Location  NYU London

Class code  JOUR-UA 9503-001

Instructor Details  Azadeh Moaveni
Office hours by appointment

Class Details  Journalism and Society

Prerequisites  A desire to understand the British media and how they relate to the society they serve. An interest in the great challenges facing the media in the globalized and increasingly digitized 21st century. Students must be prepared to become regular consumers of a variety of British media for the duration of the course.

Class Description  The British media is the closest, English-language media sphere to the United States and shares many similar functions in society, but it differs in perplexing and illuminating ways. This course will serve as an introduction to the British news media, exploring its key institutions, day-to-day practices, relationship with the state, and the way in which its understanding of what constitutes the public interest varies. We will cover essentials of the craft of journalism itself, the way the media shapes our perceptions of reality, and the function of the press in a democratic society. To understand how we arrive at what is deemed ‘newsworthy,’ we will undertake a quick overview of news values, the notion of ‘objectivity,’ and the process by which stories are selected. Journalism has its own critical language, so we will consider what is meant by framing, churnalism, and other terms that will aid us in discussing how the media functions and phenomena that are leading, especially in Britain, to a crisis of public trust in the media.

The spectre of fake or inaccurate news hangs over Britain as seriously as it does the United States, so we will examine issues around verification, as well as entrapment and privacy intrusions, in the British context. We will look at how ownership structures work across the British media and how various publications and outlets interact with the political sphere. The BBC is a cornerstone of the British establishment, and we will examine how it is funded through a private-public partnership and what it provides British society and, indeed, British foreign policy in a manner wholly distinct from any equivalent in the United States.

We will run through British press history, from the earliest reporting of the news from the Battle of Waterloo through to the Daily Mail’s conquering of the online sphere, and will look ahead to the major economic and technological issues that the media will face in coming years. To examine many of these abstract ideas in practice, we will look at how the British media cover international conflicts.

The course meets weekly for a three-hour session that will be divided between lecture and seminar discussion, with a break in between. We will have class visits, to be confirmed, to both the BBC and the Daily Express, and guest speakers will join us on occasion in class.
Desired Outcomes

1. To gain an understanding of the news media’s role in society.
2. To broaden students’ understanding of media and journalism outside the United States.
3. To gain insights and perspectives into the coverage of international stories and forces shaping prevailing narratives.
4. To gain an understanding of the key issues facing the media and explore avenues for their future evolution.

Assessment Components

- 1,200-word essay, 25% of total mark
- Mid-term exam 25% of final mark – in-class essay, 1,500 words
- 500-word online story or podcast - 15% of total mark
- Final essay – 1,200-word, 25% of total mark
- Class Participation – 10% of final grade

Both online story/podcast and final essay assignments will require original reporting. Failure to submit or fulfil any required course component results in failure of the class.

Assessment Expectations

PLEASE NOTE: All students are expected to be able to write essays that are grammatically correct and logically coherent.

Grade A: A students will be expected to submit all of their work on time, read in advance all relevant material that is assigned for specific classes, and achieve a quality of work in their writing and analytical ability that is clearly superior to their classmates. Students are expected to have made a significant contribution to class discussions. Their final exam marks should place them amongst the top achievers in the class.

Grade B: B students will also be expected to submit their work on time and achieve a better than average quality of work in their writing and analysis, as well as in their classroom participation. They are also expected to have read their material in advance of class and to contribute to class discussions. They will be expected to score above average in their final exams.

Grade C: C students are expected to attend class on a regular basis and demonstrate in their written work and in their classroom participation that they are reading all relevant material that is assigned to them. They are expected to perform at least on average in their writing projects, class discussions and final exam.

Grade D: D students are clearly perceived to be performing below standard. This means that they are not prepared in class, and/or are not submitting their work on time, are writing at a below standard level, and achieved a result in their final exam that is below average.

Grade F: F students will have failed to achieve the minimal standards of the course (attending class, completing assignments on time, taking the mid-term and final exams, and reading course materials) and made no effort whatsoever in class, in their work, and in their final exam.

Required Text(s)

Required: 

In addition to these core texts, there will be weekly readings assigned and posted on NYU Classes.

You will be expected to become a regular consumer of British print, online and broadcast media, including both TV and radio. You will need to read a mix of broadsheet and tabloid papers each week, at least occasionally watch flagship news programs on Channel 4 and the BBC, and to listen, at least twice a week, to the Today programme on BBC Radio 4, broadcast from 6am-9am, but available afterwards on iPlayer.

Supplemental Text(s) (not required to purchase as copies are in NYU-L Library)

Scoop, Evelyn Waugh, (multiple editions: 1948)
My Trade: A Short History of British Journalism, Andrew Marr, (Macmillan: 2004)

Internet Research Guidelines

Students should be prepared to carry out their own reporting and research on given topics, and the internet will be a critical tool. Students must remember that often information found online, both in mainstream publications and on beyond, is simply inaccurate. A critical approach to internet sources is required and verification is key.

