

Lectures: Mondays 4:00-5:20 p.m. Frey Hall 100

Instructors: Jonathan Anzalone, Jack Millrod, Terence Sheridan

IMPORTANT DATES¹

- Midterm Exam: Wednesday, November 7
- Final Essay: Wednesday, December 5
- Final Exam: Tuesday, December 12

I. PURPOSE OF THE COURSE:

This course is designed to teach students to exercise their power as citizens by becoming perceptive news consumers. Armed with critical-thinking skills, a firm grasp of relevant history and practical knowledge about the news media, News Literacy students learn how to find the reliable information they need to make decisions, take action, make judgments and responsibly share information through social media. At a time when the digital revolution is spawning a flood of information and disinformation each day, the course seeks to help students recognize the differences between facts and rumor, news and promotion, news and opinion, bias and fairness, assertion and verification, and evidence and inference.

II. INTENDED OUTCOMES:

Successful Students Will Be Able To:

1. Analyze key elements of news reports - weighing evidence, evaluating sources, noting context and transparency - to judge reliability.
2. Distinguish between journalism, opinion journalism and unsupported assertion.
3. Identify and distinguish between news media bias and audience bias.
4. Blend personal scholarship and course materials to write effectively about journalism standards and practices, fairness and bias, First Amendment issues and their individual Fourth Estate rights and responsibilities.
5. Use examples from each day's news to demonstrate critical thinking and civic engagement.
6. Place the impact of social media and digital technologies in their historical context.

III. REQUIRED TEXTS / READINGS:

1. *News Literacy's main textbook is each day's news, whether you read, watch or listen.* News Literacy students are expected to follow the news every day and participate in an online discussion board that is the basis for near weekly news quizzes. Keeping up with news makes it possible to finish homework assigned to you.
2. No-cost materials on the Blackboard™ site for this course.

¹ Dates and times subject to change. Watch "Announcements" section of Blackboard for updates.

3. Other no-cost materials provided by your instructors.

IV. COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

1. Prerequisites: None.
2. Attendance: If legitimate circumstances prevent you from attending class, the instructor must be informed by email at least 24 hours before class starts. Two unexcused absences are permitted. Students who miss a class are still responsible for any graded assignments due that day. News quizzes may not be made up. A third or fourth such absence results in a 1/3 drop per absence, (e.g. from B to B-) on your final grade. Five or more can result in an F. Consistent tardiness will also harm your final grade.
3. Blackboard: This course is run from Blackboard, the digital content management system operated by the university. There you'll find course announcements, homework assignments, reading materials, links for electronic submission of written work, your grades, and required discussion/blog sites.
4. Check Blackboard daily: Because the course frequently changes in response to breaking news, you must check Blackboard daily. Although your lecture and recitation instructors will make every effort to give you advance notice of upcoming assignments, your failure to regularly check Blackboard is not an acceptable excuse for missing a deadline. Email and especially email sent via Blackboard is one of the ways we will officially communicate with you for this course. It is your responsibility to make sure that you read your email in your official university email account. For most students that is Google Apps for Education (<http://www.stonybrook.edu/mycloud>) but you may verify your official Electronic Post Office (EPO) address at: <http://it.stonybrook.edu/help/kb/checking-or-changing-your-mail-forwarding-address-in-the-epo>
5. Special considerations: If you have a physical, psychological, medical or learning disability that may impact your course work, please contact [Student Accessibility Support Center](#), 128 ECC Building (631) 632-6748, sasc@stonybrook.edu. They will determine with you what accommodations are necessary and appropriate. All information and documentation are confidential. Students who require assistance during emergency evacuation are encouraged to discuss their needs with their professors and Student Accessibility Support Center. For procedures and information, go to the following web site: <https://ehs.stonybrook.edu/programs/fire-safety/>
6. Deadlines: All work is due on time. You must upload your homework to the appropriate SafeAssign links contained in Blackboard prior to deadlines imposed by your instructor. Late assignments will not be accepted, unless special arrangements are made at least 48 hours in advance of the due date. Since you will submit assignments through Blackboard, you should be able to upload your work even if you miss a class.
7. Assignments: Your homework assignments may be found in the Homework link in your recitation's Blackboard page. They will include readings, videos, films and other materials to help you understand the course concepts, plus writing assignments. Your lecturer and recitation instructor will inform you each week of which assignments to work on and when they are due. Writing assignments may require you to do research, additional reading, or evaluate a news report. You will be graded on how well you articulate an understanding of the course material, support it with specific examples from readings, and how you express your own ideas. Your grade will depend, in part, on your ability to write with clarity and logic. Comply with the

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directions for word length, stay relevant, and always provide specific examples or evidence to support your arguments. The [SBU Writing Center](#) provides helpful assistance to students willing to act on expert advice: 632-7405.

