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 interface of an organization with society and its embedded meanings.

This course therefore focuses on news content and its creation by media workers and media organizations from a social/cultural construction perspective. In all, there are four parts to the course:

- The first part offers a conceptual overview of news and newsmaking.
- The second part places that overview into its social and cultural contexts.
- The third part looks at specific studies about news from several perspectives.
- The fourth part provides the opportunity to place the three previous parts into the contemporary by focusing a term paper on either (a) the rise of fake news, or (b) the impact of digital technologies on the nature of news.

Class sessions: Most class sessions involve discussion of the week’s readings. Students are expected to complete readings by the assigned class session. Class discussions should summarize key ideas and consider linkages with other readings. In general (and depending on class size), students should expect to lead an introduction and 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.

This course has four learning objectives:

1. Exploring media institutions and practices, through critical examination of news based on a conceptual framework of levels of analysis and theoretical paradigms.

2. Exploring the role of media in shaping cultures, though a consideration of how news both reflects and is reflected by cultural values and diverse perspectives.
3. Learning to conduct research and gather information responsibly, through carefully informed research papers and class discussions.

4. Understanding the usefulness of applied mass communication theories and concepts, through readings, class discussions, and assignments.

Readings: Most readings are drawn from three books, all available at the IMU Book Store:


Assignments and Examination: Your grade is made up of 5 components: (1) Exams on each book (3 exams total), (2) Literature Review Proposal, (3) Literature Review Paper, (4) Online Monitoring Reports, and (5) Attendance/Participation. More details will be provided on the class ICON web site, but the basics of each component include:

- **Examinations** will require a full class session on February 21 (Shoemaker & Reese book), April 4 (Schudson book), and April 25 (Berkowitz book). The format for exams will be announced before each exam; a review session will be held before each exam. Students are allowed one page of notes for each exam.

- **Term Paper Proposal** describes the area for your Term Paper, which will involve application of our readings to either (a) the phenomenon of “fake news” or (b) the impact of digital technologies. Assignment guidelines will be available on the ICON web site.

- **Term Paper** provides the opportunity to explore current research about the sociology of news and examine how answers to key questions have been refined or changed. This paper will be based on a review of published studies rather than collection of original data. Assignment guidelines will be available on the ICON web site.

- **Online Monitoring Reports** involve keeping up with current issues in fake news and digital journalism. Students should regularly follow (a) The Onion, (b) Snopes, (c) PolitiFact, and (d) the journal, *Digital Journalism*. For each class session, students will be assigned to present a brief oral report on an article they have read. A one-page paper should be uploaded to ICON at least one day before the article will be presented.

- **Attendance/Participation** is expected of each student. Attendance will be taken randomly throughout the semester at the start of class. Excused absences will not be given except for serious illness, death in the family, or occasions where I have approved the absence in advance. Students are expected to participate in each day’s class discussion, and to offer thoughtful, informed comments. I will bring a chart of student photos to class and will call on students by name on occasion. Students who are usually silent in class or whose
comments do not reflect understanding of class concepts, will not receive full credit for this component.

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.

Grades will be assigned according to the following percentages:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Examinations (1 &amp; 2 at 20%, 3 at 15%)</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Term Paper Proposal</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Term Paper</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online Monitoring Reports</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attendance/Participation</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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.

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, W615SSH, 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.

Office Hours: My office is located in W309 Adler Journalism Building. Office hours are Monday 10-12 and Thursday, 2-4. Other hours by appointment. 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 AND ASSIGNMENTS

WEEK 1

Tuesday, January 17
Course introduction

Part 1, Media Sociology: An Overview and Foundation

Thursday, January 19 (these readings are available on ICON)
SMON, Overview: Why a “Social Meanings of News” Perspective?
CMON, Introduction
Schudson, Introduction: Making News
Schudson, Ch. 1: Defining Journalism

WEEK 2

Tuesday, January 24
Shoemaker & Reese, Ch. 1: Media content & theory
Shoemaker & Reese, Ch. 2: Beyond processes and effects

Thursday, January 26
Shoemaker & Reese, Ch. 3: Mediating reality

WEEK 3

Tuesday, January 31
Shoemaker & Reese, Ch. 4: Social systems

Thursday, February 2
Shoemaker & Reese, Ch. 5: Social institutions

WEEK 4

Tuesday, February 7
Shoemaker & Reese, Ch. 6: Organizations

Thursday, February 9
Shoemaker & Reese, Ch. 7: Routines

WEEK 5

Tuesday, February 14
Shoemaker & Reese, Ch. 8: Individuals
Thursday, February 16
Shoemaker & Reese, Ch. 9: Studying the hierarchical model
Review session for Exam 1

WEEK 6

Tuesday, February 21
Exam 1

Part 2, Sociology of News: Placing the Foundation into Context

Thursday, February 23
Schudson, Ch. 2: Does news matter?

WEEK 7

Tuesday, February 28
Schudson, Ch. 3: Media bias

Thursday, March 2
Schudson, Ch. 4: Where news came from

WEEK 8

Tuesday, March 7
Schudson, Ch. 5: In recent memory

Thursday, March 9
Schudson, Ch. 6: News in the marketplace
Term Paper Proposal Due

WEEK 9: SPRING BREAK

Tuesday, March 14: No class meeting

Thursday, March 17: No class meeting

WEEK 10

Tuesday, March 21
Schudson, Ch. 7: News sources

Thursday, March 23
Schudson, Ch. 8: The political culture of news
Schudson, Ch. 9: The audience for news
WEEK 11

Tuesday, March 28
   Schudson, Ch. 10: News as literature and narrative
   Schudson, Ch. 11: Law, democracy and news

Thursday, March 30
   Schudson, Ch. 12: The first news revolution of the twenty-first century
   Review for Exam 2

WEEK 12

Tuesday, April 4
   Exam 2 on Schudson

Part 3, Applying Concepts to Research

Thursday, April 6
   SMON, Ch. 5: “The gate keeper”: A case study in the selection of news
   SMON, Ch. 6: Ms. Gates takes over: An updated version of a 1949 case study

WEEK 13

Tuesday, April 11
   SMON, Ch. 9: Social control in the newsroom: A functional analysis
   SMON, Ch. 11: News reporting and professionalism: Some constraints on the reporting of news
   SMON, Ch. 13: Making news by doing work: Routinizing the unexpected

Thursday, April 13
   SMON, Ch. 15: News and nonevents: Making the visible invisible
   SMON, Ch. 16: Routines and the making of oppositional news
   SMON, Ch. 18: The news factory

WEEK 14

Tuesday, April 18
   SMON, Ch. 20: The competitive ethos in television newswork
   SMON, Ch. 23: When technology fails: The drama of airline crashes in network television news
   SMON, Ch. 24: Non-Routine news and newswork: Exploring a what-a-story

Thursday, April 20
   SMON, Ch. 25: The rape of Mike Tyson: Race, the press and symbolic types
   SMON, Ch. 28: News of battering
   Review for SMON exam

WEEK 15

Tuesday, April 25
Exam 3 on SMON

Thursday, April 27
   Open time for preparing presentations
   Prof. Berkowitz available in office

WEEK 16
Tuesday, May 2
   Paper presentations

Thursday, May 4
   Paper presentations

FINALS WEEK
Tuesday, May 9
   Final versions of papers due, upload to ICON by 5 pm