



MAS 203

News and Current Affairs

S1 Day 2015

Dept of Media, Music & Cultural Studies

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General Information

Unit convenor and teaching staff

Unit Convenor

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Y3A, Hub 147, Room 156

TBA on ilearn page

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:

Understand key theories of news and current affairs media

Evaluate the relationship between news and current affairs and politics and culture

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

Demonstrate critical evaluation of news and current affairs in global media

Assessment Tasks

Name	Weighting	Due
<u>Lead the Class Exercise</u>	20%	Ongoing from Week 3
<u>Writing a news story</u>	20%	Friday, 27th March 2015
<u>Research Essay</u>	40%	Monday, 1st June at 5pm
<u>Attendance and Participation</u>	20%	Ongoing

Lead the Class Exercise

Due: **Ongoing from Week 3**

Weighting: **20%**

In Week 2 (the very first tutorial) each student will choose a week to 'lead the class' in discussion. There will generally be 2 students presenting each week (Some weeks may have 3 students depending on the total number of students in a tutorial). Students are to work together as a group, whereby they will choose a news event from that week to act as a catalyst for a discussion of the theories and ideas contained in the readings for the week. The examples used can come from either electronic and/or print media but lengthy audio-visual clips (more than 3-4 minutes) may please be avoided.

This task expects students to stimulate and manage class discussion. 'Lead the class' is not a summary of readings, nor is it a repetition of the lecture. It is about leading a discussion. The best way to approach the task is simply to be familiar with the readings, and have a few questions ready for your peers to lead to a critical analysis in the context of a contemporary news event. The task is akin to running a meeting, in which the group has a clear agenda and makes sure everyone takes part. The presentation irrespective of the number of members in the group, is to run no longer than 45 minutes and no less than 40 minutes.

The criteria against which the exercise will be judged are:

- Evidence of understanding and evaluation of theories relating to news and current affairs,
- Synthesising the theories to underline the relationship between news and current affairs and politics, as also society.
- Demonstration of wider reading,
- Clear delivery and
- Engagement with the audience

(The rubric will be posted on ilearn).

On successful completion you will be able to:

- Understand key theories of news and current affairs media
- Evaluate the relationship between news and current affairs and politics and culture

Writing a news story

Due: **Friday, 27th March 2015**

Weighting: **20%**

In about 250-300 words students are required to write a news story or news feature. This requires an understanding of 'news' (Week 2), choosing an event not reported till the date of submission elsewhere (local newspapers and websites included) based on news values (Week 3), identifying appropriate sources and collecting information from them and presenting it in an appropriate style, i.e., inverted pyramid or narrative (Week 4). A pithy headline will be regarded highly. This is not an essay, but a news report. Students must be familiar with the news format, preferably in newspapers and online. TV, radio, Twitter and blog news formats are not acceptable.

A log is to be appended to the report. The log is like a reporter's diary complete with dates of events, interviews, names of sources and contact details (phone numbers or email IDs). There is no word-limit for the log and no separate marks for it. Unfortunately, marks cannot be claimed for an excellent log and an inadequate news report. The marker will consult the log to evaluate the news gathering process and hence, it is important.

The aim of this **early assessment** is to help students familiarise themselves with processes and procedures related to the construction of news in order to enable a better evaluation of news and current affairs.

Hard copies to be dropped into MAS box in Student services, W6A and soft copy to be uploaded to Turnitin. Marked copies will be distributed in class, three weeks from submission.

The criteria against which the report will be graded are:

- newness of the event,
- news value of the event,
- range of appropriate sources,
- structure and style,
- comprehensiveness,
- as also grammar and presentation.

(Please also check rubric in ilearn).

