

# MDIA 207 News Analysis

Trimester 2 2009

22 Points

## TRIMESTER DATES:

Teaching dates: 13 July to 16 October 2009

Study week: 19 to 23 October 2009

Last piece of assessment due: 2 November 2009

## NAMES AND CONTACT DETAILS

Coordinating Instructor: Dr. Douglas A. Van Belle

Office: KP42-210

Office Hours: 1-3PM Thursdays.

Email: [doug.vanbelle@vuw.ac.nz](mailto:doug.vanbelle@vuw.ac.nz)

Tutor: Paul Davies

Office: KP42-212

Office Hours: 9-11 AM Thursdays.

Email: [paul.davies@vuw.ac.nz](mailto:paul.davies@vuw.ac.nz)

## CLASS TIMES AND LOCATIONS

### Lectures

Tuesdays 4PM-6PM HU 323

### Tutorials

Fridays Time-TBD KP 42-101

Tutorial signups can be done via S-Cubed. Instructions on how to enrol can be found on the MDIA 207 Blackboard site. Students unable to choose a tutorial at this time can contact the course tutor during his consultation times.

## **COURSE DELIVERY**

This is primarily a lecture-oriented course with 11-2 hour lectures and 9 supporting tutorials. Please note that there are only 9 tutorials during the term and check the course schedule carefully.

## **COMMUNICATION OF ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

Blackboard will be used as a bulletin board to post announcements and material relevant to the course. Lecture notes WILL NOT be posted on Blackboard.

## **COURSE CONTENT**

This course provides students the opportunity to develop the theoretical background and skills necessary for critically analyzing the various information products generated by the increasingly global news media. Rejecting the naïve assumption that the news is an accurate and objective reflection of reality, the ways in which the news presents a distorted but consistent view of the world are systematically examined, with an emphasis on how and why these distortions exist and persist. This course should be particularly useful for students considering future careers involving journalism, media consultation and news analysis in the governmental, public and corporate sectors.

## **LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

By focusing on the dynamics involved, it is expected that students will develop an understanding of the news media that will allow them to successfully interact with either the input of information into the news process or the knowledgeable utilization of the resulting news product. Specifically students are expected to be able to:

- 1) Identify and analyze systemic influences that intervene between the source event and the delivered news product.
- 2) Identify and analyze procedural influences that intervene between the source event and the delivered news product.
- 3) Identify and analyze economic and business influences that intervene between the source event and the delivered news product.
- 4) Identify and analyze political and social influences that intervene between the source event and the delivered news product.
- 5) Demonstrate a comprehension and ability to apply theories and findings from the text and ancillary readings.

## **EXPECTED WORKLOAD**

The average student is expected to commit roughly 220 hours to this course. This works out to roughly 18 hours per week to this paper, plus 4-5 hours for completing the take home test at the end of term. Weekly

readings and tutorial assignments have been designed to take 8 hours per week, leaving 8 hours per week to be scheduled for studying, researching and writing.

## READINGS

For the first two weeks of trimester all undergraduate textbooks and student notes will be sold from the Memorial Theatre foyer, while postgraduate textbooks and student notes will be available from the top floor of VicBooks in the Student Union Building, Kelburn Campus. After week two all undergraduate textbooks will be sold from VicBooks and student notes from the Student Notes Distribution Centre on the ground floor of the Student Union Building. You can order textbooks and student notes online at [www.vicbooks.co.nz](http://www.vicbooks.co.nz) or can email an order or enquiry to [enquiries@vicbooks.co.nz](mailto:enquiries@vicbooks.co.nz). Books can be couriered to you or they can be picked up from the shop. You will be contacted when they are available.

### Essential texts:

Jackie Harrison (2006) *News*. Routledge. (MUST BE PURCHASED WEEK 1!)

MDIA 207 ancillary readings: All ancillary readings are required and all are available free of charge to students, on-line through the VUW library.

Students are also required read the Dominion Post, daily, throughout the semester. In addition, students will be expected to read independently as needed for the completion of assignments and this may require the payment of interlibrary loan fees and/or the purchase of additional reading materials.

