



JOUR 200w: The Power and Responsibility of the Press
4 Units

Spring 2021 — Tues. & Thurs. — 11 a.m. to 12:20 p.m.

Section: 21000R

Location: By Zoom

Instructor: Geoffrey Cowan

I. **Course Description**

During the past few years, the power and responsibility of the press has been as important — and as disputed — as at any time in American or world history. Wherever one stands on the American political spectrum, whether you think the press is the salvation of the nation or an irresponsible source of “fake news,” it is at the center of public discourse. What’s true in this country is equally true elsewhere in the world where the press is often under assault. This course will explore the role of the press today — in America and the world — against a backdrop of history, law, ethics, technology, economics, psychology, political science, and international affairs. Moreover, during the course we will ask whether journalism has had, does have, or can have — or indeed should have — an ethical core that sets it apart from other forms of communication and human endeavor.

It will be particularly interesting to explore these topics against the backdrops of COVID-19 - including the roll out of new vaccines - and of a new presidential administration at a time when it seems that many people are getting information from two very different news ecosystems. It will be interesting for us to discuss coverage of the inauguration of President-elect Joe Biden, which will take place during the first week of class, and of the first four months of his presidency. For the past few years, this class has explored the role of the press in the Era of Donald Trump. While Donald Trump will remain an important presence, this spring we will explore the role of the press in the Era of Joe Biden.

For this class, we urge you to be as candid as is comfortable for you and to let the instructor know if you ever feel that he – or the TAs, or other students, or our guests – have missed an important point or are in some way being disrespectful to you or others because of such issues as your background, race, religion, gender, sexual identity, ethnicity, economic status, or political viewpoint.

When we have guests, as we expect to do most weeks, we will want you to be prepared to ask the kinds of thoughtful and informed questions that would be expected of first-rate conversationalists, interviewers or reporters. A part of your grade will be assigned for your role

in preparing questions for and/or talking with our guests. We will also assign you to a small group of students who will tackle a subject that is central to the class. You will be asked to write an essay on the topic covered by your group, and each group will make a presentation that will count as part of the course grade.

From the birth of the republic to the present era, it has been taken as an article of faith that the news media have a special role in American society. The press is often called “the fourth estate” or “the fourth branch” of government. Journalism has the power and responsibility to hold the leaders of the three branches of government — the executive, the legislative, and the judicial — accountable. Indeed, that is a central reason for the First Amendment which specifically states that “Congress shall make no law...abridging the freedom of the press.”

As Mr. Justice Hugo Black stated in the famed Pentagon Papers case, which we will study this fall:

“In the First Amendment the Founding Fathers gave the free press the protection it must have to fulfill its essential role in our democracy. The press was to serve the governed, not the governors. The Government's power to censor the press was abolished so that the press would remain forever free to censure the Government. The press was protected so that it could bare the secrets of government and inform the people. Only a free and unrestrained press can effectively expose deception in government.”

Society relies on the news media to describe, explain, and monitor every institution of society — from government to business to science to medicine to sports to the arts to universities. Nations around the world count on reporters from the United States, from other countries, and from their own societies to celebrate great achievements and to expose transgressions such as human rights abuses and political or corporate corruption. As we will discuss at length, some great journalism comes in the form of news reports — including breaking news and investigative reporting — while other great journalism provides more context and opinion, or what one of our textbooks calls “wisdom journalism.” Today, some important journalism comes in various forms distributed by the Internet – such as podcasts or blogs, or on social media sites such as Twitter, Facebook or Instagram.

Journalists and journalism also have the capacity to do great harm. Ideally, news stories are accurate and fair. But reporters can get stories wrong, destroying lives, careers and enterprises, a failing that this course calls “false indictments.” News outlets can publish private facts with devastating impact. They can distort information in ways that serve to undermine democracy, destroy businesses, or interfere with good medical practices. Even with the best of intent, they can get facts wrong or fail to provide context. How can, do and should aggrieved parties,

including government leaders, then react – in the United States and around the world? Do they and should they have any legal rights in such situations?

Issues of press responsibility have been put in sharp relief in recent years by the growth of highly partisan publications, by social media--which can be a source of misinformation--and by the death of many traditional news outlets. The collapse of local newspapers in particular has led to what some people call “news deserts.”

According to studies by the American Press Institute, public trust in the press has declined sharply in recent years. This decline is partly the result of biased, inaccurate or unfair reports and perhaps partly the result of social media and of efforts by some political figures, international adversaries (particularly groups based in China, Russia and Iran) and a range of interest groups to delegitimize what is sometimes called mainstream media. Is it possible for the press to serve as a watchdog if the public does not have confidence in its work?

These topics, and the rise of new media outlets, social media, and real or automated sources that are distributing what is sometimes called ‘fake news,’ are of singular importance to people who hope to understand the press, and to students who plan to go into careers in government, law, public policy, public relations, business, international affairs, science and medicine, entertainment and the arts, and any aspect of the communication field, including journalism. They were put into sharp relief in the 2016 and 2020 presidential campaigns, during the Trump Administration and by national and international efforts to understand and deal with COVID-19. They will be studied and contested this spring with a new administration in Washington. They also continue to be equally important everywhere in the world, where the press has been under increasing pressure.

This course will explore the ways in which journalism has and continues to perform at the highest levels, in America and around the world; the ways in which it sometimes fails; the risks that journalists face; and the ways in which journalism can be protected and in which some of the worst excesses of the press might be remedied. We will examine these topics in the context of some common themes, including First Amendment freedoms, professional journalistic ethics, the evolution of the news business due to technological advances, and the business models and consumer practices of news media. As a point of comparison, we will also explore the role of truth in a range of other fields including science, law, business, narrative history, and in movies, theater and novels “based on” fact. We will also discuss the role of the press in maintaining public trust in the United States and around the world.

