

NYU Buenos Aires – FALL 2019

Journalism & Society: Leaks and Whistleblowers

JOUR-UA 9503 / MCC-UE 9111

Instructor Information

- Santiago O'Donnell
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 - Office hours: Tuesdays 12:45 to 1:45

Course Information

- Tuesdays and Thursdays: 1.45- 3.15
- Ocampo Room - NYUBA

Course Overview and Goals

In 2010, [WikiLeaks](#), a non-profit organization that publishes submissions from anonymous [whistleblowers](#), in partnership with some of the most important news publications, began releasing thousands of classified diplomatic cables sent between the U.S. State Department and consulates and embassies around the world. Three years later, former National Security Agency subcontractor Edward Snowden leaked top secret information about surveillance activities by the NSA. More recently, the Panama Papers became the biggest data leak in the history of journalism: over 11 million documents containing financial information about offshore entities were revealed. These events signal the beginning of the Big Leak era, which this course will focus on. We will analyze the role of media concentration and technological innovation as twin driving forces in the inception of this Big Leak era over recent years. We will study the consequences of these changes at three different levels:

- the legal consequences for whistleblowers
- the resulting birth of global networks and partnerships that expose technical, cultural and economic limitations for traditional media
- the geopolitical implications, as a breach in a government's security apparatus is

a victory for that government's opponents.

Finally, we will confront one larger question: whether the Big Leak era means that transparency could replace fairness as journalism's main paradigm.

Upon Completion of this Course, students will be able to:

Utilizing the big leak phenomena, the course will attempt to develop students' academic and journalistic skills, such as analytical reading, investigation and research, journalistic writing, communication, debate, and presentation techniques, all of which are key for students in the fields of journalism and media & communication. To accomplish these goals, students are expected to attend all sessions, complete all the reading and assignments and actively participate in discussion in every class.

Course Requirements

There will be a **midterm** (2000 words) and a **final paper** (3000 words) that will involve case studies which emerge from class readings and discussion. Each student will pick a leak and analyze its different dimensions (size, quality, orientation, outcome). The midterm paper will provide a first approach to the phenomena, whereas the final paper will demand a cultural, economic and sociopolitical background so as to conclude how that particular leak calls into question embedded notions, rules and practices of traditional journalism, or how it sets forward new ones for the future. In order to ensure meaningful participation of students in class, they will be required to submit weekly **one-page responses to the assigned readings**.

Grading of Assignments

The grade for this course will be determined according to the following formula:

Assignments/Activities	% of Final Grade
Attendance and participation	10%
Weekly assignments	15%
Midterm paper	25%
Final paper	50%

Failure to submit or fulfill any required course component results in failure of the class.

Letter Grades

Letter grades for the entire course will be assigned as follows:

Letter Grade	Percent
A	100-94
A-	93-90
B+	89-87
B	86-84
B-	83-80
C+	79-77
C	76-74
C-	73-70
D+	69-67
D	66-65
F	below 65

Course Schedule

Topics and Assignments

Week/Date	Topic	Reading	Assignment Due
Week 1 Aug. 27-29	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction • Overview of the course. • Shared expectations • Hackers, leakers and spinners, the leak, the plant and the anonymous source. Who does it and why. • The thin line between being a 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • C.I.A. Warning on Snowden in '09 Said to Slip Through the Cracks • C.I.A. Disputes Early Suspicions on Snowden 	Submit a one-page response to the assigned readings

	<p>traitor and a terrorist like Chelsea Manning, or being a valued and admired informant like Deep Throat.</p>		
<p>Week 2</p> <p>Sept 3-5</p>	<p>A brief history of leaks and whistleblowers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Daniel Ellsberg and the Pentagon Papers. • The 9-11 effect. Obama's use of the Treason act against seven informants for leaking to the press. Brief history of the seven whistleblowers indicted for treason under the Obama administration. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Daniel Ellsberg, Edward Snowden, and the Modern Whistle-Blower • Obama's war on whistleblowers leaves administration insiders unscathed • C.I.A. Warning on Snowden in '09 Said to Slip Through the Cracks 	<p>Submit a one-page response to the assigned readings</p>
<p>Week 3</p> <p>Sept 10-12</p>	<p>Julian Assange, the mind behind WikiLeaks.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hacktivism meets journalism. The founding of WikiLeaks. The early years. The War Dispatches. • Cablegate. The blow to US diplomacy. What the cables show. The thin line that separates diplomacy and lobby from espionage and foreign intervention 	<p><i>Wikileaks: Inside Julian Assange's War on Secrecy.</i> By David Leigh and Luke Harding (Intro and chapters 1,2, 13,14,15).</p>	<p>Submit a one-page response to the assigned readings</p>

