

MASSACHUSETTS COLLEGE
OF LIBERAL ARTS

English 481-51

**"Future of Journalism: Issues and
Opportunities in a Connected World"**

Spring 2006

Class Meetings:

This three-credit class will meet on 15 consecutive Thursdays from 6:30 p.m. to 9:15 p.m. from Jan. 19 through May 4, 2006. (There will be no class Thurs., March 16 during spring break.) There will be a 10-minute break during the midpoint of each class. To accommodate speakers, a couple of sessions may be moved to Thursday or Tuesday evening or may start at 7 p.m. instead of 6:30 p.m.

Location:

Bowman Hall Room 202, MCLA campus,
North Adams, Mass.

Enrollment:

MCLA students -- enroll through
add/drop period ended Jan. 26.
Williams students -- Obtain cross-
registration form from Williams Registrar's
Office and complete for ENG 481-51.
Mass. Residents -- Course fee \$603.01
SENIORS OVER AGE 60: FREE

Instructor/Contact

Bill Densmore, Visiting Lecturer, Spring
2006 / off: 413-663-5483 cell: 413-458-8001
/ wdensmor@mcla.edu
Densmore taught "Issues in Journalism" at
MCLA in fall, 2005. OFFICE HOURS: 4:15
p.m.-6:15 p.m., Thursdays, Room A-721
(Berkshire Tower North), or 75 Water St.,
Williamstown, other weekdays, or call for
appointment.

Course Objectives:

The primary objective is to introduce students and citizens to changes occurring in the U.S. media system as a result of Internet technology -- some of which threaten the survival of traditional journalism, and give students a sense of options and tools for participating in the new environment as "citizen journalists." A secondary objective is to hone writing and oral presentation skills.

Prerequisite:

All participants in the course must have an email address and ready access to the Internet in order to collaborate with other class members and view assignments at the course weblog, <http://journalism-future.blogspot.com>. A high-speed connection is desirable. Please see the instructor before the first class if arrangements for Internet access are necessary.

Course Description:

Unprecedented audience change and new Internet technologies are disrupting old advertising models as well as the traditional largely one-way "push" relationship with news consumers. As a result, U.S. print and broadcast media are finding it harder to sustain their historic "civic watchdog" role over government and major institutions. Journalists are wondering how their profession should -- or can -- adapt. At the same time, blogs, vlogs, social networks, search engines, iPods, and "citizen journalism" are creating new opportunities and redefining the meaning of journalism -- and who is a journalist. The course will: (a) establish a conceptual basis for journalism's historic and contemporary role in American society (b) survey the pressures on journalism today and (c) consider how journalism itself, and its role as a bulwark of democracy may change; and, (d) suggest what opportunities this creates for students

-- and citizens -- who want to be equipped to create and communicate in this rapidly changing landscape. We'll illustrate issues and opportunities through (a) text readings (b) films and streaming video and audio (c) contemporary readings from print and web resources, including video and audio interviews conducted for The Media Giraffe Project (<http://www.mediagiraffe.org>) with support from the Hardman Family Endowment at MCLA.

Resources:

The following resources will be used in the course:

1. Required reading of books, handouts and online print resources (see below)
2. Viewing of documentary films
3. Contemporary web-based streaming audio, video and multimedia
4. Media Giraffe Project video or audio profiles
5. Invited speakers on specific topics

REQUIRED BOOKS

We will progressive read and discuss during the semester three books, which are available from the campus bookstore or from Amazon.com. The instructor has a few used copies of the Gillmor text for resale or loan.

1. "The Elements of Journalism: What News people Should Know and The Public Should Expect," by Bill Kovach & Tom Rosenstiel, \$10.36 on Amazon. Paperback: 208 pages Publisher: Three Rivers Press (December, 2001) ISBN: 060980691
2. "The Problem of the Media," Robert W. McChesney Paperback: 352 pages -- \$11.53 on Amazon Publisher: Monthly Review Press (March 1, 2004) ISBN: 1583671056

3. "We the Media," by Dan Gillmor -- \$15.95 on Amazon Hardcover: 304 pages Publisher: O'Reilly; 1 edition (August, 2004) ISBN: 0596007337 8 COPIES

HANDOUTS

In addition, a variety of handouts will be progressively distributed.

WEB RESOURCES

A weblog, <http://journalism-future.blogspot.com> has been established for the course and will be a resource for updates on assignments, planned class schedules, appearances and discussions, reading and resource materials and links.

MEETING PLAN

(15 sessions, listed in order):

1. Journalism origins --
-- ACTIVITY - Introductions, objectives, assumptions
-- PANEL: (Densmore/Sims)
Europe; [Colonial America](#); Alien & Sedition Acts - the [Haswell case](#)
-- MEDIA - to be determined
2. Journalism Past - From Mass to Class
-- READING: Start: "Elements of Journalism," Kovach/Rosenstiel
-- MEDIA - Film highlights; Front Page/Citizen Kane
-- TALK/DISCUSSION: The Hutchins Commission (Sims?)
3. Journalism Present - What is it?
-- READING: Continue Elements of Journalism - Kovach and Rosenstiel
-- MEDIA - To be determined
-- TALK/DISCUSSION: Survey contemporary meaning of "journalism"
4. Journalism Present - What's gone wrong?