The “lectures” are designed to provide a forum for the presentation of information and for a conversation between the professor, guests and students on some of the most pressing issues of the day. They will build on our assigned readings and on weekly “blogs” by the

instructor that will be distributed to students by email and should be read carefully before class.

Since the class will be taught this term by Zoom, we plan to attempt to take advantages of some unique qualities of distance learning. The class will be divided into small groups of students. One of the TAs will be assigned to each group. The weekly blogs often will include some topics that we will want you to discuss in your groups. During class you will have a chance to discuss that topic in your small group and in the full class. We will also assign a topic to each group, asking each student to write an essay on that topic and asking the group to make a presentation to the whole class.

After several class sessions devoted to a general description and discussion of the news media, we will examine a series of case studies. For most weeks, we will cover a subject matter area, often using stories ripped from the headlines (to use a dated newspaper era phrase) to highlight a serious and sometimes contentious issue and to provoke a discussion of the performance of the press in that area. At the same time, each week we will seek to explore some of the legal and ethical issues that the press confronts –and/or creates.

The course will meet from **11 a.m.-12:20 p.m. every Tuesday and Thursday**. Our exploration of these issues will often be enriched by visitors who are great journalists, have experienced the impact of journalism on their field, or come from other fields that offer an important perspective on the role of journalism and journalists.

Please note: this syllabus and the order and content of classes may change during the term, particularly in response to public events or the availability of special guests. Based on our experience teaching the class during the past few years, it seems possible and even likely that our experience together this spring will be defined, in part, by unexpected local, national or world events such as human tragedies, natural disasters, international conflicts or defining moments in the political process.

Students should be forewarned that in view of the central theme of the class, we encourage engaged discussion and debate and we may, from time to time, deal with topics that are controversial and/or that could make some students (and perhaps even the TAs and the instructor) uncomfortable.

Additionally, though this is a lecture class, students are expected to participate when the instructor and/or guests pose questions, and particularly during the group discussions. Participation in class will factor into students' overall grades.

Research suggests that students learn more when they keep their cameras on, so we urge you to do so. For some of us, it may be useful to use a zoom virtual background. You can learn how to do so at this website: <https://support.zoom.us/hc/en-us/articles/210707503-Virtual-Background>

II. Overall Learning Objectives and Assessment

NOTE: This course fulfills USC's General Education requirement for "citizenship in a diverse world." The expectations for that requirement are included as an appendix to this syllabus.

After completing this course, students should be able to:

- Understand the ethical and legal framework that applies to great journalism and to think critically about how well those standards are maintained
- Identify social, political, economic, technological, legal and/or cultural forces, as well as systematic biases (racial, gender, religious) that may affect reporting and determine which stories are covered (and how) by the media in the U.S. and around the world — and critically analyze the causes and/or consequences of those forces
- Articulate a definition of globalization in the context of "mass media" in the internet age and offer a critical analysis of its impacts on human life in the U.S. and around the world
- Articulate a definition of citizenship and offer a critical analysis of how the media informs citizenship and democracy in both U.S. and global senses
- Offer informed contributions to debates about how to improve the quality of news media and journalism in the U.S. and around the world

III. Course Materials

Readings will include three interesting and important books on journalism theory and history. Much of the other reading will be essays, news stories, or court decisions that you can read via the hyperlinks in the syllabus and in the instructor's weekly blog. **Students should be sure to read the instructor's weekly blog before coming to class each week.** Blogs will be sent out every Sunday. The blog is designed to put the week's topic into context, to highlight some important readings, and to serve as an introduction to the lectures and class discussions. In a sense, the blog serves as an evolving text book for the course.

The assigned books are:

Kovach and Rosenstiel, *The Elements of Journalism: What Newspeople Should Know and the Public Should Expect*, Three Rivers Press, 3rd Edition, 2014

Stephens, Mitchell, *Beyond News: The Future of Journalism*. Columbia University Press, 2014.

Sullivan, Margaret, *Ghosting the News: Local Journalism and the Crisis of American Democracy*, Columbia Global Reports, 2020

Blackboard: You will be expected to sign into the class by using Blackboard. For a variety of reasons, you will need to do it through your USC account so that we can admit you to the classroom, assign you to groups, and take attendance.

In addition to the specific readings listed in this syllabus, the reading, viewing, and listening material for each week often will be distributed by email and/or posted to Blackboard (blackboard.usc.edu). As noted, these readings will include an essay or blog from your instructor which will often include links to articles about current events, and PDFs of certain academic articles. We expect you to keep abreast of whatever material we distribute in class or by email, or that we post on Blackboard.

In short, Blackboard represents an essential link to the classroom and for all of us between classes. Please be sure to read our pages on Blackboard at least twice a week, including every Sunday. Pay special attention to the “Announcements” section of Blackboard as we use it to publish important class updates.

Over the course of the semester, **we expect students to stay current with important news stories** and outlets by following **at least some** of the following:

- 1) a major newspaper such as *The New York Times*, the *Los Angeles Times*, *The Washington Post* or *The Wall Street Journal*;
- 2) a major magazine such as *Time*, *Fortune*, *The New Yorker*, or *Vanity Fair*, *Mother Jones* or the *National Review*;
- 3) a leading television network newscast and/or a radio outlet such as National Public Radio (NPR) or the Voice of America (VOA);
- 4) a good podcast such as *The New York Times*’ “The Daily;”

5) one of the Cable News Channels, or John Oliver; a digital media outlet such as *Axios*, *The Atlantic*, *Vice*, *BuzzFeed*, *Politico*, *Breitbart*, *Newsmax*, or the *Huffington Post*.

