

Syllabus & Schedule News Literacy (JRN101/103) Fall 2012

Print and Study Syllabus. You will be tested on the contents.

Lecture Section 3:

Wednesday 8:30 am – 9:50 am

Javits 110

Important Dates¹

- August 30 Democratic Nominee's acceptance speech. Required viewing
- September 6 Republican Nominee's acceptance speech. Required viewing.
- Sept. 11 Extra credit for attending lecture by foreign correspondent Mike Slackman
- Oct. 1 Extra credit for attending lecture by Penn State pedophile scandal reporter Sara Ganim
- October 5 Test #1
- Nov. ? Extra credit for attending lecture by speaker to be announced
- November 16 Test #2:
- Dec. 11 Final Exam 8 a.m.

Prof. Dean Miller

Recitation Instructor:

I. Purpose of the course:

This course is designed to teach students how to take skillful possession of their power as citizens by becoming perceptive news consumers. Armed with critical-thinking skills, a firm grasp of relevant history and practical knowledge about news media, News Literacy students learn how to find the reliable information they need to make decisions, take action, make judgments and responsibly create material for social media. At a time when the digital revolution is spawning an unprecedented flood of information and disinformation each day, the course seeks to help students recognize the differences between news and propaganda, news and opinion, bias and fairness, assertion and verification, and evidence and inference.

II. Intended Outcomes

Successful Students Will be Able To:

1. Analyze key elements of news reports - weighing evidence, evaluating sources, noting context and transparency - to judge reliability.
2. Distinguish between journalism, opinion journalism and un-supported bloviation.
3. Identify and distinguish between news media bias and audience bias.
4. Blend personal scholarship and course materials to write forcefully about journalism standards and practices, fairness and bias, First Amendment issues and their individual Fourth Estate rights and responsibilities.

¹ Dates and times subject to change. Watch "Announcements" section of Blackboard for updates.

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5. Use examples from each day's news to demonstrate critical thinking civic engagement.
6. Place the impact of social media and digital technologies in their historical context.

III. Required texts:

1. News Literacy's main textbook is each day's news, whether you read, watch or listen News Literacy students follow the news every day and participate in an online discussion board that is the basis for the news quiz. Keeping up with news makes it possible to finish homework assigned to you.
2. *"The Elements of Journalism: What Newspeople Should Know and the Public Should Expect,"* Kovach and Rosenstiel. (available online and through campus bookstore)
3. No-cost materials linked to from the Blackboard™ site for this course
4. Other no-cost materials provided by your instructors.

IV. Course Requirements:

1. Prerequisites: none
2. Attendance: If circumstances prevent your attending class, the instructor must be informed by email no more than 24 hours after class starts. Two unexcused absences are permitted. A third or fourth such absence results in a 1/3 grade drop per absence, (e.g. from B to B-). Five can result in an F. Consistent tardiness also reduces your grade.
3. Blackboard: This course is run from Blackboard, the course website system operated by the university. There you'll find course announcements, homework assignments, reading materials, the link to the SafeAssignment submission system, your gradebook and required discussion/blog sites.
4. Check Blackboard daily: Because the course often changes in reaction to breaking news, you must check course announcements daily. Although your lecture and recitation instructors will make every effort to give you advance notice of upcoming assignments, your failure to regularly check Blackboard is not an acceptable excuse for missing a deadline.
To ensure you receive all alerts, the email address you routinely use should be entered on Blackboard in the "Personal Information" section under "Tools" in the top left box on the "Welcome" page. Student Help Desk is at 631-632-9602 if you have any difficulty doing this.
5. Special considerations: If you have a physical, psychological, medical or learning disability that may impact your course work, please contact Disability Support Services, 128 ECC Building (631) 632-6748. They will determine with you what accommodations are necessary and appropriate. All information and documentation is confidential. Students who require assistance during emergency evacuation are encouraged to discuss their needs with their professors and Disability Support Services. For procedures and information go to the following web site:
<http://www.stonybrook.edu/ehs/fire/disabilities.shtml>
6. Deadlines: All work is due on time. You must upload your homework to SafeAssignment (a plagiarism checker on the Blackboard site) prior to your class meeting. Work that fails to meet deadline loses one full grade. After one week, the student receives a 0.
7. Assignments: You will have several assignments each week, found in the homework/assignments tab of the course Blackboard™ page. They will include readings, videos, films and other materials to help you understand the course concepts, plus writing assignments. You'll be quizzed on readings and videos assigned. Writing assignments require you to do research, additional reading, or evaluate a news report. You will be graded on how well you articulate an understanding of the course material, support it with examples from readings, and how you express your own ideas. As a result, your grade may depend on your

