Global Media Seminar

Class code
MCC-UE 9456 – 001

Instructor Details
Sacha Molitorisz
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Consultations by appointment
Please allow at least 24 hours for your instructor to respond to your emails.

Class Details
Fall 2015

Global Media Seminar

Tuesday, 3:00 – 6:00pm
September 1 to December 8
Room 302
NYU Sydney Academic Centre

Prerequisites
None

Class Description
This course examines issues and perspectives related to global media. Historical and theoretical frameworks will be provided to enable students to approach the scope, disparity and complexity of current developments. These frameworks will be supplemented with the latest media news and developments. In short, we ask: what is going on in the hyperlinked and hyper-turbulent realm of blogs, Buzzfeed and The Sydney Morning Herald?

Students will reflect upon shifts in regional, national and international patterns of production, distribution and consumption. The aim is to come to an understanding of the tumultuous contemporary global media environment. Key concepts examined include: the advent of social media; the implications of globalisation; the disruption of established information flows and emergence of new information channels; the ethics, law and regulation of modern media; and trends in communication and information technologies. Issues addressed also include: the rise of celebrity culture; the challenges facing the entertainment industry; and the rise, rise and potential demise of Rupert Murdoch. The focus will be international, with an emphasis on Australia.

Ultimately, the course will examine the ways in which global communication is undergoing a
paradigm shift, as demonstrated by the Arab spring and the creeping dominance of Google, Facebook and Twitter. In other words Toto, I’ve a feeling we’re not in Kansas anymore.

**Desired Outcomes**

By the end of the course, students will be able to:

- Demonstrate a critical understanding of the complexity and diversity of the Australian media landscape in its historical and global contexts.
- Analyse the changing nature of media power, media ethics and information flows.
- Evaluate emerging trends in media production, distribution and consumption and their impact on the concepts of place, time, culture and identity.

**Assessment Components**

Class Presentation and Paper: 30% (10% first reading presentation; 20% written paper)
Class Participation: 20% (10% general participation; 10% second reading presentation)
Final Research Paper: 50%

**Class Presentation and Paper:** In sessions 2 to 7, each student will lead a presentation and discussion of approximately 10 minutes, based on the set readings. This presentation should focus on in-depth analysis of specific concepts, issues and examples relevant to the class, and should involve the promotion of active class discussion. **Students will submit a 1000-word paper in class the week after they have presented, on a topic relevant to their presentation.**

**Class Participation:** Students are expected to demonstrate thoroughness in their preparation for, and engagement with, the course. This is a seminar subject and requires active participation. It also requires respectful and engaged discussion, including listening to and respecting other points of view. Students will be required to contribute to building a classroom environment that fosters mutual respect for all students and staff. Each week, students will be assigned to give class presentations. Each student will give a total of two class presentations during the course. **The second reading presentation will contribute to the class participation mark. No paper is required after the second presentation.**

**Final Research Paper (due session 14):** A 3000-word final research paper on a topic chosen by the student based on key concepts and topics from the course. Students are required to demonstrate their critical thinking, analysis and evaluation skills and to provide a rationale for the choice of topic by situating it in the literature that has been covered in class and/or in other readings pertinent to their particular focus. Students are expected to apply their analysis to specific, carefully selected case studies and examples. **Students need to provide a topic proposal of one paragraph by Session 8 (or sooner) and have it approved by the Professor.**

*Failure to submit or fulfill any required course component will result in failure of the class.*
Assessment Expectations

**Grade A:** Excellent performance showing a thorough knowledge and understanding of the topics of the course; all work includes clear, logical explanations, insight, and original thought and reasoning. Creative work is of a highly sophisticated standard.

**Grade B:** Good performance with general knowledge and understanding of the topics; all work includes general analysis and coherent explanations showing some independent reasoning, reading and research. Creative work is of a superior standard.

**Grade C:** Satisfactory performance with some broad explanation and reasoning; the work will typically demonstrate an understanding of the course on a basic level. Creative work is of an acceptable standard.

**Grade D:** Passable performance showing a general and superficial understanding of the course’s topics; work lacks satisfactory insight, analysis or reasoned explanations. Creative work is of a basic standard.

**Grade F:** Unsatisfactory performance in all assessed criteria. Creative work is weak, unfinished or unsubmitted.

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**NYU Sydney uses the following scale of numerical equivalents to letter grades:**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
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<tr>
<td>A</td>
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<td>A-</td>
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<td>B+</td>
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**Submission of Work**

*Should work be submitted as a hard copy, or electronically?*

Unless otherwise specified, all written work must be submitted as a hard copy. The majority of written assignments must also be submitted electronically via NYU Classes. All in-class presentations must be completed during class time.

