



MAS 203

News and Current Affairs

S1 Day 2014

Dept of Media, Music & Cultural Studies

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General Information

Unit convenor and teaching staff

Unit Convenor

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Credit points

3

Prerequisites

12cp

Corequisites

Co-badged status

Unit description

This unit provides a critical analysis of news and current affairs across different media forms. Topics covered include: news values; narrative; the Fourth Estate; the doctrine of objectivity; the public sphere; tabloid media; and moral panics. An additional emphasis is on the roles of different media technologies in the global news environment and their possible uses in the future shaping of news and current affairs.

Important Academic Dates

Information about important academic dates including deadlines for withdrawing from units are available at <https://www.mq.edu.au/study/calendar-of-dates>

Learning Outcomes

On successful completion of this unit, you will be able to:

Describe key theories of news and current affairs media

Demonstrate an understanding of the history and context of news and current affairs media

Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the relationship between news and current affairs and politics and culture

Evaluate news media agendas

Synthesize theories to understand and evaluate the relationship between news and current affairs and society

Demonstrate critical and creative thinking attributes

Assessment Tasks

| Name | Weighting | Due |
|---|-----------|---------------------|
| <u>Critical News Analysis</u> | 20% | Ongoing from Week 3 |
| <u>Blog Part 1</u> | 10% | April 1, 2014 |
| <u>Blog Part 2</u> | 20% | June 16, 2014 |
| <u>Tutorial Participation</u> | 10% | Ongoing from week 2 |
| <u>Research Essay</u> | 40% | June 4, 2014 |

Critical News Analysis

Due: **Ongoing from Week 3**

Weighting: **20%**

You will be assigned to a discussion group in your tutorial in week 2. Each group will be responsible for leading a discussion about key ideas in the lecture and readings in the week prior. You should choose one or two news events from the past week to illustrate or challenge the theories and concepts.

The first goal of your brief presentation is to communicate your comprehension of the week's main concepts and ideas and show that you can apply these ideas to contemporary news media. The second is to generate a lively intellectual discussion, one that furthers our understanding of ideas we are studying and the world in which we live. Ideas regarding how to go about doing this will be discussed in the tutorials in week two.

Submission:

At least 12 hours before the class, discussion leaders are asked to post any news stories that they are going to discuss to the tutorial's blog on iLearn (Look for link: Discussion Leaders Post your Links here" to access blog) so other students can familiarize themselves with the case studies.

After the presentation, please post any presentation materials (eg. Pdf of prezis or powerpoint slides, presentation plan, notes, etc.) to the same blog.

Assessment Criteria:

To do well on this assignment you will need to:

- identify, discuss and demonstrate a deep understanding of the central argument(s) of the readings and lecture.
- identify, discuss and demonstrate that you have a broad understanding of contemporary affairs and the news media

- show that you can apply abstract concepts and ideas to concrete examples drawn from current news media
- identify questions and problems that require critical analysis
- work collaboratively
- demonstrate that you can communicate ideas orally and engage in constructive debate and discourse

N.B. You may write an individual blog post about this work but you may not submit it for the assessment.

On successful completion you will be able to:

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- Evaluate news media agendas
- Demonstrate critical and creative thinking attributes
- Synthesize theories to understand and evaluate the relationship between news and current affairs and society

Blog Part 1

Due: **April 1, 2014**

Weighting: **10%**

Students are expected to keep a weekly news analysis blog on the iLearn site. Your entry is your preparation for the tutorial and should be posted before you attend class.

After class you should post a brief reflection on the discussion (a few concise sentences will do). Ideally this should be done within 24 hours of class.

In your post you should identify one or two main concepts from the lecture and readings that interests you and choose a news event from the previous week to illustrate and/or challenge these theories. Your post is expected to be informal and brief. This is a space for scholarly exploration.

Length and format:

Concise is better than verbose. Posts may be anywhere between 300 and 500 words or you may submit an audio or video post of no more than 3 minutes. (You must discuss this option with your tutor.)

These are informal posts but remember that your audience is your tutor.

You should attribute ideas and also be sure to link to any media you are discussing.

If you do any additional research, be sure to reference it.

Submission

Your tutor will assess one entry from either week three or four. (Please note: By the end of the semester you will be expected to have completed at least six entries and at least two of these should be from the first half of the unit.) You will choose the entry and submit the text via the turnitin link.

n.b. You may not submit an entry for assessment from the week that you present and lead the discussion (but this can count towards meeting your minimum requirements.)

