

University Of California, Davis: Spring, 2012
Communication 142: News Policies, Practices, and Effects

Meets: Monday 5:10-9:00 pm in Wellman 6

Instructor: John Theobald

Office: Kerr 481

Office Hours/drop in: M 1-2; M 4-5 (other hours by appointment)

Course Assistant: Katia Ratkovich (kmratkovich@ucdavis.edu)

Course Tutors: Ethan Houser (ethouser@ucdavis.edu) & Allison Larson (aelarson@ucdavis.edu)

Course Description

Communication 142 (News Policies, Practices, and Effects) explores processes and constraints in the gathering, editing, and reporting of news. Examines studies on the effects of news, contemporary challenges to news reporting presented by new technologies, and the relationship of news to other social institutions.

Course Organization

- Part 1: Policies and Practices
- Part 2: Effects: Politics and Institutions
- Part 3: Contemporary Challenges: Technology and Other Developments

Course Format: There will be three examinations, the average of which will determine the course grade. You'll find a study guide for the exams and course policies in the pages that follow.

Course Readings

- D. Berkowitz, *Cultural Meanings of News*.
- A CMN 142 course reader—available at Campus Copies in late-April.

Part 1: Patterns and Practices

Apr 02: Introduction

Apr 09: Lecture (Berkowitz, Introduction and Chapters 1, 2, 3, 5, and 7)

Apr 16: Lecture (Berkowitz, Chapters 10, 11, 12, 13 and 20)

Apr 23 (5:10-6:30): Examination 1

Part 2: Effects: Politics and Institutions

Apr 23 (6:30-9:00): Introduction to Part II

Apr 30: Lecture (Etnier; Duncan; Hardin; Plate; Brainard & Russell)

May 07: Lecture (Boykoff; Russell; Brainard I; Brainard II; Romm; Homans; Greenbang)

May 14 (5:10-6:30): Examination 2

Part 3: Contemporary Challenges: Technology and Other Developments

May 14 (6:30-9:00): Introduction to Part III

May 21: Lecture (Love; Simon; Stephens; Crovitz I; Crovitz II; Chittum I; Chittum II)

May 28: No Meeting/Memorial Day Holiday

Jun 04: Lecture (Fallows; Downie & Schudson; McDermott; Silverman)

Sat., Jun 09 @ 3:30 pm: Examination 3

Grading, Administrative Policies, Attendance, and Make Up Work

- Exams will be graded on a 90/A, 80/B, 70/C, 60/D percent scale, except for a possible curved distribution of grades in the event of a low exam mean (defined as any exam that falls below a 77-78% mean).

- Please note the following pertaining to any exam to which a grade curve is applied: A curve will be applied to benefit students in the event that an exam is more difficult/contains more ambiguities than the instructor intends. The benefit of a curve will be automatically applied to each student. If students choose on an individual basis to challenge questions they answered incorrectly after taking an exam, they may . . . BUT, the distribution curve applied to any such student's grade will be withdrawn, and the student's exam will at that point be graded on a straight, uncurved 90-80-70 scale. In other words, if a 50 question exam yields a mean of 72%, the distribution will be adjusted downward by three questions (or 6%) to raise the mean artificially to 78%. If a student chooses to challenge questions, their exam will be graded on the pre-curved exam scale. The rationale for this policy is that the student already is receiving the benefit of a curve that presumably accounts for an exam's difficulty/ambiguity. The benefit should not be applied twice. Of course, in the case of clear error in writing an exam question or exam key, students will be given the benefit of the point in question.

- The study guides are designed to describe questions from the reading. It is assumed that you will attend the lectures and expect any lecture material to be fair game on exams.

- There may be two types of assistants used to help the instructor and students during the course. The following describes each of them and their roles:

Tutors: These are students who have completed the course and received a high grade, usually A or A-grades, in a previous quarter. Tutors attend lecture, hold office hours and hold pre-exam question and answer sessions. They are to be used for questions pertaining to course content.

Course Assistants (a.k.a. Undergraduate Readers): These are students who have taken several courses from the instructor, though not necessarily the course in which you are enrolled. They assist with instructional organization. They are to be used (in lieu of the instructor as much as possible) for administrative, record-keeping, and organizational matters pertaining to the course.