*Who may submit a student’s work?*

Each student’s assigned work must be handed in personally by that student. The student may not nominate another person to act on his/her behalf.

*When and where should the work be submitted?*

The hard copy of any written work must be submitted to the instructor at the beginning of class on the date the work is due. If the assignment due date falls outside of class time, work must be submitted to the Staff Member on duty in Room 2.04 during prescribed Office Hours (11:30am-12:30pm and 2:30-3:30pm Mon-Thu), or by appointment with the Academic
Programs Coordinator. Each submitted item of work received in Room 2.04 will be date and time stamped in the presence of the student. Work submitted in Room 2.04 will not be considered “received” unless formally stamped.

**What is the Process for Late Submission of Work?**

After the due date, work may only be submitted under the following conditions:

- **Late work**, even if an extension has been granted, must be submitted in person by appointment with the Academic Programs Coordinator. Each submitted item of work must be date and time stamped in order to be considered “received”.
- **Work** submitted after the submission time without an agreed extension receives a penalty of 2 points on the 100-point scale (for the assignment) for each day the work is late. Written work submitted beyond five weekdays after the submission date without an agreed extension receives a mark of zero, and the student is not entitled to feedback for that piece of work.
- **Because failure to submit or fulfil any required course component will result in failure of the course, it is crucial for students to submit every assignment even when it will receive a mark of zero. Early departure from the program therefore places the student at risk of failing the course.**

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**Plagiarism Policy**

The academic standards of New York University apply to all coursework at NYU Sydney. NYU Sydney policies are in accordance with New York University’s plagiarism policy. The presentation of another person’s words, ideas, judgment, images or data as though they were your own, whether intentionally or unintentionally, constitutes an act of plagiarism.

It is a serious academic offense to use the work of others (written, printed or in any other form) without acknowledgement. Cases of plagiarism are not dealt with by your instructor. They are referred to the Director, who will determine the appropriate penalty (up to and including failure in the course as a whole) taking into account the codes of conduct and academic standards for NYU’s various schools and colleges.

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**Attendance Policy**

Study abroad at Global Academic Centres is an academically intensive and immersive experience, in which students from a wide range of backgrounds exchange ideas in discussion-based seminars. Learning in such an environment depends on the active participation of all students. And since classes typically meet once or twice a week, even a single absence can cause a student to miss a significant portion of a course. To ensure the integrity of this academic experience, class attendance at the centres is mandatory, and unexcused absences will affect students’ semester grades. The class roster will be marked in the first five minutes of class and anyone who arrives after this time will be considered absent. Students are responsible for making up any work missed due to absence.

For courses that meet once a week, one unexcused absence will be penalised by a two percent deduction from the student’s final course grade. For courses that meet two or more times a week, the same penalty will apply to two unexcused absences. Repeated absences in a course may result in failure.
Classroom Expectations

This is a seminar subject and requires the active participation of all students. It also requires engaged discussion, including listening to and respecting other points of view. Your behaviour in class should respect your classmates’ desire to learn. It is important for you to focus your full attention on the class, for the entire class period.

- Arrive to class on time.
- Once you are in class, you are expected to stay until class ends. Leaving to make or take phone calls, to meet with classmates, or to go to an interview, is not acceptable behaviour.
- Phones, digital music players, and any other communications or sound devices are not to be used during class. That means no phone calls, no texting, no social media, no email, and no internet browsing at any time during class.
- Laptop computers and tablets are not to be used during class except in rare instances for specific class-related activity expressly approved by your instructor.
- The only material you should be reading in class is material assigned for that class. Reading anything else, such as newspapers or magazines, or doing work from another class, is not acceptable.
- Class may not be recorded in any fashion – audio, video, or otherwise – without permission in writing from the instructor.

Religious Observance

Students observing a religious holiday during regularly scheduled class time are entitled to miss class without any penalty to their grade. This is for the holiday only and does not include the days of travel that may come before and/or after the holiday. Students must make a request to the Program Manager, Student Services (in writing via e-mail) one week in advance of being absent for this purpose and also notify you as their instructor in advance of the absence.

Provisions to Students with Disabilities

Students with disabilities who believe that they may need accommodations in a class are encouraged to contact the Moses Centre for Students with Disabilities at (212) 998-4980 as soon as possible to better ensure that such accommodations are implemented in a timely fashion. For more information, see Study Away and Disability.