<p>Week 4</p> <p>Sept 17-19</p>	<p>WikiLeaks II</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The geopolitical game. Asylum in London with Latin America's support. Post Cablegate leaks. Hillary's email scandal and Russia's role in the presidential campaign. Wikileaks and Trump. • The case against WikiLeaks. The investigation in Sweden. The Chelsea Manning trial. The economic embargo. The AmCham sting uncovered by Anonymous. The Virginia Grand jury investigation. 	<p><i>The Wikileaks Files: the World According to U.S. Empire</i> (Introduction by Assange and <i>The World According to Empire</i> by Sarah Harrison).</p>	<p>Submit a one-page response to the assigned readings</p>
<p>Week 5</p> <p>Sept 24-26</p>	<p>Wikileaks III</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Julian Assange's arrest. Reaction and consequences for Wikileaks and for the mainstream media. • The theory behind Wikileaks: The egalitarian effect of transparency versus the power that derives from opacity. The flow of information in the Western World. The Pentagon and Silicon Valley. Strengths and weaknesses in Assange's arguments. 	<p>https://www.nybooks.com/daily/2019/05/01/why-assange-and-ecuador-fell-out/</p>	<p>Submit a one-page response to the assigned readings</p>

<p>Week 6</p> <p>Oct. 1-3</p>	<p>Snowden</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ed Snowden and the NSC leak. His story. What he did and how he did it. How WikiLeaks got him out of Hong Kong and into Moscow. • What Snowden leaked and did not leak. Why he says he did it. The intelligence community's take on what he did and why he did it. The ACLU's defense. Consequences for the NSC and for Snowden. 	<p><i>No Place to Hide: Snowden, the NSA and the U.S. Surveillance State.</i> By Glenn Greenwald (chapter "Ten days in Hong Kong").</p> <p>https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2018/09/03/glenn-greenwald-the-bane-of-their-resistance</p>	<p>Submit a one-page response to the assigned readings.</p>
<p>Week 7</p> <p>Oct. 8-10</p>	<p>Mass surveillance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mass surveillance in America and the World. Ways, means, private contractors and the four eyes alliance. Satellites and interoceanic fiber optic cables. "Good" versus "Bad" surveillance. • The cyber wars with Russia, China and Iran. Encryption as a weapon of war and a tool for journalism. 	<p><i>How America Lost Its Secrets. Edward Snowden, the Man and the Theft.</i> By Edward Jay Epstein (Intro, chapters 28 and 29, Epilogue).</p>	<p>Submit the Midterm Paper (2000 words; 25% of the final grade)</p>
	<p>FALL BREAK</p>		
<p>Week 8</p> <p>Oct. 22-24</p>	<p>Panama Papers I</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Background: The war against fiscal havens. Luxleaks and Swissleaks. The ICIJ. The role of non-profits in big leaks. • How it happened. Who is "John Doe"? The scope 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Panama Papers: Breaking the Story of how the Rich and Powerful Hide Their Money.</i> By Bastian Overmayer and Frederik Overmaier (chapter1: start). • Giant Leak Of 	<p>Submit a one-page response to the assigned readings.</p>

