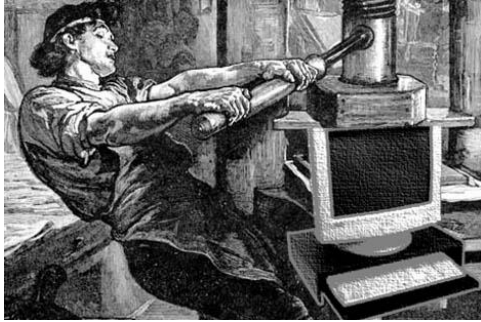


JOU4008 Journalism Studies



Fall 2020 Syllabus

Journalism Studies

Monday – Periods 5 - 7 (11:45 AM - 2:45 PM) ~ Zoom

“The Essence of Journalism Is a Discipline of Verification.” ~ [Bill Kovach and Tom Rosenstiel](#)

“As a journalist, then a lawyer, and then a lobbyist for the past 38 years, I am a practitioner of narrative. I am intrigued by the way in which the stories we tell — and the credit we give them — shapes our understanding of who we are and what is true.” ~ [Tom Lee](#)

Instructor / Contact

Instructor: Dr. Ronald R. Rodgers: [About Moi](#)

Email: rrodgers@jou.ufl.edu (However, use Canvas mail. I will respond within 24 hours Monday-Friday.)

Office: 3058 Weimer Hall

Office Hours: E-mail me and we will set up a Zoom meeting

[Policy on Reference Letters from Dr. Rodgers](#)

Course Description & Objectives

“The difference between literature and journalism is that journalism is unreadable, and literature is not read.” ~ [Oscar Wilde](#)

This course will converge at the intersection of literature and journalism. We will:

1. Explore the Problems of Journalism in a modern society through case studies of some of the many difficulties, issues, controversies, and rebellions journalists face in practicing their craft.
2. And also explore the mission of journalism by looking under the hood of that form described as literary journalism.
3. Recognize that the field of journalism has pliable borders and how this genre stretches those borders into other fields. As one former student of this class concluded after much discussion over many weeks about the subjectivity inherent in journalism as literature: *“Literary journalism is journalism – but in another place.”*
4. Reach some semblance of an understanding about the notions of objectivity and subjectivity and their relevance to the journalistic act because – and this is a mantra for this class:

All Pain Is Anecdotal

And therefore, the question is: “Can journalism employ the contested notion of “objectivity” to measure that pain – that is the straits, the troubles and the tribulations of complex and often marginalized lives lived at the periphery of our vision?”

5. Reveal – in relation to the notion that “all pain is anecdotal” – the [intersubjective](#) possibilities of this form of journalism and reach some conclusions about the significance to our world views and to democracy in general of empathetically revealing – through anecdote / narrative / metaphor / internal dialogue, and the other [elements of literary journalism](#) – “[The Other](#).”

So, Dr. Rodgers: Why is This Important?

The inverted pyramid as the basis of the informational report – called news – is certainly a powerful tool in our society when done right. But it is a tool that often fails to fulfill the true mission of journalism. I – and I am not alone here – argue that the method we call literary journalism – or narrative nonfiction, etc. – there is much dispute about the proper name – believe that journalism that narrates a story using all the affective tools of the novelist or short story writer can connect the citizens of a society – whether locally or across the globe. Not to get too academic or preachy – but this is the premise from which I proceed: The primary mission of journalism – and especially the sadly diminishing local news media – is creating and maintaining a *community of discourse*, revealing ALL of the community to its readers. The scholar of rhetoric James Herrick holds that a *community of discourse* permits “people to think and act with unity to address a wide range of serious social problems.”

Or in the words of *To Kill a Mockingbird's* Atticus Finch to his daughter Scout:

"First of all," he said, "if you can learn a simple trick, Scout, you'll get along a lot better with all kinds of folks. You never really understand a person until you consider things from his point of view-"

"Sir?"

"Until you climb into his skin and walk around in it."

A Diversity of Voices

So, what I am arguing – and what I believe – is that journalism can be transformative. Why? Because journalism can relieve us of our blindness and make us all aware (1) we exist in a mosaic – a multi-cultural and many-voiced society that is (2) the substrate of our cherished democracy that – in the minds of many – has yet to live up to its promise. Indeed, this current inflection point of infection and insurrection has – for many – laid bare the cracks in our foundation. The contemporary sociologist Ann Swidler describes such times of uncertainty as “periods of social transformation” involving “unsettled lives.”ⁱ To Swidler’s point, the writer Arundhati Roy in [a powerful essay](#) on the pandemic as a kind of social awakening prompting social change asserts that throughout history:

“Pandemics have forced humans to break with the past and imagine their world anew. This one is no different. It is a portal, a gateway between one world and the next. We can choose to walk through it, dragging the carcasses of our prejudice and hatred, our avarice, our data banks and dead ideas, our dead rivers and smoky skies behind us. Or we can walk through lightly, with little luggage, ready to imagine another world. And ready to fight for it.”ⁱⁱ

This inflection point of our present, I believe, reveals how vital journalism is to a democratic society as it acknowledges our very pluralism, valorizes the voices of our diversity, and helps accelerate the arc of history toward justice and social reconstruction.