- Uses of office hours:

Instructor hours

discussion of course performance
personal circumstances re: course
content not related to exams
requests for references, etc.
academic advising
appropriate items not listed above

Course Assistant hours

review of prior examinations
discussion of class experience
organizing study habits

In-class and pre-exam Q & A hours

questions from study guide
questions from lecture/reading
content related to exams

- If you have an issue with a question that you miss on an exam: 1) review the question by looking at the exam during a course assistant office hour, 2) make all necessary notes about the question, 3) clearly explain your point in writing, and 4) forward your claim to the instructor via the assistant.

- Make-up examinations will not be permitted without exceptional circumstances. Contact the instructor or course organizational assistant for arrangements.

- If you anticipate work, athletic, or other scheduling distractions, then take this course another quarter. As a guideline, if you have to miss one exam for a legitimate institutional reason, you probably can maintain your enrollment in the class. If more than one, then you need to re-enroll during a later quarter.

- Both lecture and video supplements will be part of our class-time curriculum. If you miss class, for whatever reason, you will have to rely on others for notes about what you missed. Like you, I have many things to do and do not have time to repeat lecture material or organize re-screenings of video material.

- If you wish to avoid having multiple final exams in one day, check the final exam schedule right now. If your exams appear bunched too tightly together for comfort during finals week, drop one of those classes and take it during a subsequent quarter. Don't ask instructors to move your exams to different times and dates . . . well, ask another instructor if you want, but don't ask me. I'm generally a nice guy, but I'm not so nice during exams week, as I'm as busy as you are. I don't have time to create special exam arrangements.

- Please don't ask for special treatment—that is, attention and opportunities not available to other students. In order to preserve the integrity of the academic process, examinations are given to each student one time only. Extra credit opportunities may be available but only as announced in class and only if available to all students.

Study Guide: CMN 142, Examination 1

From *Cultural Meanings Of News*, ed. by Daniel Berkowitz

Berkowitz/Introduction

- How does the cultural scholar see journalists?
 - What is the journalistic vantage point?
 - What is the sociological organization vantage point?
 - What is the cultural vantage point?
- [You should be conversant in the issues discussed in the above paragraphs.]
- Be familiar with the first two meanings of cultural discussed on p. xv. [The third one is not important here.]
 - Carefully read the 5 levels of analysis described on p. xviii.

Berkowitz/Chapter 1

- What do many media scholars feel about international standards?
- What is the hierarchy of influences model?
- What is the sociology-of-media view?
- How does the media sociology view differ from the agenda-setting view?
- How have U.S. government and media initiatives been pursued in the emerging democracies?
- What is “comparative” research?
- What is the author’s point about the differences across vs. differences within countries in analyzing media?
- Be acquainted with the general points about bias in the “Individual Level” section.
- What is the “Routines Level” referring to?
- What is the “Organizational Level”? Note here the “challenges for analysis” of news.
- The “Extra-Media Level” means what?
- Journalists are considered “professional” to what extent?
- What are the three major roles that characterize journalists?

Berkowitz/Chapter 2

- In the first paragraph, the author states journalism is suggested to have several characteristics . . . then he claims that these suggestions are wrong. Explain.
 - What does journalism as an ideology mean?
 - The author sees ideology as what?
 - What are the five ideal-typical traits or values that characterize journalism?
 - What have American journalists identified objectivity as?
 - Reporters across the globe share what idea about their work?
 - How does speed relate to journalism?
 - What has paralleled the history of professional codes of ethics?
 - What aspect of news do new media technologies challenge?
- [Read the last several pages, but you need not read as closely as the preceding ones.]

Berkowitz/Chapter 3

- What is happening with globalization and journalistic convergence?
 - What does Weaver claim about national journalistic cultures?
 - Review the various descriptions of culture, including journalistic culture.
 - What are the etic and emic approaches to communication?
 - What does the author claim about the conceptualization of journalism’s institutional roles?
 - What is interventionism and the interventionist approach?
 - What is power distance, and how are the dimensions represented on poles in a diagram?
 - What is market orientation, and what do high and low market orientations mean?
- [Read the last several pages, but you need not read as closely as the preceding ones.]

