Overview:

Early in the development of the field of mass communication, research focused on major newspapers, national magazines, radio programming and a small number of television channels—there was no internet. As the study of news and entertainment content and production has grown, research has shifted from sociological views to those that connect more closely to cultural aspects. With that, the boundaries of media forms and conduits have become more diffuse.

This course draws from areas that have been called “Sociology of News” and “Journalism Studies” to explore concepts drawn from sociology of work, interpretive community, mythical narratives, collective memory and boundary maintenance. Although many of these concepts have their roots in studies of news, their utility is easily adaptable to research on social media and entertainment programming.

This course therefore focuses on news content and its creation by media workers and media organizations from a social construction perspective. The first part offers a broad overview of the topic. The second part looks at original articles about news as social production. The third part considers news from a cultural vantage point.

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. In general (and depending on class size), students should expect to lead discussion of a reading every other week.

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 and rejecting them.

With the large number of readings in this course, it is unlikely that you will become intimately familiar with all of them. Some readings are essays, some are quantitative pieces, and others use qualitative methodologies. Regardless of method, do your best to glean what seems important (working knowledge of statistics is not necessary).

Most readings are drawn from two books, both available at the IMU bookstore:
I am the editor of both books, and would be perfectly happy if you showed up with a copy that had 3 "USED" stickers. If you buy a new copy, though, I'll return my royalty to you. In addition, there will be a selection of readings from recent books and journals on the class ICON website.

**Assignments and grading:** There are four main grading components required for the course.

The **first grading component** is the Concept Paper, where students attempt to sort out a set of readings. Each of the two papers is 4 - 5 pages long, double spaced, one-inch margins. Concept Papers should reflect clear thinking and careful writing. Papers are due as noted on this syllabus. No bibliography is necessary, but if you quote somebody directly, make sure that you cite the author and year in parentheses. *Do not use outside readings in these two papers.*

- “What is News?” paper, which answers the questions “What is News?” and “Why Does News Turn Out Like It Does?” based on the readings in *Social Meanings of News*.
- *Social Meanings vs Cultural Meanings*, which compares and contrasts the two collections of readings based on Table 1 in *CMON*.

A **second grading component** is the Book Introduction. Each student will choose one book from the list (found on the ICON site) and write a 2 - 3 page analysis and critique of the book, much like what would appear in a journal. Some of these books are classics in the field, while a few are more contemporary. The report should highlight key concepts and place the book within the context of other course readings to that point. Due dates for these papers will be assigned after books are chosen, drawing from the dates shown on the syllabus. Students will also prepare a one-page summary handout of their report and present a brief report in class on the due date. Only one student can report on each book.

A **third grading component** is a research proposal based on a combination of course readings and other materials. This paper does not need to study news, but must incorporate concepts from course readings.

A **fourth grading component** is Participation & Attendance. A student doing well in this component will attend class sessions regularly and make thoughtful, well-informed comments during each class session. Students who attend but do not speak will receive a lower grade; students who speak frequently but without substance will also find their grade to be lower. Obviously, students who do not attend cannot participate and their grade will suffer doubly.
Grades will be assigned according to the following percentages:

- What is News? ........................................................... 20%
- SMON vs CMON ...................................................... 20%
- Book Introduction ...................................................... 10%
- Term Paper ................................................................. 30%
- Participation & Attendance ....................................... 20%
- TOTAL .................................................................... 100%

**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 during my office hours.

Students unable to turn in a written assignment or 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 e-mail regularly.) Without prior arrangements, written assignments will not be accepted after the day they are due. Incompletes will be given *only* in accordance with University policy (that is, where work remaining is small and reasons are acceptable to the instructor). *No late papers will be accepted without a very good reason.*

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.

Webster’s New World Dictionary of the American Language defines **PLAGIARIZE**: “to take ideas, writings, etc. from another and pass them off as one’s own.” The University provides penalties for plagiarism ranging from grade reduction to dismissal from the University. Please consult the Liberal Arts Bulletin for a full discussion of this offense.

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

[http://www.clas.uiowa.edu/faculty/teaching/policies.shtml](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](http://www.uiowa.edu/jmc/iowa-dozen.html)

**Office Hours:** My office is located in W309 AJB. Office hours are by appointment only. E-mail 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: January 18
Holiday…no class meeting

WEEK 2: January 25, A Framework for Thinking About News
SMON, “Overview”
SMON, “A Framework for Thinking About News”
SMON, “The Sociology of News Production”
SMON, “Has Communication Explained Journalism”
SMON, “Professional Mass Communicators”
CMON, “Introduction”
CMON, “Understanding the Global Journalist”
CMON, “What is Journalism?”
CMON, “Deconstructing Journalism Culture”