Thus, this classroom is a place where you will be treated with respect. I welcome individuals of all ages, backgrounds, beliefs, ethnicities, genders, gender identities, gender expressions, national origins, religious affiliations, sexual orientations, ability – and other visible and nonvisible differences. All

members of this class are expected to contribute to a respectful, welcoming and inclusive environment for every other member of the class.

Thus, I must note that everyone in this class needs to conduct themselves in a courteous manner when it comes to dealing with fellow students or your instructor. That means any rude, obstructive or aggressive behavior will not be tolerated, and manifestations of same will mean ouster from the class. The [UF Counseling and Wellness Center](#) is located at 3190 Radio Road and the phone number for Appointments & After-Hour Assistance is 352-392-1575.

CAVEAT: A class such as this will deal with controversial topics, so words that may be considered offensive or ideological may be spoken in the context of subjects we discuss. As a teacher I have no political or social agenda – so do not try to answer in a way you believe might comport with what I want to hear or read. Feel free to advocate any position as long as you remain respectful of others’ opinions, and always be able to defend your point of view with evidence – not blind assertions.

Course Structure

- This class involves an [Active Reading](#) involving note-taking of the readings and a written analysis of Case Studies related to the Problems of Journalism.
- This course is a reading seminar built around informed discussion.
 - You are expected to participate in this class by submitting your written work, offering your ideas about the subject, allowing other people to express their views, respecting others’ opinions, and exchanging ideas that will make us better readers and writers.
 - Seminar discussions require a fine balance. On the one hand, you do not want to take over the conversation. On the other, you do not want to let others do all the talking.

Textbooks / Readings & Resources

- Your only required textbook for this class is a Twitter hashtag – [#JOU4008](#). I view it as a constantly updating text about the current issues of journalism happening around us every day.
- On Twitter [@ronrodgers](#) regularly check out [#JOU4008](#). Material from this will become part of a class discussion. Post anything about journalism or the media in general using the class hashtag.
- Any other readings or screenings will be linked in the Assignment section or in a folder on Canvas.

Zoom Professionalism

- Please be mindful of maintaining a professional appearance and conduct via our remote lecture/discussion meetings. Consider your wardrobe and appearance just as you would were we all in the same room, as well as your audio and visual backgrounds.
- You are expected to have your camera on during Zoom sessions. If you go to black screen for a significant amount of time, that will be considered lack of attendance/participation.

Management Issues

- **Submitting Assignments:** Except where noted, all assignments will be filed through [Canvas](#). Work turned in late will not be accepted without a legitimate and documented excuse.
- **Syllabus Changes:** I reserve the right to alter, with notice, the syllabus as the need arises.
- **Accommodation for disabilities:** Let me know immediately – informally and then with a formal letter from the proper authorities – if you have a **life issue** that would hinder your work in this course. I will do my best to help you. For accommodation register with [Disability Resource Center](#)
- **U Matter, We Care:** If you or a friend is in distress, please contact the [U Matter, We Care Team](#) so that it can reach out to the student in distress. A crisis counselor is available by at 352-392-1575.
- **Read [On Plagiarism and Academic Honesty](#)** I will work under the assumption that you have read and understand this and the accompanying links.

Final Grades Based on These Standard Break-Points

A	936+	B	836-870	C	736-770	D	636-670
A-	900-935	B-	800-835	C-	700-735	D-	600-635
B+	871-899	C+	771-799	D+	671-699	E	599 or

Class Activities

Activity	Points
1. Attendance / Participation in Discussions	100 points
2. Final Case Study Paper Topic Idea Due Sept. 21	50 points
3. Notes on Readings (20 points) DQ (10 points)	300 points
4. Participation in Discussion Posts	100 points
5. Weekly Case Study Paper (25 points)	250 points
6. Midterm Self-Assessment	50 points
7. Closing Self-Assessment	50 points
8. Final Case Study Paper on Topic of Your Choice	250 points
9. Final Case Study Presentation in PowerPoint	50 points
Total	1000 points

CLASS PARTICIPATION & ATTENDANCE

Participation: You are expected to participate meaningfully in discussions. Windy verbosity with no point and hushed passivity will not go unnoticed.