Assessment will be based upon:

How well the post demonstrates that you can identify and summarise key concepts in the readings

Your application of these ideas to current media events

Your ability to articulate questions and identify good case studies

Your ability to reflect on the discussion and identify problems that require more thought and research

You should use your feedback on this assessment to guide your work on Blog Assessment part 2.

On successful completion you will be able to:

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Blog Part 2

Due: **June 16, 2014**

Weighting: **20%**

Students are expected to keep a weekly news analysis blog on the iLearn site. Your entry is your preparation for the tutorial and should be posted before you attend class. After class you should post a brief reflection on the discussion (a few concise sentences will do). Ideally this should be done within 24 hours of class. All students are expected to have completed a minimum of six posts (you may do more) and at least two of the posts should be from weeks three through six.

In your post you should identify one or two main concepts from the lecture and readings that interests you and choose a news event from the previous week to illustrate and/or challenge these theories. Your post is expected to be informal and brief.

Length and format:

Concise is better than verbose. Posts may be anywhere between 300 and 500 words or you may submit an audio or video post of no more than 3 minutes. (You must discuss this option with your tutor.)

These are informal posts but remember that your audience is your tutor.

You should attribute ideas and also be sure to link to any media you are discussing.

If you do any additional research, be sure to reference it.

Submission

Your tutor will assess two entries from week's five through 13. You will choose the two entries and show that you have met the weekly requirements via turnitin. You should also provide a link to your blog.

n.b. You may not submit an entry for assessment from the week that you present and lead the discussion (but it may be one of your six or more entries.)

Assessment will be based upon:

How well the posts demonstrates that you can identify and summarise key concepts in the readings

Your application ideas to current media events

Your ability to articulate questions and identify good case studies

Your ability to reflect on the discussion and identify problems that require more thought and research

Your engagement with the course material and reflection on the tutorial discussions.

On successful completion you will be able to:

- Describe key theories of news and current affairs media

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Tutorial Participation

Due: **Ongoing from week 2**

Weighting: **10%**

How to prepare for tutorials

Read and review the required readings for the previous week

Review your lecture notes

Read the news stories that the presenters have posted to your class blog

Prepare some questions and comments

During the tutorials

You are expected to listen to the presenters and participate in the discussions and any exercises in a meaningful way. Tutorials are a place to experiment with, question and test ideas and to benefit from listening to and responding to the ideas and questions of others. Robust debate is encouraged but please be polite and respectful.

Please note: As tutorial attendance is compulsory, no grades will be given for attendance.

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Research Essay

Due: **June 4, 2014**

Weighting: **40%**

You will write 1800-2000 word individual research project on a question related to the key ideas and concepts that we are studying in this unit. You will be expected to devise your own research question however, suggested topics and approaches will be discussed in the lecture and tutorials.

Essays should be submitted via Turnitin

The essay should demonstrate:

- A strong understanding of key ideas in journalism and media research.
- The ability to critically assess and contextualise the work in this field.
- The ability to develop a unique and original argument.
- Clarity and precision of expression.
- Originality of thinking and approach.
- The ability to create a concise and sophisticated argument within the word limit.

On successful completion you will be able to:

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Delivery and Resources

REQUIRED READING

The iLearn site will have the most up to date information about the week's readings

PLEASE CHECK THE ILEARN SITE WEEKLY

A MAS203 unit reader will be available from the Co-op Bookshop.

Additional readings may be posted to the iLearn site. Check the site each week.

You are expected to be reading at least one national or international news site on a daily basis.

SUPPLEMENTARY READING

Meikle, Graham (2008) *Interpreting News*, Palgrave, London

Allan, Stuart (2004) *News Culture* (second edition), Open University Press, Maidenhead (a comprehensive overview of relevant approaches).

Graham Meikle and Guy Redden (eds) (2011) *News Online: Transformations and Continuities*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Tumber, Howard (ed.) (1999) *News: a Reader*, OUP, London (an excellent anthology of important writing about news). Turner, Graeme (2005)

Ending The Affair: the Decline of Television Current Affairs in Australia, UNSW Press, Sydney (the most up-to- date and authoritative look at questions of news and entertainment and the debates surrounding 'tabloid' media in the Australian context).

Technology

Course uses iLecture and Echo360.

Students are advised to check iLearn before attending both their lecture and tutorial.

