

Journalism 375
Diversity, Mass Media and Social Change
Spring 2007

Prof. Carolyn Nielsen

Office: CF 261 x3244

Office hours: MW 10 a.m. to noon and by appt.

Class meets: TTh 9 a.m. -10:50 a.m.

Classroom: CF 316

Prerequisite: J190 or equivalent or instructor permission

Required text: Race/Gender/Media: Considering Diversity Across Audiences, Content and Producers by Rebecca Ann Lind.

Catalog description: Examines how mass media cover social change, through a substantive focus on race/ethnicity and gender, to discern the effects of mass media on its audiences.

Course description: This course will examine news media production, consumption and impact through the lens of racial/ethnic, sexual minority, gender, religion and disability frameworks. Students will hone critical thinking skills through discussions, papers, readings, exercises and sessions with guest speakers.

Attendance and participation: This course is taught as a seminar, so attendance is imperative. Many of our guest speakers have traveled significant distances in the early morning hours to share their insights with you, please honor their contributions with your participation. **Attendance will be taken. Failure to come to class will hurt your grade.**

Ground rules for respectful behavior: We will be covering sensitive topics in this class. People will have strong feelings. Everyone deserves a safe environment in which to participate in the discussion. It is important to listen and respond appropriately.

- Listen to each other with respect. Do not interrupt.
- Use "I" statements: Speak your own truth. Express only your own thoughts, reactions, feelings, and experiences, not those of others;
- Do not debate someone else's experience. If someone says ____ happened to him or her, do not argue with someone's personal experience.
- No cell phones, iPods, Blackberries, etc. should be used in class.

Assignments: (total of 450 points)

- **1 speaker analysis:** 75 points
- **1 impact narrative:** 75 points
- **1 midterm on lecture/reading/movies/speakers:** 100 points
- **1 group presentation:** 50 points

- **1 final paper:** 120 points. This is a group paper divided into sections. Each individual will be graded on his or her specific section of the project (100 points possible). The overall paper will be graded for cohesiveness and clarity and that will figure into individual grades (20 points).
- **Attendance and participation:** 30

Grading criteria:

While not everyone in this class aspires to be a journalist or is proficient in journalistic writing style, papers are expected to be commensurate with university-level writing. Points will be deducted for spelling and grammar errors, run-on sentences, incomplete sentences, etc.

Grades will be awarded based on display of strong critical thinking skills, use of clear and pertinent examples and level of research shown.

***Late work will not be accepted.** If you are seriously ill and unable to complete a requirement of this class, you must contact me before the beginning of class and provide written documentation of your absence upon your return.

There is no extra credit in this class.

Assignments

Speaker Analysis 75 points

This is a personal essay, so there are no wrong answers. You will be graded on the depth and clarity of your thoughts as well as the specificity of your examples and ability to illustrate your conclusions. You will also be graded on the cohesiveness of your response. This essay is to be written in first person, i.e. "I feel this speaker strongly conveyed...."

Choose 2-3 guest speakers we have had in this class. Write 3-4 typed, double-spaced pages about what had the most profound impact on you during the presentations.

Please include quotes from the speaker.

Everyone is affected differently by different things, so I can't tell you what to write, but you might consider the following questions in forming your essay.

1. What surprised you the most?
2. What angered you?
3. What confused you?
4. How will you look at/read/listen to things differently after hearing this speaker?
5. Do you agree with this person's assessments of the media?
6. Was there something you wish you would have asked this speaker but didn't?

7. What did the speaker do a good job or a poor job of explaining?

Impact Narrative

75 points

The intent of this paper is to facilitate interpersonal communication about news media coverage of a particular group, culture or issue. You must find three people to interview and reflect their thoughts in a narrative essay.

Your sources may not be friends, relatives, co-workers or people with whom you are well acquainted. Your interviews must be done in person, not over the phone.

Your paper should have a clearly identified theme and all three sources should speak to that theme.

For example, you might interview several Japanese students about their experiences on Western's campus and their views on how their homeland and culture are portrayed in the American news media. You could interview people who attend the Sikh temple on Pole Road out in the county about how they feel their faith is represented in the local and national news media. You could go out to Lummi Nation and interview tribal fishermen on the docks about coverage of local tribal issues.

It's important that you interview people in their environment whenever possible as familiar surroundings put people at ease when they are talking about tough subjects.

By interviewing someone with a different perspective from yourself, you gain insights into that individual's personal experience and viewpoints you might not have considered.

It's important to remember that this exercise will reflect the individual experiences of one person identified with a group. Nobody should be asked to speak for an entire gender or culture—that's the antithesis of diversity.