The written homework assignments represent 30 percent of your final grade.

HOMework GRADING CRITERIA:

Some assignments will be graded on a 3-point scale.

Superior	Dramatically surpasses the requirements, well-written, demonstrates additional insights or research	Maximum 3 points
Good	Exceeds requirements, written clearly and logically	Maximum 2 points
Poor	Does not meet requirements, confusing or unclear, sloppy	Maximum 1 point
No effort	No credit	No points

Other assignments require extra effort, and will be graded out of 5 points.

Superior	Dramatically surpasses the requirements, well-written, demonstrates additional insights or research	Maximum 5 points
Very Good	Exceeds requirements, written clearly and logically	Maximum 4 points
Satisfactory	Meets minimum requirements, expresses ideas in a manner that can be understood	Maximum 3 points
Less Than Satisfactory	Approaches minimum requirements, but an error or confusing writing prevent satisfactory work	Maximum 2 point
Poor	Does not meet requirements, confusing or unclear, sloppy	Maximum 1 point
No effort	No credit	No points

8. Participation and Quizzes: You will be graded on how well you prepare for class, follow the news, and engage in discussions and debates held during recitation. You will also be quizzed throughout the semester on current events. Quizzes reward you for following the news and reinforce concepts you're learning in class.
9. Extra Credit: Extra credit points are applied to the homework portion of your final grade. Students may earn a maximum of four extra credit points. The major source of extra credit points is a series of weeknight programs during which noteworthy journalists speak about their work and answer your questions. Students receive one extra homework point for each lecture they attend. Other extra credit opportunities are offered from time to time and will be announced by your lecturer and recitation instructor.
10. Communication: If you have a general question about the course, the assignments or the lecture you may want to post your question in the discussions link available through your recitation site on Blackboard. For specific questions about your particular grade, you must make an appointment to talk with your instructor in person or by phone during his or her office hours.
11. Academic Integrity: *Any form of fabrication, plagiarism, cheating or other ethical offense will be reported to the Academic Judiciary Committee and can result in a failing grade for the course,*

dismissal from the journalism program or expulsion from the university. Here is the University’s statement on academic dishonesty: “Plagiarism is the use of others’ words and/or ideas without clearly acknowledging their source. As students, you are learning about other people’s ideas in your course texts, your instructors’ lectures, in-class discussions, and when doing your own research. When you incorporate those words and ideas into your own work, it is of the utmost importance that you give credit where it is due. Plagiarism, intentional or unintentional, is considered academic dishonesty and all instances will be reported to the Academic Judiciary. To avoid plagiarism, you must give the original author credit whenever you use another person’s ideas, opinions, drawings, or theories as well as any facts or any other pieces of information that are not common knowledge. Additionally quotations of another person’s actual spoken or written words; or a close paraphrasing of another person’s spoken or written words must also be referenced. Accurately citing all sources and putting direct quotations – of even a few key words – in quotation marks are required.” For further information on academic integrity and the policies regarding academic dishonesty, go to Academic Judiciary at www.stonybrook.edu/uaa/academicjudiciary.

12. Americans with Disabilities Act: If you have a physical, psychological, medical or learning disability that may impact your course work, please contact [Student Accessibility Support Center](#), ECC (Educational Communications Center) Building, Room 128, (631) 632-6748, sasc@stonybrook.edu. They will determine with you what accommodations, if any, are necessary and appropriate. All information and documentation is confidential. https://www.stonybrook.edu/commcms/studentaffairs/sasc/current_students/index.php
13. Disruptive Behavior: Stony Brook expects students to maintain standards of personal integrity that are in harmony with the educational goals of the institution; to observe national, state, and local laws and University regulations; and to respect the rights, privileges, and property of other people. Faculty is required to report disruptive behavior that interrupts faculty’s ability to teach, the safety of the learning environment, and/or students’ ability to learn to Judicial Affairs.
14. Electronic Devices. See your recitation instructor for his or her policy. During class, phones, tablets, and other electronic devices should be silenced and put away and laptops used only for note taking.

VI. CALCULATING FINAL GRADES: Final grades are weighted as follows:

Homework Assignments	30 Percent
Participation	10 Percent
Quizzes	10 Percent
Midterm exam	15 Percent
Final Essay	10 Percent
Final Exam	25 Percent

You won’t earn more points by writing longer than assigned. Comply with the directions for word length, write succinctly, stay relevant, and always provide specific examples or evidence to support your point.

