

Semester at Sea Course Syllabus
Summer 2012

MDST 3700
Upper Division
Newswriting II
Point of View Journalism, History and Practice
Prof. Lisa Goff

This advanced newswriting course trains students to practice “point-of-view” journalism, and to understand it as a controversial but credible alternative to the dominant model of “objectivity” on the part of the news media. Now associated largely with blogging, point-of-view journalism has a history as long as the nation’s, from Tom Paine and Benjamin Franklin in the eighteenth century to Ida Tarbell, the original “muckraker,” in the nineteenth, and “New Journalism” practitioners like Tom Wolfe and Hunter Thompson in the twentieth. Current point-of-view practitioners include news organizations on the right (Fox News) and left (MSNBC), as well as prominent bloggers like Ta-Nehisi Coates in *The Atlantic*, or Egyptian feminist Mona Eltahawy. We will also consider two types of new media outside the traditional definition of “journalism”: so-called “advocacy” or “development journalists” who write for community news media or non-profit organizations; and “comic journalism,” a category that includes graphic art as a medium for news as well as the work of entertainers such as Jon Stewart and Steven Colbert, who pillory the news (and newsmakers) in order to interpret it.

Over the course of the semester students will analyze the pros and cons of point-of-view journalism, and examine its role in both new and existing democracies: does opinionated newswriting nurture democracy, or, as many scholars and members of the press continue to argue, is “objective” journalism still the democratic ideal? We will explore these questions using readings, media websites, and news broadcasts produced for television and the web.

A key component of the course will be the practice of point-of-view journalism. Throughout the semester students will be assigned to write and revise news content that expresses their informed opinions on subjects related to port countries we will visit on the voyage, as well as life on the MV Explorer. The best of these efforts will be selected for publication in a class blog.

Pre-requisite: basic newswriting course and/or experience working on college newspaper (or equivalent) or literary maga- or e-zine. *This course is not suitable for students with no prior news media experience.*

Books to buy:

Janet Cramer, *Media/History/Society: A Cultural History of U.S. Media*

Free news media websites:

<http://www.aljazeera.com/>

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world/>

<http://www.guardiannews.com/>

CLASS OUTLINE

Assigned readings are in *italics*. All readings not found in the textbook (Cramer) will be posted in the course folder.

On “Coverage Comparison” days, students will turn in 1-page responses on assigned topics.

On “Pre-port prep” days—C8 and C18—students will turn in 1- to 2-page research briefs pertinent to the stories they will report in the upcoming port. At several of these class meetings, interport lecturers or other guest experts will speak to the class or be available for interviews.

On “Blog writing and production” days—C9, C10, C13, and C19—students will submit written drafts of assigned stories, which will be peer-reviewed and revised during class; final versions due to instructor by 7 p.m. the same day, via email **and** a paper copy left in faculty mailbox (in Glazer Lounge).

I. Journalism and democracy, then and now: media and government.

C1 Intro: objectivity vs. point of view (PoV) journalism.

Nieman Reports, “Objectivity: It’s Time to Say Goodbye”

- C2 Models: Ta-Nehisi Coates and Mona Eltahawy
Mona Eltahawy, "Why Do They Hate Us?", Foreign Policy
Ta-Nehisi Coates, "When Race Matters," The Atlantic
- C3 Revolutionaries and Partisans: Tom Paine to Bill O'Reilly
Cramer, 26-38, "No Prior Restraint: The Colonial Experience"
Benjamin Franklin, "Freedom of Speech," The New England Courant
Thomas Paine, "Common Sense," 17-20
- C4 Coverage comparison: reproductive rights
HuffPo: "On Int'l Women's Day, Congress Debates Measures to Limit Reproductive Rights"
Reuters: "Virginia Senate Passes Ultrasound Law," and "U.S. Women See Assault on Reproductive Rights"
- II. Partisan press, then and now: media, class, and commerce**
- C5 Media for the masses: from the Penny Press to *The New York Post*
Cramer, 94-111, "The Market Model and the Partisan Press"
- C6 Yellow journalism then and now: Thomas Nast, Stephen Colbert
Cramer, 135-158, "The Rise of 'New' Journalism"
Blog post due
- C7 Coverage comparison: EU debt crisis
NYT – "As Focus Shifts to Rescuing Spanish Banks, Worries Grow Over Greece"
The Guardian – "Spain's banking bailout plays out a running theme of the eurozone crisis"
- C8 Pre-port prep: Spain
no reading; research assignment due
 - four days in Spain -
- C9 Blog writing and production
no reading
 - six days in Italy -
- C10 Blog writing and production
no reading
 - four days in Dubrovnik -
- II. Citizen journalism, then and now: media and community**
- C11 Advocacy and development journalism
reading TBA
- C12 Just the facts? *ProPublica* and *PolitiFact*
reading TBA
 - four days in Greece -
- C13 Blog writing and production
no reading
 - four days in Turkey -
- III. Muckrakers then and now: media and society.**
- C14 Muckraking, an American tradition
Cramer, "Social Responsibility and the Media," 165-178
- C15 Ida B. Wells-Barnett, 1892
"Southern Horrors: Lynch Law In All Its Phases," pamphlet, 19 pages
Tourism blog due
- C16 Ida M. Tarbell, 1903
"Kansas and the Standard Oil Company: A Narrative of Today," McClure's Magazine, Part I, 13 pages
- C17 Adam Gopnik, 2011
"The Caging of America," from The New Yorker, 12 pages
- C18 Pre-port prep: Morocco
no reading; research assignment due

