CONTEMPORARY PROBLEMS in JOURNALISM  
(019:225, Fall 2011)  
4:30 to 7 p.m. Tuesdays in E254 / W332 Adler

ABOUT THIS COURSE: This class is designed to offer a “state of the news media” overview, as well as to give you a starting point for probing more deeply into issues affecting journalists and journalism today. As you probably know, sweeping structural and cultural changes are creating challenges and opportunities for virtually every aspect of the journalistic enterprise – from its economic underpinnings to its occupational practice, from its narrative conventions to its normative relationships. We will spend our time together reading, thinking and talking about these issues. By December, you should have:

* A deeper understanding of ongoing changes in journalism, as well as their implications.
* Proficiency in articulating your own ideas about journalism’s past, present and future.
* A start on the in-depth exploration of one aspect of contemporary journalism as you look ahead to work on your master’s project.

REQUIRED TEXTS:

- **Journalism: The Democratic Craft**  
  G. Stuart Adam and Roy Peter Clark, editors  
  (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006)  
  NOTE: Roughly one-third of the chapters from *Democratic Craft* are incorporated in this syllabus. Other chapters are optional reading. If you do not want to buy the book, you can check it out from the Journalism Resource Center, E350 Adler.

- **Changing the News: The Forces Shaping Journalism in Uncertain Times**  
  Wilson Lowrey and Peter J. Gade, editors (New York: Routledge, 2011)

- **The Elements of Journalism:**  
  What Newspeople Should Know and the Public Should Expect  

Books are available at the University Bookstore (and elsewhere). Additional online readings from the scholarly and trade press are indicated on the syllabus; additions or substitutions may be made as we go along.

WEBSITE: Course information is available through ICON, the university course management site. We also will use iowaJournalism225.wordpress.com as our class blog.

INSTRUCTOR: Jane Singer (jane-singer@uiowa.edu), W341 Adler; 335-3431
Office Hours: 9:30 to 11 Tuesdays and Wednesdays; or by appointment
Jane has 15 years experience as a print and online journalist, and another 19 as a teacher and researcher. She worked as a reporter and editor at three East Coast newspapers before joining CBS in the early 1980s as an editor of its fledgling online service. That project evolved into the Prodigy Services Company, and she was Prodigy's first news manager, staffing and overseeing a national online newsroom. Jane holds a Ph.D. in journalism from the University of Missouri, an M.A. in liberal studies from New York University and a bachelor's degree in journalism from the University of Georgia. From January 2007 to January 2010, she was the Johnston Press Chair in Digital Journalism at the University of Central Lancashire in England, where she remains a visiting professor.

SCHOOL INFO: School of Journalism and Mass Communication  
Main office: E305 Adler Journalism Building; 335-3401  
Director: David Perlmutter, E305B Adler (david-perlmutter@uiowa.edu)
The School is part of the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences (www.clas.uiowa.edu), which is our administrative home. The School and College require that every syllabus outline ground rules for every class. These include:

**ACADEMIC INTEGRITY:** Plagiarism – use of others’ work as your own – is dishonest and a breach of university and journalistic ethics. For journalists, plagiarism or other dishonesty is a sin deadly to any career. **Don’t do it.**

**Attribution:** All ideas that are not your own must be attributed. That goes for direct and indirect quotes; it goes for material you heard and material you read. Failing to accurately and appropriately credit all your sources is not just misleading but also dishonest. It is unacceptable in this (or any other) class.

**Plagiarizing yourself:** If you use quotes or passages that you previously published somewhere, you must adhere to the rules against plagiarism and properly credit the original publication. If you use quotes or passages that you previously wrote for some other purpose (including but not limited to another class, past or present), you must indicate that first use – and only after obtaining Jane’s permission to use the material at all.

**Online content:** The same rules apply online as elsewhere: If someone else created it, that person or organization owns it. Most information on the Internet – textual, visual, whatever – may be free to look at, but that does not mean it can be freely copied and republished, in print or online. Unless explicitly labeled for sharing (for instance, through a special Creative Commons license), it almost never can.

