

WRITING THE WORLD

Instructor: Peter Rutland; tel. 2483; email <prutland>, office PAC 203; office hours TTh 10.30-12.00.

This is not a course in how to be a journalist. Rather, it aims to provide a broad introduction to the practice of journalism in the contemporary world, covering a variety of forms of media – print, TV, online and cinema. It is writing intensive, with weekly assignments to hone your writing skills and ability to write quickly. We will also be following current events and analyzing media responses as they evolve.

The syllabus in part draws on the late David Carr’s [Press Play](#) course and suggestions from Lydia Tomkiw, a graduate of Wesleyan (2011) and Columbia’s School of International Affairs (2015).

ASSESSMENT: Out of 100 points, as follows:

- 1) Seven short papers, 500-700 words in length, due on Fridays. [10 points each]
The syllabus lists nine assignments: you can skip two, or drop the two lowest scores.
The papers do not need footnotes, but they should include a list of sources consulted.
- 2) Rewrites of any three of the nine papers, to be submitted no later than two weeks after the original submission. [5 points each]
- 3) Movie review. You will write a 500-700 word review of an assigned movie, due 11.00 am on Monday Dec 7, and do a five minute presentation (plus show a short clip) from the movie on Dec 7 or Dec 9. [10 points]
- 3) Extra credit reports. [5 points]

Email your papers to <prutland@wesleyan.edu> by 4.00 pm on the due day as attached documents in Word.

Books for the course, available for purchase in Broad Street Books:

David Carr	<i>The Night of the Gun</i> (2009)
George Orwell	<i>1984</i> (1950)
Mario Vargas Llosa	<i>The Feast of the Goat</i> (2002)

All the articles listed on the syllabus are available via the hyperlinks, either online or through the course’s Wesfiles page. All the movies are available on DVD at the Olin reserve desk.

Students must attend every class and complete the required reading each week. I only use Moodle to report grades.

Unexplained absence from three classes will be treated as withdrawal from the course. Plagiarism i.e. using material not written by yourself without clear attribution to the source will be punished. You are welcome to bring laptops to class but do NOT use them for email or web surfing.

Useful web sites

Reuters Institute for Study of Journalism	http://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/
Nieman Journalism Laboratory at Harvard’s JFK School	http://www.niemanlab.org/
Shorenstein Center at Harvard’s JFK School	http://shorensteincenter.org/
Poynter News University MediaWire	http://www.poynter.org/category/news/mediawire/
Jay Rosen’s Press Link	http://pressthink.org/
<i>Columbia Journalism Review</i>	http://www.cjr.org/
<i>American Journalism Review</i>	http://ajr.org/

Sept 7-9 **INTRODUCTION**

Sept 11 **ASSIGNMENT #1** ‘What 9/11 means to me.’

Email the paper, 500-700 words to <prutland> by 4.00 pm on Friday. Sept 11.

Sept 14 **THE WORLD SINCE 9/11**

How have journalists dealt with the enormity of 9/11?

George Packer [‘Dark Hours: Violence in the age of terror,’](#) *New Yorker*, 5/20/15
Joan Didion [‘Fixed opinions, or the hinge of history,’](#) *NY Review of Books* 01/16/ 13
Tom Junod [‘The falling man’](#) *Esquire* 9/1/03

Sept 16 **TV NEWS - CBS**

CBS’s 60 Minutes is the most popular and long-lasting news program in the US.
What is the secret of its success?

Richard Campbell [‘60 Minutes across the decades,’](#) Peabody Awards, 2012 (interview)
CBS News [How a slap started Tunisia’s revolution](#) 60 Minutes, 2/20/11
Nice example of 60 Minutes at its best.
Lara Logan [Benghazi](#) report – where telling a story got in the way of the truth.
Sarah Stein [‘Legitimizing TV journalism in 60 Minutes,’](#) *Critical Studies in Media Communication* 18: 3 (2001) 249-69.

Sept 16 **Extra credit opportunity** Opening Talk for Zilkha Gallery exhibition,
R. Luke DuBois: In Real Time. Location: Center for Arts Hall, 4.30 pm.

Sept 16 **The Republican primary debate (CNN) 8.00 pm.**

Sept 18 **ASSIGNMENT #2** ‘The Republican primary debate’

Provide your own assessment of the debate – who ‘won’, how well was it conducted, etc.
Email the paper, 500-700 words, to me by 4.00 pm on Friday. Sept 18.

Sept 21 **THE REPUBLICAN DEBATE – POST MORTEM**

We will review and discuss media coverage of the Republican race.

