

COMM 436
HISTORY OF THE MASS MEDIA
NORTH DAKOTA STATE UNIVERSITY
FALL 2006

INSTRUCTOR

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Office hours: 9:30-11 Tuesdays and Thursdays, or by appointment.

Class web site: www.ndsu.edu/communication/collins/resources.htm, COMM 436.
Class web site includes announcements page, class roster, class resources, and student bulletin board.

Class meets 2-3:15 Tuesdays and Thursdays.

OBJECTIVES

- Understand how the development of mass media shaped the philosophy and operation of mass communication today, technically, legally, and philosophically.
- Recognize the major events of communication history, and understand why they are important.
- Understand the relationship between media development and society, and recognize how mass media have met those needs in the past and today.
- Recognize a few major historical names and dates significant to media development. Understand how historians research and write history, and be able to produce historical essays of acceptable quality.
- Successfully meet the challenge of learning through a seminar format appropriate for students at the advanced level.

ATTENDANCE

As this is an **advanced-level seminar**, attendance is essential. Students need to come prepared to ask questions and discuss assigned material, as informed discussion is vital to the vibrant experience of a seminar.

The instructor realizes that students sometimes face unforeseen emergencies that may require them to miss a seminar or class. Course policy is to allow two "free skips" for any reason. Beyond this students must realize that their missing the discussion may substantially lower their class grade.

What is a seminar?

Students who enroll in a **class** may expect to receive a syllabus specifically describing the material to be covered, how it will be covered, and activities throughout the semester. The class instructor will take primary responsibility for preparing and relaying this information to students, through lectures as well as films, trips and other activities, and specific assignments. Examinations will usually be administered to evaluate student progress and establish a final grade.

A **seminar**, on the other hand, shares the educational experience among students and instructor(s). Professors facilitate discussion based on their own knowledge and study of a topic, but seldom offer long lectures or other formally structured lesson plans and assignments. Learning is instead based on participation of each student. Students will be expected to do their own research on topic ideas to be covered at class meetings, offer essays or other written work in support of those ideas, and lead or facilitate group discussions of those topics. In addition to facilitating class discussions, instructors may provide tutorials and evaluation of written work. **But the knowledge and insight taken from a seminar relies on preparation and enthusiasm of everyone who takes part.**

Because the seminar approach asks students to pursue research, writing and discussion of topics through their own initiative, enrollment is usually limited to motivated and mature participants, either high-achieving undergraduates or graduate-level students. Ancient universities such as Cambridge (the instructor's alma mater!) and Oxford, as well as American "Ivy League" universities, favor the seminar as a pinnacle of higher education. Truly it is the bright and fortunate undergraduate at NDSU who experiences the challenge—and fun!—of seminar-style learning.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND GRADING

Grades will be based on class participation and written work as assigned throughout the semester. **There will be no examinations.** Students not writing essays will be asked to submit an annotated list of references (at least three in addition to the text reading) that they consulted in preparation for each class session, and be prepared to discuss the week's topic. (In other words, don't just sit there: say something!) References must include material beyond web sites!

Please note that reference lists, essays, and other written work must be typed, double-spaced, and reasonably free of spelling and grammar errors.

GRADED ASSIGNMENTS

* Topic essays. Students will be expected to produce **an essay every other week**, 50 pts each=400 pts.

** Three self-assessment essays, 30 pts each=120 pts.

*** Weekly participation, 200 pts.

Total pts: about 760 pts.

Grading will be standard point-count based on a percentage: 90-100 percent=A, 80-89 percent=B, etc.

* An essay for this class is a four- to five-page paper based on specific topics to be discussed, as decided on by the instructor and the class. Material must be based on library resources, including books and articles, in addition to web-based sources. At least five sources are expected. Students may choose which topics they wish to write about, or the instructor may assign topics.

** A self-assessment essay is a three- to four-page paper relating to broader issues discussed in meeting sessions, and how they may relate to your personal life.