**Penalty:** Any act of plagiarism in a written assignment will result in an F for that assignment. The University also provides penalties for plagiarism ranging from grade reduction to expulsion. For a full explanation of plagiarism and other forms of cheating, consult the College’s *Academic Policies Handbook*. If you are unsure whether a situation constitutes plagiarism, ask. Ignorance of plagiarism will not be accepted as an excuse.

**ATTENDANCE:** We meet only 15 times all semester, so any absence is detrimental to your ability to succeed in the class. If you cannot be here, you must let Jane know the reason for your absence within 24 hours. You must complete any missed assignment missed to obtain any of the associated points. Late penalties may apply.

**E-MAIL:** University policy specifies that students are responsible for all official correspondence sent to their University of Iowa e-mail address (NAME@uiowa.edu).

**FINAL EXAM:** We won’t have one. But all class work must be completed by our scheduled exam time, 7 p.m. on Monday of finals week.

**LEARNING ENABLEMENT:** If you need academic accommodation for any disability, please register with Student Disability Services (www.uiowa.edu/~sds), then meet privately with Jane to make the necessary arrangements.

**RIGHTS and RESPONSIBILITIES:** You have a right to expect an environment that enables you to learn. You have a responsibility to colleagues and to your instructor to help create an environment in which others may learn. Civility, collegiality and cooperation are absolutely essential; their absence will not be tolerated.

If you have a complaint against any teaching staff member, you are responsible for following procedures in the CLAS *Academic Policies Handbook*. However, please try to work out a solution with those involved first, starting with Jane.

The University also has an explicit policy related to sexual harassment, which subverts the mission of the institution and threatens the well-being of its members. All members of the UI community have a responsibility to uphold this mission and to contribute to a safe environment that enhances learning. Incidents of harassment should be reported at once.

**SEVERE WEATHER:** Not uncommon in Iowa! If threatening weather occurs during class, seek appropriate shelter immediately. Class will continue if possible when the event is over. The Hawk Alert site (hawkalert.uiowa.edu) contains details about notification of weather and other emergencies.

**TIME ALLOCATION:** College policy states that for each semester hour of credit in a course, students should expect to spend two hours per week in out-of-class work or preparation. This is a 3 s.h. class, which means an average of six hours per week of outside-of-class work.
GRADING

Your grade in Contemporary Problems will be based primarily on the quality of your ideas about course content and your skill in articulating those ideas both orally and in writing. Details about each course component, which together add up to 1,000 points, will be provided in class.

All work must be completed on time to be eligible for full credit.

THREE THINK PIECES 450 points total (150 apiece)
These will be substantive investigations of and reflections on various contemporary issues facing news workers and organizations. They will incorporate written source material, human interviewees and your own analysis/interpretation.

DUE DATES: September 21, October 19, November 16

TEN SHORT ‘TAKE-AWAYS’ 250 points total (25 apiece)
These will be short pieces highlighting the idea(s) that most interested you from the weekly readings and/or class discussion. Please email these to Jane no later than midnight after our Tuesday class.

DUE DATES: Any 10 weeks of your choosing during the semester. Your options are:
August 30, September 6, September 13, September 20, September 27, October 4, October 11, October 18, October 25, November 1, November 8, November 15, November 29 and December 6.

TEN READINGS QUESTIONS for CLASS DISCUSSION 100 points total (10 apiece)
We will spend time in class each week discussing the readings, and your questions will help guide that discussion. For 10 different class sessions, you will prepare a provocative question (or short set of related questions), related to one or more of the readings, for the rest of us to address.

DUE DATES: Any 10 weeks of your choosing during the semester. (You can choose all the same weeks as your ‘take-away’ ones or you can mix it up.) Your options again:
August 30, September 6, September 13, September 20, September 27, October 4, October 11, October 18, October 25, November 1, November 8, November 15, November 29 and December 6.

IN-CLASS and ONLINE PARTICIPATION 100 points total (varied)
Another 10 percent of your grade will come from your participation in the class conversation, in person and online. Of these 100 points, at least 50 will come from your contributions to our class blog (iowaJournalism225.wordpress.com). The rest will come primarily from in-class interaction with guest speakers and with each other.

