Overview: Much of the mass communication literature suggests that news is not the objective presentation of what is "out there," but instead the product of many social and cultural forces. Some of these forces are unrelated to journalism, and stem from the process of doing work, from running a profit-making organization, and from the meanings inherent in a society.

This course therefore focuses on news content, its creation by media workers and media organizations, and its meanings from a cultural perspective.

Class sessions: Most class sessions involve discussion of the week’s readings. A student will be assigned to lead the class discussion of each reading, but all students are expected to complete each of the assigned readings by the assigned class session. These discussions should summarize key ideas and consider linkages with other readings. Focus on key points rather than providing a “play-by-play” of the reading. We will then try to identify the main take-away points from that group of readings.

Try not to limit your ideas by the label that an author used for a particular concept. As you read articles, think about the key concepts, and how these concepts relate to each other, as well as to other readings. Consider how the research questions framed by the author or authors shaped the conclusions. Think about how well the conclusions were supported by the data or the argument that was made. Overall, try to learn from the readings rather than just critiquing them.

With the large number of readings in this course, it is unlikely that you will become intimately familiar with all of them. Our goal will be to integrate each week’s ideas. Some readings are essays, some are quantitative pieces, and others use qualitative methodologies. Regardless of method or theory, do your best to glean what seems important.

Readings are drawn from two books, both available used on Amazon:


Both these books are also available on reserve in the JMC Resource Center on the third floor of AJB.
Assignments and grading: This class is graded pass/fail. A passing grade is based on three components: 1) attendance, 2) participation, and 3) presentation of assigned readings. No written assignments are required.

Class Policies: I would like to hear from anyone who has a disability that may require some modification of seating, testing or other class requirements so that appropriate arrangements may be made. Please see me after class or in my office.

Students unable to make their assigned presentation because of serious, unavoidable circumstances should let me know beforehand. (My phone is on a voice mail system and I check email regularly.)

If you have a complaint regarding any part of this class, please try resolving the issue with me first. If the problem cannot be resolved within the structure of the course, you may contact the director of the School of Journalism and Mass Communication, E305, 335-3482. Please consult the Liberal Arts Bulletin for a full discussion of grievance procedures.

Other course policies from the College of Liberal Arts & Sciences can be found here:

http://www.clas.uiowa.edu/faculty/teaching/policies.shtml

The School of Journalism and Mass Communication adheres to The Iowa Dozen, a set of principles for journalism education. They may be found here:

http://www.uiowa.edu/jmc/iowa-dozen.html

Office Hours: My office is located in W309 AJB. Office hours are by appointment only. Email is: dan-berkowitz@uiowa.edu. The office phone is 335-3477 and voice mail will pick up after about four rings, or if the line is busy.

SCHEDULE OF READINGS

WEEK 1: August 24
Course overview & introductions

WEEK 2: August 31
SMON: Overview: Why a “Social Meanings of News” Perspective?
SMON: A Framework for Thinking About News

WEEK 3: September 7
SMON: Selecting News: The Individual Gatekeeper

WEEK 4: September 14
SMON: Organizing News: News as a Workplace Product

WEEK 5: September 21
SMON: Professionalizing News: News as Journalists’ Norms and Routines

WEEK 6: September 28
    Summing up…no readings

WEEK 7: October 5
    CMON: Introduction: From Sociological Roots to Cultural Perspectives

WEEK 8: October 12
    CMON: A Framework for Thinking About the Meanings of News

WEEK 8: October 19
    CMON: Cultural Practice of Journalism

WEEK 9: October 26
    No class meeting

WEEK 10: November 2
    CMON: Making Meaning in the Journalistic Interpretive Community

WEEK 11: November 9
    Repairing the Journalistic Paradigm

WEEK 12: November 16
    News Narratives as Cultural Text

WEEK 13: November 23
    News as Collective Memory

WEEK 14: November 30
    Epilogue: Reflecting on Cultural Meanings of News
    Course wrap up

WEEK 15: December 7
    No class meeting