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Class description:
This course will introduce you to the field of journalism and the role it has in society. Through class readings, lectures, guest speakers, exams and assignments, you will come away from this class knowing more about what journalism is and its importance in serving the public.

Specifically, this class will delve into the practice of journalism, the arc of its history, and how the industry overlaps with issues of ethics, law, politics, public responsibility and technology. We will explore the operations of newspapers, news magazines, radio and television news and identify the essential elements that define journalism and its role in our society.

Prerequisites:
Upper division standing (≥58 units completed).

Required Text and Materials: (available at SDSU bookstore)
- “Mightier Than The Sword: How The Media Have Shaped American History,” by Rodger Streitmatter. Third edition or later
- The New York Times (print or online)
- ParSCORE (Scantron) Test forms: There will be at least seven exams and quizzes in this class that will require the use of these test forms (F-289-PAR-L).

Course Learning Objectives and Learning Outcomes:
- Articulate what is journalism and the news
- How to critique components of the news as a news consumer and journalist
- Contextualize major journalistic events that contributed to the field
- Identify the role of communication theories that were influenced by the field
- Define journalism ethics and how journalists apply ethical practices
- Explain the importance of journalism and its role
- Understand what is a traumatic news event and how journalists cover it
- Describe the role of informed citizens as part of a democratic society
- Compare and contrast the influence of technology in journalism routines
- Detect the influence and impact of media consolidation
Course requirements:

Thought papers (two @15% each) ...........................................30%
Class activities/participation ..................................................15%
Quizzes (news, lecture, readings) (five @ 4% each) ............20%
Midterm exam .................................................................15%
Final Exam (comprehensive) ................................................20%

A word about grading:
An average grade in this class is a C. To reach the standard of “A” work is to be consistently superior in content, structure, style and effort. “B” work shows consistent movement above the average. “D” work is below average.

You should not expect an “A” for doing the minimum requirements for this class. To understand grade inflation, read “Student Expectations Seen as Causing Grade Disputes,” in The New York Times, Feb. 17, 2009.

Grading Guidelines:
A: Exceptional, superior. Content, clarity and conciseness are in upper 10% of expected student performance.
B: Undeniably above average; good to very good in media form. Content, clarity and conciseness can use mild improvement. Occasional errors say more about proofreading than mastery of grammar.
C: Average but acceptable. Meets basic expectations for content, clarity and conciseness. Several errors indicate need to improve grammatical and organizational skills. Student shows potential to improve.
D: Weak, unfocused. Organization is below average; grammar and spelling errors are unacceptable; work may reflect a lack of understanding of the assignment.
NP/F: Unacceptable, well below expectations of an average student; serious errors in grammar, spelling and organization.

Grading Scale:

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\begin{array}{ccc}
93-100\% & A & 67-69.9\% & D+\\
90-92.9 & A- & 63-66.9 & D \\
87-89.9 & B+ & 60-62.9 & D- \\
83-86.9 & B & 59.9/lower & F \\
80-82.9 & B- & & \\
77-79.9 & C+ & & \\
73-76.9 & C & & \\
70-72.9 & C- & & \\
\end{array}
\]
Description of Assignments:

**Thought papers:**
There will be two thought papers assigned throughout the semester. You will have an opportunity to write a concise paper on a topic discussed in class. I will give you information on the topic a week before the paper is due so you have time to prepare. You will turn in the papers on Blackboard’s Turnitin.

No late papers will be accepted.

The premise of the papers is to demonstrate your comprehension and critical thinking skills of the materials we have reviewed. For each paper, you will explain briefly the importance of the concept/topic and its significance to you as a news consumer (and potentially, as a future journalist). Citations and bibliography of references are required. The paper must be two double-spaced pages (or about 1,000 words). Proofread your work before you turn it in. Do not email your paper to me.

- Grading criteria for this assignment is based on: information (how clear you presented the information); organization (if the paper is well laid out and flows well); synthesis (your argument is synthesized well and communicated in your own thoughts); and grammar/spelling/punctuation.

**Class activities/participation:**
Your input during class will be evaluated by your thoughtful engagement in class. Engaging in class discussion is expected of every student.

**Quizzes:**
Five quizzes will take place throughout the term.
News: You should read the front page/home page of The New York Times daily. Some of the questions will ask you to visually identify someone in the news.
Lecture: All lecture material will potentially be on quizzes, so it’s a good idea to take hand-written notes.
There will be no makeup quizzes.

**Exams:**
There will be two exams during the term, the midterm and the final. They will contain information from the lectures and readings, so make sure you take hand-written notes during class lectures. Exams will be taken on the ParSCORE Test forms. Please be sure to bring a pencil for the exams. There will be no makeup exams.

**What you should expect from me:**
- **Availability** - Don’t hesitate to email me or find me in the PSFA building. If you have a question, ask. I’ll do my best to respond to emails in my inbox before 6 p.m.
- **Fairness** – I’ll track your progress. When it comes time to see what you’ve learned, I’ll review where you are compared to where you started.
- **Direction** – We’ll talk about your strengths and weaknesses, where you’ve improved and where you need improvement.
**Openness** – I’m amenable, and hope to be responsive, to your concerns, criticisms and suggestions.

**What I’ll expect from you:**

**Honesty** – Sourcing is key to making sure you don’t pass off someone else’s words or ideas as your own. Do not plagiarize. Infractions will result in a failing grade.