John Sides [‘Why is Trump surging,’](#) *Washington Post*, 7/20/14
John Sides [‘Why news coverage may matter more than the debate’](#)
Washington Post 10/2/12
Brendan Nyhan [‘How to avoid pack journalism’](#) *Columbia Journ. Rev.* 10/2/12

Sept 22 **Extra credit opportunity** Talk by Doug Foyle and Peter Rutland
‘Gorbachev, Bush and German Unification’ Location: Fisk 210

Sept 23

POLITICAL COMMUNICATION

A look at the work of George Lakoff as a window into modern techniques of political communication.

Paul Rosenberg [‘This is why conservatives win’](#) *Salon* 11/22/14
Interview with George Lakoff on his theory of ‘framing.’
George Lakoff [‘Retaking political discourse’](#) 03/1/12. 60 min lecture
Robert Mackey [‘Rashomon on the West Bank’](#) *New York Times* 9/1/15

Sept 25

ASSIGNMENT #3 ‘The use and abuse of framing’

Come up with one example of framing and explain why it works or does not work.
Email the paper, 500-700 words, to me by 4.00 pm on Friday. Sept 25.

Sept 28

GEORGE ORWELL

A master of political journalism and one of the most influential authors of the 20th century.
How well does his classic critique of totalitarianism stand up against the passage of time?
Is it still worth reading today?
What can we learn from Orwell about the role of language in politics?

George Orwell *1984* (1950)
George Orwell [‘Politics and the English language’](#) (1946)

Sept 30

TV NEWS – CNN

The Gulf War saw the first satellite broadcasting from the battlefield – hence the ‘CNN effect.’

CNN [‘Breaking News: 35 years of CNN’](#) (2015) 40 minute documentary.
Piers Robinson [‘Media as a driving force in international politics’](#) *Global Policy Journal*, 10/8/2013
Steven Livingston [‘Clarifying the CNN effect’](#) Shorenstein Center, 1997.

Sept 30

Outside lecture Emma Sky (Yale University) 7.00 pm, PAC 001
‘The Unravelling: High Hopes and Missed Opportunities in Iraq’

Oct 2

ASSIGNMENT #4 ‘Emma Sky’s account of the Iraq war’

Email the paper, 500-700 words by 4.00 pm on Friday. Sept 18.

Oct 5-7

COVERING FOREIGN NEWS

The foreign correspondent is usually portrayed as a hero and occasionally as a fool. What was the classic role of the foreign correspondent, and what is their role today in the face of revolutionary changes in the way news is gathered and delivered?

Let's also look at the work of Wesleyan grad Lauren Wolfe.

Ryszard Kapuscinski [‘My alleyway’](#) *The New Yorker* 3/26/01
Simon Romero [‘Scandals in Brazil prompt fears of turmoil’](#) NYT 8/12/15
Peter Hessler [‘Travels with my censor,’](#) *The New Yorker* 3/9/15
Lynsey Addario [‘What can a pregnant photojournalist cover?’](#) *NYT Magazine* 1/28/15
Andres Martinez [‘Vacationing in Chavez’s Venezuelan paradise’](#) *Slate* 2/8/08

Lauren Wolfe [‘The effects of war on women’](#) Wesconnect, 7/6/15.
Lauren Wolfe [‘Turn on retweet tune out’](#) *Foreign Policy*, 8/1/14.
Lauren Wolfe [‘How Rwandans cope with the horrors of 1994’](#) *Atlantic* 4/24/14

Analysis:

Richard Sambrook [‘Are foreign correspondents redundant?’](#) Reuters 2010.
Jodi Enda [‘Retreating from the world,’](#) *American Journalism Review* Dec 2010.

Oct 12-14

THE NEW YORK TIMES

We could spend the whole course just talking about the *New York Times*. Let's begin with a viewing and discussion of the documentary *Page One*.

Andrew Rossi [‘Behind the story: Page One’](#) 2011 interview (6 mins)
Joshua Benton [‘The leaked NYT innovation report,’](#) Nieman Lab 5/15/14

Oct 16

ASSIGNMENT #5 Opinion piece.

Write an opinion piece on a topic which you feel strongly about, as if for the *Wesleyan Argus*. Email the paper, 500-700 words, to me by 4.00 pm on Friday. Oct 23.

Oct 19

THE LIFE OF THE JOURNALIST

The rather remarkable story of what David Carr's life before he became the NYT media reporter.

David Carr *The Night of the Gun* (2009)
Bruce Weber & Ashley Southall David Carr's [obituary](#), *New York Times*, 2/12/15
David Carr [‘David Carr’s last word on journalism,’](#) *New York Times*, 2/15/15

Oct 20

Extra credit opportunity. Dubravka Ugresic (author), ‘Nationalism vs transnationalism. What it means to be a transnational writer.’ Russell House, 8.00 pm.

Oct 23

ASSIGNMENT #6 ‘The future of the *New York Times*’

What do you look for in the *New York Times*? What recommendations would you suggest to improve its coverage? Email the paper, 500-700 words, to me by 4.00 pm on Friday. Oct 23.