Additional Required Equipment

A laptop and mobile phone will be essential for carrying out most assignments.

Please note: Like the craft of journalism itself, this schedule will be fluid! I may adjust our weekly plans around scheduled visits, class speakers, and occasionally, the news itself. I will always let you know in advance.

Session 1

Class introduction: getting to know each other and mutual expectations
An overview of the assigned books and media consumption habits
Grading criteria
What is journalism? What is news?

Session 2

Where does news come from?
A tour of some basic ideas: objectivity, news values, truth, agendas, framing

Session 3

Broadsheets versus tabloids
News as entertainment
Structures of ownership and why they matter

Session 4
“It’s the Sun Wot Won It”?
National tabloids and their influence on politics and voting behavior
Guest speaker: Dan Townend, News Editor at the Daily Express

Session 5
The digital revolution and what it’s doing to the media
How the British media has comparatively coped
Why did *Time* and *Newsweek* die while *The Economist* thrived?
The looming death of print
Fake news

Session 6
Crisis of trust in British media
Phone hacking & Leveson
Press regulation

Guest speaker: Brian Cathcart, founder of Hacked Off

Session 7
Mid-term exam

Session 8
The BBC as a unique institution
Private-public partnership
Broadcast media as global soft power (BBC versus VOA)

Session 9
Visit to the BBC

Session 10
Investigative journalism and the ‘fifth estate’
Data journalism and data dumps
National security concerns
Are the British media bolder?

For the next three weeks: choosing a conflict to follow

Session 11
Covering conflict across broadcast, print, and radio
How narratives are formed
Reporting and the security establishment
Does the media set the tone for our level of fear?

Session 12
How British broadcasters cover war
The conflict documentary in the British sphere

Guest speaker: Lindsey Hilsum or Ramita Navai

Session 13
Reporting on terrorism: how Britain does it differently
The costs and opportunities of proximity to conflict
Covering refugees and Muslims communities in the shadow of Syria’s war and the war on terror
Session 14
The history of British reportage and its close invocation of history
Culture knot: why do British correspondents write travelogues and American reporters write memoirs?
Hemingway vs Hunter S Thompson vs Rory Stewart

Session 15
Final essay due

Classroom Etiquette
Neither mobile phones nor laptops are to be used, or even kept out on desks, during lecture or discussion. If you have any special needs that require note taking on a laptop, please speak to me at the start of term.

Required Co-curricular Activities
TBA

Estimated Travel Costs
None.

Suggested Co-curricular Activities
To benefit fully from this course, you should keep abreast of and attend events and talks in London that deal with the media. The Guardian runs a regular event series, as does The Frontline Club, a foreign correspondents’ club near Paddington.

Your Instructor
I started my career in journalism in 1999, interning for a small, English-language newspaper in Cairo. I began working as a stringer for TIME, in Cairo and Tehran, and joined staff as a correspondent fairly soon after that. For the better part of a decade I worked across the Middle East for TIME and also The Los Angeles Times, reporting on Islamic militancy, youth culture, women’s rights, and basically everything they threw my way. I covered the Iraq War, as well as various withdrawals and uprisings, based mostly in Cairo, Beirut, and Tehran. I have written three books on Iran: Lipstick Jihad, Honeymoon in Tehran, and with the Nobel Laureate Shirin Ebadi, Iran Awakening. Until recently, I was Senior Lecturer in Journalism and Kingston University. My research over the last two years has centered around women and ISIS, and I’ve been spent a great deal of time in the Middle East reporting on this, for a book to be published this year or or next. I write occasionally for The New York Times, The Guardian, and The Financial Times. I have lived in Britain for a decade.

NYU GLOBAL ACADEMIC POLICIES

Policies and procedures for Global Academic Centres, including policies on academic integrity and the Study Away Standard, can be found here: https://www.nyu.edu/about/policies-guidelines-compliance/policies-and-guidelines/student-services.html

Absences: Key information on NYU London’s absence policy, how to report absences, and what kinds of absences can be excused can be found here: http://www.nyu.edu/london/academics/attendance-policy.html

NYU London work submission policies can be found here: http://www.nyu.edu/london/academics/academic-policies.html
**Classroom conduct:** Academic communities exist to facilitate the process of acquiring and exchanging knowledge and understanding, to enhance the personal and intellectual development of its members, and to advance the interests of society. Essential to this mission is that all members of the University Community are safe and free to engage in a civil process of teaching and learning through their experiences both inside and outside the classroom. Accordingly, no student should engage in any form of behaviour that interferes with the academic or educational process, compromises the personal safety or well-being of another, or disrupts the administration of University programs or services.

Please refer to the [NYU London Disruptive Student Behaviour Policy](https://goo.gl/Nvt5Vu) for examples of disruptive behaviour and guidelines for response and enforcement.