## ASSESSMENT REQUIREMENTS

This course is internally assessed. Below is an outline of the points of student assessment. These criteria are final for Term 2-2009 and supersede all other descriptions or depictions. All four assessments are required and must be completed to pass this course. Please note the definition of completion for the tutorial assignments in its description.

Mid-Term Test	30%
Take Home Test	30%
Term Paper (3000 Words)	30%
Tutorial Assignments	10%
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Total	100%

**Mid-Term Test, Tuesday August 18, 2009: 4:00 PM-6:00PM— HU323**

The Mid-Term test is focused on the student's ability to meet Objective 5. It focuses heavily upon the content of the textbook and students should tackle those readings as early in the term as they can manage. Students should also carefully consider how the lecture material and text materials relate to one another in order to best prepare for this piece of assessment. The test will be held in the lecture theatre. Alternate testing accommodations will be made as required for special needs students, but official university documentation must be offered to both the tutor and coordinating instructor at the beginning of the term. Make-up tests will only be offered to students with documented emergencies and please do note that the university is very strict about what counts as an emergency. **TRAVEL PLANS FOR THE BREAK ARE NOT AN ACCEPTIBLE JUSTIFICATION FOR RESCHEDULING TESTING.**

**Term Paper, Due Friday 2 October, 2009 1:59 PM**

These essays are to be placed in the essay submission box in the Media Studies office, located on the second floor of KP-42. Papers must include a signed cover sheet. Late papers will be accepted. However, without a documented excuse that meets the university requirements for granting an extension, late papers will suffer significant penalties. Papers must be turned in before the last lecture to count as completing the assignment in order to pass the course. The specific topic of the essay will be announced before the mid-term break. The term paper is intended to evaluate Objectives 1-4.

Students are expected to use this essay guide for the structure of their paper:

[http://www.cqpress.com/docs/college/VanBelle\\_WritingAppendix.pdf](http://www.cqpress.com/docs/college/VanBelle_WritingAppendix.pdf)

Students are also expected to use a standard style guide for formatting references and footnotes. The formatting and referencing instructions in the Media Studies Essay Guide (posted on blackboard) may be used, but students majoring in other disciplines or familiar with other formats may use an alternative. The best place to locate these guidelines is on the websites of an academic journal from your discipline. For example politics students may wish to use:

<http://www.indiana.edu/~iuisq/docs/style.pdf>

**Take Home Assignment, Due Monday 2 November, 2009, 1:59 PM**

The take home test will be handed out at the end of lecture on Tuesday 13 October, 2009 and will be posted on Blackboard shortly thereafter. These tests are to be submitted in the same manner as an essay and should be placed in the essay submission box in the Media Studies office, located on the second floor of KP-42. All tests must be typed and must include a signed cover sheet. **Students are only expected to spend 4-5 hours on this test and the late due date is intended to give students the maximum amount of flexibility in scheduling their work for this course around the demands of their other courses.** Late tests **will not** be accepted under any but the most extreme and documented circumstances. The take home test is designed to evaluate the student's mastery of all five course objectives.

## **Tutorial Assignments**

Tutorial assignments will be handed out and explained during tutorials and will be due at the start of the next tutorial. These single page assignments are intended primarily as exercises to support tutorial activities and enhance student engagement with lecture material. They are marked by the tutor on an acceptable/not-acceptable basis. They will address all five of course objectives. Students must attend at least 6 out of 9 tutorials (unless excused) and complete 4 out of 5 of tutorial assignments to complete this assessment. Students who do not complete this part of the assessment will fail this course regardless of their marks on other assessments.

### **Additional notes on written assignments.**

Always keep a copy of the finished essay or take-home test. It is your responsibility to submit the assignment on time, and in the event of loss, regardless of fault, it is in your best interest to be able to immediately make a new copy available to your tutor.