MAP PROJECT PROPOSAL 100 points total
For this class, you will identify and describe the purpose of your project, as well as create an annotated bibliography. Those also taking 019:226 will complete additional portions of the proposal for that class.

DUE DATE: Draft version due November 29 (40 points)
Final version due December 12 (60 points)

PLUS-MINUS GRADING: We will use plus-minus indications for final grades.

GRADE CHANGES: If you believe a mistake was made on a grade, please see Jane within one week after the material is returned. After that, the grade stands.
PROPOSED SCHEDULE of CLASSES, READINGS and ASSIGNMENTS

This is a tentative schedule. Topics and readings are subject to change based on events, your interests and your suggestions. The ICON version of the syllabus will be continually updated, so please refer to it for the latest info. Articles in academic journals are available online through the InfoHawk (UI library) gateway.

AUGUST 23: Introductions
Journalism traditions and transitions

**READ:**  
*Changing the News*: Chapter 1 (pages 1-21; foreword and preface optional, vii-xiv)

**Online:**  
State of the News Media 2011: Overview, Major Trends, Key Findings  
Pew Research Center’s Project for Excellence in Journalism  
stateofthemedia.org/2011/overview-2  
stateofthemedia.org/2011/overview-2/major-trends  
stateofthemedia.org/2011/overview-2/key-findings

**SITES TO EXPLORE:**  
poynter.org; journalism.org; stateofthemedia.org (additional sections);  
www.nieman.harvard.edu/reports.aspx

SEGMENT ONE: PERCEPTIONS OF JOURNALISM

AUGUST 30: Journalism as occupation
Newsroom practices and products

**READ:**  
*Elements of Journalism*: Preface, Intro and Chapters 1, 2 and 3 (ix – 77)

*Changing the News*: Chapters 11 and 14 (193-212; 249-269)

*Democratic Craft*: Chapter 9 (73-79)  
**Optional:** Any (or all!) of the introductory essays about the craft of writing

**Online:**  
“Between Tradition and Change: A Review of Recent Research…”  

“Compressed Dimensions in Digital Media Occupations: … Transformation”  
Weiss and Joyce, *Journalism* 10 (5, 2009): 587-603

**SITES TO EXPLORE:**  
spj.org; journaliststoolbox.org

SEPTEMBER 6: Journalism as institution
Economics and employment

**READ:**  
*Changing the News*: Chapters 8, 9 and 10 (136-192)  

*Democratic Craft*: Chapters 7 and 12 (48-56, 116-119)

**Online:**  
“Institutionalism, News Organizations and Innovation”  

“New Economic Models for U.S. Journalism”  
Giles, *Daedalus* 139 (2, 2010): 26-38

“Why U.S. Newspapers Suffer More Than Others”  
Santhanam and Rosenstiel, State of the News Media 2011  
stateofthemedia.org/2011/mobile-survey/international-newspaper-economics

**SITES TO EXPLORE:**  
grady.uga.edu/annualsurveys; poynter.org/category/latest-news/business-news
SEPTEMBER 13: Journalism as public servant
Watchdogs and guide dogs

READ:  
*Elements of Journalism*: Chapters 4, 5 and 6 (78-161)  
*Democratic Craft*: Chapters 14 and 24 (126-140; 225-236)

Online:  
“Investigative Journalism and the Moral Order”  

“The Future of Investigative Journalism”  
Houston, *Daedalus* 139 (2, 2010): 45-56

“The Elite Newspaper of the Future”  
www.ajr.org/article.asp?id=4605

SITES TO EXPLORE: ire.org; propublica.org; iowawatch.org

SEPTEMBER 20: Journalism as culture
Internalized norms and perceptions

DUE: No later than midnight on Wednesday, September 21:  
Email first think piece to Jane (jane-singer@uiowa.edu)

READ:  
*Changing the News*: Chapters 2 and 4 (22-42; 45-62)  
*Democratic Craft*: Chapter 31 (305-331)