Berkowitz/Chapter 5

- You should know the background of the “Mohammed Cartoons Affair”—background will be supplemented by video in class.
- What is journalistic paradigm maintenance?
- How do French and American journalism differ? There is a lot to this difference—focus on expose of ideas, objectivity, secularism, and suspicion of government.
- What is ritual in journalism . . . and what is meant by sacred rite in this context?
- You should be able to recognize the five journalistic strategies of *Le Monde* and understand how what the French newspaper is doing is different from what the American newspaper did.
- Review the six themes in the *New York Times* coverage. You should understand these in the context of paradigm repair.

- How was the overall European reaction to this matter different from the U.S. and British reaction?

Berkowitz/Chapter 7

- What became the “meta-narrative” of media reporting on Hurricane Katrina?
- How did the media relationship to government differ from the JFK assassination, the Vietnam War, and 9-11?
- What is a de-centered media ritual of critique?
- Note the Schudson point about norms of objectivity collapsing.
- Prior to Katrina, what was the norm in press-government relations?
- “Objectivity” describes what?
- What is boundary maintenance?
- How is crisis news different?
- What is the analytical value of tabloid journalism?
- Review the various network examples. Especially noteworthy are:
 - ABC’s personalization and populist technique
 - CBS’s focus on the president
 - CNN and the decentered ritual
 - Fox News and the lack of government sources
- The conclusion focuses on the de-centered context . . . make sure you understand what the author means by it.

Berkowitz/Chapter 10

- How do American newspaper stories help shape the social order?
- How has control over news been redistributed?
- What are the questions the author asks about new technology undermining the press?
- Understand the commoditization/de-commoditization argument.
- How do messages and control relate to the notion of the institutional?
- What are the stated missions of media (and the power of news)?
- Note the Giddens point about institutions and the evolutionary vs. the revolutionary.
- How have new media affected the press in the past?
- How do editors and reporters see their missions in the wake of the new technology? [note: This discussion starts on p. 155.]
- Note the emergence of new missions.
- You should understand the points on p. 157 that deal with new nodes of thinking, oral storytelling techniques, and sounds and text.
- What is gatekeeping? How are things changing in this regard?
- Why do news media retain authority?
- There is a historic notion of the watchdog role of media. What happened with the movement behind this role in the 1990s? What has happened since? Why?
- Is the new industry undermining its role as a societal institution?
- The press’s authority results from what?
- What is meant by the concluding sentence of the article?

Berkowitz/Chapter 11

- What are some of the contemporary problems in newsrooms?
- What does the author find about the culture of professionalism in the newsroom?
- What does he mean by his “resistant and even resentful point”?
- In the section “How Do I Do This?,” how did the reporters’ jobs change? How did they respond to these changes?
- What is the 3-part directive of what reporters are supposed to focus on in their reporting of stories?
- If you ask a journalist what a reporter does, you’ll get what kind of response?
- From the view of the organization, what is covering public agencies about?
- What does the author point out about job turnover in newsrooms?
- In the concluding section the author makes three observations about the reporters’ responses to the changes in the newsroom. Take some time and make sure you grasp each of them.

Berkowitz/Chapter 12

- You should know the basic background of the Princess Diana story.
- Who received blame for the accident?
- How did the mainstream media get drawn into the responsibility issue?
- How did mainstream newspapers attempt paradigm repair in this case?

- What, in fact, is paradigm repair? What are some of the strategies involved (see the Reese points)?
- What is attribution theory?
- What is internal attribution?
- What does the author note about editorials and paradigm repair?
- How did the mainstream media reorient themselves in telling this story?
- Be familiar with the basic explanations of responsibility in the discussion—we can discuss them in class if you'd like.
- In the concluding section, know the three general themes related to paradigm repair.
- Read the final sentences closely. Note the parallel between the news business and most people as well as the basic strategy practiced by the new media.