Important Note for Journalism Majors and Minors: Only semester grades of C or above count for credit toward the journalism major or minor. Any student earning a C-minus or below who intends to continue in the journalism program must retake the class and will not be able to continue in other journalism skills classes.

VII. SCHOOL OF JOURNALISM GRADING SCHEMA:

A : 93 and above

A-: 90-92

B+: 87-89

B : 83-86

B-: 80-82

C+: 77-79

C : 73-76

C-: 70-72

D+: 67-69

D : 60-66

F : 59 and below

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VIII. CLASS SCHEDULE:

MONDAY: LECTURE	WEDNESDAY: RECITATION
1. Week of August 27	
<p>AUGUST 27 LECTURE 1: <i>What Is News Literacy? Why Does It Matter in the Digital Age?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> This is a particularly challenging time for news consumers in search of reliable information. They must learn to navigate a fragmented, politically polarized news media landscape as they cope with information overload and a crisis of authenticity characterized by a blurring of the lines between what is and is not news. From Gutenberg to Zuckerberg: Parallels between the first and latest information revolutions help us understand how profoundly the digital age has changed the way we get and share information -- and how there is nothing new about the challenge of separating truth from misinformation and disinformation. 	<p>AUGUST 29 RECITATION 1: <i>Public Perceptions of the News Media</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Class focuses on where and how students get their news, with discussion of which news outlets the students will be using. (Students will be introduced to the Blackboard discussion board where they will post the news stories they will be quizzed on throughout the semester.) How do students view the news media? How does it compare with the general public's view? What's the source of the public's current unease? Is it justified? What's a news consumer to do?
2. Week of September 3	
<p>SEPTEMBER 3 LABOR DAY – NO LECTURE</p>	<p>SEPTEMBER 5 RECITATION 2: <i>The News Blackout and Creating a News Diet</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students discuss the News Blackout experience and look at how following news developments is a key part of this course and of becoming an informed citizen. Together, we put together the elements of a news diet that draws upon a variety of news outlets and platforms. <p>✓ HW ASSIGNMENT DUE: The 24-hour News Blackout ✓ NEWS QUIZ 1</p>
3. Week of September 10	
<p>SEPTEMBER 10 LECTURE 2: <i>The Power of Information and Misinformation</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> It's in our nature: Since humans first walked the earth, the power of information has derived from its ability to alert, divert and connect people. 	<p>SEPTEMBER 12 RECITATION 3: <i>Press Freedom</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Paparazzi, the National Enquirer, tabloid TV, Gawker ... Are the excesses of a free press too high a price to pay for the benefits to society afforded by First Amendment protections? Our

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The battle to control information: Napoleon said, "Four hostile newspapers are more to be feared than a thousand bayonets." • The power of images and video: They can move audiences and bring about change. • The power of social media: How platforms like Twitter and Facebook spread and make news. 	<p>country's founders, who saw a free press as a check on the power of government, certainly didn't think so. Today's class explores the question and students' attitudes toward the news media.</p> <p>✓ HW ASSIGNMENT DUE: NewsGuard ✓ NEWS QUIZ 2</p>
4. Week of September 17	
<p>SEPTEMBER 17 LECTURE 3: <i>What's Newsworthy and Who Decides?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ten Universal News Drivers offer insight into why some stories rise to the top of the news. The more news drivers a story has, the more prominence it is likely to receive. • Who decides? The judgment of editors and, increasingly, the preferences of the audience play a role in determining what's deemed newsworthy. • Great images and compelling video drive story play. They're powerful tools for verification but can distract or influence perceptions of news consumers and skew news judgment. • News consumers need to understand the factors at play to make smart choices about what to watch and read. They need to be their own editors. That's especially true as consumer preferences expressed in real-time analytics play a greater role in determining news value. 	<p>SEPTEMBER 19 RECITATION 4: <i>You Are the Editor</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students work in groups and design their own news home pages, drawing from a list of stories and an understanding of the factors that determine story play, including the news drivers, the economic model and target audience of your site. Be careful: A few bogus stories are mixed in with real ones. <p>✓ NEWS QUIZ 3</p>
5. Week of September 24	
<p>SEPTEMBER 24 LECTURE 4: <i>What Makes Reliable News Different?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information neighborhoods. The information bombarding news consumers can be divided into "neighborhoods" to separate what's reliable from what's suspect. The most reliable information can be found in the Journalism neighborhood, whose three defining characteristics — Verification, Independence and Accountability — distinguish it from Advertising, Promotion/Publicity, Propaganda, Entertainment and Raw Information. • Blurring of the lines: One of the primary challenges facing prospective voters is the blurring of the lines separating the neighborhoods. When they do, always look for VIA and try to identify the primary goal of the information provider. 	<p>SEPTEMBER 26 RECITATION 5: <i>Know Your Neighborhood</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where am I? Students work in teams to identify the appropriate information neighborhood of various examples. <p>✓ HW ASSIGNMENT DUE: Navigating Neighborhoods on YouTube ✓ NEWS QUIZ 4</p>