All text should be typed unless otherwise instructed. The markers prefer double spaced but, alternatively you could leave a blank line between the lines you type. In respect of script size, you probably want to use a 12 point font for the main essay text and a 10 point font for footnote/endnote details. Markers also prefer a Times Roman or similar serif font.

Assignments must be stapled and each page numbered. Do not use plastic covers or binders. A stack of essays in plastic covers exhibits many of the same qualities as a stack of live fish.

## **ASSIGNMENT COVER SHEETS**

Assignment cover sheets and extension forms can be found on Blackboard or outside the Programme office. Remember to always fill in your tutor's name-- Paul Davies

## **PENALTIES AND EXTENSIONS**

Assignments submitted after the deadline without a written extension will be penalised at a rate of 2% (out of a total of 100) per working day. In other words, if you get 50% for an assignment, after one day your grade will drop to 48%, then 46% the following day etc. Late assignments are likely to receive limited feedback. The weekend counts for one day (i.e. an assignment due on Friday that is submitted on Monday will receive a 2% penalty). Please ensure that you are aware of the time that your assignment is due, as well as the date, as this is the cut-off time utilised in calculating lateness penalties.

Extensions will be granted only in exceptional and unforeseen circumstances. Issues of workload do not constitute exceptional and unforeseen circumstances. If you require an extension, you must complete an extension request form (available on your course Blackboard site) prior to the assignment due date. This must be accompanied by relevant documentation (e.g. a doctor's certificate) where appropriate. Extension requests must be submitted to the Course Co-ordinator). Tutors cannot grant extensions.

## MANDATORY COURSE REQUIREMENTS

To gain a pass in this course you must:

- Take midterm test
- Complete Term Paper
- Complete Take Home Test
- Complete 4 tutorial assignments
- Attend 6 tutorials

## STATEMENT ON LEGIBILITY

You are expected to present work that meets appropriate standards. Work submitted during the course (i. e. work that is internally assessed) should be typed or prepared on a computer. Work submitted in an in class test or examination will obviously be handwritten. You are expected to write clearly. Where work is deemed 'illegible', you will be given a photocopy of the work and asked to transcribe it to an acceptable standard (preferably typed) within a specified time frame.

## ACADEMIC INTEGRITY AND PLAGIARISM

Academic integrity means that university staff and students, in their teaching and learning are expected to treat others honestly, fairly and with respect at all times. It is not acceptable to mistreat academic, intellectual or creative work that has been done by other people by representing it as your own original work.

Academic integrity is important because it is the core value on which the University's learning, teaching and research activities are based. Victoria University's reputation for academic integrity adds value to your qualification.

The University defines plagiarism as presenting someone else's work as if it were your own, whether you mean to or not. 'Someone else's work' means anything that is not your own idea. Even if it is presented in your own style, you must acknowledge your sources fully and appropriately. This includes:

- Material from books, journals or any other printed source
- The work of other students or staff
- Information from the internet
- Software programs and other electronic material
- Designs and ideas
- The organisation or structuring of any such material

Find out more about plagiarism, how to avoid it and penalties, on the University's website:

<http://www.victoria.ac.nz/home/study/plagiarism.aspx>

## GENERAL UNIVERSITY POLICIES AND STATUTES

You should familiarise themselves with the University's policies and statutes, particularly the Assessment Statute, the Personal Courses of Study Statute, the Statute on Student Conduct and any statutes relating to the particular qualifications being studied; see the Victoria University Calendar or go to the Academic Policy and Student Policy sections on: <http://www.victoria.ac.nz/home/about/policy>

The AVC (Academic) website also provides information in a number of areas including Academic Grievances, Student and Staff conduct, Meeting the needs of students with impairments, and student support/VUWSA student advocates. This website can be accessed at:

