

**New York University**  
Arthur L. Carter Journalism Institute  
**AMERICAN JOURNALISM: HISTORY, ETHICS & LAW**  
Professor: Penenberg, Adam

**Course Description**

This course explores the role of the journalist in America and introduces students to the art and craft of American-style journalism, surveying many of its core issues in method, style, form, ethics and history—what it has gotten right, and, equally important, what it has gotten wrong—major scandals, effect on the public’s perceptions, questions of sensationalism, bias, diversity, and an exploration of the industry’s economics and current digital upheaval. To better understand what journalism has been and might be, students will consume a selection of media, from the first investigative feature story of the 19<sup>th</sup> century to “yellow journalism” of the 1890s, coverage of war and conflict, media criticism, hard news scoops and long-form narrative classics, the emergence of radio, TV news, and the Internet, as well as delving into Watergate, the Pentagon Papers, shield laws, “fake news,” blogging, the rise of citizen journalism, and social media.

**Learning Objectives**

In this course, students will:

- Demonstrate awareness of journalism’s core ethical values
- Demonstrate critical thinking, independence, and creativity appropriate to the role of journalism in a democratic society
- Work ethically in pursuit of truth, accuracy, fairness, and diverse perspectives
- Learn about major issues in journalism throughout history
- Become a better-informed reader and more critical consumer of news, media and information
- Explore various definitions of journalist and journalism and note how they differ
- Gain a sense of journalism’s history, analyze its current state, and ponder its future
- Achieve greater awareness of the kinds of choices journalists face, from small ethical decisions about reporting and writing individual stories to large ones about the nature of truth

**Course Structure**

This is a master's seminar that will use the flipped classroom model. This means that you should complete the week's readings and assignments before joining the live class session in Zoom. Class sessions will begin with a short lecture or presentation followed by discussion.

Each student is expected to engage with the course materials and one another. There is a heavy reading load. Your job will be to read/view/listen to the assigned material, prepare for tests and quizzes, and produce a range of writing and research assignments. You will also be expected to participate in class discussion through Slack where you, your fellow students and faculty can share information and ideas, and publish comments. (Unlike most courses in the Arthur L. Carter Institute, this is not a reporting and writing course, although reporting and writing will be addressed.)

### **Readings**

**Law & Ethics e-book:** Each chapter corresponds to a week in the semester and contains lesson and assignment pages. All lessons are contained within this book, which consists of readings, videos, and images. Some weeks you'll take a quiz. Discussions occur in Slack. Your story and/or research paper assignments will be written and edited in Google Docs and published on [The Click](#).

### **Course Requirements**

As has been said, "Showing up is 80 percent of life." We meet 13 times over the course of the semester plus there is both a midterm and final assignment. Students are expected to attend all class meetings over Zoom. If you are ill or have another valid reason you must miss class (death in the family, religious holiday, a massive snowstorm knocks the power out) inform your professor *before* class.

For all of us, paying attention is getting harder. Studies show that our attention span has been shrinking with the plethora of devices at our disposal that offer almost unlimited choice. Nevertheless, during class is not the time to multitask—text, check email or Facebook, shop for boots on Amazon, swipe left or right on Tinder... you get the gist.

### **Grading & Assignments**

- Final grades calculated as follows:
- Quizzes: 10%
- Discussions\*: 10%
- Writing assignments: 20%, which include the following:
  - Week 3: 750-word article: What is a journalist? (published on The Click):
  - Week 5: 500-word article: Advocacy journalism (published on The Click):
  - Week 6: Partner Podcast

- Week 7: 500-word service, listicle, or blog-style piece on a journalist
- Week 9: 600-word news analysis on the Court of Public Opinion
- Week 10: 500-words on the pros and cons of social media
- Midterm 1000-word story on anonymous sourcing or undercover reporting: 25%
- Final 1500-word story on an ethical issue in journalism: 25%
- Editorial Professionalism\*\*: 10%

\*Discussions will be graded for:

1. Quality: Comments are original, reflective of the week's materials, and respectful of others' postings
2. Creativity: Comments go beyond simply answering the question and attempt to motivate the group by introducing new perspectives and examples to stimulate thought and further discussion

\*\*Editorial Professionalism refers to the quality of your attendance, participation, and etiquette throughout the course.

### **Schedule**

*\*You'll find the reading and assignments in the Law & Ethics e-book.*

<b>Week</b>	<b>Topic</b>	<b>e-book Chapters</b>	<b>Assignments</b>
1	Introductions	1: What is a Journalist?	<input type="checkbox"/> Quiz <input type="checkbox"/> Discussion
2	The First Amendment	2: The First Amendment 2: Limits of the First Amendment	<input type="checkbox"/> Quiz <input type="checkbox"/> Discussion
3	The Role of the Press	3: The Role of the Press 3: Influencing Public Opinion	<input type="checkbox"/> Quiz <input type="checkbox"/> Discussion <input type="checkbox"/> Writing Assignment
4	Objectivity vs. POV	4: Objectivity vs Point of View 4: Conflicts of Interest	<input type="checkbox"/> Quiz <input type="checkbox"/> Discussion
5	Advocacy Journalism	5: Advocacy Journalism	<input type="checkbox"/> Writing Assignment

6	An Ethical Framework	6: An Ethical Framework 6: When Publishing Causes Harm	<input type="checkbox"/> Quiz <input type="checkbox"/> Partner Podcasting Assignment
7	(Un)Ethical Newsgathering	7: (Un)Ethical Newsgathering	<input type="checkbox"/> Quiz <input type="checkbox"/> Discussion <input type="checkbox"/> Writing Assignment
8	Anonymous Sourcing and Undercover Reporting	8: Anonymous Sourcing 8: Undercover Reporting	<input type="checkbox"/> Discussion <input type="checkbox"/> Writing Assignment
9	Midterm	NO LIVE CLASS SESSION THIS WEEK	<input type="checkbox"/> Work on your Midterm (Due Next Week)
10	Privacy vs Public's Right to Know	9: Privacy vs Public's Right to Know 9: The Court of Public Opinion	<input type="checkbox"/> Midterm Essay Due <input type="checkbox"/> Quiz <input type="checkbox"/> Writing Assignment
11	Publicly Available Information	10: Publicly Available Information 10: Government Secrets	<input type="checkbox"/> Discussion <input type="checkbox"/> Writing Assignment
12	The Evolution of Defamation	11: The Evolution of Defamation 11: Invasions of Privacy	<input type="checkbox"/> Quiz <input type="checkbox"/> Discussion
	Thanksgiving Break	NO LIVE CLASS SESSION THIS WEEK	Enjoy your break!
13	Private Citizens vs Public Figures	12: Private Citizens vs. Public Figures	<input type="checkbox"/> Quiz <input type="checkbox"/> Discussion

14	Hype and Sensationalism	13: Hype and Sensationalism	<input type="checkbox"/> Work on your Final (Due Next Week)
	Finals		<input type="checkbox"/> Final Due

**Accommodations**

Students with disabilities that necessitate accommodations should contact and register with New York University’s Moses Center for Students with Disabilities (CSD) at 212-998-4980 or [mosescsd@nyu.edu](mailto:mosescsd@nyu.edu). Information about the Moses Center can be found at [www.nyu.edu/csd](http://www.nyu.edu/csd). The Moses Center is located at 726 Broadway on the 2nd floor.

**Diversity & Inclusion**

The Institute is committed to creating an inclusive learning environment. The Institute embraces a notion of intellectual community enriched and enhanced by diversity along a number of dimensions.