

Breaking Headlines: The History of News
A Reading Seminar

Course Description

An untold story lies behind the news that we read, hear or see every day and the media sources that we mine constantly as historians. This reading seminar introduces students to the major themes and approaches to the historical study of news from the ‘invention’ of modern newspapers in the seventeenth century to the multiplication of media today. Topics include journalism, propaganda, public opinion, news agencies, radio, television, and Twitter.

The course will study how the meaning of ‘news’ has emerged from a nexus of politics, economics, technology and society. To examine this, we will consider production, collection, dissemination, and reception of news. We will investigate the emergence of journalistic forms, such as the interview, and seek to understand the development of concepts of objectivity, neutrality, propaganda and truth within news. Furthermore, the course moves beyond the presentation of news to consider news infrastructures and institutions, asking, for example, how new technologies such as the telegraph impacted political control of the news, its geographical origins, and its price. The course does not assume *a priori* that news matters, but will consider carefully the potential impact of news on public opinion and policy makers. We will discuss the effects of news and consider how news can both create and undermine public spheres. While we focus on the English-speaking world, the course examines the hidden spatial connections of news and explores how different media infrastructures can create different global geographies. By the end of this course, you’ll never hear, read or see the news in the same way again!

Course Requirements

1. *Participation* in weekly seminar, ten-minute presentation of one week’s readings and completion of the weekly readings (25%).
2. Four *mini-assignments* of two pages, due in seminar in weeks 5, 8, 11 and 13. The first three assignments examine different aspects of news presentation and production; the fourth is a book review. (30%).
3. Final *historiographical paper* of ten to twelve pages on a topic of your choice, due at the end of reading period. The paper may concentrate, for example, on a particular country, technology, news source, or event, but should thereby illustrate the student’s mastery of the major historiographical debates at hand. (45%)

Books required for purchase are listed below. All books are paperbacks.

Jean Baudrillard, *The Gulf War did not take place* (Indiana UP, 1995).

Edward L. Bernays, *Propaganda* (Ig Publishing, 2005, orig. ed. 1928).

Elliot King, *Free for All: The Internet’s Transformation of Journalism* (Northwestern UP, 2010).

Walter Lippmann, *The Phantom Public* (Transaction Publishers, 1993, orig. ed. 1927).

Paul Starr, *The creation of the media: political origins of modern communications* (Basic, 2005).

Dwayne Winseck and Robert Pike, *Communication and Empire, 1860-1930* (Duke UP 2007).

Syllabus

Week 1: News Travels Fast: An Overview

Week 2: The Meanings of News: Three Approaches

Readings:

Asa Briggs & Peter Burke, *A Social History of the Media* (2nd ed., 2005), introduction, pp. 1-14.

James Carey, *Communication as Culture. Essays on Media and Society* (1989), chapter 1, pp. 13-36.

Paul Starr, *The creation of the media: political origins of modern communications* (2004), introduction, pp. 1-23.

Week 3: The Invention of the Newspaper? News in the Seventeenth Century

Readings:

Joad Raymond, *The invention of the newspaper: English newsbooks, 1641-1649* (rev. ed., 2005), introduction, chapters 2 and 5, pp. 1-19, 80-127, 232-269.

Paul Starr, *The creation of the media* (2004), chapter 1, pp. 23-46.

Week 4: Café Culture, Revolution and the Public Sphere: News in the Eighteenth Century

Readings:

Robert Darnton, "An Early Information Society: News and the Media in Eighteenth-Century Paris," *The American Historical Review* 105:1 (Feb., 2000), pp. 1-35.

Jürgen Habermas, "The Public Sphere: An Encyclopedia Article (1964)," in *New German Critique* 3 (Autumn 1974), pp. 45-55.

Will Slauter, "Forward-Looking Statements: News and Speculation in the Age of the American Revolution," *Journal of Modern History* 81 (Dec., 2009), pp. 759-772.

Paul Starr, *The creation of the media* (2004), chapters 2-4, pp. 62-150.

Week 5: The Victorian Internet? The Telegraph

Assignment 1:

Write a two-page comparison of one issue of *The London Times* (available via e-Resources) from 1860 and one from 1880. How many stories are supplied by telegraph and how can you tell? What type of news is supplied by telegraph and where from? How have the layout of the paper and geographical distribution of news articles changed? With the help of the readings, what conclusions might we draw on the changes wrought by the telegraph?

