This lecture course will introduce students to the art and craft of 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 of the world, questions of sensationalism, bias, and diversity, and an exploration of the industry’s economics and current digital upheaval. We’ll delve into the structure of news—the “Inverted Pyramid,” “ledes” and “nut graphs”—correct common grammar and punctuation mistakes, and dissect articles to inform our own writing. To better understand what journalism has been and might be, students will be introduced to a selection of media, from the first investigative feature story of the 19th century through “yellow journalism,” coverage of war and conflict, media criticism, long-form narrative classics, radio segments, early broadcast news, as well as delving into topics such as Wikileaks, blogging, shield laws, and the rise of citizen journalism and social media.

We meet once a week for two-and-a-half hours. I’ll try to schedule one 15-minute break per session. In addition to the lectures a number of guests—often professional journalists—will offer presentations.

Your job will be to read, watch, or listen to the assigned material, complete the automated learning module (more on that later), come to class ready to participate, prepare for tests and quizzes, and produce a range of assignments. (Unlike most of the courses in the Arthur L. Carter Institute and the Journalism major, this is not a reporting and writing course, though reporting and writing will often be discussed.)

Course Goals

1. To illuminate major issues in journalism.
2. To make you a better informed, more critical reader and consumer of news and media.
3. To illustrate what journalism, at its best, might be and accomplish, as well as gauge the harm it can do at its worst.
4. To take you through the steps a credible professional journalist takes in divining, researching, writing, editing, and publishing a story.
5. To explore the kinds of choices journalists face, from small ethical decisions about reporting and writing individual stories, to large ones about the nature of truth.
6. To provide a sense of journalism’s history, analyze its current state, and ponder its future.

Teaching Assistants
You will be assigned a teaching assistant at the beginning of the semester. Each is a highly regarded journalism graduate student who will hold regular office hours each week in the journalism building. I encourage you to visit them often (visit me, too). They will grade all your assignments, make arrangements for those who require special dispensation through the Moses Center, troubleshoot any problems that may arise, take attendance, and proctor exams.

Your TA will email you at your NYU account after the first class to introduce herself (or himself), inform you of her office hours, and invite you to share the automated learning module.

Required Texts

- Nickel and Dimed: On Not Getting By in America, by Barbara Ehrenreich
- Between the World and Me, by Ta-Nehisi Coates

These books are available at the NYU Bookstore. Or to save money you can buy them used or borrow them from a friend. I scheduled them for late in the semester to give you plenty of time to find them.

- Automated Learning Module (ALM): An online journalism textbook with several automatically graded exams to test your comprehension and mastery of the material. You will be sent an invitation to your NYU email account that will give you access.

I will also regularly assign articles and other material.

Course Requirements

As Woody Allen once said, “Showing up is 80 percent of life.” We meet 14 times over the course of the semester; students are expected to attend all lectures. Our TAs will take attendance at the beginning of class and after the break. If you are ill or have another valid reason you must miss class (death in the family, religious holiday, a massive snowstorm disrupts your travel) inform your TA before class.

If you miss two classes we will deduct a half point off your final grade (‘B+’ would be lowered to ‘B,’ and so forth.) Three unexplained absences will result in a full point off (‘B’ would become ‘C.’) If you skip more than three classes you will receive an incomplete for the course.

Bring a laptop or tablet to class to take notes, quizzes and exams, but leave your phone in your bag or pocket.

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 text, check email or Facebook, shop
for boots on Amazon, swipe left or right on Tinder… you get the gist. Our TAs will monitor the room and may ask you to leave if you are using your device for activities other than those that would assist in learning. In that case you would be marked absent that day.

You will complete several assignments for this course, including:

- Automated learning module (ALM).
- Three short, surprise quizzes on readings and lectures. (If you miss one, you receive an ‘F.’)
- Profile (750-1,000 words). Your TA must approve your subject in advance.
- Multimedia explainer: Create an “explainer” using your choice of platforms, such as Go Animate (http://goanimate.com) Digital Films (http://www.digitalfilms.com), Pixton (http://www.pixton.com), Powtoon (http://www.powtoon.com), Plotogon (https://plotagon.com), or produce a photo slide show (with narration), video, or other form.
- Midterm exam (in class, Mar. 7th): Series of essays to be completed in class. (Closed book: no Internet, no apps, no notes, no collaboration.)
- Final exam (in class, May 9th): Series of essays to be completed in class that will include themes and material from the entire semester. (Closed book: no Internet, no apps, no notes, no collaboration.)

