

**New York University** | Summer Journalism  
**Course No. XXXX** | **Albert No. XXXX** | **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** | Craig Barboza

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# Journalism Goes to the Movies

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## 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 The Criterion Collection, also known as "the Louvre of movies." 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 600 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
"She Said: Breaking the Sexual Harassment Story That Helped Ignite a Movement"	Jodi Kantor and Megan Twohey

# Course Preview

## **Class 1 | *Meet Cute***

We will look at Hollywood's obsession with journalism, and how the media and the film industry are intertwined. An intro to the class and syllabus review. Get to know each other writing exercise. Review of story basics, including research and interviewing techniques. What good writing shares in common with many good movies. Plus, a tribute to the critic turned director.

*Homework 1: Students read excerpts from a landmark film book that was made into a 2015 documentary, and prepare questions for an article they will write about its 10th anniversary.*

## **Class 2 | *Behind the Scenes***

Student presentations. A screening of a documentary about two celebrated movie directors, followed by a class discussion with our first guest speaker, the film's director. We'll cover the making of the film and its 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 2: Written assignment (up to 600 words) about the film's 10th anniversary, using notes from class. Read packet of writing from and about the "Film Generation."*

## **Class 3 | *Exposition***

An A to Z guide to movie coverage. What's the difference between *Cineaste* and *IndieWire*? Which dates should I circle on my film calendar? The tools and resources of professional film journalists, followed by a lesson on access in Hollywood and an in-class writing exercise.

*Homework 3: Students research and prepare questions for our next guest speaker.*

## **Class 4 | *Lights, Camera, Paparazzo***

Student presentations. A screening of the 1960 classic following a would-be intellectual slumming it in the world of celebrity journalism in Rome. Our guest speaker (another writer who's spent time on the periphery of the spotlight) will join the class for a discussion about chronicling culture and what he's learned about creating richly textured writing about people and events.

*Homework 4: Students will write a final draft of an exercise started in class.*

### **Class 5 | *When the Movies Mattered***

How to write an effective movie review, that's not just your opinion. An overview of film writing in the mainstream press, from the "golden age of movie criticism" to today. In-class writing exercise on movie reviews.

*Homework 5: Research and prepare questions for the next guest speaker, pitch final project.*

### **Class 6 | *"Everything else is just advertising"***

Watch a documentary about an influential critic who helped transform film into an art form in the eyes of the public. During the class discussion, our guest speaker (who was mentored by the film's subject) will talk about her legacy.

*Homework 6: Students complete a reading assignment focused on investigative journalism.*

### **Class 7 | *Dailies***

A primer on reporting techniques and an examination of the writing process. (How do I organize my material? Where do I go to fact-check my story?) Peer review workshop. Student presentations.

*Homework 7: Students complete reading assignment and prepare questions for guest speaker.*

### **Class 8 | *The Climax***

We'll end the class with a screening of a journalism movie that follows a team of reporters investigating a sexual abuse scandal at a major and trusted institution. Our guest speaker is one of the actual reporters and he will discuss 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 project.*

## **Grading System**

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

40% assignments

20% final project

30% class participation

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%)
<i>Ordinary work, needs significant revision</i>	<i>Major problems with facts, reporting</i>
C+ (79% to 77%)	D (69% to 65%)
C (76% to 73%)	<i>Issues with plagiarism, etc.</i>
C- (72% to 70%)	F (64% to 0%)

## **Disability Disclosure Statement**

Academic accommodations are available for students with disabilities. The Moses Center website is [nyu.edu/csd](http://nyu.edu/csd). Please contact the Moses Center for Students with Disabilities (212-998-4980 or [mosescsd@nyu.edu](mailto: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.