COMM 421, History of Journalism.

Taught fall semester by Ross F. Collins, Ph.D.
of the North Dakota State University Communication
Department, Fargo. OFFICE: 338 Minard Hall.
HOURS, in which the professor will receive students:
9:30-11 Mondays and Wednesdays, or by appointment.

Members of this class are behooved to rely on the
TELEPHONE at 1-7295, or ELECTRONIC MAIL at
ross.collins@ndsu.edu for expedient facilitation of com-
mutation with the professor.

TO THE PUBLIC.
A few words of introduction.

WE PRESENT TO the student public a COURSE
covering the history of mass media which we intend to
be unexampled in point of depth and breadth, and, we
trust, to be pronounced of the highest order of merit.
Our arrangements have been made without regard to expense,
based on the admirable facilities afforded us by the noble
people of the great state of NORTH DAKOTA. We trust
that those students who are now reading these words will
find this course to be of first class rank, able to meet nearly
all expectations and varying demands expected of such an
undertaking.

EXPLANATION OF PRINCIPLES.

FROM ONE OF our own Correspondents recently returned from an extended
journey to the south end of campus, we are pleased to pro-
vide an authoritative report on the objectives of this course,
the particulars of which are

COMM 421, History of Journalism.

Education being an object of the highest importance to the
welfare of society, we shall endeavor to present just and
adequate knowledge in order to form our students into useful
members of society. Our Correspondent informs us that the
course objectives to be implemented are as presented in
the list below. The student who successfully completes
this program should:
☞ 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 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 history.
☞ Understand how historians research and write history, and be able to actually
produce historical writing of acceptable quality.

Bulletin description:
The history and development of journalism as shaped by the
political and social environment. PREREQUISITE: COMM 310. Restricted
to communication professional majors and minors.

The merit of attendance.
WE ARE HAPPY to have the opportunity to confirm that the instructor of this
course has seen fit to abstain from implementing a formal attendance policy. The import
of this momentous decision on the student public is that attendance is not required, nor
will roll be taken.

Though not desirous of dictating, we shall feel it our in-
cumbent duty to state that the instructor plans a number of
lectures and activities in class which will not be duplicated
by textbook material. Students who abstain for reasons un-
known from class attendance will miss this material, which
will very likely be included on a subsequent examination. In
addition, in-class assignments cannot be made up, nor can credit
be obtained for them. It will avail the luckless student little to
mourn his missed assign-
mements, as requests for special favors will only be regarded with disapproval by the instructor.

Nevertheless, it shall be
the instructor’s desire to con-
duct the class as to give offec-
tence to none of its patrons. There-
fore, in an attempt to take into
account the inevitable trials which befall all human beings
from time to time during a
given semester, the instruc-
tor will drop one missed in-class assignment from final grade
calculations. Earnest students so desirous to make fruitful
intellectual intercourse with
their brethren without falter
during the entire semester will
find that their lowest in-class
grade will not be considered in
final grade calculations.

The matter of grades.
A WONDER OF FAIR
DEALING.

WE MOST POSITIVE-
LY and distinctly state that
upon no account shall any
alteration be made in the
fair-grading policy as set out
below. Grading will be based on a standard point-count.
Grades received by individuals will not be discussed in class,
to preserve confidentiality.

Students whose benevolence is momentarily at issue with
respect to a grade received are asked to meet privately
with the instructor during office hours.

We intend, and are re-
solved, that two examinations will be presented during the
semester, one at mid-semester
time, and the other during
the final examination period. In
addition, students will be
assigned a historical project
based on resources to be
explained in the fullness of
time, and sundry weekly assign-
mements. Work presented late will be accepted, but
grades will suffer according to
the length of tardiness.

The counting
of points.
Grading weights may be
broken into the numbers
presented below, reflecting highest possible points.
☞ Mid-semester exam, 100 pts.
☞ Final exam, 200 pts.
☞ Historical research project, 150 pts.
☞ Quizzes: 100 pts
☞ Other assignments, 50 pts.
Total points: 600.
The total number may change slightly.
Standard grade percent-
ages: 90-100=A; 80-89=B; 70-
79=C; 60-69=D; below 60=F.
Note: all submissions, class
announcements and grading will
be handled through the university’s
Blackboard class management
system.

Note: Design and wording of this syllabus are based on actual materials published in 19th century American and British newspapers.
A Tentative 2014 Schedule.

Class will be conducted in hybrid fashion, part online and part face to face. Students will be responsible for basic media history material based on assigned textbook chapters and online readings. These topics will often not be presented at length in class, but students will be able to demonstrate their knowledge through weekly online (open-book) quizzes, as will be indicated on Blackboard. Material from the quizzes will become part of the midterm and final exams. Class periods will include some lectures, but also will include guest speakers and student presentations based on this semester’s class theme, “historical biography.”

Week One (Aug. 25-29)
Introduction, historical overview. War and the end of the century. Read Introduction, chapter 25, online reading one.

Week Two (Sept. 1-5)
Development of the Internet, and contemporary media. Read Tim Berners-Lee, Forword and Chs. 1-3, on reserve.

Week Three (Sept. 8-12)

Week Four (Sept. 15-19)
World War II, propaganda, news values. Read chapter 17 and online reading two.

Week Five (Sept. 22-26)
Historical research methods, entertainment, jazz journalism, photojournalism. Read chapters 19-20, and “A Brief History of Photojournalism” (online reading) part one.

Week Six (Sept. 29-Oct. 3)

Week Seven (Oct. 6-10)
Muckraking, yellow journalism. Read chapters 15 and 16.

Week Eight (Oct. 13-17)

Week Nine (Oct. 20-24)
How to research a historical biography; plagiarism. Read online reading, “What is Plagiarism?” and “Writing a Historical Research Paper.” Mid-semester exam is Thursday, Oct. 17. Begin biographical research project.

Week Ten (Oct. 27-31)
Dawn of public relations and advertising. Read chapters 14, 21 and 22.

Week Eleven (Nov. 3-7)
Civil War and the frontier press. Read chapters 9 and 10.

Week Twelve (Nov. 10-14)
News for cheap: the Penny Press and technology. Read chapters 7 and 8.

Week Thirteen (Nov. 17-21)

Week Fourteen (Nov. 24-28; Nov. 27-28 is Thanksgiving break, no classes.)
The press and an old nation, colonial and revolutionary. Read chapters 3 and 4.

Week Fifteen (Dec. 2-5)

Week Sixteen (Dec. 8-12)
Roots and beginnings, international journalism. Read chapter 1 and online reading five. Student biographical presentations.

Final exam period: 10:30 a.m. Wednesday, Dec. 17.

Further Reading.

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


Instructor’s website.
In addition to the Blackboard class management system, materials are available at www.rossfcollins.com; choose Classes and Media History. The site offers this syllabus and class readings, as well as videos and PowerPoint presentations. A variety of other resources is also available.