WEEK 3: February 1, News as Social Production
SMON, “A New Gatekeeper Model”
SMON, “The ‘Gate Keeper’”
SMON, “Ms. Gates Takes Over”
SMON, “Refining the Gatekeeping Metaphor for Local Television News”
SMON, “Structure and Constraints on Community Newspaper Gatekeepers”

WEEK 4: February 8, Organizing News: News as a Workplace Product
SMON, “News Organizations: Conflict as a Crafted Cultural Norm”
SMON, “News Reporting and Professionalism: Some Constraints on the Reporting of the News”
SMON, “Science Writers at Work”

Book Introduction

WEEK 5: February 15, Professionalizing News: News as Journalists’ Norms and Routines
SMON, “Making News by Doing Work: Routinizing the Unexpected”
SMON, “News as Purposive Behaviour: On the Strategic Use of Routine Events, Accidents and Scandals”
SMON, “News and Nonevents: Making the Visible Invisible”
SMON, “Routines and the Making of Oppositional News”

Book Introduction

WEEK 6: February 22, Selling News: News as Economic Entity
SMON, “Boundaries of Journalistic Autonomy”
SMON, “The News Factory”
SMON, “The First Stage of News Production: Learning”
SMON, “The Competitive Ethos in Television Newswork”
Book Introduction

WEEK 7: February 29, *Telling News: News as Familiar Story*
SMON, “Mythical Elements in Television News”
SMON, “Myth, Chronicle, and Story: Exploring the Narrative Qualities of News
SMON, “When Technology Fails: The Drama of Airline Crashes in Network Television News”
SMON, “The Rape of Mike Tyson: Race, the Press and Symbolic Types”

Book Introduction

WEEK 8: March 7, *Ideology and News: News as Social Power*
SMON, “Journalists as Interpretive Communities”
SMON, “The News Paradigm and the Ideology of Objectivity”
SMON, “News of Battering”
SMON, “Press Rites and Race Relations”
SMON, “Science, Technology and Risk Coverage of a Community Conflict”
SMON, “Epilogue: Applying the Tools to Study News”

Book Introduction

WEEK 9: March 14, *Spring Break*
No class meeting

WEEK 10: March 21, *Cultural Practice of Journalism*
CMON, Overview
CMON, “The Socially Responsible Existentialist: A Normative Emphasis for Journalists in a New Media Environment”
CMON, ‘Blasphemy as Sacred Rite/Right: ‘The Mohammed Cartoons Affair’ and Maintenance of Journalistic Ideology”
CMON, “The Journalistic Gut Feeling: Journalistic Doxa, News Habitus, and Orthodox News Values”
CMON, “Media Ritual in Catastrophic Time: The Populist Turn in Television Coverage of Hurricane Katrina”

Book Introduction

*Paper due…* "What is News? Why Does it Turn Out Like it Does?"

WEEK 11: March 28, *Making Meaning in the Journalistic Interpretive Community*
CMON, Overview
CMON, “War Journalism and the ‘KIA Journalist’: The Cases of David Bloom and Michael Kelly”
CMON, “The Importance of Ritual in Crisis Journalism”
CMON, “‘Someone’s Gotta Be in Control Here’: The Institutionalization of Online News and the Creation of Shared Journalistic Authority”
CMON, “Broader and Deeper: A Study of Newsroom Culture in a Time of Change”

Book Introduction

WEEK 12: April 4, Repairing the Journalistic Paradigm
CMON, Overview
CMON, “The Princess and the Paparazzi: Blame, Responsibility, and the Media’s Role in the Death of Diana”
CMON, “‘These Crowded Circumstances’: When Pack Journalists Bash Pack Journalism”
CMON, “Israeli Image Repair: Recasting the Deviant Actor to Retell the Story”

Book Introduction

WEEK 13: April 11, News Narratives as Cultural Text
CMON, Overview
CMON, “Why Peace Journalism Isn’t News”
CMON, “‘Lost Boys’ and the Promised Land: US Newspaper Coverage of Sudanese Refugees”
CMON, “Crafting Cultural Resonance: Imaginative Power in Everyday Journalism”
CMON, “Medea in the Media: Narrative and Myth in the Newspaper Coverage of Women Who Kill Their Children”

Book Introduction

WEEK 14: April 18, News as Collective Memory
CMON, “Reporting Through the Lens of the Past”
CMON, “Memory in Journalism and the Memory of Journalism”
CMON, “Making Memories Matter”
CMON, “Memory Studies”
CMON, “Epilogue: Reflecting on Cultural Meanings of News”

Paper due…”Social Meanings vs Cultural Meanings”
WEEK 15: April 25, Additional Selections


Eddy, “Collective Memory in a Post-Broadcast World,” in Journalism and Memory.

Anden-Papadopoulos, “Journalism, Memory, and the ‘Crowd-Sourced Video Revolution,’” in Journalism and Memory.


WEEK 16: May 2, Project Presentations

FINALS WEEK: May 9

Final paper due 5:00 pm, May 12