As noted below some of the newspapers will be available to our students for free in their digital format.

Please be sure to follow at least one international news source such as *The Guardian*, the *Financial Times*, *The Economist*, *China Daily*, *The Times of India*, *The Jerusalem Post*, the BBC, or Al Jazeera. If you are fluent in a language other than English, please consider reading or listening to a news source in that language.

Two good examples of “wisdom journalism” that are always informative are: *The Washington Post*’s morning column and analysis called “Daily 202,” and the free morning email for *Axios* by Mike Allen which you can [*Sign up for here*](#).

Students will also be receiving free subscriptions to *The New York Times*, *The Wall Street Journal*, and the *Los Angeles Times* during the class. We will provide more information about how to redeem these subscriptions once the semester starts.

IV. Description of Assignments

The assignments for JOUR 200w consist of an autobiographical essay, a short biographical description of another student, a paper, a group project that will also include a paper, a midterm exam, and a final exam. There will also be extra credit opportunities; we urge students to take advantage of them. In past semesters, students earned an average grade of at least B+ if they attended the classes, participated in class discussions, handed in papers on time, completed their other assignments on time, attended review sessions before the exams, and took advantage of extra credit.

For each assignment we will provide specific rubrics which detail exact point distributions, and examples of strong work from previous semesters. Each assignment is described in more detail below. Please be sure to read all of the expectations set forth in the syllabus for papers, exams and your group project, including rules regarding academic integrity. If you have questions about what is expected, please be sure to see your TA.

TAs will provide written feedback on all assignments, but the best way to improve the quality of your writing and responses is to visit your TA during office hours before and after assignments are due. They can offer guidance as you work on assignments, prepare for papers and exams, and develop your group project and they can provide extended explanations of how to improve in the

future if you are unsatisfied with a grade. Over the past four years of teaching this class, we have found that the best way to support student success on assignments is through one on one coaching. We urge you to take full advantage of the TA's knowledge and expertise, and remember that they are a resource for you. In addition, they can become your friends and advocates as you navigate life at USC. Thanks to Zoom, you can have this experience by using new technology.

Here is a list of your assignments:

A) Autobiography and short biography of another student: Students will write an **autobiographical essay due by 11 a.m. on Thursday, January 28**. The autobiographical essay **along with a photograph** must be sent to the instructor and to your TA by email, and **submitted to Blackboard through the Assignments portal**. It must be submitted as a **Word document**. Students will also write a short biography of another student that will be due at the same time.

Students will also write **two papers** of about 1,000 – 1,500 words (approximately 4-7 double-spaced pages). The papers, which are due by the beginning of class on **February 18** and **April 6**, must be **submitted on Blackboard**.

B) Paper #1: For **Paper #1** you will write an original research essay on someone who has had a major impact on the field of journalism, for better or worse. The person can be a journalist, editor, publisher, etc. They can be someone from the past or present, someone from the United States or someone from another country. In this essay you will explore this person's lasting impact on journalism.

We will expect you to deal with questions such as how their work has influenced or transformed the field and what makes their work unique and noteworthy. Your essay should make a clear argument (in the form of a strong thesis) about the person's legacy in the field and what makes them exceptional. **Your essay should be more than a biography; we want you to explain and discuss your subject's significance.**

In your paper, turn your critical eye to this person in the context of their industry in order to identify what qualities or characteristics are worthy of your attention. Be sure to provide ample evidence and examples to back up your choice. This includes using a variety of sources and going far beyond Biography.com.

You must submit the name of the person you propose to study — and your reasons for that selection — to your TA via the Google form posted to Blackboard by the beginning of class on **February 2** for approval. A more detailed rubric will be distributed via Blackboard.

C) Small Group presentations and paper #2: Information about the small group topics and paper #2 will be provided during the term.

D) Exams: There will be a midterm **exam** to be taken in class on **March 25** and a **final exam** to be taken at the end of the semester on **May 11**.

E) Class Participation:

Class participation constitutes 10% of your final grade.

Participation credit will be given for active engagement in the class, including comments in general class discussions and written comments on the contents of each class, which is explained in more detail below. **Each student must also visit Professor Cowan at least once in a “Coffee with Cowan” session. Students should also visit their TA’s office hours at least once during the semester. All office hours and Coffees with Cowan will take place via Zoom.** If you cannot meet your TA during their regular office hours, you may contact them to set up an appointment that works for your schedule.

You will be evaluated on your participation in all parts of the class. At the end of each week, **by 5 pm Pacific Time Friday**, please submit a weekly summary to Blackboard describing and discussing the materials for that week including the readings, lectures, group discussions, and guest visits (for the weeks that we have guests). You can make this an informal document and have some fun with it so long as you touch on these different areas and express how they have expanded your thinking, challenged you, inspired new connections, and/or informed your understanding of the media, citizenship, technology, economics, ethics, the law, etc. Keep the course objectives in mind as you craft your responses. Please feel free to take a critical view of anything in the course materials, as long as you do so in good faith and with solid reasoning.

To take advantage of the wonderful class guests, and to help you learn how to engage in serious conversations with professional and industry leaders, you will be expected to prepare questions in advance for our guests and to ask a question or engage in a discussion with at least one of our guest speakers. Your questions and/or comments will be graded on the quality of your research about the guest and how well they are tailored to match the themes of the class including the theme for the week as set forth in the lectures and the syllabus.

