

**JOU4004**  
**History of Journalism**  
**Wednesdays 9:35 AM - 12:35 PM**  
**Dr. Rachel Grant**  
Office Hours: 12:45-1:45p.m. Thursdays or by appointment



#### COURSE OVERVIEW

From the first colonial printers to today's transnational media conglomerates, media agents and organizations have played a key role in shaping meaning, fostering communities, influencing ways of life. This course examines the evolution of American journalism – as an idea, a cultural and social practice, and an institution – within the broader historical trajectory of American society over the past three hundred years. We will highlight the historical foundations of three interrelated concepts – press freedom, professionalism, and commercialization. We will also explore other closely related historical questions such as: How have gender and race been constituted in and through media? How did public relations evolve from press agency to a recognized profession? What role has “new” technology played in media history? How to understand the changing relationships between the news media and the presidents, and what are the historical consequences of these changes?

#### COURSE OBJECTIVES

By the end of the course, you should be able to:

- Identify important figures, events, ideas and values, institutions, and social practices that have shaped American journalism and strategic communication.
- Explain the role of journalism in the cultural, political, social and economic life of American people.
- Understand gender, race, ethnicity, and, as appropriate, other forms of diversity in society in relation to journalism and media development.
- Draw lessons, insights and parallels from the past 300+ years of American journalism to better understand and critically evaluate the progress and problems of today's media institutions.
- Identify the main themes and topics in the historiography of American journalism.
- Create a micro-documentary project to construct, present and share a piece of media history in informed and responsible ways.

#### COURSE MATERIALS

**Required textbook:** Sloan, Pribanic-Smith, Lucht (eds.). *The media in America: A history*. 12th Edition (2023). Northport, Ala.: Vision. (Alternatively, you can purchase the 11th edition, published in 2020)

**Other required readings:** A few additional readings include academic journal articles, book chapters, and online resources that discuss specific topics of journalism history. Those readings can be downloaded from the Canvas class site or accessed through websites.

**Additional readings:** If you are interested in a particular topic, you are encouraged to read beyond the required readings, and I will give you a more extensive reading list.

## REQUIREMENTS AND GRADING

### **Weekly reflection (5 points each, total 50 points)**

Starting in Week 2, you will write a short reflection on what you have learned from that week's readings, lectures and discussions. The purpose of this assignment is to invite you to critically engage with the course material. You may choose to reflect on the overall topic of the week or focus on a specific point from the readings or lectures, sharing your thoughts, evaluations, and questions.

Each weekly reflection should be 150-250 words. Your reflections are due every Thursday by 9:35 a.m. Detailed instructions will be provided in class, and examples will be posted on Canvas.

Each reflection is worth 5 points, and there will be 12 opportunities to submit reflections throughout the semester (see the weekly schedule for due dates). At the end of the semester, your two lowest scores will be dropped. This also means that if you miss up to two reflections, your grade will not be affected. However, if you miss more than two, the additional missed assignments will impact your grade.

### **Two exams (100 points each, total 200 points)**

This course is divided into three units, with each unit concluding with an exam. The exams will take place in class during regular class times on the following dates

The exams are not cumulative and carry equally weight. They are open-book and open-note exams. Taking thorough notes during each unit and making full use of the provided study guide will put you in a better position to perform well. Stay engaged throughout the course is key to success.

### **Research Project (150 points)**

The Project's purpose is to explore and present a particular piece of media history of your choosing. You can focus on a person, organization, association, event, era, phenomenon, issue, or value. You will collect relevant primary and secondary sources and critically examine your chosen subject from multiple perspectives to reveal the complexity and richness of its history. Your project should present a close portrait of the particular subject while also including a narrative arc that provides context and perspective to place the subject in a larger historical framework and, ideally, to connect to contemporary journalism and media practice.

What is the process? This is a research-based project. You will:

1. Identify a topic in which you are particularly interested and develop a set of specific research questions.
2. Submit a prospectus for approval
3. Conduct library and archival research to collect primary and secondary sources and/or conduct field research to create original materials (e.g., oral history interviews, photographing, audio and video-taping, etc.). Critically examine the materials and find answers to your research questions.
4. Share a draft with classmates for feedback
5. Submit your final project

## COURSE POLICIES

**Classroom civility:** So that everyone can have a positive learning experience, it is crucial that students act in a manner that is respectful both to each other and to the instructor and the teaching assistants. With this in mind, it is expected that students will adhere to the following guidelines:

**Arriving and departing:** Please be on time to class and do not pack up your bags to leave the classroom until the instructor has brought the activities to a conclusion. Arriving late and particularly leaving early can be very disruptive. If on a given day you absolutely must leave early, please be courteous and let the instructor know ahead of time. Points can be deducted for later arrival and earlier departure.

**Electronics etiquette:** Laptop computers and tablets can be useful tools for learning, but they also can be a distraction. Research has determined students are more engaged in class and retain information better when taking notes by hand, but learning styles and needs vary. You are allowed to use laptops/tablets for your note taking and other tasks related to the course content as long as they do not become a distraction. Conducting personal business (Facebook, YouTube, checking emails, etc.) is both disrespectful to the presenters and distracting for your classmates, and I reserve the right to limit your use of electronic devices if the use is distracting to others. Cell phones should always be silenced and put away during class.

**Mutual respect:** Because this class needs to be a participatory community if students are to fulfill their potential for learning, rude, sarcastic, obscene or disrespectful speech or disruptive behavior will not be tolerated. In order to achieve our educational goals and to encourage the expression, testing, understanding and creation of a variety of ideas and opinions, respect must be shown to everyone.

**Attendance:** Consistent attendance is crucial for success in this course. Students who attend class regularly tend to perform better. Please prioritize attending class whenever possible. However, I understand that life happens, and absences may be unavoidable. If you miss a class, it is your responsibility to obtain notes from a classmate who attended.

**Students Requiring Accommodations:** Students with disabilities who experience learning barriers and would like to request academic accommodations should connect with the disability Resource Center by visiting <https://disability.ufl.edu/students/get-started/>. It is important for students to share their accommodation letter with their instructor and discuss their access needs, as early as possible in the semester.

If you fail to turn in an assignment, you have a week to turn in the assignment (NOT Weekly Reflections). Five points will be deducted for each day the assignment is late. After a week, you will NOT receive credit.

## **CLASS SCHEDULE (SUBJECT TO CHANGE)**

### **Week 1**

1/15 Introduction: Defining the History of American Journalism

Questions:

What is journalism? And what is it worth? -- Is there a distinctive form of American journalism? -- History: What is it for? Who is it for? And why does it matter?

No reading.