Each assignment, quiz, or test will be graded based on your mastery of the facts, depth of reporting, quality of analysis, and your ability to apply class discussions and writing. If you hand in your assignment after deadline, your grade will be lowered one full grade (e.g. B to C) for each day late. (Special exemptions for students registered with the Moses Center.) Grades may also be lowered for misspelled proper names and other glaring inaccuracies or deficiencies.

We have a Facebook Group page where we’ll conduct discussions. On it, students, TAs, and your professor can post additional material, links to resources, comments, announcements, and engage in discussions. Everyone is expected to participate. Let’s keep the level of discourse at a high level. No abusive comments. Realize it’s a public forum, so anybody and everybody will be able to read it (although only members of the class can post). Click here to request an invitation: https://www.facebook.com/groups/1537006673255414/

Grading

Automated Learning Module: 20%
Quizzes (combined): 10%
Journalistic essay: 15%
Multimedia explainer: 15%
Midterm exam: 20%
Final exam: 20%
A Word on Trigger Warnings

Over the past few years a heated debate has raged in academia (if you can say anything rages in academia) over the use of “trigger warnings.” One common definition of a trigger warning is “a statement at the start of a piece of writing, video, etc., alerting the reader or viewer to the fact that it contains potentially distressing material (often used to introduce a description of such content).”

Trigger warning proponents point out that some students in any given class may have suffered some level of trauma, whether it arises from sexual assault, violence, or other types of abuse. They should therefore receive fair warning when a reading or discussion relates to material that could cause them discomfort.

Trigger warning critics contend that the world is often messy, disturbing, and violent, and that college is a time for intellectual growth and emotional development. For this to occur, a professor’s role is to challenge students so they learn to engage rationally with arguments, ideas, opinions, and principles they might find upsetting or even deeply offensive.

While NYU does not subscribe to any university-wide position on trigger warnings—the administration advises anyone who might be traumatized by a reading or video to seek appropriate help at the university’s health center—the journalism faculty believes our entire profession should come stamped with a giant trigger warning. Part of what we do as journalists is to seek the truth no matter where it may lead. This sometimes takes us into violent, disturbing places.

In this course we will read and discuss articles and view video that deal with some disturbing themes, including sexual assault, war and combat, terrorism, disease, racism, and sexism.

If these are topics that you believe could trigger in you any psychological or health problems, you should not take this course.

Also, at times you may find yourself vehemently disagreeing with the writer of an essay, article, feature story, interview subject on camera, another student, a guest, or your professor. I encourage you to speak up and share your perspectives. But do it in a way that fosters mutual respect and be aware that reasonable people can have, at time, views that may appear “extreme” to some.

About This Syllabus

This syllabus is not etched in stone. By its nature, journalism is fluid and subject to fast-paced changes. Sometimes events can dictate a change in lecture topics, readings, or assignments. So go with the flow.

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SCHEDULE

Week 1: Introduction

Course introduction: Overview of the syllabus. Plagiarism and other sins; attribution, conflicts of interest, human sources, on the record, off the record, on background, and not for attribution. Context: How we got here, newspapers over the past 100 years; advertising as a revenue stream; craigslist and the death of classifieds; today’s news consumption; the impact of technologies, such as the printing press, postal system, paper costs, telegraph, telephone, the Internet, apps, screens, the transition to mobile on the craft and business of journalism; the eight-second attention span and battle for “mindshare.”

Due next class:

*NYU Journalism Handbook: Ethics, Law, & Good Practice:*


Post a 1- to 2-sentence-long definition of what you think a journalist is to our Facebook Group page. (Click to [https://www.facebook.com/groups/1537006673255414/](https://www.facebook.com/groups/1537006673255414/) and request an invitation to join. Then post.)

Week 2: What Is a Journalist?

Bobst Research Librarian Katherine Boss on using NYU’s research databases; in-class database project. Seeking a definition of journalist; Branzburg v. Hayes; types of journalism—from news articles to listicles to eyewitness accounts and more: Thai tsunami, London and Madrid bombings; Wikileaks “Collateral Damage.”

Due next class:

ALM Unit 1: Finish all the exercises.