In addition to sending the emails, students are expected to participate in class by asking and responding to questions and actively engaging in the discussions of the groups that we will create at the beginning of the semester.

When you meet in your groups, we will take note of students who are exceptionally engaged in class, and may increase their grades. We also take note of students who do not participate in class or group discussions, and we may subtract class participation points for students who have not been engaged in class discussions. You will be with your assigned group for the entirety of the semester, and we hope that it will serve as a tool to make a large lecture feel more like a small discussion. We want you all to get to know your peers and even make some new friends. **Your participation in group discussions is not only part of your grade in the class, but will also greatly enhance your and your peers' learning.**

If for any reason you need to miss part or all of the class, please notify your TA and provide appropriate documentation **in advance** (with the exception of an emergency, in which case documentation can be provided afterward). 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 using the USC Illness Absence Excuse [form](#). More long-term absences due to serious illnesses will require specific medical documentation. We urge all students to have their monitors on during class – and especially during group discussions – because we think it enhances that educational experience. But we also know that internet connections can be unstable and unreliable, and we will be understanding when students are not visible during all or part of the classes.

There will also be several opportunities for extra credit available to all students. Questions submitted for guest speakers will be worth up to 2 points, depending on their quality, and longer extra credit assignments will be worth up to 3 points. Students can take advantage of extra credit assignments for a possible total of up to 30 extra credit points. No more than 30 extra credit points will be granted to any student. Extra credit participation during the term can enable a grade to be improved by a total of one half of one grade: for example, a B can become a B+ or a B+ can become an A-. We urge students to take advantage of at least some of these opportunities. As with any other assignment, each extra credit opportunity will be graded on the quality of the work.

V. **Coffee with Cowan (Bring your own Coffee or drink of choice)**

Student-faculty interaction is an important part of university life, but the fact that we are all off campus and in a large lecture class will make such interactions very difficult. Therefore, Professor Cowan will offer informal discussion sessions by Zoom during the semester for students to gather and discuss the day's news, class themes, life at USC, and journalistic issues. These discussion sections will be announced in advance so that students have the opportunity to plan accordingly.

VI. Grading

Breakdown of Assignments

Assignment	Points	% of Grade
Paper #1	90	15%
Group Project: Presentation and Paper #2	180	30%
Autobiography and Biography	30	5%
Exams: Midterm	120	20%
Final	120	20%
Class Participation including weekly summaries	60	10%
TOTAL	600	100%

Grading Scale

95% to 100%: A	80% to 83%: B-	67% to 69%: D+
90% to 94%: A-	77% to 79%: C+	64% to 66%: D
87% to 89%: B+	74% to 76%: C	60% to 63%: D-
84% to 86%: B	70% to 73%: C-	0% to 59%: F

Grading Standards

All assignments will be graded based on a high standard of academic excellence. Please keep this in mind when reacting to grades. We maintain high standards in this class to help you learn and grow as a student and to meet the expectations of one of the nation's outstanding universities. If you have questions about ways to develop your skills or about a grade, please visit your TA and use it as an opportunity to seek help, to gain a better understanding of our expectations, and to improve the quality of your work. For each assignment, the guidelines listed below will apply.

In addition to providing a quality response to each element of each question, all submissions should be consistent with the expectations for academic participation in a challenging class at a great university. Failure to adhere to these standards will result in a lower grade. For any questions, please feel free to talk with your TA.

The expectations for the written assignments include:

- **Formatting:** All papers should use Times New Roman 12 point font and 1-inch margins.
- **Use of a style manual:** All papers in the course should be submitted using APA style. You should also consult the APA style manual (which is available online) if you have additional questions. We recommend the use of <http://citefast.com> for ease of managing references in text and for works cited. **While you do not need to submit an abstract, you must provide in-text parenthetical citations and include a bibliography/works cited.**
- **Structure:** Quality papers should demonstrate a clear writing plan and basic structure. A clear thesis should be evident early on the first page to preview the fundamental elements of the essay. This section should also preview the organizational structure of the project. Each section should reflect an organizing principle that utilizes previews, summaries, and transitions. Effective essays also should include a quality conclusion that draws together the basic details. Simply finishing your last point doesn't accomplish this task.
- **Focus on specific problems & arguments:** Your essays are all designed to analyze specific journalistic contexts, so it is important that you closely detail the relevant articles and texts, including properly citing them, and provide specific analysis. You are encouraged to use your own perspectives to accent these essays, but ultimately they need to provide analysis of the specific question as their primary task and to understand alternative points of view.
- **Writing Style:** Inevitably we will judge your papers, event summaries, and exams by the quality of your writing. Even in our increasingly visual culture, the ability to make a professional argument in writing is an essential skill, especially in a course such as this.
- **Use of qualified sources:** In cases where you need or want to make an authoritative claim, you should utilize a well-qualified source. For example, you can rely on experts in the field,

scholarly journals, top-level news accounts and essays, court decisions, and other professional sources, including our texts. Feel free to start searches by using Google but use Google as a starting point for references. Particularly in an era of “fake news” — and in a course that is examining that topic - don’t use sources such as Wikipedia as stand-alone references without doing further research. Quality Wikipedia articles provide citations, which you can investigate and vet for trustworthiness. When essay topics refer to specific concepts covered in the readings, it is important that these essays display a competent grasp of the material.

