

New York University | Summer Journalism
Course No. JOUR-UA-25.007 | **Albert No.** 4841 | **Credits:** 2

Class Schedule | July 8 to July 31, 2025 | Tues. 4 to 6 p.m. & Thurs. 4 to 8 p.m.

Location | 20 Cooper Square | Room 655

Taught By | Craigh Barboza

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Journalism Goes to the Movies

Course Description

This four-week course explores the genre of “journalism movies,” from postwar to present, in order to understand how the news and film industries continue to be intertwined, their bond born of ambition and necessity on both sides.

As far back as early Hollywood, the people who make movies have seen the journalist as an intriguing protagonist who is a kind of detective, aggressively pursuing leads to get to the bottom of things. It’s their difficult mission to communicate information about the world. But what lessons can we really learn from films like *La Dolce Vita*, *All the President’s Men* and *Spotlight*? What questions do they raise about this high and noble calling, and its place in society?

We’ll meet on Tuesdays (from 4 to 6 p.m.) and on Thursdays (4 to 8 p.m.) we will screen movies that follow journalists whose occupation is central to the storyline. We hope they can provide jumping-off points for class discussions with that week’s guest speaker, who will cover key themes, like holding power accountable, our growing distrust of the media – and what it’ll take to regain it – as well as the long tradition of journalists who have gone on to make movies.

Students will learn how the press covers movies and what it means to be a working film journalist. We'll also delve into notable works by François Truffaut, Pauline Kael, Peter Bogdanovich and Nora Ephron. Possible class trips include the influential arthouse Film Forum and Film at Lincoln Center, the nonprofit organization behind the New York Film Festival and *Film Comment* magazine, which features reviews and analysis of mainstream, art-house, and avant-garde filmmaking from around the world. Students will be given in-class exercises and reading/writing assignments.

Learning Objectives

- ☐ Demonstrate an understanding of movie writing and Hollywood's treatment of journalism
- ☐ Write clear, accurate and engaging prose in an audience-appropriate manner
- ☐ Conduct research, interview subjects and evaluate information
- ☐ Work ethically in pursuit of truth, accuracy, fairness, and diverse perspectives

Assignments

- A. Work on two written assignments (up to 500 words each) based on selected films that will be screened during class. These should utilize evidence, observations and insights gained from the assigned reading.
- B. Research film topics and prepare questions for guest speakers.
- C. Collaborate on a group project (up to 2,000 words) that will critically pick apart assumptions and beliefs about journalism movies.

Reading List (chapters from)

"Newsroom Confidential"	Margaret Sullivan
"Hitchcock/Truffaut"	Francois Truffaut
"Physical Evidence: Selected Film Criticism"	Kent Jones
"Nora Ephron at the Movies"	Ilana Kaplan
"Do Something: Coming of Age Amid the Glitter and Doom of '70s New York"	Guy Trebay
"I Lost It At the Movies"	Pauline Kael
"From Reverence to Rape: The Treatment of Women in the Movies"	Molly Haskell
"Toms, Coons, Mulattoes, Mammies & Bucks: An Interpretive History of Blacks in American Films"	Donald Bogle

Course Preview

Class 1 | *Meet Cute*

We open with an introduction to the class and a brief writing exercise, followed by a free-form discussion on movie ideas and topics. Review of journalism fundamentals, including research and reporting methods. (Who knows who's being hired, or who's being fired? How do you pick subjects and identify key elements of a story?) We'll dive into how movies are covered by the press, given the close ties between the news and film industries.

Homework 1: Movie journalism reading. Complete group project (up to 800 words).

Deadline: Thursday, July 10, at noon.

Class 2 | *All the News Fit to Screen*

Class trip to the offices of Film Forum, which has been called "the best little movie house in New York." Programmer Bruce Goldstein will take us behind the scenes on "The Newspaper Picture," his 2010 festival celebrating the old-school newsroom, before leading us in a discussion on Hollywood's fascination with journalism. Plus, a tribute to the critic-turned-director.

Homework 2: Write a reflection piece (up to 500 words) about the class trip. Read packet of writing from and about the "Film Generation." Deadline: Tuesday, July 15, at noon.

Class 3 | *Bio-Pics*

Student presentations. A look at how writing about movies evolved, then a primer on access in Hollywood and interviewing techniques. (What should I include in my interview request? How can I help subjects relax? Who are good secondary sources?) There will be an in-class exercise that serves as the groundwork for your final group project: Take a position on a class-related issue and explain your stance through research, explanation and evidence.

Homework 3: Research and prepare questions for our first guest speaker, critic and filmmaker Kent Jones. Deadline: Start of class on Thursday, July 17.

Class 4 | *The Journalist-Turned-Director*

We will screen *Hitchcock/Truffaut*, a documentary about two cinematic giants who sat for a series of interviews that formed the basis of a landmark book (first published in 1967) about film art, history and technique. Its director, Kent Jones, will join us for a class discussion. We'll cover the making of the film and its critical reception, as well as related topics like how the media shapes film culture and the succession of journalists who became even more eminent moviemakers.