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ability to write with clarity and logic. Comply with the directions for word length, stay relevant, and always provide specific examples or evidence to support your argument. The SBU Writing Center provides helpful assistance to students willing to act on expert advice: 632-7405.

The written homework assignments represent 40 percent of your final grade. You read that correctly...40%.

Homework Grading Standards:

Superior	Dramatically surpasses the requirements, well-written, demonstrates additional insights or research	Maximum 4 points
Good	Exceeds requirements, written clearly and logically	Maximum 3 points
Satisfactory	Meets minimum requirements, expresses ideas in a manner that can be understood	Maximum 2 points
Poor	Does not meet requirements, confusing or unclear, sloppy	Maximum 1 point
Failed to hand in	No credit	No points

8. Participation and Quizzes: You will be graded on how well you prepare for class, follow the news and engage in class discussions and debates. You will also be quizzed throughout the semester. Quiz questions will cover current events, the previous week's lecture and any other material you have been assigned. Quizzes reward you for following the news and reinforce concepts you're learning in class.

9. Extra Homework Credits: Extra credit points are applied to the homework portion of your final grade. Students may earn a maximum of eight extra credit points. The major source of extra credit points is a series of three weeknight programs during which noteworthy journalists speak about their work and answer your questions. Students receive two extra homework points for each lecture they attend. Other extra credit opportunities are offered from time to time.

9. Communicating : If you have a general question about the course, the assignments or the lecture you may want to post your question in the discussions link available through your recitation site on Blackboard. For specific questions about your particular grade, you must make an appointment to talk with your instructor in person or by phone during his or her office hours.

10. Plagiarism and cheating: Any form of plagiarism or cheating will be reported to the Academic Judiciary Committee and can result in a failing grade for the course. Here is the University's statement on academic dishonesty: "Plagiarism is the use of others' words and/or ideas without clearly acknowledging their source. As students, you are learning about other people's ideas in your course texts, your instructors' lectures, in-class discussions, and when doing your own research. When you incorporate those words and ideas into your own work, it is of the utmost importance that you give credit where it is due. Plagiarism, intentional or unintentional, is considered academic dishonesty and all instances will be reported to the Academic Judiciary. To avoid plagiarism, you must give the original author credit whenever you use another person's ideas, opinions, drawings, or theories as well as any facts or any other pieces of information that are not common knowledge. Additionally, quotations of another person's actual spoken or written words; or a close paraphrasing of another person's spoken or

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written words must also be referenced. Accurately citing all sources and putting direct quotations – of even a few key words – in quotation marks are required. For further information on academic integrity and the policies regarding academic dishonesty, go to the Academic Judiciary Web site at <http://www.stonybrook.edu/uaa/academicjudiciary/>. We further add that you must cite all sources used in writing your assignments.