	and the magnitude. Teamwork. The main discoveries.	Offshore Financial Records Exposes Global Array Of Crime And Corruption	
Week 9 Oct. 29-31	<p>Panama Papers II</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The geopolitical impact. Winners (U.S.) and losers (Russia and China). Media coverage of the Panama Papers. Case study: Argentina. • Economic and legal impact. Impact on tax havens in general and on Panama in particular. The arrest of Mossak and Fonseca. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Panama Papers Have Had Historic Global Effects — And The Impacts Keep Coming • Panama Papers: Soros Beyond the Reach of Scrutiny 	Submit a one-page response to the assigned readings.
Week 10 Nov. 5 -no class November 7, makeup Nov. 16]	<p>Big leaks and little leakers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vaticanleaks and FIFAgate, WilldLeaks, DCLeaks, Balcanleaks, Mexicoleaks. • Covering leaks as a foreign correspondent. Sources and off-the- records. Global reporting and national security. The anthrax fear. Similarities and differences between the Washington and Buenos Aires. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vatican Leaks Scandal • https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2019/06/03/how-football-leaks-is-exposing-corruption-in-european-soccer 	Submit a one-page response to the assigned readings.
Week 11 Nov12-14 Nov. 15	<p>Leaks and globalization</p> <p>The fall of Cambridge Analytica.</p> <p>The fall of Rupert Murdoch's News of the World</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Digital Vigilantes who Hack Back • Everything you need to know about Facebook and Cambridge Analytica • News of the World phone-hacking scandal 	Submit a one-page response to the assigned readings.
Week 12	Big leaks in Latin America	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • https://theintercept.com/series/secret- 	Submit a one-page response

<p>Nov. 19-21</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Moroleaks: How to derail Lula’s reelection through lawfare. • Roselloleaks in Puerto Rico: a revolution led by Ricky Martin 	<p>brazil-archive/ (parts 1, 2 and 3)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • http://periodismoinvestigativo.com/2019/07/the-pillage-of-public-funds-in-puerto-rico-going-on-behind-the-chat/ 	<p>to the assigned readings.</p>
<p>Week 13 Nov. 26-28</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preliminary conclusions. • As big leaks of highly secret documents become commonplace, and recipients of this information are no longer passive readers, are they more inclined to go directly to the primary source and bypass the mediation of journalists. As big corporations take over what used to be a family business to make them media empires or multipurpose conglomerates, do the journalists employed by these empires and conglomerates have the same freedom as they did in the 70s and 80s? • How do big leaks expose these weaknesses in the old model and usher us into a new era of zero or close to zero privacy, corporate public communication disguised as old-fashioned journalism? • As journalists become celebrities and celebrities become journalists, as bloggers and social media unveil journalism’s dirty little secrets, as journalism becomes more global and 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Cypherpunks: Freedom and the Future of the Internet.</i> By Julian Assange and Jacob Appelbaum (From “Espionage in the private sector to Rats in the opera”) 	<p>Submit a one-page response to the assigned readings.</p>

	yet more focalized and segmented, has transparency replaced fairness as the professions main paradigm?		
Week 14 Dec. 3-5	Final paper workshop. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One- on- one coaching before final paper due. • Class presentations and final course evaluations by students and instructor. • End of classes 	Readings specific to final paper project.	Submit a one-page response to the assigned readings.
Week 15 Dec. 12	Final Paper due (3000 words; 50% of the grade).		

Course Materials

Assigned Readings

Books:

- *The Wikileaks Files: the Word According to U.S. Empire* (compilation; Verso - Reprint edition, 2016)
- *Cypherpunks: Freedom and the Future of the Internet*. By Julian Assange and Jacob Appelbaum (OR Books, 2012)
- *Wikileaks: Inside Julian Assange's War on Secrecy*. By David Leigh and Luke Harding (Guardian Books, 2011)
- *Julian Assange: Unauthorized biography* (Cannongate Books, 2011)
- *No Place to Hide: Snowden, the NSA and the U.S. Surveillance State*. By Glenn Greenwald (Metropolitan Books, 2014)
- *How America Lost Its Secrets. Edward Snowden, the Man and the Theft*. By Edward Jay Epstein (Knopf, 2017)

- *Panama Papers: Breaking the Story of how the Rich and Powerful Hide Their Money*. By Bastian Overmayer and Frederik Overmaier (Oneworld Publications, 2016)

Additional materials:

Film:

- [The Fifth Estate](#) (Assange). Official trailer
- *Risk* (Assange) Official trailer <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1teM525rVlc>
- *Citizenfour*. (Snowden) [Official trailer](#)

Resources

- **Access your course materials:** [NYU Classes](http://nyu.edu/its/classes) (nyu.edu/its/classes)
- **Databases, journal articles, and more:** [Bobst Library](http://library.nyu.edu) (library.nyu.edu)
- **Assistance with strengthening your writing:** [NYU Writing Center](http://nyu.mywconline.com) (nyu.mywconline.com)
- **Obtain 24/7 technology assistance:** [IT Help Desk](http://nyu.edu/it/servicedesk) (nyu.edu/it/servicedesk)

