

**I. CATALOG DESCRIPTION:**

- A. Department Information  
Division: Humanities and Social Science  
Department: English  
Course ID: ENGL 121  
Course Title: The News Media  
Units: 3  
Lecture: 3 Hours  
Prerequisite: Eligibility for ENGL 101
- B. Catalog and Schedule Description:  
An analysis of the nature of news, the role of the news media in America, the principal problems of the media (newspapers, wire services, news magazines and television) and an evaluation of their performance.

**II. NUMBER OF TIMES COURSE MAY BE TAKEN FOR CREDIT: One**

**III. EXPECTED OUTCOMES FOR STUDENTS:**

Upon completion of the course the student will be able to:

- A. Define the term news as understood by the “mainstream “media as well as by the alternative and even “tabloid” media;
- B. Explain the role of the media generally as social/political/cultural critics;
- C. Explain what is meant by journalistic “objectivity”;
- D. Explain the implications of the First Amendment for the media and the limitations on free speech: libel, slander, privacy;
- E. Explain the varying impact and requirements of the electronic media vs. the print media;
- F. Analyze and evaluate the performance of journalists in the coverage of a controversy.

**IV. COURSE CONTENT:**

- A. Competing definition of news:
  1. News as information in the public interest
  2. News as public entertainment
- B. Constitutional basis for news media
  1. Rights
  2. Responsibilities
- C. Impact on media of major court cases:
  1. Libel/slander
  2. Privacy
- D. Media as social/ political/cultural critics
- E. Competing needs of print vs. electronic media (broadcast, cable, internet)
- F. Examination of media role in some major controversy: McCarthyism, Vietnam, Watergate, Iran-Contra, and Fornigate.

**V. METHODS OF INSTRUCTION:**

- A. Lecture/discussion: Readings in the texts may be supplemented through lectures. Students will be asked to apply basic principles to case studies of media performance.
- B. Workshop: The class may be broken up into several groups to prepare oral reports on specific issues. Critiques of reports will be done in small groups.

**VI. TYPICAL ASSIGNMENTS:**

- A. Students will write a 500-word essay analyzing the opinion of media critic James Fallows on political campaign coverage, as stated in his book *Breaking the News*.

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- B. Students in small groups will read Fred Friendly's account of *See It Now* coverage of Sen. Joe McCarthy and prepare an oral presentation of the important details and the implications for today.

**VII. EVALUATION(S):**

A. Methods of evaluation:

1. Essays: Students will write at least five essays, including the final exam. These will be evaluated for their organization, detail, style, punctuation and mechanics. The topics should be narrowly focused.
2. Quizzes: The instructor has the option of using quizzes to encourage a careful reading of the assigned texts and to stimulate discussion of them.
3. Oral Reports: Students will give at least one report in a panel presentation. Individuals will be graded on their preparation, analysis and presentation.

B. Frequency of evaluation:

1. Essays will be assigned on a regular basis throughout the semester and correspond roughly to the major units of instruction (see content).
2. Quizzes will be given on a weekly basis or as needed. Sample test question: Critique a local TV newscast. What are some possible reasons for its shortcomings.
3. One oral report.

**VIII. TYPICAL TEXT(S):**

Fred Friendly. Due to Circumstances Beyond Our Control. New York: Vintage, 1997.  
James Fallows. Breaking the News. New York: Vintage, 1997.  
Pete Hamill. News Is a Verb. New York: Random House, 1998

**IX. OTHER SUPPLIES REQUIRED OF STUDENTS: None**