Last Week Tonight With John Oliver on Native Advertising (video): [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E_F5GxCwize](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E_F5GxCwize)
“Newspapers and Thinking the Unthinkable,” by Clay Shirky: 

**Week 3: The Business of Journalism**

The “Medici model,” “bootstrapping,” venture capital, journalism non-profits; aggregating eyeballs: a short history of advertising; the “wall” between the business and editorial sides; inherent conflicts between the search for “truth” v. the realities of profit; reader monopolies vs. limitless competition; VHS, DVD, CDs, MP3s, and streaming; CPMs, click-bait and click-through rates, measuring engagement, and the search for a new ad unit; a 1981 report on online news; the profit and pitfalls of “native advertising” (or “branded content”); the cesspool of comment threads and the impact on reader interpretation; social media, the “Facebook effect,” and the role of oxytocin in helping to drive social transactions.

**Due next class:**
(No class next week. Due Feb. 22)

ALM Unit 2. Finish all the exercises.

“A Rape on Campus: A Brutal Assault and Struggle for Justice at UVA”: Rolling Stone: 
http://www.rollingstone.com/culture/features/a-rape-on-campus-20141119#ixzz3NdXmIanmg

“U-Va. Students Challenge Rolling Stone Account of Alleged Sexual Assault”: Washington Post: 

“Rolling Stone and UVA: The Columbia University Graduate School of Journalism Report: An Anatomy of a Journalistic Failure,” by Sheila Coronel, Steve Coll, Derek Kravitz, Rolling Stone: Read more: 
http://www.rollingstone.com/culture/features/a-rape-on-campus-what-went-wrong-20150405#ixzz3y6uXcGs9

“Dr. V’s Magical Putter”: Grantland: 
http://grantland.com/features/a-mysterious-physicist-golf-club-dr-v/

“The Dr. V Story: A Letter From the Editor,” by Bill Simmons: 

“How Many Rape Reports Are False?” by Megan McArdle, Bloomberg View: 
http://www.bloombergview.com/articles/2014-09-19/how-many-rape-reports-are-false

**Week 4: Sources, Privacy, News Judgment, and the Public’s Right to Know**
Mon., Feb. 22
The “narrative fallacy”: the inherent problem with trend, political, and stock market stories; “if it bleeds it leads” local broadcast news and impact on public perception; Rolling Stone/UVA sexual assault story; Dr. V’s Magical Putter and LGBT sources; Kobe Bryant rape allegations, the ensuing media circus, and the practice of not naming alleged victims of sexual assault vs. identifying alleged perpetrators; sensitivity to sources; Deadspin; Arthur Ashe v. USA Today; Sony hack and publication of private email; Charlie Hebdo. Rules governing the use of recordings: one-party and two-party states.

**Due next class:**


Also due:

**Story pitch:** File a short memo (300 words) via email to your TA that introduces a person you wish to profile and why. Your subject must be interesting and doing something special and/or important. What makes this person worthy of being profiled? You cannot profile friends, relatives, work colleagues or any NYU students. **You must meet your subject in person for the bulk of interviewing** (no email, telephone interviews, or other digital communication such as text or IM, although you can use them for follow-up questions). Profile (750-1,000 words) due Mar. 7.

**Week 5: Pitfalls of Anonymous Sources**

Legal and ethical implications for anonymous sourcing; rules of identification; Watergate; Atlanta Olympics bombing; Wen Ho Lee; Judy Miller, WMDs and the run up to war; the Valerie Plame affair; government patterns of spin: Paris attacks, the encryption debate, and The New York Times; questions surrounding the NYT nail salon investigation. Anonymous source scandals’ impact on newsrooms editorial policies.

**Due at the start of class: Story pitch**
Due next class:

ALM Unit 3. Finish all the exercises.


http://www.nytimes.com/2004/05/26/international/middleeast/26FTE_NOTE.html?page=print


Week 6: MIDTERM

In-class midterm exam (2 hours, 30 minutes, proctored): You’ll have a choice of essays that cover all the reading, lectures, and ALM units 1-3. Closed book: no notes, no “cheat sheets,” no Internet, no apps, no collaboration.

Profile (750–1,000 words) due at the start of class. This is a hard deadline. Late assignments penalized a full grade off for each day they are late. At the bottom of your
story supply the phone number(s) for your profile subject. (Email and mailing address would not be sufficient on their own.)

Use Microsoft Word, Pages, or Google Docs for your work. Your TA will receive 30+ files so label yours with your name, the date, and the course, in this fashion:

LAST NAME, FIRST NAME. 03.07.16.IJ.DOCX. For example: OBAMA, BARACK.03.07.16.IJ.DOCX

TAs will reject files that are improperly labeled.

