggestions about research material.

Late papers will lose at least one letter grade.

Class discussion teams

During the semester, teams of students will be responsible for leading conversation about topics related to the reading. One of the goals of this course is to enhance your ability to discuss, fluently and thoughtfully, how the news media cover issues and events. Each team will be responsible on the assigned dates for a joint presentation that should include research findings about the topic and discussion questions for your colleagues in the class. The presentation should last about an hour.

TEAM 1:

TEAM 2:

TEAM 3:

DATES/TOPICS:

*[Please do not cover the same topics that we will be addressing in class on the day of your presentation.]*

September 14: Team 1. Analyze several international news stories, such as ones related to conflict or other humanitarian emergencies.

October 5: Team 2. Analyze several news stories related to race, gender, class, etc.

November 9: Team 3. Examine ways that news media use of still and/or moving images reflects social responsibility principles.

Grading policies

Papers will receive numerical grades that will be converted into letter grades at the end of the semester. This is the conversion table, as prescribed by the university:

95-100 A

90-94 A-

87-89 B+

84-86 B

80-83 B-

77-79 C+

74-76 C

70-73 C-

67-69 D+

64-66 D

The university defines the letter grades as A=”excellent”; B=”good”; C=”fair.” (C is the minimum passing grade for graduate credit.) I define D as “dismal.”

“Incomplete” and other special situation course grades are given at the discretion of the professor (i.e., not solely at the request of the student), and the professor is strictly limited by university rules related to this.

I will be happy to discuss the content of your papers. I will not, however, discuss the grade you have received. If you wish to appeal a grade, a formal process is available for doing so.

In grading your work, I consider quality of research and clarity of expression. Good research needs to be presented through good writing, and good writing needs to be backed up by good research. Clarity of expression also involves good organization. Don’t wander and don’t take an overly broad approach to your topic. Doing so can seriously detract from the power of your writing. Factual errors and mistakes in spelling, grammar, etc. will cost grade points, so proofread carefully.

Additionally, I look for evidence of insight into the topic -- do you seem to really grasp the subject matter and say something interesting about it?

In research papers you may interject your opinion, but only if you support it with evidence. In other words, beware of lapsing into polemic, no matter how passionately you may feel about the topic. For this class and your future endeavors, you want your work to be compelling and convincing. Achieving that balanced combination is always difficult but always possible.

One more very important point: Many of the issues/cases you might address in your papers change rapidly in the fast-moving modern political environment. Be certain that sources you cite related to current or near-current events are not outdated.

Mobile phones

Turned off and put away during all class sessions. If you have urgent need to have access to your phone during class, talk with the professor beforehand. Laptops and tablets are okay; you might actually be taking notes on them, but I’ve learned that mobile phones are merely distractions.

Academic Conduct and Support Systems

*Plagiarism*

Presenting someone else’s ideas as your own, either verbatim or recast in your own words - is a serious academic offense with serious consequences. Please familiarize yourself with the discussion of plagiarism in *SCampus* in Section 11, *Behavior Violating University Standards* <https://scampus.usc.edu/b/11-00-behavior-violating-university-standards-and-appropriate-sanctions/>. Other forms of academic dishonesty are equally unacceptable. See additional information in *SCampus* and university policies on scientific misconduct, <http://policy.usc.edu/scientific-misconduct/>.

*Equity and Diversity*

Discrimination, sexual assault, and harassment are not tolerated by the university. You are encouraged to report any incidents to the *Office of Equity and Diversity* <http://equity.usc.edu/> or to the *Department of Public Safety* <http://capsnet.usc.edu/department/department-public-safety/online-forms/contact-us>. This is important for the safety of the whole USC community. Another member of the university community - such as a friend, classmate, advisor, or faculty member - can help initiate the report, or can initiate the report on behalf of another person. *The Center for Women and Men*<http://www.usc.edu/student-affairs/cwm/> provides 24/7 confidential support, and the sexual assault resource center webpage <https://sarc.usc.edu/> describes reporting options and other resources.

*Support with Scholarly Writing*

A number of USC’s schools provide support for students who need help with scholarly writing. Check with your advisor or program staff to find out more. Students whose primary language is not English should check with the *American Language Institute* <http://dornsife.usc.edu/ali>, which sponsors courses and workshops specifically for international graduate students.

*The Office of Disability Services and Programs* <http://sait.usc.edu/academicsupport/centerprograms/dsp/home_index.html>provides certification for students with disabilities and helps arrange the relevant accommodations.

*Stress Management*

Students are under a lot of pressure. If you start to feel overwhelmed, it is important that you reach out for help. A good place to start is the USC Student Counseling Services office at 213-740-7711. The service is confidential, and there is no charge.

**About the Instructor:**

Philip Seib is Professor of Journalism and Public Diplomacy, and Professor of International Relations. He was director of USC’s Center on Public Diplomacy, 2009-2013 and was Vice Dean of the Annenberg School 20015-2016.  He is author or editor of numerous books, including *Beyond the Front Lines: How the News Media Cover a World Shaped by War*; *New Media and the New Middle East; The Al Jazeera Effect; Global Terrorism and New Media; Real-Time Diplomacy; Religion and Public Diplomacy;* and *The Future of Diplomacy.* His new book, *As Terrorism Evolves: Media, Religion, and Governance,* will be published in late 2017.He is editor of the Palgrave Macmillan Series in International Political Communication, co-editor of the Palgrave Macmillan Series in Global Public Diplomacy, and was a founding co-editor of the journal *Media, War, and Conflict*. He is also an attorney, and while teaching in Texas he worked on a part-time basis as a television and print journalist.