Readings:

Menahem Blondheim, *News over the Wires: the Telegraph and the Flow of Public Information in America, 1844-1897* (1994), chapters 1 and 2, pp. 11-46.

Daniel Headrick, *The Invisible Weapon: Telecommunications and International Politics, 1851-1945* (1991), chapters 1-6, pp. 3-115.

Paul Starr, *The creation of the media* (2004), chapter 5, pp. 153-190.

Week 6: The Production of News: News Agencies

Readings:

Menahem Blondheim, *News over the Wires* (1994), chapters 3-8 and conclusion, pp. 47-189.

Terhi Rantanen, "The Cosmopolitanization of News," *Journalism Studies* 8:6 (Dec.,2007), pp. 843-861.

-----, "Foreign Dependence and Domestic Monopoly: The European News Cartel and U.S. Associated Presses, 1861-1932," *Media History* 12:1 (2006), pp. 19-35.

Week 7: Constructing and Controlling the Imperial

Readings:

Dwayne Winseck and Robert Pike, *Communication and Empire: Media, Markets and Globalization, 1860-1930* (2007).

Week 8: The Invention of Journalism, its Forms and Styles

Assignment 2:

Search in *The New York Times* digital archives (available via e-Resources) for news stories from the same day of your choice in 1870, 1890, and 1910. Bring one sample article from each year and write a two-page analysis of the differences and similarities in your three articles. Use this week's readings to help you analyze the articles.

Readings:

Marcel Broersma, "Journalism as Performative Discourse: The Importance of Form and Style in Journalism," in Verica Rupar (ed.), *Journalism and Meaning-Making* (2010), pp. 15-36.

Jean Chalaby, "Journalism as an Anglo-American Invention: A Comparison of the Development of French and Anglo-American Journalism, 1830s-1920s," *European Journal of Communications* 11:3 (1996), pp. 303-326.

Michael Schudson, *The Power of News* (1995), chapters 2-4, pp. 53-112.

-----, *The Sociology of News* (2003), chapter 4, pp. 64-89.

Week 9: "Human Interest": Newspaper Culture Reaches the Masses

Readings:

Walter Lippmann, *The Phantom Public* (1993, orig. ed. 1927).

Week 10: News and War: Censorship and Propaganda

Readings:

Edward L. Bernays, *Propaganda* (2004, orig. ed. 1928).

Paul Starr, *The creation of the media* (2004), chapters 7 and 8, pp. 222-294.

Week 11: Into the Ether: Radio

Assignment 3:

Listen to an FDR fireside chat or radio address of your choice

(<http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/medialist.php?presid=32>) and read the *New York Times* article on the same chat OR listen to a Winston Churchill speech in World War II (<http://www.winstonchurchill.org/learn/speeches/audio-archive> - you have to register for free to hear the audio) and read *The London Times* article on that speech. Write a two-page analysis of the differences and similarities in coverage in the two media.

Readings:

Douglas B. Craig, *Fireside Politics: Radio and Political Culture in the United States, 1920-1940* (2000), chapters 10 and 11, pp. 186-233.

Susan Douglas, *Listening In: Radio and the American Imagination* (1999), chapter 7, pp. 161-198.

Paul Starr, *The creation of the media* (2004), chapters 10 and 11, coda, pp. 327-384, 395-402.

Week 12: News or Entertainment? Television

Readings:

Jean Baudrillard, *The Gulf War did not take place* (1995).

Geoffrey Baym, *From Cronkite to Colbert: the evolution of broadcast news* (2009), chapters 6 and 7, pp. 101-143.

Stephen Cushion, "Three Phases of 24-Hour News Television," and Michael Bromley, "'All the World's a Stage: 24/7 News, Newspapers, and the Ages of Media,'" in Stephen Cushion & Justin Lewis (eds.), *The rise of 24-hour news television: global perspectives* (2010), pp. 15-49.

Week 13: The End of the Printed Word? Huffington Post, Blogs and Twitter

Assignment 4:

Choose one of the secondary works from which we have read an excerpt. Read the whole book and write a two-page book review. Identify and critique the author's main arguments, structure and evidence. Remember to consider the author's use of primary sources and methods of analysis, using the insights you have gained from the three previous assignments. Consult recent reviews in the *American Historical Review* for more guidance on appropriate style.

Readings:

Elliot King, *Free for All: The Internet's Transformation of Journalism* (2010).