Berkowitz/Chapter 13

- Who likes pack journalism?
- Journalism is described as an occupational culture with a reputation for ignoring external criticism. It has begun to recognize what?
- The section called “pack journalism” points out that it’s an article of faith that the public is better served by a multitude of versions of events. In this section:
 - What is the point of the Breslin example?
 - Printing what makes editors nervous?
 - What is the “docile sheep/aggressive wolves” example about?
- What is paradigm repair?
- What image problems arise from the objectivity standard?
- What is boundary-work rhetoric?
- How does the public react to pack journalism (see p. 208 examples)?
- How do print reporters use TV trucks to draw boundaries?
- In the conclusion: What does third-person rhetoric allow the writer to do?

Berkowitz/Chapter 20

- What does the author note about extreme deadline pressures on the first page of the article?
- What are typifications?
- Why & how do reporters rely on collective memory?
- What is the downside of reporting on collective memory?
- How do briefings offer some advantage to the academic analyst of news? [See both pp. 307 and 309.]
- How did reporting on the Columbia accident change after the first several days?
- Why are wire service reporters so potentially influential?
- Review the examples involving the specific reporters. Details may be called to your attention in class.
- There are several noteworthy points in the conclusion section, among them:
 - Might the story have taken different trajectories? Explain.
 - When did collective memory start shaping the story?
 - What does the author note about Bennett’s complaint that news lacks a sense of history?
- How might collective memory have made it more difficult for reporters to understand the issues involved in the accident?

Study Guide For CMN 142 Exam 2

Etnier

- What did the author discover about the *New York Times* May, 2011 article on housing.
- Examine the comparison of the openings in the two versions.
- What is the author's implication? . . . and what does it suggest about an optimism bias in media?

Duncan

[Part I]

- How many Americans cannot read a simple science story?
- Note the numbers on evolution and earth orbiting the sun.
- Why is scientific ignorance dangerous?
- Note the author's historical examples.
- Do Europeans and Japanese know more than we do?
- What campaign does the author propose?

[Part II]

- Duncan believes we live in what times today when it comes to science writing?
- Science writing has what kind of learning curve?
- What are the problematic "two ways" media frequently report science?
- What is the "Africa Effect"?
- What does Duncan claim about incremental reporting?
- What crisis does science journalism share with journalism in general?

Hardin, from *Living Within Limits*

[Ch. 1]

- What is the author's point about limits?
- What does the author argue about "taboo"?

[Ch. 24]

- What is the argument about the population bomb? What is the instructor's point here re: events v. increments?
- How do media deal with issues? Note Hardin's examples herein, particularly the earthquake example.
- How is the taboo subject treated here (see box 24-1)?
- Note the point on critical v. chronic issues and the way we treat them?
- Compassion breeds what? And how does this create problems for the issues Hardin feels we must confront?
- Note the point on voluntary control and population control.
- What is the difference between birth control and population control?

Plate

- What did CJR report about peak oil in 2008? What is the problem with our reporting of the story?
- Re: Theobald—Why is peak oil an underreported story?
- Re: Maass—What are the challenges to reporting on oil? What solution does he see?
- Re: Margonelli—Most of the media write to what level? Media rely too much on what? What does she claim about rewards as an energy reporter? What is "Jules Verne-ism"?
- Re: Heinberg—High oil prices do what, as far as educating the public is concerned?

Brainard & Russell

- How is the energy situation faced by Obama different from that of previous presidents?
- What are not the "best selling points for a low-carbon economy"?
- The emergence of the modern energy beat began when? Why?
- What did the analysis of the *NY Times* and *Washington Post* reveal?
- Why does the reemergence of energy offer the press opportunities?
- Nothing grabs the public more than what kind of energy stories?
- How are energy stories covered differently in California than in other places?
- What do the authors note about media, technology, and coal stories?
- Press coverage of technologies (e.g., wind) relies more on whom than on technical experts?
- Note the authors' complimentary description of Delaware's *News Journal*.
- What do the authors write about energy stories and the business desk?
- Review the authors' suggestions that appear near the end of the story.

Boykoff & Boykoff

- Read the abstract carefully.
- How does the article contrast the difference between Bush and the IPCC?
- The study examines what newspapers?
- What do the authors note about journalistic norms?
- How do the authors define bias?
- You should have a basic understanding of the methodology of the study.
- What did the authors find about majority of coverage? Note other basic findings.
- What do the authors conclude about the US “prestige press.”