<http://www.victoria.ac.nz/home/about/avcademic/Publications.aspx>

## COURSE PROGRAMME

Week 1	13-7	<p><u>Lecture Topics:</u></p> <p><b>First Hour</b> Introduction. Teaching strategy and related suggestions for learning strategies.</p> <p><b>Second Hour</b> A political economy framework for conceptualizing the news industry, its actions and its products. A brief discussion of relevant journalism topics: The news professional, the working environment, beats, assignments, deadlines, journalistic norms and expectations, the journalist as generalist, education backgrounds of journalists.</p> <p><u>Tutorial Assignment for Week 2:</u> Written definition of what is News. Students should spend several hours examining the variety of available media sources and from that observation and that observation alone, write a clear but brief (less than one page double-spaced) definition of what they believe defines a text as news. This, as with all tutorial assignments must be typewritten (Word Processed) and a copy must be handed in to the tutor at the beginning of the tutorial for which it is assigned.</p> <p><u>Tutorial Activity:</u> Tutorial signups at end of lecture</p> <p><u>Readings For Week 2:</u> Harrison Chapters 1 and 2</p>
Week 2	20-7	<p><u>Lecture Topics:</u></p> <p><b>First Hour</b> Agreement reality, news as a representation, not a reflection of reality, thinking in terms of the construction of news as the construction of a public sphere or mediated reality.</p> <p><b>Second Hour</b> The stained-glass window as a metaphor for the metaphor of the news as a window on the world.</p> <p><u>Tutorial Activity:</u> Introduction of tutor and tutorials. Discussion of expectations and student strategies for learning. Discussion of definitions of news</p> <p><u>Tutorial Assignment for Week 3:</u> Offensive headlines. From at least three different days of coverage in the Dominion Post. Students should gather 3 headlines (at least</p>

**MEDIA STUDIES COURSE OUTLINE 207**

9 total) that will offend some group in society. Students should then identify the group and find an advertisement in the paper that might reasonably be argued to target that group. The headlines themselves and notation of the group and advertiser should be typed for handing in. The stories themselves should be cut from the paper and brought in to the tutorial to facilitate discussion but the stories do not need to be turned in.

Readings For Week 3: Harrison Chapter 4 (Note Chapter read out of order)

Week 3	27-7	<p><u>Lecture Topics:</u></p> <p><b>First Hour</b> The Business of News—The Audience as Product, Costs versus the value of the product</p> <p><b>Second Hour</b> The Business of the News—Advertising, delivery costs, market sizes and niche versus mass audience strategies.</p> <p><u>Tutorial Activity:</u> Discussion of target audiences, advertisers and how that might influence coverage choices.</p> <p><u>Tutorial Assignment for Week 4:</u></p> <p>Written definition of what is Dramatic. Students should watch at least one episode of a serialized soap opera, such as Shortland Street, Coronation Street, Days of Our lives, Desperate Housewives, at least one crime drama, and a feature-length film that is rated for a children’s audience. From these and only these viewings, write a brief (one-page double spaced) definition of what makes something dramatic.</p> <p><u>Readings For Week 4:</u> Harrison Chapter 3</p>
Week 4	3-8	<p><u>Lecture Topics:</u></p> <p><b>First Hour</b> Imperatives of and limitations on the news-Newsworthiness</p> <p><b>Second Hour</b> Imperatives of and limitations on the news-The dramatic story structure</p> <p><u>Tutorial Activity:</u> The William Shatner School of Acting Dynamics, Discuss.</p> <p><u>Tutorial Assignment for Week 5:</u> Will it Play In Peoria? Find and extract an article from the Dominion Post that would be of interest to a pig farmer in Peoria Illinois, USA. Prepare to explain why s/he might choose to read it?</p> <p><u>Readings For Week 5:</u> Harrison Chapter 5.</p> <p>Supplimental Reading: A Strategic Guide to Writing for the Classroom. <a href="http://www.cqpress.com/docs/college/VanBelle_WritingAppendix.pdf">http://www.cqpress.com/docs/college/VanBelle_WritingAppendix.pdf</a></p>
Week 5	10-8	<p><u>Lecture Topics:</u></p> <p><b>First Hour</b> Imperatives and limitations on the news-Gatekeeping and logistics Theory</p> <p><b>Second Hour</b> Imperatives and limitations on the news-Gatekeeping and logistics Example</p> <p><u>Tutorial Activity:</u> Term Paper Assignment handed out and discussed. The use of library database access to research articles discussed.</p> <p><u>Readings For Week 6:</u> None</p>
Week 6	17-8	<p>Test</p> <p><u>Tutorial Activity:</u> No Tutorial</p>



Tutorial Assignment for Week 7: Students should select a term-paper topic and write a one paragraph description of it to present for discussion.