<p>6. Week of October 1</p>	
<p>OCTOBER 1 LECTURE 5: <i>Truth and Verification, Part 1</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is truth? Philosophers and scientists have their own definitions. Journalists seek the best available truth at that moment -- a provisional truth that is, by definition, a snapshot in time. • Context and transparency: Introducing two key concepts in the journey from fact to truth. The most valuable news stories put information in context and are transparent about how the reporters know what they know — and what they don't know and why. • Truth is more likely to emerge when you look at a story from different perspectives. Journalists do that by trying to include the voices of all involved. • What's the evidence? No matter how forcefully they are delivered, statements by newsmakers must be considered assertions until they are verified, ideally with direct evidence. Ask: What do I know, and how do I know it? • Why does verification sometimes fail? Verification can break down when writers and editors rush to get a story first or a report is based on false or insufficient evidence. Consumers should ask themselves whether journalists “opened the freezer” -- if the reporters verified the information they are reporting themselves with direct evidence. 	<p>OCTOBER 3 RECITATION 6: <i>Keeping up with Provisional Truth</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ One reason to keep up with the news is that sometimes reporters fail to do their job. The class explores examples of journalistic malpractice that involved a breakdown in the process of verification – from the Pulitzer-prize winning “Jimmy’s World” to the recent Rolling Stone campus rape story. We include examples where the rush to convey breaking news resulted in errors. <p>✓ NEWS QUIZ 5</p>
<p>7. Week of October 8</p>	
<p>OCTOBER 8 COLUMBUS DAY – NO LECTURE</p>	<p>OCTOBER 10 RECITATION 7: <i>Provisional Truth, Polls, and Surveys</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Stories develop over time for a variety of reasons, and it’s necessary to keep up with the news. Election-season polls illustrate provisional truth. They’re a snapshot in time, and not always an accurate predictor of the outcome. <p>✓ NEWS QUIZ 6</p>
<p>8. Week of October 15</p>	
<p>OCTOBER 15 LECTURE 6: <i>Truth and Verification, Part 2</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We take a closer look at the concept of provisional truth. News consumers need to look at 	<p>OCTOBER 17 RECITATION 8: <i>You Are the Fact-Checker</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students discuss their experience with the Post-Facto game, then apply the lessons of Truth and

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<p>developments in the context of what is and isn't known and follow the story to get the full picture -- especially in the case of breaking news.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Through verification -- one of the defining attributes of journalism -- statements can be checked using independent, reputable news or fact-checking sites, or independently by news consumers seeking direct evidence from authoritative sources. 	<p>Verification in checking facts in news stories and social media posts.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ HW ASSIGNMENT DUE: The Post-Facto Game ✓ NEWS QUIZ 7
<p>9. Week of October 22</p>	
<p>OCTOBER 22 LECTURE 7: Verification: Evaluating Sources</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We focus on the evaluating sources to judge the reliability of news reports. A news report is only as good as its sources. • IMVAIN: News Literacy teaches students to evaluate news sources with a five-step test based on the idea that the most reliable sources are: 1) Independent, 2) Multiple, 3) Provide Verifiable information, 4) Authoritative or Informed and 5) Named. 	<p>OCTOBER 24 RECITATION 9: Evaluating Sources</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students apply source-evaluation techniques, with an eye on their goal: to find information they can act on with confidence. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ HW ASSIGNMENT DUE: Source Evaluation ✓ NEWS QUIZ 8
<p>10. Week of October 29</p>	
<p>OCTOBER 29 LECTURE 8: Balance, Fairness, and Bias</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Responsible journalism aspires to being fair to all sides of a story and to the facts themselves. It requires fair presentation, language and treatment. • Balance — making sure all sides in a conflict are given the same amount of time or space — can be a tool for achieving fairness when the truth or outcome is unknown. In some instances, though, balance can create a false equivalency that can make a story unfair to the evidence. • Bias is a pattern of unfairness found in the coverage of a single news organization over time. It can be a barrier in the way of finding the truth. • Three ways to spot bias: 1) Look for a pattern over time in a single news outlet's coverage. 2) Compare coverage of the same stories by other outlets. 3) Take note of the self-interest of those alleging bias. 	<p>OCTOBER 31 RECITATION 10: Midterm Review</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We will recap and reinforce the lesson on Balance, Fairness, and Bias, discussing students' responses to the Project Implicit exercise. • We will prepare for the midterm exam, to be given in the following week's recitation. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ HW ASSIGNMENT DUE: Project Implicit ✓ NEWS QUIZ 9