Oct 21

JOURNALISTS AND HISTORY

How well do journalists do at incorporating history into their analysis?
Do they just tap into well-established stereotypes, or do they educate and inform the public?

- James Loewen [‘Why do people believe myths about the Confederacy?’](#) *Washington Post*, 7/1/2015
- Timothy Snyder [‘Fascism, Russia and Ukraine’](#) *New York Review of Books* 3/20/14
- Jill Lepore [‘The rule of history: Magna Carta, the Bill of Rights, and the hold of time’](#) *New Yorker* 4/30/15
- Gideon Rachman [‘Never forget national humiliation’](#) (China) *Financial Times* 8/27/12

Oct 24-27

FALL BREAK – no classes

Oct 28

ICONIC IMAGES

Guest lecturer – Jennifer Tucker (History).
The power of visual images in fixing historical moments in popular memory

- Susan Sontag *Regarding the Pain of Others* Ch. 2 (18-39)
- Jason Hill & Vanessa Schwartz *Getting the Picture* (2015) 1-12, also 206-210, 272-278.
- Vicki Goldberg *The Power of Photography: How Photographs Changed Our Lives*, chs. 8-9 (191-251)
- Victor Navasky [‘As if: on Barbie Zelizer,’](#) *The Nation* 3/16/2011. Review of book *About to Die. How News Images Move the Public*
- Robert Hariman & John Localities [No Caption Needed.](#) Blog, also 2007 book. *Looking for an Icon* 2005 documentary

Oct 30

ASSIGNMENT #7 ‘The uses and abuses of history’

Write an article about a contemporary topic where you use history to shed light on the present. (Hint: newspapers like anniversaries.)
Email the paper, 500-700 words, to me by 4.00 pm on Friday. Oct 30.

Nov 2

NEW MEDIA AND THE ARAB SPRING

New media – satellite TV and Facebook – were seen as playing a crucial role in igniting the Arab Spring. But the protests did not usher in a new democratic era.

- Hugh Miles [‘The Al Jazeera effect’](#) *Foreign Policy*, 02/11/2011
- Sherry Richiardi [‘The Al Jazeera effect’](#) *American Journalism Review* 03/2011
- Larry Diamond [‘Liberation technology,’](#) *Journal of Democracy*, 21:3. 2010
- Malcolm Gladwell [‘Why the revolution will not be tweeted’](#) *New Yorker* 10/4/2010
- Elisabeth Flock [‘Are Syrian citizen journalists embellishing the truth,’](#) *Washington post*, 3/27/12
- Marc Lynch [‘Syria’s socially mediated civil war’](#) USIP 1/13/14
- Marc Lynch [‘The web and the Arab spring’](#) *Journal of Democracy* Oct 15

Nov 4

REPORTING THE CRISIS IN UKRAINE

A look at how Western media have framed the Ukraine conflict, and how coverage has evolved over the past year. Note the role of visual media in reporting the current war in Ukraine. Is the Western media biased against Russia? Why is Russian propaganda, such as Russia Today TV, apparently proving so effective?

Vice News '[Selfie soldiers. Russia checks in to Ukraine](#)' 06/16/2015
ABC '[MH17 Caught in the crossfire](#)' Australian Broadcast Corporation report on the July 2014 shutdown of MH17 over eastern Ukraine.
Lydia Tomkiw '[A Ukrainian factchecking site is trying to spot fake photos](#)' *Nieman Lab* 6/2/14
The Guardian '[Is Western coverage of the Ukraine crisis anti-Russian?](#)' 8/4/2014.
Nick Cohen '[Why Western cynics lap up Putin's TV poison](#),' *The Guardian* 11/08/2014

Nov 6

ASSIGNMENT #8 'Reporting assignment'

Find an international student to interview, and use that as the basis for a story about their home country. Email the 500-700 word paper to me by 4.00 pm on Nov 6.

Nov 9

JOURNALISTS AND DICTATORS

Some of the best political fiction has come out of Latin America. What can a novelist accomplish that a news journalist cannot? Vargas Llosa examines the seamy workings of the Dominican dictator Rafael Trujillo in this powerful novel, later made into a film (2005).

Mario Vargas Llosa *The Feast of the Goat* (2002)

Nov 11

THE VICTIMIZATION OF JOURNALISTS

The Charlie Hebdo affair is just the tip of the iceberg when it comes to repression of journalists by governments, criminal gangs and others.

