

CST 310: News Media in America, Fall 2008, 3 credits
Cedar Crest College, BHA 4, T 4-6:30pm
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Office hours: TBA and by appointment

Required Texts: Always bring your textbooks to class.

- Bagdikian, Ben. The new media monopoly, 7th edition. (Beacon, 2004)
- Phillips, Peter. Censored 2008: The top 25 censored stories, 30th edition. (Seven Stories Press, 2007)

Important Websites and Additional suggested materials for class:

- ◆ *Morning Call* web site www.mcall.com
- ◆ *New York Times* web site www.nytimes.com
- ◆ Project Censored Website http://www.projectcensored.org/censored_2007/index.htm
- ◆ The Reporters Committee for Freedom of the Press www.rcfp.org
- ◆ Media Watch <http://www.pbs.org/newshour/media/index.html>
- ◆ Fairness and accuracy in reporting <http://www.fair.org/index.php>

Journalists must keep up with the news. Reading local and national newspapers is a crucial component of every reporter's job. As students strive to develop their media skills, they must be informed about local, state, national and international events. Students are required keep up with national news (via newspaper, television, radio or web sites).

Course Description: This course will further analyze the ongoing debate about press freedom and look at the relationship between the news media and the American public and their ideals. This course is designed to make students critical consumers of news and aims to expand their knowledge of the press in America.

Course Objectives and Outcomes:

At the conclusion of this course, students should be able to:

1. Analyze journalistic pieces coherently and effectively
2. Demonstrate an understanding between the American press and democracy
3. Present information with clarity, objectivity, accuracy, and thoroughness
4. Present opinions with clarity and substantiation
5. Demonstrate understanding of the principles of journalistic ethics

In this course, students will develop the basic skills needed to become analytical journalists and informed citizens.

Key questions we will consider in class:

Are the media liberal? Does news matter? Do media monopolies harm the marketplace of ideas? Is news entertainment? Do reporters have a responsibility to be objective? Is objectivity even possible? Should reporters promise their sources confidentiality? Is it ever OK to reveal a source? How are the news media and journalists represented in other media? How do these representations influence the public's perception of journalists?

Course Format:

This course will employ a combination of lectures, discussions, movie presentations and debate. The instructor in this course will act as a guide and moderator to student led discussion. This course requires students to complete all reading when assigned and to take an active role in class discussion. Most importantly, we will discuss things that you may or may not agree with – You are free to establish your own views on all topics – but it is important that we are open to all ideas in class.

Student Assessment/Evaluation:

The following list of assignments will be discussed in more detail in class:

News Presentation

Students will be asked to present a summary of major news events at the beginning of class. Students will be asked to prepare a 10-15 minute presentation of current events. The events should be local, national and international in scope. Presentations should take the format of a broadcast in that they are somewhat informal and can cover a lot of material in a short amount of time. Students should also tell the class about events happening with news media (controversy, criticism, etc. <http://www.pbs.org/newshour/media/index.html>). The presentation will constitute 10% of your final grade. We will assign presentation dates during the first week of class.

“Censored” Presentation

Select “a PC news story from the “Top 25” list and become an “expert” on the story, not only by reading the PC article, but by finding at least 3 other independent news stories about the topic. Then, have students write a short summary of the story, concluding with some thoughts about why that particular story might be on the “censored” list.” Then, “prepare and present a 5-7 minute speech to the classroom or community on their PC story, complete with a multimedia component if possible.” (retrieved January 12, 2007 from <http://www.projectcensored.org/resources/teacherguide.htm>)

Presentations will be graded on applicability to text material, creativity, and learning experience. Have fun with this assignment – you are in charge of the class time so please make sure that you put the time to good use for yourself and your classmates.

Debate/Presentation

Through class discussion, we will decide the format of the final project. Students will be asked to engage in a timely debate or give a formal presentation pertinent to class content. Further details will be established.

In class/take home assignments

Students will occasionally be asked to complete assignments in class or at home. If you miss an in class assignment, there will be no opportunity to make the assignment up but if you miss class the day a take home assignment is assigned, you will be permitted to turn in that assignment with the rest of your classmates. What this means then is that you are responsible for the work that you have missed in class and you are responsible to make up that work before our next class session. Please find another member of the class that you can call/email if you miss class.

Assignment	Value	Points	Due
“Censored” presentation and paper	20 percent	200	TBD
Student news presentation	10 percent	100	TBD
Debate/Final Presentation - TBD	25 percent	250	Last day of class
In-class/take home assignments	20 percent	200	Throughout semester
Participation	15 percent	150	Weekly
Attendance	10 percent	100	Weekly

The following is the **grading scale** for this course:

A	= 100-93	C	= 76.9-74
A-	= 92.9-90	C-	= 73.9-70
B+	= 89.9-87	D+	= 69.9-67
B	= 86.9-84	D	= 66.9-64
B-	= 83.9-80	D-	= 63.9-60
C+	= 79.9-77	F	= 59.9 and below

Participation/Attendance:

Participation is mandatory. Participation means taking an active role in class discussions and projects and possibly providing constructive criticism of your classmates’ work. In-class assignments and discussions

are **central** to this course. Students will earn up to 100 points for participation. Obviously you can't participate if you do not attend class. *There will be no make-ups for missed assignments. Extended absences due to illness or a family emergency will be excused only with notification from the Office of the Dean of Student Affairs.* I realize that we all have busy lives outside of school but because we only meet one night a week, it is important to be present every class session.

