

SYLLABUS- ANG 2330
“Reading” Journalism

Professor Caroline Brown
Winter 2012
Course Meeting Times: Thurs., 4-7 pm
Classroom: Pavillon 3200 Jean-Brillant, room B-3280
Office: C-8117
Office Hours: Thurs., 3-4pm (or by appt.)
Phone: 514-343-7358
e-mail: caroline.brown@umontreal.ca

Course Description

In the 21st century, journalism is a field in a profound state of flux. Both flourishing and threatened by atrophy and irrelevance, its status underscores the contradictions of its volatile position in a rapidly changing world. On the one hand, there are more sources of news than ever before, much of it housed within cyberspace and easily and speedily accessed by powerful internet search engines, such as Google. On the other hand, the mainstream news media—particularly broadcast news and print journalism, already increasingly corporatized—has lost audience shares and revenue to the democratized free-for-all of the internet and specialized outlets, such as talk radio and cable television. What does this mean for the future of journalism? Does more choice indicate better options? Are non-traditional media fundamentally more or less reliable than corporate entities? How can a vibrant democracy thrive without the presence of a responsible and organized news media, which serves as the public watchdog? In this course, “‘Reading’ Journalism,” we will examine and discuss some of the diverse forms of journalism in operation today. We will begin by briefly reviewing the history and development of news gathering in the modern world, tying it to the development of cheap printed matter and the push to universal literacy. We will then explore the function of the media in Western democracies, ethical issues that influence news gathering, and the pressures that arise as it fights for relevance and profits in an easily distracted, capital-intensive, globalized world. Finally, in order to better address the future of the news media, we will explore a cross-section of diverse formats—newspapers, magazines, television programming, comics, the photograph, books, and documentary films—gaining insights into how they function and what they convey.

Please Note: This is not a journalism course or writing workshop. It is an English elective that examines journalism as a discourse and a discipline.

Required Texts (Available at UdeM Bookstore)

Truman Capote	<i>In Cold Blood</i>
Joe Sacco	<i>Footnotes in Gaza</i>
<i>Course Reader</i>	

Course Requirements

Participation	10%
In-class Response Papers	10%
Take-Home Response Papers (1 page)	10%
2 Short Essays (2-3 pp)	
#1 (Due: 3/1)	20%
#2 (Due: 4/12)	20%
Final Exam (Thurs., 4/19)	30%

Course Objectives

- (1) A primary objective of this course is for us to be conscious of how we engage in critical inquiry and, in the process, claim space as scholars. This course will function as a workshop in which students actively create their own strategies for intellectual engagement with complex texts and issues related to the field of journalism.
- (2) Central to this process is reading and research. It's necessary to read for class. This may involve pursuing independent research. Please do so critically and on time.
- (3) Discussion is the most obvious manifestation of the life of the mind in the university classroom. It's also essential in the creation of a community of thinkers. To facilitate the creation of a healthy environment, it's important to treat others with respect while feeling that we have the right and responsibility to question and challenge other thinkers and writers.
- (4) In order to allow students time to develop their insights on a given topic and process issues brought up during research and class discussion, students will be assigned (i) short, in-class response papers at the beginning of each class session; (ii) take-home response papers (1 page typed) the week before the class discussion; and, (iii) two short essays (typed) that will be written outside of class. Topics will be announced during the course of the semester.
- (5) Your final exam will be an in-class exam. It will be held on April 19. We will discuss its format in greater depth as the semester progresses.

Course Mechanics

- Class participation is a must. It improves the quality of discussion and is graded for both content and frequency.
- All essays must be typed. Each should be double-spaced and have a one-inch margin. Please use a standard font. Remember to title your essays and include page numbers. You do not need a separate title page. Staple all pages together.
- Plagiarism, the uncredited use of another's words, research, and thoughts, is forbidden and will be penalized. Please document your sources appropriately.
- You are responsible for collecting any materials or assignments handed out during an absence, including graded essays.
- Please turn off cell phones and pagers while class is in session. Do not text during class time.
- This is a very large course. Because of its size, late papers will not be accepted. Please hand your essay in on time and sit for the exam on the scheduled date. In this way, I will be able to return your papers and assign grades in a timely manner.

SCHEDULE

WEEK 1 (1/12) *Introductions*

WEEK 2 (1/19) *Historical Contexts and the Ethics of Reportage*

James Rainey, "For Web News Depth, Pay Up" (*LA Times*)

Robert W. McChesney, "The Problem of Journalism" (from *The Political Economy of Media*)

Bill Moyers, "Foreward" (from *The Future of the Media*)

Ron Rosenbaum "Columbia's J-School Needs to Consider Trollopian Retooling"

Alex Jones, "Media Ethics—The Painful Balance" (from *Losing the News*)

WEEK 3 (1/26) *The Canadian Media*

David Taras, "Media, Globalization, and Identity in Canada" (from *How Canadians Communicate*)

Kenneth Goldstein, "From Assumptions of Scarcity to Facts of Fragmentation"

WEEK 4 (2/2) *The Roots of Investigative Reporting: The Muckrakers*

Robert W. McChesney, "Upton Sinclair and the Contradictions of Capitalist Journalism"
(from *The Political Economy of Media*)
Upton Sinclair, *The Brass Check* (excerpt)

WEEK 5 (2/9) *The Modern Day Muckraker: Exploring Class and Socioeconomic Inequality*

Film: *Roger and Me* (Michael Moore)
Barbara Ehrenreich, *Nickel and Dimed* (excerpts): "Introduction" (1-10), "Serving in Florida" (11-49),
"Scrubbing in Maine" (51-119), "Afterword" (223-235)

WEEK 6 (2/16) *Rethinking Notions of the Journalistic Narrative: Israel/Palestine*

Joe Sacco, *Footnotes in Gaza* (Graphic/Comic Journalism)

WEEK 7 (2/23) *Rethinking Notions of the Journalistic Narrative: Continued*

Joe Sacco, *Footnotes in Gaza* (Graphic/Comic Journalism)
Jonathan Garfinkel, "A House Divided"

WEEK 8 (3/1) *In the Empire of the Image: The War in Iraq*

Dexter Filkins, "The Shrine Down the Hall" (*NY Times Magazine*)
Photo-essay: "The Shrine Down the Hall" New York Times
([website:http://nytimes.com/interactive/2010/03/21/magazine/soldiers-bedrooms-slideshow](http://nytimes.com/interactive/2010/03/21/magazine/soldiers-bedrooms-slideshow))
Film: *Standard Operating Procedure* (Errol Morris)
Due: Essay #1

WEEK 9 (3/8) **SPRING BREAK**

WEEK 10 (3/15) *Creating Conversations Across Genres: Food Production*

Film: *Food Inc.* (Robert Kenner)
Michael Pollan, *The Omnivore's Dilemma* (excerpts)

WEEK 11 (3/22) *New Journalism/Literary Journalism*

Joan Didion, "Some Dreamers of the Golden Dream" (from *Slouching Towards Bethlehem*)
Tom Wolfe, *The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test* (excerpts)

WEEK 12 (3/29)

Truman Capote, *In Cold Blood*, Parts I and II (pp 3-155)
Film: *Capote* (Bennett Miller)

WEEK 13 (4/5)

Truman Capote, *In Cold Blood*, Parts III and IV (pp 159-343)

WEEK 14 (4/12) **Due:** Essay #2

April 19: FINAL EXAM