On successful completion you will be able to:

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

- Demonstrate critical evaluation of news and current affairs in global media

Research Essay

Due: **Monday, 1st June at 5pm**

Weighting: **40%**

Select any ONE of the following questions:

1. Identify an important national or international story which is significant enough to be covered by a range of media outlets. Select four different versions of the same story and explain choices of content and why they differ in the way that they do. This will require you to pay attention to what is left *out*, just as much as what is left *in*. *The analysis is to be justified based on evidence from the course readings, which will take in the concepts of at least three weeks of the course, as well as any necessary supplementary resources.*
2. What role does the digital have to play in constructing news in the contemporary world? Is it changing the format and function of news, if so, how so? Provide appropriate examples to justify your research. *The analysis is to be justified based on evidence from the course readings, which will take in the concepts of at least three weeks of the course, as well as any necessary supplementary resources.*
3. Identify three pseudo-events and evaluate their function in the news media. Assess whether they have any news value and what they are. If you do not think they have a news value, explain why you think so. *The analysis is to be justified based on evidence from the course readings, which will take in the concepts of at least three weeks of the course, as well as any necessary supplementary resources.*
4. Should we lament the increasing tabloidization of news and current affairs media? Identify three examples of tabloid news that might help to justify your answer. *The analysis is to be justified based on evidence from the course readings, which will take in the concepts of at least three weeks of the course, as well as any necessary supplementary resources.*

PLEASE NOTE – all of the research examples must have occurred during this SEMESTER (not earlier than January 2015). Older events can be referred to in the essay to substantiate an argument, but the essay CANNOT rest on examples of news reportage earlier than January 2015. Some of the things you might want to think about: where does the story occur in terms of the context of the program; the language the news presenters or reporters use, or the manner in which they address their perceived audience; or even the camera angles used in an interview. Please do NOT analyse the stories in a piecemeal way. The point of a research essay is to compare and contrast.

Hard copies to be dropped into MAS box in Student services, W6A and soft copy to be uploaded to Turnitin. Marked copies will be available for collection from Student Services after declaration of results.

The criteria for grading the assessment are (detailed in the rubric on ilearn):

- Evidence of understanding and evaluation of theories relating to news and current affairs,

- synthesising the theories to underline the relationship between news and current affairs and politics, as also society,
- demonstration of wider academic reading,
- standard in-text referencing,
- a well-constructed reference list,
- good grammar and spelling and
- a clear writing style.

On successful completion you will be able to:

- Understand key theories of news and current affairs media
- Evaluate the relationship between news and current affairs and politics and culture
- Synthesize theories to understand and evaluate the relationship between news and current affairs and society
- Demonstrate critical evaluation of news and current affairs in global media

Attendance and Participation

Due: **Ongoing**

Weighting: **20%**

Tutorial attendance is compulsory and it is the student's responsibility to maintain 80 per cent attendance. Absences require the submission of a disruption to studies request online. Unfortunately, marks are not for mere attendance. The grading criteria are: active participation and meaningful discussions based on more than a passing acquaintance with media material. Discussions are to reflect an understanding and a critical evaluation of media material in the context of the week's readings. While willing participation in discussions will be regarded highly, grading will take into account the quality of contribution to the discussions rather than the number of interventions.

On successful completion you will be able to:

- Understand key theories of news and current affairs media
- Evaluate the relationship between news and current affairs and politics and culture

Delivery and Resources

LECTURES

The lectures for this unit are pre-recorded and will be uploaded not later than Tuesday every working week. There are hence, no face-to-face lectures. Students are expected to listen to the lectures recorded on Echo 360 and accessible on the ilearn page for the unit and come prepared for the tutorials held on Wednesdays and Thursdays.

REQUIRED READING

The unit readings are available online through the library website.

***HIGHLY* RECOMMENDED READING**

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

OTHER RECOMMENDED READING

If you want to develop a superior understanding of the concerns and themes of this unit, here are four books you should read this semester (in alphabetical order by author's surname): 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).

The above books are held in the Reserve section of the library.

Course uses pre-recorded lectures using Echo360. There is no physical lecture. Lectures will be uploaded on Monday-Tuesday and students are expected to have listened to them before attending the tutorials.