**Due next class:**
(No class next week. Due Mar. 21)

“The Editorial Notebook; Trenchcoats, Then and Now,” New York Times editorial:  

“New York Times Statement About 1932 Pulitzer Prize Awarded to Walter Duranty”:  

“Jimmy’s World,” by Janet Cooke, Washington Post, Sep. 28, 1980:  

“No Second Chance For Stephen Glass,” by Adam L. Penenberg:  

“Correcting the Record; Times Reporter Who Resigned Leaves Long Trail of Deception,” by New York Times staff:  

“Ex-USA Today Reporter Faked Major Stories,” by Blake Morrison, USA Today:  

“All the Mistakenly Identified ‘Suspects’ in the Boston Bombing Investigation,” by Joe Coscarelli, New York:  

**SPRING BREAK**

**Week 7: Liars, Cheats, and Scoundrels**

In-class screening of “Shattered Glass.”

**Due next class:**

ALM Unit 4: Finish all the exercises.


**Week 8**

**Part 1. The art of the explainer**

**Part 2. Breaking the Law in Pursuit of a Story**

Explainers: fivethirtyeight.com, vox.com, John Oliver, the Daily Show.

We’ll view in class:

- “Quantative Easing Explained”: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PTUY16CkS-k](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PTUY16CkS-k)
- “Charlie Brooker’s How to Report the News”: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aHun58mz3vI](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aHun58mz3vI)
- “One is One… Or Is It?” by Christopher Danielson: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EtcleWGG7WQ#t=38](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EtcleWGG7WQ#t=38)
- “NSA Filed Decoded: What the Revelations Mean For You,” the Guardian: [http://www.theguardian.com/world/interactive/2013/nov/01/snowden-nsa-files-surveillance-revelations-decoded#section/1](http://www.theguardian.com/world/interactive/2013/nov/01/snowden-nsa-files-surveillance-revelations-decoded#section/1)
- “The Fracking Song (My Water’s on Fire Tonight)”: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=timfvNgr_Q4](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=timfvNgr_Q4)
- Taiwanese animators: [https://www.youtube.com/user/NMAWorldEdition](https://www.youtube.com/user/NMAWorldEdition)

Breaking the law in pursuit of a story: Cincinnati Enquirer v. Chiquita Banana; Food Lion/ABC News.
In class we’ll view the original ABC/Food Lion segment and Frontline’s report on Rupert Murdoch’s NewsCorp. phone hacking scandal:
http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/frontline/film/murdochs-scandal/

**Due next class:**

History of American Journalism: 1930s:
http://history.journalism.ku.edu/1930/1930.shtml and 1940s:
http://history.journalism.ku.edu/1940/1940.shtml

“Edward R. Murrow, Broadcaster and Ex-Chief of U.S.I.A, Dies”:

**Due in two weeks (Apr. 11th):** Multimedia explainer: Create an “explainer” using your choice of platforms, such as Go Animate (http://goanimate.com) Digital Films (http://www.digitalfilms.com), Pixton (http://www.pixton.com), Powtoon (http://www.powtoon.com), Plotagon (https://plotagon.com), or produce a photo slide show (with narration), video, or other form. Choose your own topic: the only requirement is that you must explain something **newsworthy** and accomplish it in a fresh, unique way. You can’t do an explainer on, say, making coffee or shopping in a mall. It must have substance, although I heartily endorse humor and creativity. Do yours on politics, foreign affairs, the environment, Wall Street, science, technology, media, or even sports (as long as your explainer reveals something surprising).

Explainer resource:

“How to Write a Killer Explainer Video Script”:
http://www.videobrewery.com/blog/how-to-write-a-killer-explainer-video-script

**Week 9: Radio and TV News**

The rise of radio; Edward R. Murrow and the London Blitz and Buchenwald concentration camp; Orson Welles and War of the Worlds. Impact of newsreels then television on news; the Hindenburg disaster, Wright Bros. early flights; Vietnam War coverage; Iraq War embedded reporters.

In class, we’ll listen to Edward R. Murrow radio broadcasts and view CBS News’ “Harvest of Shame.”

**Due next class:**

ALM Unit 5: Finish all the exercises.