Required Texts

There is no required text for this course. Weekly readings will be posted on NYU Classes.

Supplemental Texts (Available at NYUS Library)

Session 1  Australian Media: History and Context
Tuesday September 1

Introduction to the course: global media from an Australasian perspective. First Australians, First Fleet, first media. A convict past and a wide open land bred bushrangers - does that explain Rupert Murdoch? This session ranges from the Sydney Gazette and the wartime wireless to the multiculturalism of SBS TV and the optimism of the National Broadband Network.

Required Reading:

Session 2  Fairfax Media: A Microcosm
Tuesday September 8

The temporal qualities of media have always been fundamental to how they become embedded in our everyday life. Shifts in the frequencies of media production are having a dramatic impact on news. A question arises: does the news change because the platform changes? What does it mean that newspapers tend to be published in a daily edition, whereas the internet is permanently republishing itself, moment-by-moment? This week's focus is Fairfax Media, one of Australia's biggest media companies, which is struggling to survive. Its flagship, The Sydney Morning Herald, was first published as the Sydney Herald in 1831, and provides an apt case study for charting changes and challenges facing all global media companies. From its origins more than 180 years ago, The Sydney Morning Herald went from local rag to one of the world's best newspapers to ... what? The newspaper is currently reinventing itself under the "digital first" slogan, pushing its websites and apps. Unfortunately, its financial position is precarious, necessitating dramatic staff and budget cutbacks, prompting a game of editorial musical chairs and tempting the world's richest woman to buy a seat on the board.

Required Reading:
• The Sydney Morning Herald and www.smh.com.au

Recommended Viewing/Reading:

NB On Monday September 14 (week three) there will be an evening field trip to be in the audience for Q&A at ABC TV studios (near Urbanest) [www.abc.net.au/tv/qanda/](http://www.abc.net.au/tv/qanda/)

More details will be provided in class.

**Session 3  The Sporting Media? The Olympics and the World Cup as Global Media Events**

**Tuesday September 15**

We've talked time; let's talk place. Media create new possibilities for the experience and organisation of space. From the "doubling of space" that takes place via live broadcasting to the creation of virtual spaces via the Internet, how is space reworked by contemporary media? And how has coverage of sporting events, in particular, changed our understanding of place? Sporting spectacles such as the Olympics and the World Cup of Football bring into relief the transformations occurring in global media. For now, free-to-air TV still leads the conversation ... but for how long? New media, and specifically social media, have irrevocably altered the way audiences - and even athletes - experience major sporting events.

**Required Reading:**


- Molitorisz, S., 2012, “How Nine Spoiled The Olympics” (UNSW)

**Recommended Viewing:**

- John Clarke, *Sporting Nation*: ABC TV, Episodes 1 - 3, NYU-Sydney library
- *Gruen Sweat*: ABC TV, Episode 1, NYU-Sydney library

**Session 4  Media on the Move, People on the Move: SBS, Asylum Seeking and Global Migration**

**Tuesday September 22**

SBS (Special Broadcasting Service) is Australia’s multicultural public broadcaster focused on engaging with the global diaspora in Australia. Its goal was and is to get beyond the Anglo-centrism of rival networks. In August/September 2012, SBS ran the second season of a ground-breaking reality TV show, *Go Back To Where You Came From*. This class will provide context for the vexed debate on asylum seekers in Australia, with an emphasis on the role played by the Australian media. It will also cover the role of public broadcasters in Australia. Topics covered include the "children overboard affair", which turned the act of seeking asylum into a major media event.

**Required Reading:**


Recommended Reading/Viewing:

- SBS Series: *Go Back To Where You Came From*, Series 2, Episode 1, NYU-Sydney Library.

**Session 5  Rupert Murdoch: The Fox Outfoxed?**

**Tuesday September 29**

Australian media is dominated by dynasties. The Packers. The Fairfaxs. Above all, the Murdochs. Inspired by his dad, Rupert Murdoch built his empire in Australia. Next he conquered England, before he then became an American and conquered the world. His annus horribilis, however, came in 2012. The phone hacking scandal shut down his money-spinner, *The News of the World*, before the Leveson Report asked "What the hell was going on?" What does it say that the next generation of these Australian dynasties – including Lachlan Murdoch and James Packer - are having mixed fortunes with their media enterprises? And if anyone doubted the extreme challenges facing media's foremost families, the fault lines were revealed when Elisabeth Murdoch tore into her brother James in her MacTaggart Lecture. The big question is: As the media landscape shifts radically, how much power do these dynasties continue to wield?