Deadlines:

Deadlines are part of journalism! Part of learning about the media is learning how to cope with deadline pressure. Work handed in after the deadline without prior approval will be marked down 10 percent for each day that it is late. The best way to make a deadline is to finish work before it is due. Assignments will not be accepted via email.

Plagiarism:

Deliberate or accidental, plagiarism is a serious academic and professional offense and a violation of the spirit of the Cedar Crest Honor Code philosophy. Depending on the severity of the offense, penalties for plagiarism will range from the assignment of an "F" for the article or work, to the assignment of an "F" for the course. All cases of plagiarism will be reported to the Vice President for Academic Affairs and Dean of Faculty. Under certain circumstances, acts of plagiarism may result in suspension or expulsion from the College.

Learning Disabilities:

Students with documented disabilities who may need academic accommodations should discuss these needs with their professors during the first two weeks of class. Students with disabilities who wish to request accommodations should contact the Advising Center.

Faculty statement on disruptive behavior (C. Cameron, author – edited from original version):

Generally, disruptive behavior in the classroom is any behavior that interferes with the process of learning. At Cedar Crest College, it is the right of every student and faculty member to engage in a classroom experience free from disruptive behavior.

What is disruptive to one person might not be disruptive to another, so the final authority on disruptive behavior is the faculty member. Faculty members have the authority to address disruptive behavior in the manner they see fit under the guidelines set forth in the College Catalog.

Disruptive behavior may be viewed on a continuum ranging from the isolated incidents of mildly annoying or irritating behavior to more clearly disruptive, dangerous, and/or violent behavior.

Examples of disruptive behavior may include the following:

- Persistent speaking without permission
- Use of electronic devices, cell phones, or pagers during class
- Threats or harassment of any kind
- Working on homework for other classes
- Inappropriate personal disclosures during class (sharing too much information)
- Sleeping in class
- Entering class late or leaving early (without permission)
- Eating/drinking in class without permission
- Arguing with faculty and other students

Additionally, classroom participants should note that basic human courtesy is an expectation when interacting with faculty members, staff, and other students.

Verbal Communication

Faculty members are not part of your social circle or peer group and should not be addressed as such. On the first day of class, faculty members will introduce themselves and express how you should address them.

Addressing a faculty member by his or her first name is not acceptable unless the faculty member invites you to do so.

When addressing a faculty member in person, use a positive, respectful approach. Ideally, you should meet with faculty members during their scheduled office hours and not at the beginning or end of class unless the interaction will be brief.

When using the telephone, be sure to identify yourself at the beginning of the conversation. Be brief and concise, particularly when leaving a voice mail message.

Written Communication

When sending email, remember that your writing conveys an image of you and demonstrates respect for the recipient. Treat email as you would any other written correspondence: Begin with the appropriate greeting (“Dear Professor Ortiz”), use complete sentences with good grammar and spelling, use a friendly and polite tone, and expect that faculty members will return your correspondence when they are able. Expecting an “instant response” is not realistic.

Schedule of Readings and Assignments

(Instructor reserves right to make changes to the syllabus)

If there is a snow day during the semester, we will push assignments back one week and have final presentations during “finals time.” Please plan travel plans for the end of the semester accordingly.

Almost weekly we will view a film on news or about those who make the news. If you miss a video, please contact a classmate to get the information so you can be up to date.

Aug 26 – Course Intro and Expectations

What is News? Who decides?

News Ownership exercise

Sign up for news presentations and “censored” presentations

Sept 9 – Discuss *Monopoly*:

Preface

Chapter 1: Common media for and uncommon nation

Chapter 2: The big five

News presentation 1

Sept 16

News presentation 2

Censored presentation 1 & 2

Discuss *Monopoly*:

Chapter 3: The internet

Chapter 6: Paper in the digital age

Sept 23

News presentation 3

Censored presentation 3 & 4

Discuss *Monopoly*:

Chapter 4: (Not) All the news that’s fit to print

Chapter 5: All the news that fits

Sept 30

News presentation 3 & 4

Censored presentation 4 & 5

- Discuss *Monopoly*:
Chapter 7: Rebellion and Remedies
- Oct 7
News presentation 5 & 6
Censored presentation 6
Discuss *Monopoly*:
Chapter 8: Won't they ever learn?
- Oct 14 – No classes – Fall Break
- Oct 21
News presentation 6 & 7
Censored presentation 7
Discuss *Monopoly*:
Chapter 9: From mythology to theology
- Oct 28 -
News presentation 8
Censored presentation 8 & 9
Discuss *Monopoly*:
Chapter 10: “Dear Mr. President...”
Determine final project format and topics
- Nov 4 – ELECTION DAY
News presentation 9 & 10
Censored presentation 10 & 11
Discuss *Monopoly*:
Chapter 11: Only the affluent need apply
- Nov 11 –
News presentation 11 & 12
Censored presentation 12 & 13
Discuss *Monopoly*:
Chapter 12: Dr. Brandreth has gone to Harvard
- Nov 18 -
News presentation 13 & 14
Censored presentation 14
Discuss *Monopoly*:
Afterward
- Nov 25 -
News presentation 15
Censored presentation 15
Read: Hostage: The Jill Carroll story
<http://www.csmonitor.com/specials/carroll/index.html>
- Dec 2 -
Class Evaluation and final projects