Russell

- What is changing with media coverage of climate change?
- How will journalism have to change re: climate change?
- Note the observation by Daniel Schrag.
- Note the Nisbet observation?
- How do journalists relate to the scientific consensus?
- What is the author’s concerns about the subtleties of the science?
- What is techno-optimism?
- What problems have plagued climate reporting re: choosing experts?
- How much of our media coverage today is environmental coverage
- What is the job of a professional journalist?

Brainard I (26 May 2011)

- What is Bill McKibben writing, and what does Brainard write in response?
- Note Brainard’s example involving Joseph Romm.
- How does the author feel about most major news outlets’ job of covering climate?
- What does the NOAA report claim?
- What are the observations from *Geophysical Research Letters* reporting?
- What does the article suggest is underrepresented in climate reporting?
- What does Brainard conclude?

Brainard II (21 June 2011)

- What was the role of the climate issue in the debate described by Brainard?
- Note the general similarity among Republican presidential candidate positions on climate.
- The onus is on whom when it comes to climate change, according to the author?
- What is the author’s concluding point (which also is the main point of the article)?

Romm

- What does the author claim has happened to the *NY Times* coverage of climate over the past 4-5 years?
- Examine the graph in the article.
- What does media effects literature show about public cues?
- How is American media different from that in other countries on the climate issue?
- What is Romm’s point about media connecting the dots on the climate issue?
- What is the author’s point about culture, beliefs, and media coverage?
- What does the author note about conservatives in the U.S. and conservatives in other countries when it comes to the climate issue?

Homans

- Who is Jon Coleman, and what are his qualifications?
- What is the difference b/t weather and climate? And why are meteorologists not climate experts? (Note that this subject comes up in both the second and fifth pages of the article.)
- Note in the Wilson/Emory University survey how climate researchers and meteorologists differ in their views on global warming.
- What do Americans know and think about climate change?
- Who does the public trust for information about global warming?

- What is the downside to meteorologists being scientifically conversant? What does the author conclude about meteorologists recognizing the limits of their own training?

Greenbang

- Know the basics of the phosphorus claims in the article, and re-read the first sentence of the article.

Study Guide For CMN 142 Exam 3

Love

- What does the author claim about the quantity of fake news?
- Note the U.S. Gov't and Armstrong Williams examples.
- What does he claim about the Bush Admin.?
- What are VNRs and how are they used?
- Where have hoaxes migrated today?
- What percentage of Americans trust the media?
- What does he claim about CNN and NY Times re: the lead up to the Iraq War?
- What is the history of fake news?
- What does he claim about the new technology?
- Who resorts to fake journalism?
- Note the Hearst-Cuba example?
- Historically, who are hoaxers?
- Note the Blair-Glass point.
- What is the point about VNRs on p. 105?
- Note the doctored war photos examples.
- Be familiar with the Fox/Milloy/Phillip Morris example.
- Note the challenge to media described on the last page of the article.

Simon

- What is "The Twitter Revolution," and what does Simon think it ignores?
- What serious vulnerabilities in the global information environment does Simon see?
- What are governments using to gain control of the net? What three steps in the journalism process have they exploited?
- Have gov'ts been successful in blocking the net? Note the Burma/Cuba comparison to China/Iran.
- How do the Germany and India cases differ from others cited in the article?
- Note the observation about the recent Google case.
- Besides technology, what do we need to do to stop gov't censorship?

Stephens

- What do news people worry about re: new technology?
- What should they worry about?
- What should journalists do besides selling news?
- Note the John Carroll example and the author's response.
- What should journalism sell? How should they follow the path of the slower journals?
- Why might reporters/editors have trouble adapting to a new news approach?
- Review the Fassihi/email example.
- What is the claim about journalists and the fear of bias?
- What will the best journalistic organizations be selling in the future?
- Review the 5 I's. [memorization not necessary]
- Note the author's concluding point.

Crovitz I (5 April 2010)

- With the information revolution, we have more of what and less of what?
- What is the author's point about narrowness of perspectives?
- What is serendipity in news (see the Jarvis quote)?
- Note Bill Maher's concluding observation?

