

C201 Hot Topics in Journalism and Mass Communication
Class Number: 11652

Instructors' Information

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Jacob Groshek
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Associate Instructor Information

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Course Information

Semester: 2007
Time: Tues & Thurs, 6:00 to 8:00p.m.
Room: Woodburn Hall, 100

C201 Hot Topics In Journalism And Mass Communication

Do the media occupy a “hot” space in audiences’ everyday lives? How do we come to know the “who, what, where, when, and why” of popular celebrities and controversies in politics, economics, and entertainment? Consider the list below:

- **Hot Personalities:** George W. Bush, Jon Stewart, Jessica Simpson, Kobe Bryant, Paris Hilton, Katie Couric, Oprah Winfrey, Osama Bin Laden, and Condoleeza Rice – these are political, sports, entertainment, and journalism personalities whose names have come up in conversations with friends and family members.
- **Hot Places:** New York, New Orleans, Fallujah, Abu Ghraib, West Bank, Beirut, and Paris – these are the distant places many of us have traveled to in our imaginations over the past few years even though we may be residing in one geographic location.
- **Hot Products:** Cosmetic surgeries, ipods, youtube, and online movie rentals – whether we like it or not, corporations offering these products and services have tried to convince us that we need their products over those of competitors.
- **Hot Corporations:** Enron, Arthur Andersen, Haliburton, Walmart, and Microsoft – these are some multinational companies that have recently found themselves in trouble for ethical breaches.
- **Hot Emotions:** Happiness, sadness, fear, anger, horror, empathy, and sympathy – from events such as people dying after a hurricane, tsunami, or terrorist attacks to March Madness and young people winning American Idol have provoked strong emotions among strangers scattered in distant locations.

Without the media, how familiar would you be with many of the items on the list above? The colorful images and words of newspapers, television news, online journalism, news and lifestyle magazines, and films have created a shared media culture of personalities, places, products, currencies, and emotional connections with strangers for millions of audiences across the world. Most middle-class citizens of industrialized and developing nations encounter the media in airports, cafes, classrooms, living rooms, gyms, and hospitals. In the United States, it has become increasingly difficult to avoid or escape media. In this course, we will go behind the curtains of online information, newspaper pages, and television screens to gain a better understanding of how media shape the reality that we often take for granted.

Course Goals

Our main goals in teaching this course are:

- To familiarize you with recent trends in the media industry including media ownership, technological innovation, and audience consumption.
- To enhance your understanding of the media's historical and contemporary influences on society, politics, business, and consumerism.
- To provide a working knowledge of the different aspects of the media industry including print and television journalism, public relations, and advertising.
- To introduce you to ethical debates that focus on the relations among and within news corporations, celebrity culture, public relations, entertainment, and news.
- To provide background knowledge of the media that will help you become a more critical viewer and reader of media content.

Course Reading Materials

The textbook for this course is:

Kovach, B., & Rosenstiel, T. (2001). *The Elements of Journalism*. New York, NY: Three Rivers Press.

This book is available for purchase at the bookstore in the IMU. Specific readings may be posted for certain weeks to Oncourse.

Examinations and Grading

Your course grade is based on the following:

- Five weekly quizzes (20% of your grade; 4% each quiz)
- A midterm exam (40% of your grade)
- A final exam (40% of your grade)

QUIZZES: To help you better understand the material presented in class and from the readings, you will complete weekly quizzes and homework assignments that will collectively count as 20% of your grade. We will discuss these in detail in class.

EXAMS: The exams will consist of multiple-choice questions drawn from class speakers and assigned readings. We will hold exam reviews in class before each exam.

Course Policies

To ensure that the administration of the course is fair to everyone, please note the following course policies:

Attendance: We do not have an attendance policy; however, attending class regularly will help you do well on the exams. Also, guest speakers will not repeat their performances, so you will have limited, if any, opportunity to catch up.

Oncourse: It is essential that you check Oncourse, the online site for classes, on a regular basis. We will post syllabi, announcements, reviews, and quizzes, along with other course material on Oncourse at: <http://oncourse.iu.edu>. E-mail messages announcing changes and modifications to the syllabus will be sent to you via Oncourse mail only.

Professional Behavior in the Classroom: **Please turn off your cell phones before you enter class.** Being on time for class is a professional courtesy to your classmates and instructors. Talking and whispering during class lectures and video presentations can be very disruptive. Studies over the years have shown an increasing number of behavioral problems in large classrooms. Our approach to classroom interaction and management is centered on mutual respect. We will encourage a great amount of discussion and interaction in this class, despite its large size. But, we don't want these kinds of activities to spill over into the lecture portions of the class. To be clear, chatting on cell phones, instant messaging, personal conversations during lectures, reading the newspaper during class or any other disruptive behavior will not be tolerated. If we find your behavior disruptive to us or to your classmates we will discuss this with you. After that, if disruptive behavior continues we will ask you to leave the classroom.

Make-up Exams and Incompletes: We will not give automatic make-up exams or incompletes in this course. Make-up exams will be scheduled only for those students who provide medical documentation. In order for us to even consider any other serious or unavoidable crises as valid reasons, it is **absolutely mandatory** that you contact us **before the exam**. We will not hold a make-up exam if you contact us after the exam.