Readings For Week 7: None.

**Mid Trimester Break:** Monday 24 August– Friday 4 September 2009

Week 7 7-9

Lecture Topics:

**First Hour** Sex Lecture...Seriously.

**Second Hour** What your parents never told you about essays

Tutorial Activity: Present Essay topics and discuss.

Tutorial Assignment for Week 8: Write the first paragraph of your essay in the form outlined in:

[http://www.cqpress.com/docs/college/VanBelle\\_WritingAppendix.pdf](http://www.cqpress.com/docs/college/VanBelle_WritingAppendix.pdf)

Readings For Week 8: Harrison Chapter 7 (Note: chapter read out of order)

Ancillary reading: Livingston, Steven and D. Van Belle (2004) "The Effects of New Satellite Newsgathering Technology on Newsgathering from Remote Locations." *Political Communication* 22 : 45-62 Available online through the library.

Week 8 14-9

Lecture Topics:

**First Hour** Mutual exploitation model of the news

**Second Hour** Three social/political communicative roles of the news- Top down, lateral, bottom up.

Tutorial Activity: Paper Writing Workshop

Tutorial Assignment for Week 9: Sources in the news. Students will take the front pages of the Dominion Post from Two days during week 7 and list all identified or quoted sources of information. This list should be organized by story, and typed.

Readings For Week 9: Harrison Chapter 6 (Note: chapter read out of order)

Ancillary Reading: Bennett, W. Lance (1990) Toward a Theory of Press-State Relations in the United States. *Journal of Communication* 40, Vol 2. Spring, 103-125.

Week 9 21-9

Lecture Topics:

**First Hour** Elite dominance of the sources of news-Framing

**Second Hour** Elite dominance of the sources of news-Indexing

Tutorial Activity: Discussion of sourcing patterns.

Tutorial Assignment for Week 10: Writing of a press release. Take one of the most often repeated of stories you have heard from family or friend and write a one page double spaced press release for it.

Readings For Week 10: Harrison Chapter 8

Week 10 28-9

Lecture Topics:

**First Hour** Elite dominance of the sources of news- strategies, taking advantage of the business imperatives of the news

**Second Hour** Elite dominance of the sources of news- psuedo events, controlled news environments, spin, back to framing

Tutorial Activity: Critique and discussion of peer's press release.

Tutorial Assignment for Week 11: Using the Lexus/Nexus database, find and briefly analyze one news story from each of 4 distinct protest events (4 stories in total).

Readings: Ancillary Reading

McLeod, Douglas M and Benjamin H Detenber (1999) Framing effects of television news coverage of social protest. *Journal of Communication*. Vol. 49, Iss. 3; p. 3 (21 pages)

Week 11 5-10

Lecture Topics:

**First Hour** Classic concept of Agenda Setting - Protest, and the disadvantaged voice, Investigative journalism

**Second Hour** Classic concept of Agenda Setting - The drama of scandal and the myth of conspiracy

Tutorial Activity: Discussion of protest coverage assignment.

Tutorial Assignment for Week 12: None

Readings for Week 12: Ancillary Readings

Stamm, Keith, Michelle Johnson and Brennon Martin (1997). Difference among newspapers, television, and radio in their contribution to knowledge of the contract with America. *Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly*, 74, 687-702

Week 12 12-10

Lecture Topics:

**First Hour** Television versus print- Differences in structure and format, audience response

**Second Hour** Analyzing the news- Coverage of Lebanon versus Israel.

Take home test handed out.

Tutorial Activity: No Tutorial

**Study Period:** Monday 19 to Friday 23 October 2009

**Examination Period:** Tuesday 27 October – Sunday 15 November 2009