11. Week of November 5	
<p>NOVEMBER 5 LECTURE 9: <i>Your Filter Bubble and You</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sometimes the perception of bias is rooted not in journalistic bias but in audience bias. News consumers who seek affirmation, not information, distrust or dismiss information that disagrees with their opinions or beliefs because that causes cognitive dissonance. • Seeking information that challenges our beliefs and broadens our worldview is growing more difficult in the Digital Age, as search-engine and social-media algorithms feed us information we show a preference for. We will discuss strategies for breaking free of the filter bubbles that limit the news and information we consume every day. 	<p>NOVEMBER 7 RECITATION 11: MIDTERM EXAM</p>
12. Week of November 12	
<p>NOVEMBER 12 LECTURE 10: <i>Deconstructing the News</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This 7-step deconstruction process uses News Literacy concepts to analyze and dispassionately judge a report's reliability. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Summarize the main points and then check if the headline and the lead support the main point(s) of the story? 2. How close does the reporter come to opening the freezer? Is the evidence direct or indirect? 3. Evaluate the reliability of the sources using IMVAIN. 4. Does the reporter make his or her work transparent? 5. Does the reporter place the story in context? 6. Are the key questions answered? 7. Is the story fair? • Students apply the principles of deconstruction to all forms of traditional media including video and audio news stories. 	<p>NOVEMBER 14 RECITATION 12: <i>Deconstructing the News</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students practice applying the 7 steps of deconstruction, in the quest to find reliable, actionable information. <p>NEWS QUIZ 10</p>
13. Week of November 19	
<p>NOVEMBER 19 LECTURE 11: <i>The Medium Is the Message</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deconstruction works best when consumers know the strengths and weaknesses of the different mediums on which news is found. 	<p>NOVEMBER 21 NO RECITATION – HAPPY THANKSGIVING</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Driven by the power of the written word, newspapers and magazines still offer the most comprehensive coverage, but market forces, technological advances and demographic changes have dramatically reduced their resources and reach. • Radio has survived by maintaining an intimacy and immediacy and its own style of storytelling. • TV news is still the most powerful tool for following breaking news stories with compelling visuals, but it exists in an entertainment medium. • Social media has transformed the news consumer from observer to news producer and brought a proliferation of misinformation. News websites and search engines have broadened the reach of news consumers while presenting them with new challenges — information overload, questions of authenticity and confirmation bias — in their pursuit of reliable information. <p>✓ HW ASSIGNMENT DUE: Text Deconstruction</p>	
<p>14. Week of November 26</p>	
<p>NOVEMBER 26 LECTURE 12: <i>To Share or Not to Share? Deconstructing Digital Age Media</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This class looks at the new opportunities—and responsibilities—for news consumers to not only find news, but to participate as “citizen journalists” in news production in the digital age. • Students will discuss the multiple means by which they can now influence and even contribute to news coverage via the Web, texting and social media. • The IMVAIN technique should also be used to evaluate the trustworthiness of news websites and social media reports by identifying primary and authoritative sources of information. 	<p>NOVEMBER 28 RECITATION 13: <i>Deconstructing the News</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students continue to practice deconstruction across a variety of media platforms. • We review the deconstruction homework assignments. <p>✓ HW ASSIGNMENT DUE: Video Deconstruction ✓ NEWS QUIZ 11 (BONUS)</p>
<p>15. Week of December 3</p>	
<p>DECEMBER 3 LECTURE 13: <i>Where Are We? Where Do We Go from Here?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The final step in the deconstruction process is to conclude whether the news report is reliable enough to act upon. In the past, that was generally 	<p>DECEMBER 5 RECITATION 14: <i>Review and preparation for the final exam</i></p>

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<p>a personal choice about what to believe or do. Today, news consumers also are publishers with the added responsibility of deciding not only what to do, but what to share.</p>	<p>✓ FINAL ESSAY DUE</p>
<p>16. Week of December 10</p>	
<p>DECEMBER 10 LECTURE 14: <i>Final Exam Review</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Students take a practice final exam, and review it with their instructors.	<p>DECEMBER 12 FINAL EXAM 8:30-11:00 P.M.</p> <p>Room TBA</p>