E-mail: Please feel free to address all your e-mail about readings, exams, and lectures to Janis, Jacob, or Jessica. While we will do our best to check e-mail regularly during the week, we cannot guarantee that we will respond to your e-mail on Friday evenings and

over the weekends. As far as possible, try to clarify your questions in person with us before or after class. E-mail messages announcing changes and modifications to the syllabus will be sent to you via Oncourse.

Please DO NOT use e-mail to:

- (1) get routine information that may already be on the syllabus.
- (2) ask what you missed in class lecture when you were absent. Please contact a classmate for notes. We will be glad to provide any handouts you missed.
- (3) discuss in-depth a major or significant problem.

If you have a major problem, e-mail us to set up an appointment and briefly describe the problem, but the bulk of our discussion should happen at a one-on-one meeting with the associate instructor or the instructors.

Withdrawals: The last day to withdraw with an automatic "W" is **TUESDAY, APRIL 10**. Thereafter the university will not permit you to withdraw, except for urgent reasons related to extended illness or equivalent distress. The desire to avoid a low grade is not an acceptable reason for withdrawal from a course.

Cheating and Academic Misconduct: Be sure that you know and understand Indiana University's policy on academic misconduct, particularly on cheating during exams. Personally, the instructors and associate instructor have no tolerance for any misconduct. Cheating may result in severe consequences for your final grade or an automatic grade of F for the entire course. For further information on the university's policies regarding plagiarism and other academic misconduct, we encourage you to consult the Code of Student Rights, Responsibilities and Conduct, which is available online at <http://dsa.indiana.edu/Code>.

Guest speakers: Many of the guest speakers who come to lecture in this course are very busy people who have rearranged their professional and personal commitments to come to our class. Guest speakers volunteer their time for our class because they enjoy meeting and interacting with students and sharing their knowledge and experiences. We request your assistance in creating a rewarding and fulfilling environment for our guest speakers this semester. We hope you will ask speakers questions, share your comments, and show your appreciation for their generosity.

Extra credit: A student can earn 5 extra credit points (once only) by participating in a research study in the Telecommunications department. The five points will automatically be added to the student's lowest earned exam grade at the end of the semester. One of our guest speakers will visit our class to recruit you for participation in a research study. It will probably take about one hour of your time outside of class to participate and earn this extra credit.

TENTATIVE COURSE OUTLINE

WEEK ONE

Course introduction

March 6/Tuesday

Welcome to C201 and Discussion of Syllabus
Media as “Hot” Topics: The Mural

Ethics and journalistic decision making

March 8/Thursday

Text: Introduction and Chapter 1

Mascots in the Media

Guest Speaker: Prof. Michael Evans

WEEK TWO – SPRING BREAK

WEEK THREE

Ethics and journalistic decision making continued

March 19/Monday, 7p.m.

(No class Tuesday, March 20)

Attend David Halberstam’s speech “Iraq in the
Shadow of Vietnam” at the Buskirk-Chumley
Theater, 114 E. Kirkwood Ave.

March 22/Thursday

Text: Chapter 2

Privacy and Media Coverage

Guest Speaker: Prof. Dave Boeyink

WEEK FOUR

Media imperialism, international news, and the journalism student

March 27/Tuesday

Text: Chapter 3

Media’s Threat to Culture

Guest Speaker: Mike Lyons

March 29/Thursday

Text: Chapter 4

Controversy and the Public Forum of Student
Media

Guest Speaker: Prof. David Adams

WEEK FOUR

Media imperialism, international news, and the journalism student

April 3/Tuesday

Text: Chapter 5

Freedom of Information and Democracy

Speaker: Jacob Groshek

Midterm Review

April 5/Thursday

MIDTERM EXAM

WEEK FIVE*Covering sex, sports, and violence*

April 10/Tuesday
Text: Chapter 6

Sexually Explicit Media: History & Function
Guest Speaker: Prof. Betsi Grabe

Please Note: Midterms will be returned and today (April 10) is the last day to withdraw from this course with an automatic "W."

April 11/Wednesday, 7p.m.
(No class Thursday, April 12)

Attend Frank Deford's speech at Alumni Hall in the IMU.

WEEK SIX*Covering sex, sports, and violence continued*

April 17/Tuesday
Text: Chapter 7

Photojournalism: The Power of Visual Media
Guest Speaker: Prof. Steve Raymer

Celebrities and politics in the media

April 19/Thursday
Text: Chapter 8

Celebrity Activism and Brangelina
Guest Speaker: Spring-Serenity Duvall

WEEK SEVEN*Celebrities and politics in the media continued*

April 24/Tuesday
Text: Chapter 9

Dr. Phil and Religion in the Media
Guest Speaker: Lori Henson

April 26/Thursday
Text: Chapter 10

The News Debate over Gay Marriage
Guest Speaker: Leigh Moscovitz
Final Exam Review

WEEK EIGHT

May 1/Tuesday

FINAL EXAM: 7:15 p.m. to 9:15 p.m.