**Required Reading:**


**FALL BREAK: October 5 - 9**

**Session 6  How New Media Needs Old Ethics**

**Tuesday October 13**

In 1999, it emerged that two of Australia's highest-paid radio personalities, John Laws and Alan Jones, had been paid to express opinions on air, and to make them sound like independent commentary. This became known as the Cash for Comment scandal, and it drew a line in the sand for media ethics. But then the sand was blown away by the rise of new media. Have the ethical rules changed? Or do they still apply? This class will examine the ethics of "chequebook journalism", native advertising, mojo (mobile journalism) and more, including whether depictions of violence in film, music and the news contribute to the incidence of violence in the real world. This class covers the basic principles of ethical theory, touching on Aristotle, Mill and Kant. It also looks at the regulation of media ethics. In Australia, print media has traditionally been self-regulating -
but the 400-page report of 2012's Finkelstein-Ricketson review called for a taxpayer-funded super-regulator, the News Media Council, to oversee print, radio, television and online media. The upshot? Nada.

**Required Reading:**

**Recommended Reading:**

**Session 7     WikiLeaks, Edward Snowden and Investigative Journalism**
**Tuesday October 20**

Does investigative journalism still have a place in an era of whistleblower websites and embattled newspapers? Does truth deserve to be free? Is Julian Assange a self-aggrandising trouble-maker or a noble champion of truth? Or both? And what about Edward Snowden and his revelations about the surveillance activities of the National Security Agency? Is he a traitor or a patriot? In this session we will address these questions, plus further questions of journalistic sources and a reporter's duty to the truth. Also, we will examine the right to freedom of speech, which is enshrined in the US's First Amendment, but which has no such protection in Australia. Despite the First Amendment, however, there are significant limits on free speech in the US, just as there are in Australia. Wherever you look, freedom of speech is not unrestrained.

**Required Viewing/Reading:**
- Documentary feature: *We Steal Secrets: The Story of WikiLeaks* (2013), NYU-Sydney library

**Recommended Viewing/Reading:**

**Session 8     You Call That Funny?**
**Tuesday October 27**

Ever since 100,000 BCE, when Zorg slipped on a banana peel while describing that morning’s mammoth conquest, humour has formed a big part of human storytelling. During Sydney's Depression, alcoholic journalist Lennie Lower wrote the novel *Here’s Luck*. More recently, Australian expat Clive James cast his witty eye over popular culture and Australian identity. Now, in the digital age, humour writers and
presenters remain popular, including Richard Glover, Jon Ronson, Louis Theroux, Dave Barry and Bill Bryson, while Australia's Norman Gunston prefigured Ali G's cringe-inducing gotcha style. Thanks to global media, the differences between the humour of Australia and the US (and other countries) is eroding, and wits such as the retiring Jon Stewart and Stephen Colbert wield global influence. As well as political point-scoring, new media also offers a new outlet for guerrilla satire and low budget parodies, as revealed by The Bondi Hipsters. At a time of media democratisation and information overload, humour presents - more than ever - a way to cut through; but there are risks.

Required Reading/Viewing:
- Chaser team crash APEC, 2007: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TdnAaQ0n5-8
- The Chaser's War On Everything, Make A Realistic Wish Sketch: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AYS_ExI3nXQ
- The Chaser's Make A Realistic Wish apology: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_GQ8U-NQAxg

Recommended Reading/Viewing:
- Jon Stewart on Crossfire, 2004: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aFQFB5YPZEThe
- James, Clive, Unreliable Memoirs. Chapter 1.
- Bondi Hipsters explain why they’re going to London Olympics: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Dku6Vyy1MRk

Assessment: Topic Proposals due this Week in Preparation for Final Paper.

Session 9     The Explosion of Opinion
Tuesday November 3

The NYT launched the first “oped” page in 1970. Now the world is drowning in opinion pages and pieces - partly thanks to blogs - and the spin is getting more subtle, more pervasive, more powerful. In this session we will focus on key shifts in the production and distribution of opinion pieces. And we explore the proposition that not everyone is entitled to express their opinion.

Required Reading:
Session 10     Location, Location, Location: How Mobile Phones are Reshaping Reality
Tuesday November 10

Mobile phones have changed the way people work, play and interact. How do mobile media alter our experience of the boundaries between public and private life? How do mobile phones inform our identity? Focusing on current research being conducted in Australia into the use of mobile media in everyday life, this class investigates the effect that mobile media has on our conception of place and cultural identity.