Crovitz II (9 October 2011)

- What was Steve Jobs' objection to advertising in the Wall St. Journal?
- What does Crovitz think about Jobs' contribution to newspaper publishing?

Chittum I

- What is Warren Buffett's position on the newspaper business models?
- Review the examples of:
 - the Wall Street Journal
 - the New York Times
 - the Los Angeles Times
- Note the difference between circulation and advertising revenues. Note also here the recent changes in newspaper ad revenues and the comparison to earlier times,

Chittum II

- What does the author think about the prospects for the *New York Times* in the next several years?
- How has the *New York Times*' approach differed from that of the *Washington Post* or *Los Angeles Times*?
- What does the author claim about paywalls on the second page of the article?
- What has changed about circulation revenue vs. ad revenue?
- The author concludes what about the *New York Times*?

Fallows

- What is Fallows's thesis (first page of article)?
- Who is Ted Koppel, and what is the argument in his column?
- What are the related concerns of the Koppel and Obama comments?
- What does Fallows note about how every previous media era looks, and what does he mean?
- What does he note about journalistic ethics in the Gawker reporting on the O'Donnell affair?
- What is the conflict that is as old as journalism?
- Note the brief history on ownership and regulation.
- How have things changed in recent times (p. 6 of the original article)?
- How many visits do the Gawker sites get?
- What is the view of professor Lepore?
- You should know the story of Koppel's *Nightline* program and its political situation.
- What is Whitworth's view of the history of war coverage since Vietnam?
- What does Popkin note about American political knowledge?
- What does Fallows note about the stability of the American news business? Note especially the observations about the period from the mid-1940s to the late 1970s.
- Note the contrast between Woodward and Bernstein and how it represents a change in journalism.
- How did the rise of TV change journalism? Was the change good or bad?
- What are the four changes we most fear?
- Note the four bold type issues discussed late in the article and what Fallows means by them.
- Note the Egypt example on the last page . . . and ultimately Fallows's conclusion.

Downie & Schudson

After reading the Schudson book in Part I of the course and the Stephens article earlier in this section of the course, you should have sufficient background to grasp the context of this article. The Downie & Schudson article is loosely divided into three sections: intro (pp. 1-5), questions addressed by the article (pp. 5-21), and authors' recommendations.

[Intro]

- What is the central question of the article?
- Most of what newspapers did in the U.S. well into the 19th Century was what?
- Note how news space and news content changed in the last part of the 20th Century (p. 3 of the article).
- What does Schudson point out in his analysis of Hurricane Katrina coverage? In the paragraph that follows, what does he say would be lost if news organizations were to vanish?
- What kind of journalism is especially threatened by the economic troubles?
- How has digital technology opened up new possibilities for reporting?

[Questions]

Skim this section, but not so loosely that you fail to get the main concepts under each question.

[Authors' Recommendation]

- The authors conclude with 6 recommendations. You should understand each of them and be able to distinguish their recommendations from positions they don't advocate.

McDermott

- Note as background the Obama administration critique of Fox News.
- Note the distinction b/t news and opinion programming.
- What did the author find to be the differences b/t CNN, MSNBC, and Fox, re:
 - content overall
 - commentary content
 - newsroom size and approach
- How are the cable networks "old fashioned"?
- Note viewership comparisons b/t the cable networks and *American Idol*.
- How did becoming more sharply opinionated help MSNBC?

- Does the author see Fox News as an arm of the G.O.P. (Republican Party)?

Silverman simple rules for accurate journalism

Just read through these. Anything you need to know will be discussed in class.

CMN 142 Reader/Spring, 2012

Part 2: Effects: Politics and Institutions

Etnier

Duncan

Hardin

Plate

Brainard & Russell

Boykoff & Boykoff

Russell

Brainard, I

Brainard, II

Romm

Homans

Greenbang

Part 3: Contemporary Challenges: Technology and Other Developments

Love

Simon

Stephens

Crovitz I

Crovitz II

Chittum I

Chittum II

Fallows

Downie & Schudson

McDermott

Silverman