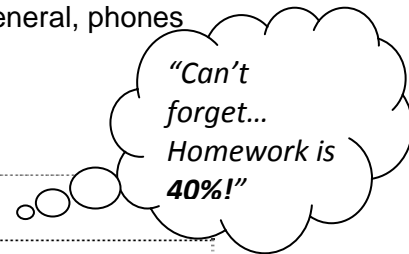
Other examples of cheating include: Copying answers or assignments from someone else or allowing someone to copy from you. Cheating in any form on an exam. Collaboration (without instructor preapproval) or multiple submissions of the same work. Fabricating or altering an excuse note and making up quotes, facts or references.

11. Disruptive Behavior: “Stony Brook expects students to maintain standards of personal integrity that are in harmony with the educational goals of the institution; to observe national, state, and local laws and University regulations; and to respect the rights, privileges, and property of other people. Faculty is required to report disruptive behavior that interrupts faculty’s ability to teach, the safety of the learning environment, and/or students’ ability to learn to Judicial Affairs.”

12. Electronic Devices. See your recitation instructor for his or her policy. In general, phones should be put away and laptops used only for note-taking.

VI. Calculating Final Grades: Final grades are weighted as follows:

Homework Assignments	40 Percent- Total HW score is curved
Final Exam and Essay	30 Percent
Tests	20 Percent
Participation and Quizzes	5+5 Percent- Total Quiz score is curved



You won’t earn more points by writing longer than assigned. Comply with the directions for word length, write succinctly, stay relevant, and always provide specific examples or evidence to support your point.

Important: Only semester grades of C or above count for credit toward the journalism major or minor. Any student earning a C-minus or below who intends to continue in the journalism program must retake the class and will not be able to continue in other journalism skills classes.

VII. School of Journalism Grading Schema:

A : 93 and above
A-: 90-92
B+: 87-89
B : 83-86
B-: 80-82
C+: 77-79

C : 73-76
C-: 70-72
D+: 67-69
D : 60-66
F : 59 and below

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VIII. Class Schedule:

Wednesday lecture	Friday recitation
1. Week of Aug. 27 to 31	
<p>8/29 L1: Why News Literacy Matters: From 'Berg to 'Berg An introduction and overview of the course, highlighted by a multi-media show of coming attractions, including examples of timely print and broadcast stories that illustrate why news literacy matters to students – and society. We define “the news media,” and put the course in the context of the accelerating communications revolution. Students leave this class with an understanding of the course’s goals and the core definition of News Literacy: The ability to judge the credibility and reliability of news reports -- and why that matters to them.</p>	<p>8/31 R1: What the Public Thinks of the News Media and Why Students discuss results of the student media survey they and their classmates completed. Class focuses on where and how students get their news, with discussion of which news sources the students will use during the semester. How do students view the news media? How does it compare with the general public’s view? What’s the source of the public’s current unease? Is it justified? What’s a news consumer to do? Students are expected to schedule their blackout around Gov. Mitt Romney’s acceptance speech at the Republican Convention on August 30, which will be discussed in class.</p>
2. Week of Sept. 3 to 7	
<p>9/5 L2: The Power of Information We explore the universal need to receive and share information and the function news has played in every recorded society: To alert, to connect and to divert. We examine the role technology has played in amplifying information – from smoke signals to television – and how this also has enabled the sender to control the news. This leads to a broader discussion of how information is power and why there is a global battle for information control. Students leave this class with a clear understanding of why there is a need for a free flow of information and why some people are willing to kill (and journalists are willing to die) in the battle to control information.</p>	<p>9/7 Quiz 1 R2: The Battle Over Information Students discuss their news “Blackout” experiences in the context of the CPJ readings about blacked out news worldwide. The class examines timely examples in the news of the struggle for information control. What is the conflict in China really about? Are executives with Google or Yahoo right in agreeing to operate within China’s designated rules? Does the United States government try to control news? The class ends with an introduction to other categories of information beyond news and propaganda. Students will also discuss coverage of Pres. Barack Obama’s Sept. 6 acceptance speech at the Democratic National Convention.</p>
3. Week of Sept. 10 to 14	
<p>9/12 L3: Know Your Neighborhood – What Makes Journalism Different What makes journalism different from other kinds of information? The first rule for a smart news consumer is this: Always know what information “neighborhood” you’re in. This lecture explores the differences between news, propaganda, publicity, advertising, entertainment and raw information.</p>	<p>9/14 Quiz 2 R3: The Blurring of the Lines Students complete and review the Taxonomy of Information Grid. Students debate whether Jon Stewart is a journalist and whether a consumer can find reliable news reports on YouTube.</p>