Online:  
“Rethinking Objectivity”  
Cunningham, *Columbia Journalism Review*, July 2003  
(Republished by Alternet: www.alternet.org/media/16348)

“Professional Roles, Values, Ethics”  
Weaver et al., in *The American Journalist in the 21st Century* (130-181)  

SITES TO EXPLORE: spj.org/ethicscode.asp; cjr.org; ajr.org

SEGMENT TWO: JOURNALISM IN CONTEXT

SEPTEMBER 27: Journalism in a democracy
The power of information

SPECIAL GUEST: Seung Min Kim, Politico

READ:  
*Elements of Journalism*: Chapters 7 and 8 (162-206)  
*Changing the News*: Chapters 3 and 7 (45-62; 118-135)  
*Democratic Craft*: Chapters 10, 27 and 30 (80-98; 256-262; 300-304)

Online:  
“The Virtual Sphere: The Internet as a Public Sphere”  

“The Fact-Checking Explosion”  
www.ajr.org/Article.asp?id=4980

SITES TO EXPLORE: politifact.org; cjr.org/campaign_desk; politico.com
OCTOBER 4: Journalism in a global society
The power of borderless media

READ:  
*Changing the News: Chapters 5 and 6 (83-117)*

Online:  
“International Reporting in the Age of Participatory Media”
Zuckerman, *Daedalus* 139 (2, 2010): 66-75

“Mapping Journalism Cultures Across Nations: Comparative Study …”

“Signal and Noise”
Bell, *Columbia Journalism Review*, July/August 2011
www.cjr.org/cover_story/signal_and_noise.php (URL may change …)

SITES TO EXPLORE:  
www.publicintegrity.org/investigations/icij;  icfj.org;  en.rsf.org

OCTOBER 11: Journalism in a network
The power of connections

READ:  
*Elements of Journalism: Chapter 9 (207-225)*  
*Changing the News: Chapters 12, 13 and 15 (213-248, 270-286)*

Online:  
“All the News Fit to Post? Comparing News Content on the Web …”

“Start Spreading the News”
Briggs, *Nieman Reports*, Summer 2011
www.nieman.harvard.edu/reports/article/102623/Start-Spreading-the-News.aspx

“The Distribution Revolution”
www.ajr.org/Article.asp?id=4844

SITES TO EXPLORE:  
knightdigitalmediacenter.org;  ojr.org;  oreilly.com/openbook/wemedia/book

OCTOBER 18: Journalism in collaboration
The power of the crowd

DUE:  
No later than midnight on Wednesday, October 19:  
Email second think piece to Jane (jane-singer@uiowa.edu)

READ:  
*Elements of Journalism: Chapters 10 and 11 (226-255)*

Online:  
“Competition, Complementarity or Integration? The Relationship…”

“When the Media Meet Crowds of Wisdom: … Newsgathering”

“The Rise of Crowdsourcing”
Howe, *Wired*, June 2006
www.wired.com/wired/archive/14.06/crowds.html
For the 3-minute version, see: youtube.com/watch?v=F0-UtNg3ots

“Four Crowdsourcing Lessons from the Guardian’s … Experiment”
Andersen, Nieman Journalism Lab, June 2009

SITES TO EXPLORE:  
www.j-lab.org/projects/networked-journalism;  mashable.com
SEGMENT THREE: ALTERNATIVE FORMS OF JOURNALISM

OCTOBER 25: User-generated content
Barbarians at the gates?

