

*NEWS FROM THE BOTTOM UP*

In this seminar, we'll extend our understanding of the news media in two ways. First, we'll look at how the news usually covers the world, and at why it's covered that way.

Next, as our research and our writing project, we'll produce a newspaper of our own, covering stories and issues on our campus and in the surrounding communities – local, national, international. But the news we produce will not be business as usual – in fact, quite the opposite. The usual news tends to come from an elite point of view – that is, from the top down. But our news will come from the bottom up – from people who are not in charge, but who have to live with the decisions of those who are – and who have to decide whether to endorse those decisions, endure them, or resist them.

The usual news is also fragmented – cut off from other, similar stories, from history, and from theories that might explain events. The library research part of our papers will help us connect our stories to these other things, and see the picture whole, not just in bits and pieces. In the course of this research students will divide up into four teams of investigative reporters, with each team working on a separate story. We'll review earlier issues of "News from the Bottom Up" to find examples of the kind of stories we might do.

The stories that result from our work will be published, in newsletter format, and distributed throughout the campus. I'm hoping this unit will enable us, not just to **learn about** the news, but to **make** news – to make news not just by making a newspaper, but making a newspaper that makes a difference – in the issues people see on this campus and in the ways people view those issues.

***Writing Project: NEWS FROM THE BOTTOM UP***

This writing project will consist of two related researches. First, each student will conduct a library research on a particular social issue, and write a paper (approximately 8 pages) based on that research. The social issue will be one chosen by your team, and designed to inform you generally and theoretically about the issue you'll later investigate locally. In selecting your sources, be sure to select at least some that view your issue "from the bottom up" – i.e., are sympathetic to the subordinate groups they deal with.

The second research will be a field research, conducted in teams, based on personal interviews, observations, etc. of a local (i.e., campus or North Country community) issue. Your thinking about and investigation of this local issue should be informed by your earlier library research. (For example, if your local issue is, "Is there racism at SLU?" your library research might focus on racism in the U.S., generally, and on college campuses in particular.) This research should be a deliberate alternative to mainstream news – i.e., it should focus not on the viewpoints of elites, but of non-elites.

Each research team will combine the findings of their library and field researches to produce an alternative news story (approximately 5 pages), a view from the bottom up, which connects the local story to other stories and, if possible, to sophisticated explanations of your social problem.

**ORAL PRESENTATIONS:**

There will be two oral presentations. In the first, you'll deliver your research paper to the class, in the same way you might present a paper at an academic conference. Presentations should run about 10 minutes.

In the second, your news-story team will assume responsibility for an hour-long class - - blending results of your library and field researches, lecturing and leading discussion.

**OTHER REQUIREMENTS:** Assigned readings should be outlined. These outlines will be handed in and will be graded. Roll will be called at the beginning of class. Students not present for roll will be marked absent, **so be on time for class.** More than three absences, **for any reason,** will result in a reduction of a grade by .25 of a grade point per absence. On the other hand, perfect attendance will increase a grade by .25, and having only one miss will increase a grade by .15 of a grade point.

**COMPONENTS OF FINAL GRADE:**

Research Paper (first and final drafts):	30%
News Story (first and final drafts):	30%
All other writing and research assignments	20%
Oral presentations	20%

**Project Deadlines**

- 1/28 **Due:** 3-4 sources in topic area and summary of argument of each  
2/6 **Due:** Outline of research paper; include sources & citations  
2/13 **Due:** Research paper  
2/21 **Due:** Notes from field research  
2/25-28 *Oral presentations of research papers*  
3/4 **Due:** Individual contributions to News Story  
3/11 **Due:** First draft of news story  
4/1 **Due:** Second draft of news story  
4/24-29 *Oral presentations*

**1. Writing a Research Paper**

- 1/19 A. Outline semester; intro projects  
1/20 B. Intro to Mass Media; teams caucus – read Exoo, Ch. 1  
1/22 C. Writing issues; documentation, evidence, etc; divide into teams to finalize research questions  
1/26 **Project Deadline; due:** 3-4 sources in topic area and summary of argument of each; meet as research teams to share sources, discuss research questions; discuss outlining the paper

**2. Structure of the News Business**

- 1/27 A. When the News Fails (Exoo, Ch. 3) Video (Buying the War)  
1/29 B. Why? Exoo, Ch. 6, pp.  
2/2 C. Why II? Exoo, Ch. 6, pp. (Video: News Wars)  
2/3 D. History, Bennett, Ch. 6 Video-(History of PR)  
2/5 E. Project deadline: Outline of Research Paper – include sources (Video: Murrow & McCarthy)

### **3. What's News?**

- 2/9 Four Biases, Bennett, Ch. 1, 2
- 2/10 Bennett, redux
- 2/12 Due: Research paper, discuss oral presentations; discuss field research
- 2/16 – 2/23 Conduct Field Research; meet as teams
- 2/24 Election Coverage – TBA
- 2/26 – 3/3 Oral presentations of research papers
- 3/5 Due: Individual contribution to News Story – Team Conference – Putting It All Together
- 3/10 Team work on News Story
- 3/12 Due – first draft of news story
- 3/23 Team conferences on 1<sup>st</sup> draft
- 3/24 Legal & Regulatory Politics – Read Croteau & Hoynes – Video – National Security & the Press)
- 3/26 Legal & Regulatory – Video: Up in Smoke MMOV
- 3/30 Team work on final draft of story
- 3/31 Team work
- 4/2 Due: Final draft of News Story
- 4/6 Coverage of: Women, Minorities etc.
- 4/7 Global Media (read Pintak, Ch. \_\_\_\_\_, Video: News War – Al Jazeera
- 4/9 Public Broadcasting – McChesney
- 4/13 Media Right and Left – Brock, Ch. \_\_\_\_\_
- 4/14 New Media - TBA
- 4/16 Media Effects - Iyengar
- 4/20 Rehearse oral presentations
- 4/21, 23,  
27, 29 Oral presentations
- 4/30 Conclusion