Required Reading:


Session 11     Revolution 2.0 – From the Arab Spring to the Great Firewall of China and Beyond
Tuesday November 17

The printing press played a key role in the French and American revolutions. Thanks to digital media, we now have Revolution 2.0 - superfast, superstrong, potentially bloodless. Since late 2010, the Arab Spring - or Arab Revolution - has seen rulers ousted in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, and Yemen, with significant unrest in many more countries. Social media has been largely responsible for spreading an anti-authoritarian message, as repressive governments find themselves unable to dictate the flow of information and disgruntled citizens become, as never before, able to organise and militate on-line. Despite initial optimism, however, the Arab Spring appears to have stalled, only to see the emergence of Islamic State, which adeptly uses social media to recruit teenage terrorists. Meanwhile in China, bloggers such as 20-something Zola and 50-something Tiger Temple work with mobiles and laptops to topple the Great Firewall of China, reporting stories their party leaders would prefer to suppress. This class explores media developments in Egypt, China and beyond.

Required Reading:

- Additional links will be provided via NYU Classes.
Session 12  Pussy Riot, Social Media and the Thorny Question of Privacy

Tuesday November 24

Me me me or Meme meme meme? Does social media enable narcissism and navel-gazing, or is it a powerful instrument for social change? It can certainly spread the word. In 2012, pop-punk band Pussy Riot protested in a Moscow church. They wore coloured balaclavas. They used colourful language. But Vladimir Putin wasn’t amused, and so two members went to jail. Where are they now? And, erm, what were they protesting again? Examining Pussy Riot, and carrying on from session 11, this class will investigate whether Twitter and Facebook are effective tools for social change, or whether social media is best suited to sharing pictures of kittens in martini glasses. Also, the class will tackle one of modern media’s thorniest questions: can a right to privacy continue to exist in a wired world?

Required Reading:

Recommended Viewing/Reading:
- Documentary feature: Pussy Riot: A Punk Prayer (2013), NYU-Sydney library

Session 13  Convergence, Transmedia and Shifts in Entertainment Media

Tuesday December 1

For two decades, "convergence" has been a defining buzzword of the fast-changing media landscape, denoting the belief that once-separate industries - IT, telecommunications, news media, consumer electronics - are converging into one unified enterprise. In the ’90s, such thinking prompted a wave of takeovers and mergers - but most of them failed. The theory sounded good, but didn't work out in practice. Still, the buzzword survives, and in 2012 the Australian government received the results of its Convergence Report. Meanwhile, convergence has been joined by another buzzword, "transmedia". After exploring these terms, this class examines the revolutionary changes sweeping the entertainment industry, with a particular focus on music, film and TV, and their respective challenges with piracy.

Required Reading:
Session 14     Media Tarts: Gender-based Inequities

Tuesday December 8

So media has changed dramatically, right? Not in all ways. The gender imbalance remains striking, especially at the top. Four decades after Australian media doyenne Anne Summers published *Damned Whores and God’s Police*, blokes still call the shots. In 2011, Amanda Wilson was appointed as the first editor of the 180-year-old Sydney Morning Herald. In 2012, she was ousted and replaced by a man. Meanwhile, have depictions of women in the media changed? On the surface, the sexism has softened, but a deeper analysis reveals an ongoing imbalance in the portrayals of men and women in public life. And, in some cases, new media is simply providing a whole new forum for misogyny. In post-feminist 2015, men are still often assessed by their achievements, but women by their looks and family. Further, research reveals women and girls remain underrepresented as key characters in films and TV shows - apart from the glaring exception of porn, which is booming online. Is it still a case of men do, women are done?

Required Reading:


Recommended Reading:


Your Instructor

Born in Germany, Sacha Molitorisz arrived in Australia in 1973. After graduating with Arts (English Literature) and Law degrees from the University of New South Wales (UNSW), Sacha was hired as a writer by The Sydney Morning Herald, where his specialties included film, music and TV, and also parenthood, education and philosophy. He has published two books: *Australian Bushrangers - The Romance of Robbery* and *From Here To Paternity - A User’s Manual For Early Fatherhood*. As a PhD candidate at Macquarie University, he is currently investigating the ethics of internet privacy. Meanwhile, he is teaching media studies at NYU Sydney and UNSW. Sacha lives in Sydney with his wife, two kids and a chocolate brown labrador. Whenever possible, he immerses himself in the Pacific Ocean.