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<p>Students begin work on a Taxonomy of Information Neighborhoods. In the journalism neighborhood, a news consumer should always find three key values: verification, independence and accountability. But the lines on the grid are blurring, often by design, and it's easy to be deceived as to what journalism is and who is a journalist. The class watches Video News Releases, war "coverage" on YouTube and Jon Stewart.</p>	
<p>4. Week of Sept. 17 to 21</p>	
<p>9/19 L4: The Mission of the American Press This class looks at the philosophical and practical underpinnings of a free press in America and the ongoing tension in a democracy between the press and the government. We examine the First Amendment and what freedom of the press really means, looking at landmark Supreme Court cases (<i>Near vs. Minnesota, Pentagon Papers and others</i>). We examine the role of the press in wartime, issues of censorship and press responsibility and the role of the press as a "watchdog."</p>	<p>9/21 Quiz 3 R4: <i>The New York Times</i> and National Security Case study: Did <i>The New York Times</i> act responsibly or commit treason in disclosing Operation Swift? Students debate which principle takes precedence: national security or the public's right to know. They conduct a mock trial of the <i>Times'</i> reporters. Students discuss the upcoming (October 12) New York voter registration deadline. Will they vote or not, and why?</p>
<p>5. Week of Sept. 24 to 28</p>	
<p>9/26 – YOM KIPPUR Starts AT SUNDOWN 9/25, ends SUNDOWN 26th L5: What Is News and Who Decides? What makes some information news? This class examines news drivers, news values and how the news process works. What is the decision-making process that determines whether a story gets published or broadcast? Who decides? How do editors balance the interesting and the important? What is "news play," or presentation, and why does it matter? What is proportionality? What is sensationalism? Are news decisions driven by the profit motive or social responsibility or some combination of the two? Students examine the question of whether there is too much bad news.</p>	<p>9/28 Quiz 4 R5: You Be the Editor Students decide what to put on the front page of the "<i>SB World</i>." After an examination of the types of issues editors must deal with every day, students break into small news meetings and plan the front page of a campus newspaper.</p>
<p>6. Week of Oct. 1 to 5</p>	
<p>10/3 L6: Opinion: The License to Kill What is the difference between news and opinion within the journalism neighborhood and why are the lines blurring so rapidly? How can you differentiate news from opinion in a newspaper, on television, on the Internet? What is a columnist? A commentator? Are bloggers journalists? How can a news consumer</p>	<p>10/5 R6: Test #1 Test covers all material to date.</p>