- **Evidence matters:** Evidence should be carefully analyzed before usage. Materials offered to support your claims should be timely, relevant, and well scrutinized. Materials should reflect your awareness of the ideological foundations and potential bias of that source. Both the quality and quantity of sources will be taken into account.
- **Bibliography & Citations:** All materials either directly quoted or references in your text should be included in your bibliography. Your bibliography citations should be complete (again, follow APA Style Manual), and the reader should be able to readily access the content that you have cited.

In general, grading will assess the analysis, structure, evidence, style, and grammar of your paper.

Because of COVID-19, USC has decided that students will also be able to choose a Pass/No Pass grading option in Spring through April 30. The deadline to withdraw from a course in Spring is also April 30.

Please refer to the [Undergraduate Student Pass/No Pass FAQs](#) for more details. Please note that USC undergraduates may take a maximum of 24 units as Pass/No Pass. It is important that students work with their academic advisors to plan their grading decisions appropriately.

VII. **Additional Policies, Procedures and Information**

Assignment Submission Policy

With the exception of the autobiographical essay, which must be sent as a **Word Document to Professor Cowan and your TA by email in addition to being submitted via Blackboard**, all papers and reports on events should be submitted online via Blackboard. Both assignment instructions and submission links are set forth in the "Assignments" folder on Blackboard. All assignments must be uploaded as Word Documents, **not PDFs or Google Docs because otherwise TA’s cannot make comments on the document. No paper or emailed versions of**

these assignments will be accepted. Papers will be submitted via TurnItIn to check for plagiarism and unauthorized collaboration. Once an assignment is graded, TA comments will be accessible via Blackboard.

Late Work Policy

Students must complete all assignments in order to earn a grade in the course. Unless specifically excused by the instructor or TA in writing, any material turned in late **will be reduced one letter grade per calendar day late.**

VIII. Class Schedule

Note: Updates to the syllabus will be announced in class and/or distributed via email and/or Blackboard. For each class you will be expected to study the readings. In addition, you will be expected to read the instructor's weekly blog before coming to class on Tuesday. The blog will be distributed electronically and/or on Blackboard by Sunday night. It will often include links to articles or stories that you should be prepared to discuss.

Since we will often discuss breaking news events and/or take advantage of the sudden availability of interesting guests, we will make some scheduling changes during the term. We will announce the visits of our (often high-profile) guests in advance. To get the most from those visitors, please try to learn about them before they come to speak. In many cases, we will ask you to send proposed questions to your TA. A portion of your grade will be based on the questions that you send and the exchange that you have with our guests during their visit.

Week One (Tuesday, 1/19, and Thursday, 1/21): What is journalism – and why does it matter?

Readings:

- **Professor Cowan's Blog #1**
- *The Class Syllabus (Please do read it carefully)*
- *"The Elements of Journalism," Chapters 1-3*
- *["What can Journalism Actually Do for American Democracy"](#) (Herbert Gans)*
- *["The Iron Core"](#) (Alex Jones)*
- *["Why the "golden age" of journalism was the exception, not the rule"](#) (NiemanLab)*
- *["News and Democracy Society: Past, Present, and Future"](#) (Michael Schudson)*

Week Two (Tuesday, 1/26, and Thursday, 1/28): The history of journalism – the role it plays in a democracy – and the special place of local news

Assignments Due Thursday, 1/28. Autobiographical & Peer Biographical Essay due by 11

AM

Readings:

- **Professor Cowan's Blog #2**
- "Beyond News," Chapters 1-3
- "Ghosting the News," Chapters 1-2
- "The Adversaries," Chapters 1-3 on Blackboard
- "The Fourth Estate as the Fourth Branch" (Cowan) on Blackboard
- "[LOSING THE NEWS: The Decimation of Local Journalism and the Search for Solutions](#)"

Submit a proposed important journalist for Paper #1 to your TA by 2/2 at 11 AM

Week Three (Tuesday, 2/2 and Thursday, 2/4) Investigative Journalism: How it works, where it succeeds and fails, and the role it plays in a democracy – with a look at the special role of whistleblowers, anonymous sources, "conspiracy theories" – and a brief look at investigative history

Readings:

- **Professor Cowan's Blog #3**
- "Elements of Journalism," Chapter 6
- "[A guide to the 6 biggest revelations from the Panama Papers \(so far\)](#)"
- "[Fake News Spreads Faster Than True News on Twitter—Thanks to People, Not Bots](#)" (Science)
- "[How images — sometimes manipulated and altered — are shaping the seething world of our politics](#)" (LA Times)
- [How Big Businesses got government loans meant for small businesses \(Pro Publica\)](#)
- [The Out Crowd \(This American Life\)](#)
- [Brian Rosenthal on the New York City Taxi Industry \(read at least one of the articles\)](#)
- [Unheard: Sexual Assault in Alaska \(Anchorage Daily News/Pro Publica\)](#)
- "[Robert Caro, The Art of Biography No. 5](#)" (Paris Review)

Week Four (Tuesday, 2/9 and Thursday, 2/11): What is the role of opinion, "wisdom journalism," columnists and the editorial page?