**Accuracy** – Spelling and grammar, to name a few; they have to be right in everything you submit.

**Promptness** – Showing up late to class is disruptive to me and to your fellow students. Late papers will not be accepted.

**Professionalism** – Includes obvious things like showing up to class on time and putting away/silencing your media (cell phones/laptops) during lecture. You should consider it rude when someone else is talking or online when you have the floor. Students should not randomly leave and enter the classroom.

**A willingness to learn** – Read assignments in advance of class. Obtain class notes from missed classes from your classmates and keep up with the news. Keep a healthy attitude and be open to critique.

**Input** – You’ll get out of the class what you put in. Respond to feedback. This class is only partially lecture-driven; it should feel like an on-going discussion where all questions are welcomed.

**Attendance** – Roll will not be taken, although attendance is expected. If you miss some or all of a class, it is your responsibility to learn what was covered. In the event of an unavoidable attendance conflict (determined by me), it is your responsibility to make arrangements with me to solve the issue.

**Academic Honesty:**

The University adheres to a strict policy regarding cheating and plagiarism. These activities will not be tolerated in this class. Become familiar with the policy (http://www.sa.sdsu.edu/srr/conduct1.html). Any cheating or plagiarism will result in failing this class and a disciplinary review by Student Affairs.

**Turnitin:**

Students agree that by taking this course all required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to Turnitin.com for the detection of plagiarism. All submitted papers will be included as source documents in the Turnitin.com reference database solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of such papers.

**Students with Disabilities:**

If you are a student with a disability and believe you will need accommodations for this class, it is your responsibility to contact Student Disability Services at (619) 594-6473. To avoid any delay in the receipt of your accommodations, you should contact Student Disability Services as soon as possible. Please note that accommodations are not retroactive, and that accommodations based upon disability cannot be provided until you have presented your instructor with an accommodation letter from Student Disability Services. Your cooperation is appreciated.
Tentative class schedule
(Subject to change)

Week 1:
**Week of Jan. 20: The Influence of the News Media**
- 20: Introductions/syllabus review
- 22: Who owns the news media? Media consolidation

Week 2:
**Week of Jan. 25: Agenda Setting and the News**
- 25: Media theory #1: Agenda Setting
  
  Read “The Elements of Journalism,” Ch. 1-3
- 27: News values. What is news?
- 29: Quiz #1 (Weeks 1 & 2)

Week 3:
**Week of Feb. 1: Journalism, Then & Now**
- 1: A brief history of journalism
  
  Read “Mightier Than the Sword,” Ch. 1-5
- 3: The paradigms of journalism
  
  (Instructions for Thought Paper #1)
- 5: The state of journalism today
  
  Read “The Elements of Journalism,” Ch. 4-5 & 10

Week 4:
**Week of Feb. 8: Ethics & Objectivity**
- 8: Objectivity and the old gatekeepers
- 10: Media theory #2: Framing/Priming
- 12: Thought paper #1 due

Week 5:
**Week of Feb. 15: Journalism Routines**
- 15: Quiz #2 (Weeks 3 & 4)
- 17: The Political Economy of News
  
  Read “The Elements of Journalism,” Ch. 6-7
- 19: The Political Economy of News
  
  Read “Mightier Than the Sword,” Ch. 6-7

Week 6:
**Week of Feb. 22: Social issues and the news**
- 22: The social construction of the news
- 24: Social issues – deviancy amplification
- 26: Class exercise
Week 7:
**Week of Feb. 29: Midterm exam**
- 29-2: Exam review
- 4: Midterm exam

Week 8:
**Week of March 7: News Credibility and the Watchdog Role**
- 7: Journalists as public servants
- 9: Journalism as society’s watchdog
- 11: The state of news credibility
  - Quiz #3 (Weeks 6 & 8)
  - *Read “Mightier Than the Sword,” Ch. 14*

Week 9:
**Week of March 14: The Public’s Right to Know**
- 14: Jefferson’s ideas: from intention to implementation
- 16: The importance of an informed citizenry
- 18: The public’s right to know information
  - *Read “The Elements of Journalism,” Ch. 11*

Week 10:
**Week of March 21: Page One Documentary**
- 21: *Page One*
- 23: *Page One continued*
- 25: *Thought paper #2 due*

Week of March 28: Spring Break – no class

Week 11:
**Week of April 4: How news is produced: The Routines of News**
- 4: The routines of news production
- 6: The routines of news production
- 8: Quiz #4 (Weeks 9, 10 & 11)

Week 12:
**Week of April 11: The Press as an Agent of Social Control**
- 11: The new gatekeepers
- 13: The psychology of bad news
- 15: The psychology of bad news

Week 13:
**Week of April 18: New Journalism Tools in a Digital Age**
- 18: Media theory #3: Cultivation Theory
  - *Read “Mightier Than the Sword, Ch. 10-11*
- 20: Participatory journalism - social media as a reporting tool
- 22: In-class exercise
Week 14:
Week of April 25: Journalism Ethics
  25: Journalism ethics
    Read “Elements of Journalism,” Ch.7-8
  27: Journalism law
  29: Quiz #5 (Weeks 12, 13 & 14)

Week 15:
Week of May 2: The future of journalism
  2: Digital-only spaces; new frontiers in journalism
  4: Final exam review (last class)

Week of May 9: Final exam
  9: Final exam (from 8 – 10 a.m.)