

Jour. 505 Syllabus/Calendar Fall, 2007

Course Title: American Media History Seminar Class Number: 21475D

Time/Day: 2-4:40 p.m., Wednesday Room Number: ASC 230

Instructor: Jonathan Kotler

Text: *The Media In America, A History*, 6th ed., by Wm. David Sloan (Vision Press)

Reader: *American Datelines*, edited by Cray, Kotler, Beller, (U of Illinois, 2003)

Why Journalism 505:

This is one of three seminars intended to provide you with the special knowledge that makes journalism a profession rather than a craft. (The others are 500, which deals with journalism as a social institution, and 560, which will introduce you to the legal rights of the profession. The three are interrelated and will, on occasion, cover similar topics, but from different perspectives.)

The working premise behind requiring these seminars is that writing in a vacuum is just that. Moreover, such writing certainly is not journalism, or at least it is not journalism of the variety we want our graduates to practice.

The history of what today often is referred to as the “mass media” is really the history of the United States, politically, sociologically, technically and geographically. It is the history of the United States in all its diversity, of all its peoples. In truth, the history of the American press, and the history of the United States are inextricably and forever entwined.

And yet, the press is, or was until recently, somehow “different.” It stood apart from society, often acting as its mirror, often as its conscience, but, hopefully, always separate. How this came to pass—and whether or not it still remains so—is the subject of this semester’s work.

To become journalists, you must understand not only how we’ve come to this place in what has been called “the continuing American experiment,” but what the implications of our travels have been.

Course Procedure/Requirements:

During the first dozen or so weeks of the semester, Journalism 505 will follow a lecture format, during which the instructor will sketch the history of American journalism. At the same time, students will be working on a research topic, the format of which will be handed out and discussed in class on September 6. The fruits of each student's research will provide the basis of the oral presentations during the last two class meetings of the term, as well as in researched, fully-footnoted papers turned in at the end of the semester. In addition, there will be a take home essay handed out on August 29 that is due by 2 p.m. on Wednesday, September 26.

Grading:

This is primarily a research seminar. It is also a graduate course. As such, there will be no examinations, as that term is usually understood. Your grade will be based entirely on your performance on the take home essay (33.3% of your semester's grade), the longer research project (66.7% of your semester's grade). Late papers will be assessed a penalty of one grade for each day, or part thereof, late.

Tentative Calendar of Discussion:

(All chapter references are to *The Media In America*. It is expected that the assigned reading will be completed **prior** to the class meeting during which the subject matter is to be discussed. Students will also be expected to complete the readings in *American Datelines* that parallel each class meeting prior thereto.)

August 28: Whither the watchdog? An introduction.

September 5: British antecedents; colonial, revolutionary press to 1789 (Chapters 1-3)

September 12: 9/11 and its aftermath: The watchdog that became a pussycat.

September 19: Partisan press, penny press, Civil War (1789-1865) (Chapters 5-10)

September 26: America, and its newspapers, come of age (1865-1900) (Chapters 11-14)

October 3: Muckraking, World War I, the (first) Red Scare (1890-1920), Ch. 15-17)

October 10: Video: *Empire of the Air* (Chapter 18)

October 17: Jazz Journalism, radio, World War II, 1920-45 (Chapter 18)

October 24: The brave new world of television, technology, and the credibility gap (1945-92) (Chapters 19-23)

October 31: A Halloween surprise

November 7: Joe McCarthy and his progeny

November 14: Watergate: Television's finest hour

November 21: No class; Thanksgiving

November 28: The business of journalism in the age of changing technology (Chpt 24)

December 5: It's a wrap; thoughts and conclusions on a long journey.

December 5: Research papers due by 4 p.m. via email at kotler@usc.edu.

Important note: The above schedule and procedures are subject to change in the event of extenuating circumstances as determined by the instructor.

School of Journalism Policy on Plagiarism/Academic Integrity:

Plagiarism is defined as taking ideas and writings from another and passing them off as one's own; in journalism, this includes appropriating the reporting of another without clear attribution. The following is the Annenberg School of Journalism's policy on academic integrity as published in the University catalogue: "Since its founding, the USC School of Journalism has maintained a commitment to the highest standards of ethical conduct and academic excellence. Any student found guilty of plagiarism, fabrication, cheating on examinations, or purchasing papers or other assignments will receive a failing grade in the course and will be dismissed as a major from the School of Journalism. There will be no exceptions to the school's policy."

School of Journalism Policy on Academic Accommodations:

Any students requesting academic accommodations based on a disability are requested to register with Disability Services and Programs (DSP) each semester. A letter of verification for approved accommodations can be obtained from DSP when adequate documentation is filed. Please be sure the letter is delivered to the professor as early in the semester as possible. DSP is open Monday through Friday, 8:30 a.m. – 5 p.m. The office is located in the Student Union room 301 and their phone number is (213) 740-0776.

School of Journalism Policy on Internships

The value of professional internships as part of the overall educational experience of our students has long been recognized by the School of Journalism. Accordingly, while internships are not required for successful completion of this course, any student enrolled in this course who undertakes and completes an approved, non-paid internship during this semester shall earn academic extra credit herein of an amount equal to one percent of the total available semester points for this course.