Students are advised to make frequent use of iLearn in order to survey course content in greater detail.

Unit Schedule

All lectures are pre-recorded. They will be accessible in ilearn every working week on Tuesdays.

Unit Schedule: Overview		
Week 1	25th February No tutorials this week	Introduction
Week 2	4th March	Defining News
Week 3	11th March	News Values: Principles of Selection 'Lead the class' exercise begins this week
Week 4	18th March	True Stories: News and Narrative
Week 5	25th March	The Fourth Estate
Week 6	1st April	Sources of News 'News report' due for submission on 3rd April 2015.

		RECESS
Week 7	22nd April	News, Entertainment and Tabloid Media
Week 8	29th April	Inclusion and Exclusion: Moral Panics
Week 9	6th May	Global News Part 1
Week 10	13th May	Global News Part 2
Week 11	21st May	News and the 'Net
Week 12	27th May	The Future of News
Week 13	No lecture and tutorials this week	Research essay due on 1st June 2015

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/

Results

Results shown in *iLearn*, or released directly by your Unit Convenor, are not confirmed as they are subject to final approval by the University. Once approved, final results will be sent to your student email address and will be made available in [eStudent](#). For more information visit ask.mq.edu.au.

Additional information

MMCCS website https://www.mq.edu.au/about_us/faculties_and_departments/faculty_of_arts/department_of_media_music_communication_and_cultural_studies/

MMCCS Session Re-mark Application <http://www.mq.edu.au/pubstatic/public/download/?id=167914>

Information is correct at the time of publication.

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

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

- Evaluate the relationship between news and current affairs and politics and culture
- Synthesize theories to understand and evaluate the relationship between news and current affairs and society
- Demonstrate critical evaluation of news and current affairs in global media

Assessment tasks

- Lead the Class Exercise
- Attendance and Participation

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 outcome

- Demonstrate critical evaluation of news and current affairs in global media

Assessment tasks

- Writing a news story
- Research Essay
- Attendance and Participation

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

- Understand key theories of news and current affairs media
- Evaluate the relationship between news and current affairs and politics and culture
- Synthesize theories to understand and evaluate the relationship between news and

current affairs and society

- Demonstrate critical evaluation of news and current affairs in global media

Assessment tasks

- Lead the Class Exercise
- Writing a news story
- Research Essay
- Attendance and Participation

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

- Understand key theories of news and current affairs media
- Evaluate the relationship between news and current affairs and politics and culture
- Synthesize theories to understand and evaluate the relationship between news and current affairs and society

Assessment tasks

- Lead the Class Exercise
- Writing a news story
- Research Essay
- Attendance and Participation

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

- Understand key theories of news and current affairs media
- Evaluate the relationship between news and current affairs and politics and culture
- Synthesize theories to understand and evaluate the relationship between news and current affairs and society
- Demonstrate critical evaluation of news and current affairs in global media

Assessment tasks

- Lead the Class Exercise
- Research Essay
- Attendance and Participation

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

- Understand key theories of news and current affairs media
- Evaluate the relationship between news and current affairs and politics and culture
- Synthesize theories to understand and evaluate the relationship between news and current affairs and society
- Demonstrate critical evaluation of news and current affairs in global media

Assessment tasks

- Writing a news story
- 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

- Evaluate the relationship between news and current affairs and politics and culture
- Synthesize theories to understand and evaluate the relationship between news and current affairs and society
- Demonstrate critical evaluation of news and current affairs in global media

Assessment tasks

- Lead the Class Exercise
- Writing a news story
- Research Essay
- Attendance and Participation

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 evaluation of news and current affairs in global media

Assessment tasks

- Lead the Class Exercise
- Writing a news story
- Research Essay
- Attendance and Participation

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 evaluation of news and current affairs in global media

Assessment tasks

- Writing a news story
- Research Essay