Here is how I assess your participation in class:

- Good:** You add significant content to discussion but do not dominate the conversation.
- OK:** You speak from time to time, but look for more opportunities to add to our discussions.
- Inadequate:** Your perspective is important. I need to hear much more from you!

Attendance: You will receive a failing grade for missing 3 or more classes without a legitimate excuse such as documented medical excuses and religious observances (with advance notice). University-approved absences must be documented (in advance, if for an approved university activity).

Weekly Case Study Paper on The Problems of Journalism

(25 points)

[Case Study Grading Rubric](#)

Due 8 a.m. Mondays

The case studies outlined in this class certainly do not cover all of the problematics you may face in a career in communications, but they or their like will undoubtedly arise some time in your future. And as you will see in our discussion about the revolts taking place in newsrooms across the country, you will soon be in a position to influence change. However, change or

solutions require arguments based in analysis and evidence. An analysis of a case study requires you to investigate a problem of journalism – here represented by a series of readings around a topic. Draw on these readings and any other relevant anecdotes or research that melds with your case study. Then you examine any solutions and then propose the most effective solution using supporting evidence.

Here’s how it works – and use each of these headings in this order in your paper:

1. Introduction

- Identify the key problems and issues in the case study.
- Then include a thesis statement that briefly summarizes the outcome of your analysis in 1 to 2 sentences.

2. Background

- Set the scene: background information, relevant facts, and the most important issues.
- Demonstrate you have researched the problems in this case study.

3. Evaluation of the Case

- Outline the various pieces of the case study that you are focusing on.
- State why these parts of the case study are or are not working well.

4. Proposed Solution/Changes

- Offer a solution that will work and articulate why you chose this solution.
- Support this solution with substantive evidence, such as:
 - Concepts from class (text readings, discussions, lectures)
 - Outside research
 - Personal experience (anecdotes)

5. Recommendations

- Articulate how the proposed solution can be accomplished.
- That is: What should be done and who should do it?

Format: 12 pt. Times-Roman, **single**-spaced, one-inch margins, Word document, at least one full page. Use subheads and follow the organization outlined above. **Note:** You have 12 chances to do 10 of these.

Weekly Notes on Readings

(30 points)

Due 8 a.m. Mondays

Respond to any directives and make notes about your reaction to or questions or quandaries about each of the readings – that is all of them – as you read. Post your notes and your ideas about readings to the Note Assignment in Canvas and then copy and paste to the week’s Note Assignment in the Google Drive folder for this class so others can view and conversate and react to your ideas. Make sure you put your name atop the Notes. **Include at least one substantive and relevant discussion question (DQ) at the end of your notes visibly labeled Discussion Question.**

Format: 12 pt. Times-Roman, **single**-spaced, one-inch margins, Word document. **Note:** You have 12 chances to do 10 of these.

Final Case Study Paper Topic Idea

(25 points)

Due 8 a.m. Sept. 21

Post a well-articulated idea for vetting before you go too far.

Final Case Study Analysis on a Problem of Journalism Topic of Your Choice

(250 points)

Due 8 a.m. Dec. 7

Follow the format outlined above. Here you can draw on any of the Case Study assignments for ideas or come up with a problem of journalism of your own that interests you that we do not cover during the semester. Just as many of the readings about journalism this semester, this is an analytical article written for publication in the popular press online. That is, it should include at least one photo or graphic element and multiple links to other relevant articles or information sources just as I have done in this syllabus and on the assignment schedule.

Format: 12 pt. Times-Roman, **double**-spaced, one-inch margins, Word document – **at least 3,000 words.**

Final Case Study Presentation

(50 points)

In Class Dec. 7

Since we will not be meeting the last day, what I want is a PowerPoint presentation based on your Case Study Analysis of a Problem of Journalism. No more than 10 slides. In your presentation, follow the format outlined for the weekly and final case studies. Clearly articulate (1) its key elements, (2) why you wrote about this topic – that is what interested you, (3) what challenges you faced in the research and writing of the analysis.

Mid-Term Self-Assessment

(50 points)

Due 8 p.m. Oct. 12

Closing Self-Assessment

(50 points)

Due 8 p.m. Dec. 7

i Ann Swidler, "Culture in Action: Symbols and Strategies," *American Sociological Review* 51, no. 2 (1986): 278.

ii Arundhati Roy, "The Pandemic Is a Portal," *Financial Times*, April 3, 2020
<https://www.ft.com/content/10d8f5e8-74eb-11ea-95fe-fcd274e920ca>