Course Policies

Attendance and Tardiness

- NYU's Global Programs (including NYU Buenos Aires) must adhere to a strict policy regarding course attendance. No unexcused absences are permitted.
- Each unexcused absence will be penalized by deducting 1% from the student's final course grade.
- Absences are only excused if they are due to illness, religious observance or emergencies.
- Absences due to illness or mental health issues must be discussed with the Assistant Director for Academics Programs **within one week** of your return to class.
- A doctor's note excusing your absence is mandatory.
- **The date on the doctor's note must be the date of the missed class or exam.**
- Being absent to any kind of examination must be informed at or before the time of said examination via email to the Assistant Director of Academic Programs.
- Requests to be excused for non-illness purposes must be discussed with your professors prior to the date(s) in question. (If you want the reasons of your absence

to be treated confidentially and not shared with your professor, please contact the Assistant Director of Academics Programs).

- If students have more than four unexcused absences, they will fail the course.
- Each class lasts one hour and half or two hours. Missing one class represents one absence. For those courses that meet once a week (three-hour block), missing one class represents two absences.
- Students are responsible for making up any work missed due to absence.
- NYU BA also expects students to arrive to class promptly (both at the beginning and after any breaks) and to remain for the duration of the class. Three late arrivals or early departures (10 minutes after the starting time or before the ending time) will be considered one absence. Missing more than 20 minutes of a class will count as a full absence.
- Please note that for classes involving a field trip or other external visit, transportation difficulties are never grounds for an excused absence. It is the student's responsibility to arrive at an agreed meeting point in a punctual and timely fashion.
- Make-up classes for Holidays are mandatory as regular scheduled classes.
- 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 notify their professor and the Office of Academic Support in writing via email one week in advance before being absent for this purpose.

Late Assignment

- Late work should be submitted in person to the Assistant Director for Academics Programs during office hours (Mon - Fri, 10 am to 6 pm), who will write on the essay or other work the date and time of submission, in the presence of the student. Another member of the administrative staff can accept the work, in person, in the absence of the Assistant Director for Academic Affairs and will write the date and time of submission on the work, as above.
- Work submitted within 5 weekdays after the submission time without an agreed extension receives a penalty of 10 points on the 100point scale.
- Written work submitted after 5 weekdays after the submission date without an agreed extension fails and is given a zero.
- Please note end of semester essays must be submitted on time

Academic Honesty/Plagiarism

- Academic Integrity is intimately related to the teaching and learning process.
- When writing research papers, you need to keep in mind that plagiarism includes the use of another person's words, ideas, judgment, images or data as though they were your own, whether intentionally or unintentionally. It also includes presenting and/or paraphrasing discourse or ideas from a published work (in print or on internet) without quotation marks and clear without acknowledgment of the original source.
- For formatting in your papers, refer to MLA guidelines.
- On matters regarding academic integrity, refer to the section "[Academic Standards and Discipline](#)" in the College of Arts and Science Bulletin and to "[Statement on Academic Integrity](#)" in NYU Expository Writing Program: Policies and Procedures.
- All your written work must be submitted as a hard copy AND in electronic form to the instructor.
- It is expected that the student follow the rules on academic honesty and intellectual integrity established by NYU University.

Disability Disclosure Statement

Academic accommodations are available for students with disabilities. Please contact the Moses Center for Students with Disabilities (212-998-4980 or mosescsd@nyu.edu) for further information. Students who are requesting academic accommodations are advised to reach out to the Moses Center as early as possible in the semester for assistance.

Your instructor

Santiago O'Donnell is the Foreign Editor at the Argentine newspaper *Página/12* and a former Los Angeles Times and Washington Post staff writer. Besides teaching a journalism course at NYU-Buenos Aires for the last four years, he directs the Journalism Masters Program at Universidad de Buenos Aires since 2013. He has written four books, including based on cablegate, the best sellers *Argenleaks* (Buenos Aires, Random House, 2011) and *Politileaks* (Buenos Aires, Random House, 2014) and a third based on the Panama Papers: *Argenpapers* (Buenos Aires, Random House, 2017).