*Nickel and Dimed*, by Barbara Ehrenreich
“Rubbish,” by Chris Lydgate, Willamette Week:  


“Writer Evan Ratliff Tried to Vanish: Here’s What Happened,” Evan Ratliff, Wired:  

**Week 10: Stunt Journalism**

W.T. Stead, Nellie Bly, James O’Keefe “Acorn Prostitution Investigation;” anti-abortion group goes after Planned Parenthood over fetal tissue; car hacking, “hurricane weathermen,” the ethics of NBC’s “To Catch a Predator;” The Daily Show in Iran; open carry gun scenario; “Black Like Me”: John Howard Griffin’s famous race stunt.

In-class screening of Super Size Me, by Morgan Spurlock.

Explainers are due at the start of class. This is a hard deadline. Late assignments penalized a full grade off for each day they are late. You can either email a link to your project to your TA or provide a file, which **must be properly slugged** with your name, the date, and the course, in this fashion:

LAST NAME, FIRST NAME. 03.07.16.IJ.DOCX. For example: OBAMA, BARACK.03.07.16.IJ.DOCX

TAs will reject files that are improperly labeled.

**Due next class:**

“The Death of Captain Waskow,” by Ernie Pyle, Jan. 10, 1944:  
http://mediaschool.indiana.edu/erniepyle/1944/01/10/the-death-of-captain-waskow/

“Hitler’s Sea Wall Is Breached, Invaders Fighting Way Inland; New Allied Landings Are Made,” by Associated Press, Jun. 7, 1944:  
http://www.nytimes.com/learning/general/onthisday/big/0606.html#article

“Dachau: Experimental Murder,” by Martha Gellman, Collier’s, Jun. 23, 1945:  

“Hiroshima,” by John Hershey, New Yorker, Aug. 31, 1946:  
http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/1946/08/31/hiroshima


“The 10th anniversary of a photo that changed the Iraq War”: http://www.cjr.org/feature/one_day_in_the_war_of_images.php?page=all

**Week 11: War and Conflict Coverage**

Coverage of World War I and II: news vs. propaganda; newsreels, newspapers, magazines; Clare Hollingworth, Martha Gellman, Ernie Pyle, Robert Capa: Beaches of Normandy (Life magazine). The dangers that reporters face covering war and terrorism: Daniel Pearl, Richard Engel, Jason Rezaian; journalists killed in 2015; ethics of embedded journalists; terrorist organizations’ use of social media; ISIS recruitment propaganda, Twitter; Hamas Student League and Facebook; Abu Ghraib photos; questions surrounding Schmidle’s Bin Laden capture piece.

In-class screening of newsreels: http://www.history.com/topics/world-war-ii/d-day/videos/d-day-documented-by-newsreel-cameras

**Due next class:**

Finish ALM Unit 5: Complete all the exercises.

*Between the World and Me*, by Ta-Nehisi Coates.


Black Like Me, Fifty Years Later,” by Bruce Watson, Smithsonian: http://www.smithsonianmag.com/arts-culture/black-like-me-50-years-later-74543463/?all


**Week 12: Race**
The Civil Rights Movement and impact of broadcast TV; march from Selma to Montgomery. The power of citizen video; Rodney King; 9/11; Ferguson live blogs and social media; Eric Garner; “Between the World and Me” (poem), by Richard Wright; Martin Luther King “I Have a Dream” speech; “Black Man vs White Man Open Carry An AR-15 In Oregon.” Smartphone adoption and ubiquitous video.

Panel on race in media.

**Due next class:**

“Damsel in Distress: Part 1 - Tropes vs Women in Video Games” (video), by Anita Sarkeesian:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X6p5AZp7r_Q&list=PLn4ob_5_ttEaA_vc8F3fjZ62esf9yP61


The Status of Women in the U.S. Media 2015,” by Women’s Media Center:
http://wmc.3cdn.net/83bf6082a319460eb1_hsrm680x2.pdf

**Week 13: Gender**

Trolls, Social Shaming, Doxing, and the Downside of Citizen Participation in Media; Gamergate. The sexism Barbara Walters faced.

“In-class viewing: Megan Kamerick (Ted Talk): “Women Should Represent Women in Media”:
https://www.ted.com/talks/megan_kamerick_women_should_represent_women_in_media?language=en#t-6388

Panel on women in media.

Due next week: review all ALM units and material for the final exam.

**Week 14: FINAL EXAM**

In-class final exam (2 hours 30 minutes, proctored): You’ll have a choice of essays that cover all the reading, lectures, and ALM units 1-5. Closed book: no notes, no “cheat sheets,” no Internet, no apps, no collaboration.