Unit Schedule

Unit Schedule: Overview

Week 1 Introduction

Week 2 Telling True Stories: How and why do we represent reality?

Week 3 News Values and News Cultures: What is news and who decides?

Week 4 The Fourth Estate and a Free Press: Does Democracy need a free press?

Week 5 Failings of the Fourth Estate: Is news propaganda?

Week 6 Failings of the Fourth Estate: Are tabloids evil?

STUDY BREAK

Week 7 Reviving the Fourth Estate: Is transparency a news value?

Week 8 Reviving the Fourth Estate and advocacy: Is objectivity biased?

Week 9 Reviving the Fourth Estate: Participation and the Public Sphere

Week 10 Reviving the Fourth Estate: Comedy, satire and infotainment

Week 11 Reviving the Fourth Estate: Curating, aggregating and distribution

Week 12 Conclusion: Does news have a future?

Policies and Procedures

Macquarie University policies and procedures are accessible from [Policy Central](#). Students should be aware of the following policies in particular with regard to Learning and Teaching:

Academic Honesty Policy http://mq.edu.au/policy/docs/academic_honesty/policy.html

Assessment Policy <http://mq.edu.au/policy/docs/assessment/policy.html>

Grading Policy <http://mq.edu.au/policy/docs/grading/policy.html>

Grade Appeal Policy <http://mq.edu.au/policy/docs/gradeappeal/policy.html>

Grievance Management Policy http://mq.edu.au/policy/docs/grievance_management/policy.html

Disruption to Studies Policy http://www.mq.edu.au/policy/docs/disruption_studies/policy.html *The Disruption to Studies Policy is effective from March 3 2014 and replaces the Special Consideration Policy.*

In addition, a number of other policies can be found in the [Learning and Teaching Category](#) of Policy Central.

Student Code of Conduct

Macquarie University students have a responsibility to be familiar with the Student Code of Conduct: https://students.mq.edu.au/support/student_conduct/

Student Support

Macquarie University provides a range of support services for students. For details, visit <http://students.mq.edu.au/support/>

Learning Skills

Learning Skills (mq.edu.au/learningskills) provides academic writing resources and study strategies to improve your marks and take control of your study.

- [Workshops](#)
- [StudyWise](#)
- [Academic Integrity Module for Students](#)
- [Ask a Learning Adviser](#)

Student Services and Support

Students with a disability are encouraged to contact the [Disability Service](#) who can provide appropriate help with any issues that arise during their studies.

Student Enquiries

For all student enquiries, visit Student Connect at ask.mq.edu.au

IT Help

For help with University computer systems and technology, visit <http://informatics.mq.edu.au/help/>.

When using the University's IT, you must adhere to the [Acceptable Use Policy](#). The policy applies to all who connect to the MQ network including students.

Graduate Capabilities

Capable of Professional and Personal Judgement and Initiative

We want our graduates to have emotional intelligence and sound interpersonal skills and to demonstrate discernment and common sense in their professional and personal judgement. They will exercise initiative as needed. They will be capable of risk assessment, and be able to handle ambiguity and complexity, enabling them to be adaptable in diverse and changing environments.

This graduate capability is supported by:

Learning outcomes

- Evaluate news media agendas
- Demonstrate critical and creative thinking attributes

Assessment tasks

- Critical News Analysis
- Blog Part 1
- Blog Part 2
- Tutorial Participation
- Research Essay

Commitment to Continuous Learning

Our graduates will have enquiring minds and a literate curiosity which will lead them to pursue knowledge for its own sake. They will continue to pursue learning in their careers and as they participate in the world. They will be capable of reflecting on their experiences and relationships with others and the environment, learning from them, and growing - personally, professionally and socially.

This graduate capability is supported by:

Learning outcomes

- Describe key theories of news and current affairs media

- Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the relationship between news and current affairs and politics and culture
- Evaluate news media agendas
- Synthesize theories to understand and evaluate the relationship between news and current affairs and society
- Demonstrate critical and creative thinking attributes

Assessment tasks

- Critical News Analysis
- Blog Part 1
- Blog Part 2
- Tutorial Participation
- Research Essay

Discipline Specific Knowledge and Skills

Our graduates will take with them the intellectual development, depth and breadth of knowledge, scholarly understanding, and specific subject content in their chosen fields to make them competent and confident in their subject or profession. They will be able to demonstrate, where relevant, professional technical competence and meet professional standards. They will be able to articulate the structure of knowledge of their discipline, be able to adapt discipline-specific knowledge to novel situations, and be able to contribute from their discipline to inter-disciplinary solutions to problems.