Readings:

- **Professor Cowan's Blog #4**

- “Beyond News,” Chapter 4-6
- “Elements of Journalism,” Chapter 5
- Distinguishing between fact and opinion in the news (Pew)
- Tom Cotton: Send in the Troops (NY Times)
- Michelle Goldberg: Tom Cotton's Fascist Op Ed (NY Times)
- WSJ Journalists Ask Publisher for Clearer Distinction Between News and Opinion Content
- Coddling of the American Mind

Assignment Due 2/18: Paper No. 1 at 11 AM — Report on a figure who has had a major impact on the field of journalism

Week Five (Tuesday, 2/16 and Thursday, 2/18): How the technology and economics of journalism have evolved – and are continuing to evolve - in America and around the world – and the impact of social media on journalism

Readings

- ***Professor Cowan’s Blog #5***
- “Ghosting the News,” Chapters 3-5 and Conclusion
- “Leading the Way to Better News: The Role of Leadership in a World Where Most of the ‘Powers That Be’ Became ‘The Powers That Were’” (Shorenstein Center)
- “Washington Post, Breaking News, Is Also Breaking New Ground” (The New York Times)
- “Journalism That Stands Apart: The Report of the 2020 Group” (The New York Times)
- “Public service media today has its most important role to play since World War II” (NiemanLab)
- “Social Media Has Become a Global Battlefield,” (The Atlantic)

Recommended Reading

- The McClatchy Auction ended with a whimper (NiemanLab)
- "Information Overload Helps Fake News Spread, and Social Media Knows It" (Scientific American)
- "Americans Who Mainly Get Their News on Social Media Are Less Engaged, Less Knowledgeable" (Pew)
- Social Media News Use (Pew)

Week Six (Tuesday, 2/23, and Thursday, 2/25): The law and ethics of journalism – and the threats to journalists and journalism in America and the World

Readings:

- **Professor Cowan's Blog #6**
- "Beyond the News," Chapter 5
- "Elements of Journalism," Chapter 4
- ["The Pentagon Papers Case – Amid Leaks, Recalling an Epic Battle Over Press Freedom in Nixon Era" \(The New York Times\)](#)
- ["The Shield Bearer" \(CJR\)](#)
- ["If Donald Trump Targets Journalists, Thank Obama" \(The New York Times\)](#)
- ["The Secret Sharer: Is Thomas Drake an enemy of the state?" \(The New Yorker\)](#)
- ["Reporter's Case Poses Dilemma for Justice Dept." \(The New York Times\)](#)
- [Los Angeles Times Ethics Guidelines](#)
- [How does a FOIA work?](#)
- [World Press Freedom Index \(Reporters without Borders\)](#)
- [New York Times vs. Sullivan \(YouTube\)](#)
- [The Most Expensive Comment in History? \(The Atlantic\)](#)
- [Police Unions threaten Freedom of Information \(Reporters Committee for Freedom of the Press\)](#)
- [Reporters Without Borders](#)

Week Seven (Tuesday, 3/2 and Thursday, 3/4): The role of long-form journalism and non-fiction books

Readings:

- **Professor Cowan's Blog #7**
- *Beyond News, Chapter 7*
- Choose to read 3-4 of the following examples of long-form journalism:
 - [A Letter from a Region in my Mind \(The New Yorker\)](#)
 - [Bad Blood \(NPR\)](#)
 - [I Spent 5 years with some of Trumps biggest fans \(Mother Jones\)](#)
 - [The Power Broker \(Robert Caro\)](#)
 - [What really happened in the Manson Murders \(LA Times\)](#)
 - [Our Towns \(The Atlantic\)](#)

Recommended Readings:

- ["The future of longform" \(Columbia Journalism Review\) and Atlantic](#)
- ["Against Long-Form Journalism" \(The Atlantic\)](#)

Week Eight (Tuesday, 3/9, and Thursday, 3/11): Case Study 1: How the media covers politics and government; the history, sources and impact of “fake news” and conspiracy theories; the growth of social media; and the role of news sources who favor one side in political debates

Readings:

- **Professor Cowan’s Blog #8**
- [“How much influence does the media really have over elections? Digging into the data”](#) (NiemanLab)
- [“Don’t blame the election on fake news. Blame it on the media.”](#) (CJR)
- [“Everything you need to know about the Fairness Doctrine in one post”](#) (Washington Post)
- [“What Reporters Really Think of 2016”](#) (POLITICO Magazine)
- [“Maybe The Right-Wing Media Isn’t Crazy, After All”](#) (Vanity Fair)
- [“The Fake News Fallacy,”](#) (New Yorker)
- [“New report on Russian disinformation, prepared for the Senate, shows the operation’s scale and sweep,”](#) (Washington Post)
- [“Everything you need to know about the Fairness Doctrine in one post”](#) (Washington Post)
- [The Fox News Effect](#) (Vox)
- “The Paranoid Style of American Politics” (Hofstadter) on Blackboard

Week Nine (Tuesday, 3/16 and 3/18): Case Study 2: How well does the press cover diverse communities?

Readings:

- **Professor Cowan’s Blog #9**
- [“The moral argument for diversity in newsrooms is also a business argument — and you need both”](#) (NiemanLab)
- [“Six Times Journalists on the Paper’s History of Covering AIDS and Gay Issues”](#) (The New York Times Style Magazine)
- [“Black Lives Matter: The Movement, the Organization and how Journalists get it Wrong”](#) (Columbia Journalism Review)
- [“On Being a \(Latina\) Journalist”](#) (The Atlantic)
- [“Covering #MeToo”](#) (NPR)
- [“Why did media miss the Trump wave?”](#) (Poynter)

Week Ten – Tuesday, March 23 – Wellness Day

MIDTERM EXAM on Thursday, 3/25

Week Eleven (Tuesday, 3/30 and Thursday, 4/1) Case Study 3: How well does the press cover national security and war and issues of international importance – and how does the press of different countries cover the same issue in America and the world?