Homework 4: Write up a Q&A (approximately 400 words) with Kent Jones, based on our class discussion. Plus, a reading assignment on '70s New York. Deadline: Tuesday, July 22, at noon.

Class 5 | "What's the pitch?"

Student presentations and a discussion on movie ideas and topics. To kick off a lesson on how to pitch story ideas, we will screen and analyze a clip from *Trainwreck*, the comedy about a magazine writer with commitment issues. Plus, a discussion on what good journalism has in common with many good movies.

Homework 5: Reading assignment and film journal entry. Also, research and prepare questions for the next guest speaker, writer Guy Trebay. Deadline: Thursday, 24, at noon.

Class 6 | *Lights, Camera, Paparazzo*

A screening of the Federico Fellini classic *La Dolce Vita*, which follows a would-be intellectual slumming it in the world of celebrity journalism in Rome. Guest speaker Guy Trebay – another writer who's spent time on the periphery of the spotlight – will join us for a discussion about chronicling culture and what he's learned about creating richly textured writing.

Homework 6: Students complete a reading assignment focused on investigative journalism and a film journal entry. Deadline: Tuesday, July 29, at noon.

Class 7 | *Dailies*

A lesson on pursuing truth, accuracy, fairness and a diversity of perspectives in your work. Watch a clip from *Ace in the Hole*, Billy Wilder's black-and-white satire about a newspaperman who'll do anything to ensure he gets the big scoop, followed by a

discussion on journalism ethics. (What constitutes a conflict of interest? How do you keep an appropriate distance from the industry you cover?) Peer review workshop: TBD.

Homework 7: Reading assignment and prepare questions for our last guest speaker, Pulitzer Prize-winning reporter Michael Rezendes. Deadline: Start of class on Thursday, July 31.

Class 8 | The Climax

We'll end the class with a screening of the Oscar-winning movie *Spotlight*, which follows a team of reporters investigating a sexual abuse scandal at a major and trusted institution. Michael Rezendes, one of the actual reporters, will be on hand for a discussion on covering the powerful, avoiding conflicts of interest, and how the work of investigative journalism has changed since the heyday of *All the President's Men*, a film that was said to boost enrollment at journalism schools in the 1970s. Closing statement. Roll credits.

Homework 8: Complete final group project (up to 1,800 words) that will analyze and question assumptions about a class-related topic. Students will engage in a discussion about their position, including how it may have changed while listening to their peers. Final deadline: Monday, Aug. 4 at noon.

Grading System

This class uses letter grades, which will be based on the following criteria:

40% assignments	30% class participation
20% final project	10% in-class exercises

Grades can be lowered for unmet deadlines, lateness or absence from class. Plagiarism, invented sources or other ethical breaches can result in an automatic F.

A breakdown of numeric grade to letter grade:

<i>Outstanding work, publishable as is</i>	<i>Good work, in need of minor revision</i>
A (100% to 94%)	B+ (89% to 87%)
A- (93% to 90%)	B (86% to 83%)
	B- (82% to 80%)

Ordinary work, needs significant revision

C+ (79% to 77%)

C (76% to 73%)

C- (72% to 70%)

Major problems with facts, reporting

D (69% to 65%)

Issues with plagiarism, etc.

F (64% to 0%)

Disability Disclosure Statement

Academic accommodations are available for students with disabilities. The Moses Center website is nyu.edu/csd. Please contact the Moses Center for Students with Disabilities (212-998-4980 or mosescsd@nyu.edu) for further information. Students requesting academic accommodations are advised to reach out to as early as possible in the semester for assistance.

Diversity Statement

The Arthur L. Carter Journalism Institute is committed to creating an anti-racist learning environment that embraces diversity, complexity, and honesty. We are an intellectual community enriched by diversity along a number of dimensions, including race, sex, gender identity, class, ethnicity, sexualities, abilities, religion, and culture. Our student body is excitingly international. We welcome a multiplicity of perspectives. We acknowledge that listening to other perspectives on some of these issues may be personally challenging, and we accept that challenge. We further acknowledge that our profession, journalism, and our home, New York University, have participated in the systemic racism that underpins U.S. history. We are committed to teaching and practicing fair, rigorous, and engaged journalism that helps all our communities move toward justice and equality.

Wellness

In a large, complex community like New York University, it's vital to reach out to others, particularly those who are isolated or engaged in self-destructive activities. [Student wellness](#) is the responsibility of us all. The NYU [Wellness Exchange](#) is the constellation of NYU's programs and services designed to address the overall health and mental health needs of its students. The Wellness Exchange is your greatest mental health resource at NYU. Call the 24-hour hotline at (212) 443-9999, chat via the Wellness Exchange app anytime, make an appointment, or arrange a same-day Urgent Counseling session to speak with a certified counselor about any day-to-day challenges or health concerns. If you need assistance, please call (212) 443-9999. Please do not visit in person.