- READING: Start "The Problem of the Media," by Robt. McChesney
 - MEDIA - Bill Moyers' speech, Madison, Wis., 2003
 - TALK/DISCUSSION: What's gone wrong (guest speaker)
5. Journalism Present - Why it went wrong?
- READING: Continue McChesney
 - MEDIA - Documentary: "Orwell Rolls in his Grave"
 - PANEL DISCUSSION: Why it went wrong
6. The Death of Newspapers - Does It Matter?
- READING - Continue "We the Media" - Gillmor
 - MEDIA - Philip Meyer, "The Vanishing Newspaper" - MP3
 - PANEL/DISCUSSION - Death of Newspapers - Does It Matter?
7. Journalism Future - The new competitors
- READING: Finish McChesney
 - MEDIA - Trippi-Bush; McChesney speech
 - LECTURE - The new competitors: eBay, Google, Craig's List, Yahoo, blogs
8. Journalism - Where we stand
- MIDTERM EXAM: (2 hours)
- MEDIA - MGP interview to be selected (45 minutes)
9. Now what makes a journalist?
- <http://journalism-issues.blogspot.com/2005/11/concept-comparing-todays-blog-driven.html>
- READING - Start "We the Media" - Gillmor
 - MEDIA - MGP interviews: iBrattleboro founders, PowerLine blogger
 - TALK/DISCUSSION - Now what makes a journalist?
10. What about the "wisdom of crowds?"
- <http://journalism-issues.blogspot.com/2005/11/question-what-is-future-of-journalism.html>
- READING - Continue "We the Media" - Gillmor
 - MEDIA - MGP interview: Jimmy Wales, Wikimedia Foundation
 - TALK/DISCUSSION- Scott Walker, MGP, ex-Tripod, Utne Reader
11. What Will Journalism Become?
- READING - Finish "We the Media" -- Gillmor
 - MEDIA - EPIC (and discussion); MGP interview with Robin Thompson
 - TALK/DISCUSSION: Future scenarios roundup
12. Does democracy need journalism?
- READING - to be determined
 - MEDIA - to be determined
 - PANEL/DISCUSSION: Does democracy need journalism?
13. What will sustain journalism?
- READING - Handouts and web links to be determined
 - MEDIA - to be determined
 - TALK/DISCUSSION: What will sustain journalism?
14. The cause of journalism - Ownership, profit vs. purpose
- READING - Handouts and web links TBD
 - MEDIA - TBD
 - TALK/DISCUSSION: Citizen journalism: Wave of the future?
15. Other views: Book reviews and discuss
- READING - 15-minute book reports and discussions
- PROFILES - Class-reported Media Giraffe profiles
- RECEPTION - End-of-semester reception/discussion

READING SUGGESTIONS:

Each student will be given a major assignment to read one book during the semester and present an oral report on it. The book may be selected by the student and approved by the lecturer, or drawn from the list below:

1. "Tuned Out: Why Americans Under 40 Don't Follow the News," by David T.Z. Mindich. Paperback: 172 pages, \$17.00 Publisher: Oxford University Press (March 1, 2005) ISBN: 0195161416
2. "Tragedy: How the American Media Sell Wars, Spin Elections and Destroy Democracy," by John Nichols and Robert W. McChesney, The New Press, Oct., 2005, hardbound, 211 pages, ISBN: 1-59558-016-6, \$23.95
3. "Smart Mobs: The Next Social Revolution," by Howard Rheingold Paperback: 288 pages, \$10.88 on Amazon Publisher: Basic Books; Reprint edition (October 1, 2003) ISBN: 0738208612 5
4. "The Revolution Will Not Be Televised: Democracy, the Internet, and the Overthrow of Everything," by Joe Trippi Publisher: Regan Books (July 1, 2004), 272 pages, \$16.98 on Amazon ISBN: 0060761555
5. "America's Right Turn: How Conservatives Used New and Alternative Media to Take Power," by Richard Viguerie Hardcover: 384 pages, \$16.98 on Amazon. Publisher: Bonus Books (August, 2004) ISBN: 1566252520
6. "Bad News: The Decline of Reporting, the Business of News, and the Danger to Us All, by Tom Fenton ReganBooks; ISBN: 0060797460 (March 2005) Hardcover, 272 pages.
7. "News Incorporated: Corporate Media Ownership and Its Threat to Democracy", by Elliot D. Cohen,
8. "Breaking the News: How the Media Undermine American Democracy," by James M. Fallows. New York: Pantheon, 1997. ISBN: 0-679-75856
9. "Media Big Bang, Challenge and Change in the Media World," (Paperback) by Sangbok Lee Tackwhan Kim (Author) Publisher: Communication Books (2005) Language: English ISBN: 8984995681
10. "Into the Buzzsaw: Leading Journalists Expose the Myth of a Free Press," by Kristina Borjesson (Editor) Hardcover: 392 pages, \$16.38 on Amazon Publisher: Prometheus Books (March 1, 2002) ISBN: 1573929727
11. "The New Rulers of the World," by John Pilger Paperback: 192 pages, \$9.75 on Amazon Publisher: Verso (April, 2003) Language: English ISBN: 185984412X
12. "Within the Veil: Black Journalists, White Media," by Pamela Newkirk Paperback: 240 pages, \$20 on Amazon Publisher: New York University Press (September 1, 2002) ISBN: 0814758002
13. "Tell Me No Lies: Investigative Journalism and Its Triumphs," by John Pilger (2004), 448 pages, paperback, Vintage Books; new edition (Nov. 2005). ISBN: 0099437457.
14. "Community Media: People, Places, and Communication Technologies," by Kevin Howley, Cambridge University Press, 2005, paperback \$34.99. 324 pages. ISBN: 0521796687
15. "Twilight of Press Freedom: The Rise of People's Journalism," by John Calhoun Merrill, Peter J. Glad and Frederick Blevens, paperback, 240 pages, Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, June 2001. ISBN: 0805836640.