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<p>identify the difference? And why does it matter?</p>	
7. Week of Oct. 8 to 12	
<p>10/10 L7: Fairness and Bias This class explores one of the most controversial and contentious issues surrounding the press. Is the news media fair and balanced? What do those terms mean? How can a news consumer tell? What is bias? What's the difference between <i>media</i> bias and <i>audience</i> bias?</p>	<p>10/12 Quiz 5 R7: Exploring Fairness and Bias A discussion of the issues of fairness and bias. Students divide into groups and examine whether stories are fair. Students also discuss their responses to an Internet-based test of their own possible biases.</p>
8. Week of Oct. 15 to 19	
<p>10/17 L8: Truth and Verification: What Is Journalistic Truth? How Do Journalists Verify Information? What do journalists mean by "truth"? How does journalistic truth differ from philosophical truth, or scientific truth? What standards do journalists use to try to verify information? This class explores the pursuit of journalistic "truth" and the verification process. What are the differences between direct and indirect evidence, assertion and verification, evidence and inference? How news consumers can assess journalistic evidence and why the verification process breaks down.</p>	<p>10/19 Quiz 6 R8: How Journalists Verify Information Case study: Anderson Cooper's reporting about the tsunami in Sri Lanka. Students identify key factors in his verification process. Class also reviews the difference between assertion and verification and how separating the two can help news consumers weigh evidence. If time permits, students will engage in verification exercises.</p>
9. Week of Oct. 22 to 26	
<p>10/24 L9: Evaluating Sources By looking at news coverage of Hurricane Katrina and how it relates to themes in the lecture, students learn to ask what makes some news sources reliable and others less reliable. What standards should news consumers use to weigh the credibility of sources quoted in news reports? Definitions of self-interest, independence and authority are explored.</p>	<p>10/26 Quiz 7 R9: Evaluating Sources Students begin to practice real-time source evaluation and explore questions such as: Does self-interest automatically degrade the credibility of a source? What obligation do reporters have to be transparent about their sources' self-interests, authority or background?</p>
10. Week of Oct. 29 to Nov. 2	
<p>10/31 L10: Deconstructing the News This key class examines how to "deconstruct" news stories to judge their credibility and reliability by asking a series of key questions. The class reprises previous classes on evidence, sourcing, and fairness, but also explores context, transparency and thoroughness.</p>	<p>11/2 Quiz 8 R10: How to Deconstruct a Story Students practice deconstructing several news stories together. Class also reviews assignment dealing with The Washington Post story on Walter Reed Hospital.</p>

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11. Week of Nov. 5 to 9	
<p>11/7 L11: Deconstructing Social Media This class looks at the new opportunities—and responsibilities—for news consumers to not only find news, but to participate as “citizen journalists” in news production in the digital age. Students will discuss the multiple means by which they can now influence and even contribute to news coverage via the Web, texting and social media.</p>	<p>11/9 Quiz 9 R11: Students discuss the power of images and sound to verify facts, but also to arouse news consumers’ emotions.</p>
12. Week of Nov. 12 to 16	
<p>11/14 L12: The Power of Images and Sound Photographs, recorded sound and moving pictures (film and video) are among journalists’ most powerful tools of verification. Because of their visceral impact, they can arouse emotions, sometimes in useful ways, sometimes in manipulative ways. As modern culture becomes increasingly visual, what is the impact on the news consumer’s search for reliable information? What special challenges arise when digital technologies can easily alter images and sound?</p>	<p>11/16 R12: <u>TEST #2</u> Test covers all material to date.</p>
13. Week of Nov. 19 to 23	
<p>11/21 No Class</p>	<p>11/23 No class</p>
14. Week of Nov. 26 to 30	
<p>11/28 L13: Deconstructing TV News Students apply the principles of deconstruction to TV news stories. Working with Associate Dean of Journalism Marcy McGinnis (Former Senior Vice President in charge of News at CBS) this lecture presents and analyzes a series of “winners” and “sinners” and how you can tell the difference.</p>	<p>11/30 Quiz 10 R13: The Internet: A Blessing or a Curse? A discussion of the revolutionary changes the Internet has spawned and the potential positive and negative consequences for news consumers. Students also review an assignment deconstructing a major TV news story.</p>
15. Week of Dec. 3 to 7	
<p>12/5 Last Lecture L14: The Future of News From Ben Franklin to Rupert Murdoch, American media outlets have always been driven by both profit and public service. How do the sweeping changes</p>	<p>12/7 R14: Review and Test Prep Final Essay Due</p>

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and economic problems in the news industry today affect the quality of journalism? Who will pay for watchdog journalism? Will new digital models and technologies make it more difficult—or easier-- to find reliable information?

News Lit Final

TUESDAY, Dec. 11, 8:00 AM – 10:45 AM, Location: TBA