This graduate capability is supported by:

Learning outcomes

- Describe key theories of news and current affairs media
- Demonstrate an understanding of the history and context of news and current affairs media
- Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the relationship between news and current affairs and politics and culture
- Evaluate news media agendas
- Synthesize theories to understand and evaluate the relationship between news and current affairs and society

Assessment tasks

- Critical News Analysis
- Blog Part 1
- Blog Part 2

- Tutorial Participation
- Research Essay

Critical, Analytical and Integrative Thinking

We want our graduates to be capable of reasoning, questioning and analysing, and to integrate and synthesise learning and knowledge from a range of sources and environments; to be able to critique constraints, assumptions and limitations; to be able to think independently and systemically in relation to scholarly activity, in the workplace, and in the world. We want them to have a level of scientific and information technology literacy.

This graduate capability is supported by:

Learning outcomes

- Describe key theories of news and current affairs media
- Demonstrate an understanding of the history and context of news and current affairs media
- Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the relationship between news and current affairs and politics and culture
- Evaluate news media agendas
- Synthesize theories to understand and evaluate the relationship between news and current affairs and society
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Assessment tasks

- Critical News Analysis
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- Blog Part 2
- Tutorial Participation
- Research Essay

Problem Solving and Research Capability

Our graduates should be capable of researching; of analysing, and interpreting and assessing data and information in various forms; of drawing connections across fields of knowledge; and they should be able to relate their knowledge to complex situations at work or in the world, in order to diagnose and solve problems. We want them to have the confidence to take the initiative in doing so, within an awareness of their own limitations.

This graduate capability is supported by:

Learning outcomes

- Describe key theories of news and current affairs media

- Demonstrate an understanding of the history and context of news and current affairs media
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- Synthesize theories to understand and evaluate the relationship between news and current affairs and society
- Demonstrate critical and creative thinking attributes

Assessment tasks

- Critical News Analysis
- Blog Part 1
- Blog Part 2
- Research Essay

Creative and Innovative

Our graduates will also be capable of creative thinking and of creating knowledge. They will be imaginative and open to experience and capable of innovation at work and in the community. We want them to be engaged in applying their critical, creative thinking.

This graduate capability is supported by:

Learning outcomes

- Demonstrate an understanding of the history and context of news and current affairs media
- Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the relationship between news and current affairs and politics and culture
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- Synthesize theories to understand and evaluate the relationship between news and current affairs and society
- Demonstrate critical and creative thinking attributes

Assessment tasks

- Critical News Analysis
- Blog Part 1
- Blog Part 2
- Tutorial Participation
- Research Essay

Effective Communication

We want to develop in our students the ability to communicate and convey their views in forms effective with different audiences. We want our graduates to take with them the capability to read, listen, question, gather and evaluate information resources in a variety of formats, assess, write clearly, speak effectively, and to use visual communication and communication technologies as appropriate.

This graduate capability is supported by:

Learning outcomes

- Demonstrate an understanding of the history and context of news and current affairs media
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- Synthesize theories to understand and evaluate the relationship between news and current affairs and society
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Assessment tasks

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- Blog Part 1
- Blog Part 2
- Tutorial Participation
- Research Essay

Engaged and Ethical Local and Global citizens

As local citizens our graduates will be aware of indigenous perspectives and of the nation's historical context. They will be engaged with the challenges of contemporary society and with knowledge and ideas. We want our graduates to have respect for diversity, to be open-minded, sensitive to others and inclusive, and to be open to other cultures and perspectives: they should have a level of cultural literacy. Our graduates should be aware of disadvantage and social justice, and be willing to participate to help create a wiser and better society.

This graduate capability is supported by:

Learning outcome

- Demonstrate critical and creative thinking attributes

Assessment tasks

- Critical News Analysis

- Blog Part 1
- Blog Part 2
- Research Essay

Socially and Environmentally Active and Responsible

We want our graduates to be aware of and have respect for self and others; to be able to work with others as a leader and a team player; to have a sense of connectedness with others and country; and to have a sense of mutual obligation. Our graduates should be informed and active participants in moving society towards sustainability.

This graduate capability is supported by:

Learning outcome

- Demonstrate critical and creative thinking attributes

Assessment tasks

- Critical News Analysis
- Blog Part 2
- Research Essay