*** Class participation: students will receive a mid-semester evaluation of their class participation for reference.

TENTATIVE SCHEDULE

CLASS STRUCTURE

Most of you have survived history courses before, at least in high school. Likely you have not experienced one built on the archeological model, however. That is, instead of beginning in the past, we begin with recent history, and work our way back, just as an archeologist sifts the ground from the present time through to past centuries. In our class the present means the Gulf War of 1991. (Anything later than that is defined more as "current events" than history.) We'll work backwards from there.

GENERAL CLASS THEMES

Discussions may center around the following themes, each reflecting an aspect of mass media history. They will not necessarily be presented in this order, and are subject to change, depending on class and instructor choices. Textbook readings will be chosen based on topic covered for the week. The instructor may occasionally offer lectures or other activities on some topics, and will include a lecture on historical research methods. Note: because class topics are based on choices made in class, students not able to attend a class must consult the class web site announcements page for topic choice and assigned readings.

1. The media and modern war: 1991 Persian Gulf War, wars of the 1980s, Vietnam War. War and propaganda.
2. Television in the last two decades.
3. Watergate.
4. Dawn of television.
5. World War II and the press.
6. Development of modern news values.
7. Jazz journalism.
8. Development of radio.
9. World War I and the press.
10. Muckraking, yellow journalism.
11. Photography and photojournalism.
12. Development of the modern newspaper, “new journalism” of 1890s.
13. Dawn of public relations and advertising.
14. Civil War journalism.
15. Frontier journalism.
16. Penny press.
17. Technology and development of industrial journalism.
18. The press and a new nation: 1790-1830.
19. Colonial and revolutionary journalism.
20. Roots of American journalism: European journalism history.
21. International journalism history.

BOOKS AND READINGS

William David Sloan, *The Media in America* 6th ed. (Vision Press, 2005) In addition to textbook readings, students will be expected to collect and extra read course material to prepare for class themes. Readings will be collected from the library, on-line databases, and the internet. Instructor may assign specific readings, or may provide bibliographical lists from which students may wish to draw to prepare for a meeting. Information students collect and present in class may be used for subsequent class assignments.

OFFICIAL NOTICES

If you need accommodations for learning or have special needs, please let the instructors know as soon as possible.

Work in this course must adhere to the NDSU Code of Academic Responsibility and Conduct. This addresses cheating, plagiarism, fabrication, or facilitating dishonesty. Instructors have the right to respond to a student's dishonesty by failing the student for the particular assignment or test, or even the entire course, or recommend the student drop the course.

GENERAL BACKGROUND READINGS

Jacques Barzun and Henry Graff, *The Modern Researcher*, 1977. A classic for historians and others who sometimes rely on historical research methods, such as working journalists.

Susan L. Carruthers, *The Media at War*. 2000. Not entirely historical, but a good discussion of the problems and challenges.

Michael and Edwin Emery, *The Press and America*. Many editions around; this is the most well-known journalism history text.

Jean Folkerts and Dwight L. Teeter, Jr. *Voices of a Nation. A History of Mass Media in the United States*. 4th edition, 2002. Widely used journalism history text.

The Greenwood Library of American War Reporting. 9 vols. 2005. Good discussion of war reporting throughout history; the instructor wrote World War I material, volume 5.

Phillip Knightley, *The First Casualty. From the Crimea to the Falklands: The War Correspondent as Hero, Propagandist and Myth Maker*. 1975. The most well known modern text on war and propaganda.

David T. Z. Mindich, *Just the Facts. How Objectivity Came to Define American Journalism*. 1998. New explanation of the development of what we today take for granted.

Michael Schudson, *Discovering the News*, 1978. The rise of the idea of objectivity, the classic text.

James D. Startt and William David Sloan, *Historical Methods in Mass Communication*. Revised edition, 2003. This is the only text covering historical research methods for journalism historians.

Mitchell Stephens, *A History of News*, 2nd ed. 2005. Only text that looks at journalism development from a world-wide perspective.

Martin Walker, *Powers of the Press. Twelve of the World's Influential Newspapers*, 1983. A reasonable introduction to international journalism.

Hiley H. Ward, *Mainstreams of American Media History*, 1997. Excellent resource for students who want to write history, media or general.