George Packer '[Mute button](#)' *New Yorker* 4/13/15
Roula Khalaf '[Journalists, repression & global conspiracy](#)' *Financial Times*, 9/2/2015
Simon Romero '[Murder of Brazilian journalist furthers alarming trend](#)' NYT 8/7/15
Jill Carroll '[The kidnapping](#)' *Christian Science Monitor* 8/14/06
Lawrence Wright '[Five hostages](#)' *New York Times Magazine* 7/6/15
Amie Tsang '[Caijin journal shaming signals China's growing control](#)' NYT 9/6/15
Reporters Without Borders [Press Freedom Index](#) (2013)
Committee to Protect Journalists [blog](#)

Nov 13

ASSIGNMENT #9 'Profile of a repressed journalist'

Select one journalist who has been killed or jailed for carrying out their duties, and write a profile. Email the paper, 500-700 words, to me by 4.00 pm on Friday. Nov 13.

Nov 16-18

UNDER-REPRESENTED VOICES

An eclectic collection of well-written stories than explore various marginal people and issues somewhat removed from the journalistic mainstream.

Elisa Griswold	‘Why Afghan women risk death to write poetry’ <i>NYT Mag</i> 4/27/12
Emily Gibson	‘India’s toilet crisis’ video – password ‘India’
Binyavanga Wainaina	‘How to write about Africa,’ <i>Granta</i> 92, Winter 2005
Africa is a Country	blog
Ta Nehisi Coates	‘The case for reparations’ <i>The Atlantic</i> June 2014
Mischa Berlinsky	‘Zombie underworld’ <i>Epic True Stories</i>
C.J. Chivers	‘The School,’ <i>Esquire</i> 3/14/07 (On the 2004 Beslan tragedy)
Leslie Jamison	‘Fog Count,’ <i>Oxford American</i> 4/1/13
N.R. Kleinfield	‘Baptism by fire,’ <i>New York Times</i> 6/20/2014

Nov 23-30

THE FUTURE OF NEWS

The last five years has seen the devastation of dead tree media and the rise of online news. Why did this happen, and what kinds of online news models are financially sustainable?

Matthew Garrahan & Hannah Kuchler	‘The future of news’ <i>Financial Times</i> 07/01/2015
Clay Shirky	‘Newspapers and thinking the unthinkable’ blog, 03/2009
Tony Haile	‘What you think you know about the Web is wrong’ <i>Time</i> 3/8/14
Jon Ronson	‘How one stupid tweet blew up Justine Sacco’s life,’ <i>NYT Mag</i> 2/12/15
Alexis Madrigal	‘The day the stream crested’ <i>The Atlantic</i> 12/12/13
Mike Hoyt	‘The end of American Journalism Review,’ <i>Columbia Journalism Review</i> 08/25/15
Maria Konnikova	‘Six things that make stories go viral’ <i>New Yorker</i> 1/21/14
Felxi Salmon	‘Can Murdoch hold on to Kara Swisher?’ Reuters 8/28/13
Shane Snow	‘What journalists need to know about content marketing’ <i>Poynter</i> 9/28/12
Lucia Moses	‘GE becomes legitimate online publisher,’ <i>Digiday</i> 6/25/14
David Carr	‘The Media Equation’ Carr’s <i>New York Times</i> column about new media and technology (2006-2015). eg Flagging Tribune 10/6/10
Robert Picard	‘Journalists’ perceptions about the future of journalistic work’ Reuters Institute, May 2015

Dec 2-9

MOVIES ABOUT JOURNALISM

How has the silver screen treated the profession of journalism? Each student will be assigned one of the films, and will be do a five minute class presentation on the film, and show a short film clip.

Bernard Weinraub	‘Bad guys, good guys. Journalists in the movies’ <i>NY Times</i> 10/13/97
Chip Rowe	‘Hacks on film’ <i>American Journalism Review</i> Nov 1992
David Carr	‘Magazine writing on the web, for film’ <i>New York Times</i> 8/11/13
Brian McNair	<i>Journalists in Film</i> (2009)
Howard Good	<i>Outcasts. The Image of Journalists in Contemporary Film</i> (1989)
Matthew Ehrlich	<i>Journalism in the Movies</i> (2004)

Dec 07

ASSIGNMENT #10 ‘Movie review’

Write a 500-700 word critique of the assigned movie, focusing on what it is trying to tell us about the profession of journalism. Email the paper to me by 11.00 am on Monday, Dec 7.

MOVIES TO BE REVIEWED (all on reserve in Olin Library)

Ace in the Hole (1951)
All the President's Men (1976)
A Mighty Heart (2007)
Broadcast News (1987)
Good Night and Good Luck (2005)
Live from Baghdad (2002)
Nothing But the Truth (2008)
Network (1976)
Salvador (1985)
Shattered Glass (2004)
State of Play (BBC 2008)
The Bang Bang Club (2011)
The Front Page (1931)
The Killing Fields (1984)
True Story (2015)
Wag the Dog (1997)
Year of Living Dangerously (1982)

Documentaries:

Looking for an Icon (2005)
Page One (2011)
The Control Room (2004)
The September Issue (2009)