



SELF PROGRAM 2025/2026

Journalism and Democracy: 1826-2026

C. Jon DELOGU

Contact : christopher-jon.delogu@univ-lyon3.fr

Course information

Number of credits : 6 credits

Contact hours : 30 hours

Hours taught per week : 2,5 hours

Teaching period : Spring Semester 2026

Course description :

This course will cover the period 1826-2026. Class sessions will review the history of journalism starting with its gradual emancipation from state control and the birth of public opinion (1825-1900); then the development of journalistic ethics and standards to distinguish journalism from propaganda (1900-1945); the development of a business model based on advertising directed at a white, male-dominated consumer society (1945-1980);

the rise of media monopolies and dog-whistle politics (1960-2000); the “great expectations” of the Internet for journalism and the “lost illusions,” distrust, and angry polarization that followed (1990-2025); the collapse of local journalism and subscriptions; market segmentation & nationalization; the capture of advertising revenue by Facebook and Google; the segmentation, restructuring, and diversification of information spaces; the experiments to revive journalism under new business models; the tensions between Affirmation Journalism, Infotainment, and Accountability Journalism (2010-2025).

NB: This course’s American focus does not disqualify evoking and using events and materials from other countries: Canada, the UK, Europe, Asia, South America, Africa, ... the World.

Weekly Program: chronological progression via general topic + specific examples

1. General introduction NPR segment “News Influencers”

<https://www.npr.org/2025/01/04/nx-s1-5246011/influencer> (4 Jan 2025)

2. Emergence of ethics/standards *Elements of Journalism*, Chapter 1
3. *Elements* Chapter 2 Film: *The Battle of Algiers*, decolonization & journalism
4. *Elements* Chapter 3 Truman Doctrine & Cold War consensus journalism
5. *Elements* Chapter 4 Vietnam War, Watergate, *All the President’s Men*
6. *Elements* Chapter 5 Race-Class Academy, dog-whistle politics
7. *Elements* Chapter 6 CNN, cable news, 9/11, social media influencers
8. *Elements* Chapter 7 media monopolies, E. Osnos on Facebook
9. *Elements* Chapter 8 Arab Spring, G. Packer on Occupy Wall Street
10. *Elements* Chapter 9 Trump I, covid, “alternative facts” & disinformation;
conspiracy journalism; disaster reporting: George Packer, *The Unwinding* (2013);
Evan Osnos, *Wildland* (2021); Jeff Sharlet, *The Undertow* (2023), Tom Nichols, *The Death of Expertise* (2nd edition 2024).
11. *Elements* Ch 10 & 11 Joe Biden to Trump II, truth vs. post-truth; affirmation
journalism and/versus accountability journalism; National Public Radio segments:
organ removal gone wrong; illegal immigrant construction workers in Texas
12. Final Exam: in-class factual portion + take-home portion (choice of 2 topics)

Prerequisites :

none

Course objectives:

The goal of this course is to teach students about how journalism's health rises and falls with the health—positive or negative—of democracy, and vice versa. To achieve that goal reviewing modern journalism's 200-year-old history is essential so that ultimately students are able to make better-informed choices for their lives and can be more *empowered* and *free* as they make use of journalism and co-participate in its future methods, content, and delivery within democratic, fact-based civil societies.

Assessment:

The grade for the course will be the average of three marks: 1) in-class final exam - factual test on course materials, 2) in-class oral presentation (in teams), 3) final paper

Attendance:

In order to participate, students must be present. Nevertheless, a maximum of 2 (two) unexcused absences will be allowed; otherwise no mark will be given. An unexcused absence at a test (final test or continuous assessment) means no credits for the course.

Bibliography:

The following book is required reading and will be referred to often in class:

Kovach, Bill and Tom Rosenstiel, *The Elements of Journalism: What Newspeople Should Know and the Public Should Expect*. New York: Crown, 2021 4th edition.

The following title is optional, but recommended:

Sullivan, Margaret. *Ghosting the News: Local Journalism and the Crisis of American Democracy*. New York: Columbia Global Reports, 2020.

Other materials will be made available via the Moodle e-learning module you MUST join.