SPECIAL GUEST: Deborah Shelton, Chicago Tribune

READ: Democratic Craft: Chapters 22 and 23 (208-224)


“Quality Control: Perceived Effects of User-Generated Content …” Singer, Journalism Practice 4 (2, 2010): 127-142


“Online Comments: Dialogue or Diatribe?” Shepard, Nieman Reports, summer 2011 www.nieman.harvard.edu/reports/article/102647/Online-Comments-Discussion-or-Diatribe.aspx

SITES TO EXPLORE: Comment policies of your favorite (or least favorite!) media website

NOVEMBER 1: Blogs and bloggers
When everyone’s a publisher

READ (online): “Mapping the Journalism-Blogging Relationship” Lowrey, Journalism 7 (4, 2006): 477-500

“Contested Autonomy: Professional and Popular Claims on Journalistic Norms” Singer, Journalism Studies 8 (1, 2007): 79-95


“To Amazing To Turn Down” Benzing, American Journalism Review, March/April 2011 www.ajr.org/article.asp?id=5052

SITES TO EXPLORE: www.nytimes.com/interactive/blogs/directory.html; technorati.com

NOVEMBER 8: Mobile journalism
‘Opportunities’ for journalists

READ (online): “Twittering the News: The Emergence of Ambient Journalism” Hermida, Journalism Practice 4 (3, 2010): 297-308


“Understanding the Participatory News Consumer” (Overview; News on the Go) www.journalism.org/node/19537; access “News on the Go” from sidebar menu

SITE TO EXPLORE: www.poynter.org/category/latest-news/media-lab/mobile-media
NOVEMBER 15: Non-profit journalism
New media economics

SPECIAL GUEST: Abby Rapoport, Texas Observer

DUE: No later than midnight on Wednesday, November 16:
Email final think piece to Jane (jane-singer@uiowa.edu)

READ (online):
“Foundation-Funded Journalism: Reasons To Be Wary of Charitable Support”
Browne, Journalism Studies 11 (6, 2010): 889-903

“Sustaining Hyperlocal Media: In Search of Funding Models”
Kurpius, Metzgar and Rowley, Journalism Studies 11 (3, 2010): 359-376

“Non-profit News: Assessing a New Landscape in Journalism”
Pew Research Center’s Project for Excellence in Journalism, July 2011
www.journalism.org/analysis_report/non_profit_news_1 (all sections)

“The Reconstruction of American Journalism”
Downie and Schudson, Columbia Journalism Review, October 2009
www.cjr.org/reconstruction/the_reconstruction_of_american.php (all pages)

SITES TO EXPLORE: www.texasobserver.org; investigativewsnetwork.org; www.iwatchnews.org;
knightfoundation.org/grants/?funding_option=1; news21.com

NOVEMBER 22: Thanksgiving Week – enjoy the stuffing!

NOVEMBER 29 and/or DECEMBER 1: Proposal workshop (with Professor Steve Berry)
Joint session with Master’s Advanced Reporting and Writing class

DUE: Draft version of proposal purpose and annotated bibliography

READ: The articles you have selected for your proposal’s annotated bibliography

DECEMBER 6: Looking back, looking forward
Journalism past, present and future

READ: Democratic Craft: Chapter 33 (344-369)

Online: Whatever interests you from these websites (or others you find!):

Nieman Reports, Summer 2010: The Digital Landscape: What’s Next for News?
www.nieman.harvard.edu/reports/issue/100062/Summer-2010.aspx

Nieman Journalism Lab
niemanlab.org

Knight Digital Media Center: News Leadership 3.0
www.knightdigitalmediacenter.org/leadership_blog

PBS: MediaShift
www.pbs.org/mediashift

DECEMBER 12

DUE: Final version of proposal purpose and annotated bibliography
No later than midnight Monday, December 12

HAPPY HOLIDAYS!
THE IOWA DOZEN

The mission of our School is to educate journalism and mass communication professionals, scholars and faculty. Through professional and creative research activities, we enhance a continually growing and evolving understanding of the social and cultural roles, responsibilities and contexts for communicators in a democratic society, as well as in diverse global contexts.

To accomplish that mission:

We learn to ...

1. Write correctly, clearly and well.
2. Conduct research and gather information responsibly.
3. Edit and evaluate carefully.
4. Use media technologies thoughtfully.
5. Apply statistical concepts accurately.

We value ...

6. Free speech and First Amendment principles for all individuals and groups.
7. A diverse global community.
8. Creativity and independence.

We explore ...

10. Theories and concepts.
11. The history, structure and economy of media institutions
12. The role of media in shaping cultures.