Readings:

- **Professor Cowan's Blog #11**
- ["WHY THE VOICE OF AMERICA REMAINS A VITAL FORCE IN THE WORLD"](#) (Cowan)
- [Iran and Presidential Powers, Explained \(New York Times\)](#)
- [At War with the Truth \(Washington Post\)](#)
- ["Print Media Coverage of Paris Climate Deal"](#) (Brookings Institution)
- ["Attacks on the Press Track a Democratic Backslide"](#) (Foreign Policy)
- ["What Foreign Journalists See in the US Election"](#) (The New Yorker)
- [How we would cover Ferguson if it happened in another country \(Vox\)](#)
- ["One dangerous year"](#) (CJR)
- ["What America looks like in the media abroad"](#) (CJR)

Assignment Due: Paper #2 –4/6 at 11 am

Week Twelve (Tuesday, 4/6 and Thursday, 4/8): Case Study 4: How accurate is reporting about science and scientific advances – and COVID-19

Readings:

- **Professor Cowan's Blog #12**
- ["The problem with facts"](#) (The Financial Times)
- [Understanding Anti-Vaxxers \(Texas Public Radio\)](#)
- ["How science goes wrong: Scientific research has changed the world. Now it needs to change itself"](#) (The Economist) (Paywall articles can be accessed through USC Libraries)
- ["Why bad science persists: Incentive malus"](#) (The Economist) (Paywall articles can be accessed through USC Libraries)
- ["Making Sense of Science Reporting"](#) (The Washington Post)
- ["Journalistic deficit disorder: What newspapers don't say matters as much as what they do"](#) (The Economist) (Paywall articles can be accessed through USC Libraries)
- [2 Degrees Centigrade: Beyond the Limit \(Washington Post\)](#)

Week Thirteen (Tuesday, 4/13, and Thursday, 4/15): Case study 5: Reporting on Business

Readings:

- **Professor Cowan's Blog #13**
- ["The Best Business Journalism of 2013"](#) (The New Yorker)
- ["Covering the Great Recession"](#) (Pew Research Center)
- ["Wells Fargo's pressure-cooker sales culture comes at a cost"](#) (Los Angeles Times)
- ["How VW tried to cover up the emissions scandal"](#) (BBC)

Week Fourteen (Tuesday, 4/20): Case Study 6: How important (or unimportant) is Truth in other contexts – including in politics, and works of history, docudramas and fiction based on fact?

Readings:

- **Professor Cowan's Blog #14**
- "The Legal and Ethical Limitations of Factual Misrepresentation" (Cowan) on Blackboard
- "Truth in the Docudrama – From Shakespeare to Peter Morgan" (Cowan) on Blackboard
- ["F for Fake \(clip\)."](#) (Orson Wells)
- ["Alternative history: the dangerous byproduct of fake facts"](#) (The Guardian)
- ["How true should historical fiction be?"](#) (The Guardian)

Wellness Day – Thursday, 4/22

Week Fifteen (Tuesday, 4/27 and Thursday, 4/29): Case Study 7: Why journalism's coverage of Entertainment, Books, The Arts, Music, Food and Fashion matters

Readings:

- **Professor Cowan's Blog #15**
- "The Elements of Journalism", Chapter 7
- ["Football Has Always Been a Battleground in the Culture War"](#) (The Atlantic)
- ["Art is Vital"](#) (The Atlantic)
- Michael Blanding, ["Journalism and Art: Complementary and Collaborative Storytelling"](#) (Nieman Storyboard)
- ["The Man to Blame for Our Culture of Fame"](#) (The New York Times)
- ["Is Gossip Good for You?"](#) (The New York Times)
- ["The Players' Revolt Against Racism, Inequality, and Police Terror"](#) (The New Yorker)
- [What to do with Confederate statues?](#) (The New Yorker)
- ["Why fashion matters — no matter who you are"](#) (Financial Times)

Final Exam –Tuesday, May 11, at 11 a.m.-1 p.m.

IX. Statement on Academic Conduct and Support Systems

a. Academic Conduct

Plagiarism

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 Part B, Section 11, “Behavior Violating University Standards” policy.usc.edu/scampus-part-b. Other forms of academic dishonesty are equally unacceptable. See additional information in *SCampus* and university policies on scientific misconduct, policy.usc.edu/scientific-misconduct.

USC School of Journalism Policy on Academic Integrity

The following is the USC Annenberg School of Journalism’s policy on academic integrity and repeated in the syllabus for every course in the school:

“Since its founding, the USC School of Journalism has maintained a commitment to the highest standards of ethical conduct and academic excellence. Any student found plagiarizing, fabricating, cheating on examinations, and/or purchasing papers or other assignments faces sanctions ranging from an ‘F’ on the assignment to dismissal from the School of Journalism. All academic integrity violations will be reported to the office of Student Judicial Affairs & Community Standards (SJACS), as per university policy, as well as journalism school administrators.”

In addition, it is assumed that the work you submit for this course is work you have produced entirely by yourself, and has not been previously produced by you for submission in another course or Learning Lab, without approval of the instructor.

b. Support Systems

Counseling and Mental Health - (213) 740-9355 – 24/7 on call

studenthealth.usc.edu/counseling

Free and confidential mental health treatment for students, including short-term psychotherapy, group counseling, stress fitness workshops, and crisis intervention.

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline - 1 (800) 273-8255 – 24/7 on call

suicidepreventionlifeline.org

Free and confidential emotional support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

*Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention and Services (RSVP) - (213) 740-9355(WELL),
press "0" after hours – 24/7 on call*

studenthealth.usc.edu/sexual-assault

Free and confidential therapy services, workshops, and training for situations related to gender-based harm.