Some good sources include the phone book, Facebook groups, local organizations and places of worship, campus clubs.

Some questions you might ask:

1. Do you see yourself represented in campus/local/national news media?
2. Do you see any misinterpretations of the way your culture/nation/religion/gender/sexual orientation is represented in news coverage?
3. What do you wish people understood?
4. How could the news media do a better job of reflecting your culture/community, etc?
5. What do you feel are the impacts of the coverage on you personally? On the community at large?

Grading criteria for impact narrative

1. Theme clearly identified: /35

Sources tie together to show various viewpoints or facets of an issue.

2. Demonstrates critical thinking and analysis: /25

Goes beyond the superficial and the obvious to the next layer. Shows sources' personal impacts or beliefs.

3. Logically organized: /15

Essay flows from one topic or speaker to the next. Like subject matter grouped together for a smooth read. Proper grammar, spelling, sentence structure observed

Final Paper **120 points**

Each paper is written by a four-person team. Each person will receive a grade on his or her individual section (worth 100 points) and a grade on the flow of the overall paper (20 points). To make the paper cohesive, it is imperative that you work together. The benefit of working together is the discussion that comes from the group dynamic. That can be a strong learning experience and I urge you all to open yourselves to that.

As a team, first choose a single news event or issue to analyze from a diversity perspective. Find a minimum of nine different news stories from nine different sources. Those may include a combination of mainstream newspapers, alternative newspapers, magazines, broadcast radio or television transcripts, or recognized Web news sites such as Slate.com. You may use international sources so long as the publication is internationally recognized—Al-Jazeera, The Guardian (U.K.), Jyllands-Posten (Denmark), etc. (If you have questions about sources, particularly Web sites, please ask me. No using Uncle Joe's Blog.)

A minimum of four of your stories must come from mainstream newspapers, but the other four may be a combination of any of the other sources listed. You may be able to find nine unique stories in mainstream newspapers—that would be acceptable for sourcing. A word of caution on finding distinct stories: Many publications use wire services, so it's possible that the exact same story might appear in more than one newspaper. You must have nine unique sources. You may not use editorials, columns or news analysis—nothing from the editorial page. (If you have questions, ask me.)

Your analysis will look at the who, what and how in dissecting the coverage. Each person will write 4-5 typed, double-spaced pages for his or her individual section.

1. WHO: One person will examine differences in sourcing. What do you notice about the sourcing-- gender, age, race/ethnicity, religion, socio-economic class? Are the sources officials, regular people about town or a mix of both? How are people described- physically, by age, appearance, occupation, race? Who gets the most space? If there are photographs accompanying the story, what do they show? How do they differ from one paper to another? Do the stories feel balanced or

- biased? Why? What are the differences among the different types of media; for example, how did CNN cover a story versus KIRO or The Seattle Times?
2. **WHAT:** One person will compare what is covered, what is left out. How are people described- physically, by age, appearance, occupation, race? Analyze what is included in one article but left out of others. (You do not need to speculate as to why as you cannot truly know.) If there are photographs accompanying the story, what do they show? How do they differ from one paper to another? What issue gets the most space in each article? Does the story feel balanced or biased? Why? What are the differences among the different types of media; for example, how did CNN cover a story versus KIRO or The Seattle Times?
 3. **HOW:** One person will dissect the language and labels used. How does the reporter use adjectives such as “fundamentalist” or “radical?” Are there differences among the articles in labels for groups. If there are photographs accompanying the story, what do they show? How do they differ from one paper to another? Does the story feel balanced or biased? Why? What are the differences among the different types of media; for example, how did CNN cover a story versus KIRO or The Seattle Times?
 4. **Introduction and conclusion:** intro is one page, typed, double-spaced and conclusion is two to three pages. The person who writes this section must work with the other three to ensure accuracy and cohesion.

*** Each paper must include a bibliography in APA or MLA style.**

You may pick your own topic, but you must write a half-page proposal and e-mail it to me for approval. I will be able to give you guidance if your topic is too broad. Narrow topics are easier to cover and make for stronger papers. You are urged to choose a topic as early in the quarter as possible.

Grading criteria for final paper

(100 points for individual)

1. Specific examples, including quotes from articles/transcripts. (30 points)
2. Variety of sources that show real differences in coverage. (30 points)
3. Critical-thinking skills. (30 points)
4. Proper spelling and grammar. (10 points)

(20 points for group)

1. Flows together from section to section. (5 points)
2. Introduction and conclusion. (10 points)
3. Bibliography (5 points)

Group presentation: 50 points. Each group will give a 10-minute in-class presentation on its findings and conclusions.