- four days in Morocco -

C19 Blog writing and production
no reading

- four days in Portugal -

IV. Commentators, comics, and comedians: contemporary PoV journalism

C20 Gonzo journalism: Hunter Thompson, Tom Wolfe, and the 1960s

Hunter Thompson, "Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas: A Savage Journey to the Heart of the American Dream" excerpt, pages 1-22

C21: Fox News and MSNBC

"The Foxification of News," The Economist, 2 pages

C22 Jon Stewart, Stephen Colbert, and SNL

no reading; issue analysis blog post due

C23 The Who, What, and Where of News

no reading

C24 Final exam

METHODS OF EVALUATION

* *Writing assignments, 60%*. Students will be assigned 7 point-of-view blog posts about shipboard life and experiences in our port countries. All story assignments will be graded for content, style, and presentation. Stories will be 500-750 words each, except for the final story, which will be 750-1000 words. Students are allowed to skip *one* of the writing assignments, *but not the Tourism or Issues assignments*.

* *Class participation, 30%*. Discussions about the history and practice of point-of-view journalism are essential to the success of the class, and all students are expected to contribute to this goal. Students may be required to complete short, graded writing assignments in class to demonstrate comprehension of the assigned reading. Class attendance is mandatory: students may skip one class period without penalty; additional absences will damage your grade.

* *Final exam, 10%*. The final exam will be based on the readings for the course.

FIELD ASSIGNMENTS

Field work constitutes 20% of the contact hours for each course, and our experiences in ports will provide much of the content for students' news stories. Students will serve as reporters in the field, collecting pertinent information from which to produce news reports after they return to the ship.

Additionally, students will be required to attend the field lab for the course, Sufi Dervish Ceremony at Suleyman Mosque, on our first evening in Istanbul. Students will use this field lab as the central example for an assignment to write a 750-word blog post on the topic of "Tourism," a piece of writing that will draw on the students' cumulative experience as a tourist on the Semester at Sea voyage.

Please note: In keeping with tradition, men and women will observe the ceremony in separate groups. Participants should be respectful of this ritual and should dress conservatively. More details will be given in class.

POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Electronic devices: laptops will be used in the classroom at the discretion of the instructor. During discussions, and on days when interport lecturers or other visitors speak to the class, however, students may **not** use laptops, even to take notes. *So, bring paper to class for note-taking during discussions and speakers.* No phones or other electronic devices are allowed in the classroom. All quizzes will be hand-written, *so bring paper to every class.*

Food: no food of any kind is allowed in class. It is okay to bring coffee, water, soda.

Attire: student casual. No pajamas, no swimsuits, no kidding.

Attendance: You are allowed one absence without penalty. You do not have to explain to me why you were absent. Additional absences will lower your grade.

Class format: this is a discussion class heavily based on field work. Read assigned chapters and complete assignments before you come to class, and arrive prepared to both answer and pose questions based on the readings and your own work.

Extensions: no extensions will be granted. Writing on deadline is the essence of good journalism.

Blog postings: please submit both digitally and/or on paper, as directed by the instructor. All written submissions (in- and out-of-class assignments) must be type-written or printer generated, double spaced, 12 point type, Times New Roman, one inch margins on all edges. AP Style is recommended for all professional assignments. The bottom line, however, is grammar and punctuation; inaccurate grammar or punctuation hurts your grade.

Quizzes: bring paper with you to class for quizzes.

Academic honesty: all research sources, including those accessed on the Internet, must be properly cited to avoid charges of plagiarism. Uncited, plagiarized material is considered a violation of the UVA honor code. If you are ever confused as to what constitutes plagiarism, please ask me.

Please sign your name on every hand-written assignment, and type it on emailed copies. These signatures are the equivalent of pledging the honor code: "On my honor as a student, I have neither given nor received help on this exam/paper." Be aware, however, that adherence to the Honor Code is required, even in the absence of a signature or written pledge.

Observance of religious holidays: this course will make every effort to accommodate all students who, because of religious obligations, have conflicts with scheduled exams, assignments, or other required attendance. Whenever possible, students should notify me at least two weeks in advance of the conflict to request special accommodation.

Disability accommodations: if you qualify for accommodations because of a disability, please let me know so that your needs may be addressed.

Grading: there is no pass/fail option.

Extra credit: there are no extra credit options. Students' grades will be based solely on assigned and completed work, and class participation.