Office of Equity and Diversity (OED)- (213) 740-5086 | Title IX – (213) 821-8298

equity.usc.edu, titleix.usc.edu

Information about how to get help or help someone affected by harassment or discrimination, rights of protected classes, reporting options, and additional resources for students, faculty, staff, visitors, and applicants. The university prohibits discrimination or harassment based on the following *protected characteristics*: race, color, national origin, ancestry, religion, sex, gender, gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation, age, physical disability, medical condition, mental disability, marital status, pregnancy, veteran status, genetic information, and any other characteristic which may be specified in applicable laws and governmental regulations. The university also prohibits sexual assault, non-consensual sexual contact, sexual misconduct, intimate partner violence, stalking, malicious dissuasion, retaliation, and violation of interim measures.

Reporting Incidents of Bias or Harassment - (213) 740-5086 or (213) 821-8298

usc-advocate.symplcity.com/care_report

Avenue to report incidents of bias, hate crimes, and microaggressions to the Office of Equity and Diversity | Title IX for appropriate investigation, supportive measures, and response.

The Office of Disability Services and Programs - (213) 740-0776

dsp.usc.edu

Support and accommodations for students with disabilities. Services include assistance in providing readers/notetakers/interpreters, special accommodations for test taking needs, assistance with architectural barriers, assistive technology, and support for individual needs.

USC Support and Advocacy - (213) 821-4710

uscsa.usc.edu

Assists students and families in resolving complex personal, financial, and academic issues adversely affecting their success as a student.

Diversity at USC - (213) 740-2101

diversity.usc.edu

Information on events, programs and training, the Provost's Diversity and Inclusion Council, Diversity Liaisons for each academic school, chronology, participation, and various resources for students.

USC Emergency - UPC: (213) 740-4321, HSC: (323) 442-1000 – 24/7 on call

dps.usc.edu, emergency.usc.edu

Emergency assistance and avenue to report a crime. Latest updates regarding safety, including ways in which instruction will be continued if an officially declared emergency makes travel to campus infeasible.

USC Department of Public Safety - UPC: (213) 740-6000, HSC: (323) 442-120 – 24/7 on call

dps.usc.edu

Non-emergency assistance or information.

Annenberg Student Success Fund

<https://annenberg.usc.edu/current-students/resources/additional-funding-resources>

The Annenberg Student Success Fund is a donor-funded financial aid account available to USC Annenberg undergraduate and graduate students for non-tuition expenses related to extra- and co-curricular programs and opportunities.

Breaking Bread Program [undergraduate students only]

<https://undergrad.usc.edu/faculty/bread/>

The Breaking Bread Program is designed to provide individual undergraduate students with an opportunity to meet and have scholarly discussions with faculty members outside of the normal classroom setting. Through this program, students and faculty enjoy good company and great conversation by literally “breaking bread” over a meal together and USC will pick up the tab! Your meal event can take place anywhere outside of the normal classroom setting. Your venue can be a restaurant or eatery on or off-campus.

X. **About Your Instructor**

An award-winning writer, television producer, teacher, and the former dean of the USC Annenberg School (1996-2007), Professor Geoffrey Cowan holds the Annenberg Family Chair in Communication Leadership at USC where he is one of about 25 members of the faculty with the rank of University Professor. In addition, he is the Director of the USC Annenberg Center on Communication Leadership & Policy.

During the administration of President Bill Clinton, Professor Cowan headed the Voice of America which broadcasts in more than 45 languages to a worldwide audience of more than 200 million people. From 2010 to 2016, after stepping down as dean of the Annenberg School, he served as the President of the Annenberg Foundation Trust at Sunnylands, where he hosted three presidential summits, including the historic meeting in 2013 between President Barack Obama and Chinese President Xi Jinping of China. Professor Cowan is the author of several books, including "Let the People Rule: Theodore Roosevelt and the Birth of the Presidential Primary," "See No Evil: The Backstage Battle Over Sex and Violence on Television" and the best-selling

“The People v. Clarence Darrow: The Bribery Trial of America's Greatest Lawyer.” His award-winning play, “Top Secret: The Battle for the Pentagon Papers,” has been performed around the world including two tours of China.

A graduate of Harvard College and Yale Law School, Cowan is married to Aileen Adams, former deputy mayor of Los Angeles. They have two children, Gabriel Cowan, a filmmaker based in Los Angeles, and Mandy Adams Wolf, a teacher at The Center for Early Education, and four grandchildren.

Appendix

GE-G. Citizenship in a Diverse World

Courses in this category enhance understanding of citizenship and moral agency within the context of today's increasingly global society, exploring differences and similarities across diverse communities and cultures. Courses can cover a diverse range of issues, such as political, legal, ethical or cultural aspects of U.S. society in a global context, or the ways in which other societies and cultures construct what it means to be a citizen and a moral agent. Courses in this category can draw upon various disciplinary perspectives or methods, such as political, social or economic analyses, moral philosophy and social justice, cultural studies, and critical theory. However, all courses must confront questions of social responsibility and citizenship in the context of differing political, social, legal or economic institutions during the present global era.

All courses in this category must confront questions of social responsibility and citizenship in the context of differing political, social, legal, or economic institutions during the present global era.

Learning Objectives

Upon completion of the Citizenship in a Diverse World course students should be able to:

- Identify social, political, economic, and/or cultural forces that bear on human experience in the U.S. and around the world.
- Identify and critically analyze the causes and/or consequences of the forces listed above.
- Articulate a definition of globalization/globalism and offer a critical analysis of its impacts on human life in the U.S. and around the world.
- Articulate a definition of citizenship and offer a critical analysis of its accessibility and importance in both U.S. and Global senses.

- Offer informed contributions to debates about how to improve the quality of life in the U.S. and around the world.