

International Journalism

Course Information:

JOURNAL 310 (4 credits), Spring 2022

Meets Mondays and Wednesdays, 5:30-6:45 p.m. in ILC N255

Prereqs: Open to Seniors, Juniors & Sophomores only

Instructor:

<PROF_FULL_NAME>

S467 Integrative Learning Center

E-mail (preferred): <PROF_EMAIL>

Office Hours (appointments encouraged):

Wednesdays, 11:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.

[Schedule your appointment](#)

INTRODUCTION

This course applies a social scientific lens to the challenges and issues facing journalists working abroad or covering global affairs. The class is structured around three overarching areas: (1) canonical theories for understanding impacts on and of journalism; (2) journalistic cultures and transnational issues; and (3) journalistic routines and practices. Each of these areas is applied to the context of international journalism, highlighting what is distinct (and not so different) about reporting outside the U.S. and bringing the world home. Students will also learn about how to empirically evaluate different aspects of international journalism through the use of social scientific tools.

REQUIRED TEXTS

Over the course of the semester, we will be reading the following eBook, which is made available to you for free (see Moodle):

- [Zamith, R. \(2022\). *The International Journalism Handbook: Concepts, Challenges, and Contexts*. Amherst, MA: UMass Amherst Libraries.](#)

You will also be assigned two additional texts, videos, or podcasts each week to complement the eBook chapters. All of those materials will be made available to you for free via Moodle. You may print these materials or view them on your electronic device of choice, but please do not redistribute them.

Finally, you will be required to purchase or borrow one of the non-fiction books below for the "Book Discussion" assignment. *(Please wait for your book assignment before purchasing a book!)*

- [Abouzeid, R. \(2018\). *No Turning Back: Life, Loss, and Hope in Wartime Syria*. New York: W. W. Norton.](#)

- [Corchado, A. \(2014\). *Midnight in Mexico: A Reporter's Journey Through a Country's Descent into Darkness*. New York: Penguin Books.](#)

TECHNOLOGY

This course makes use of the Moodle online learning management system in order to distribute course content and assignments, complete Quizzes, and submit assignments. Moodle will serve as the hub for all aspects of this course, so always go there first. To access Moodle, visit: <https://umass.moonami.com/>.

We will also use Flipgrid for the Book Discussion assignment at the end of the semester. All of the technology used in this class will be made available to you for free and will work in any modern browser, although Flipgrid will require access to a camera (on your computer or phone). If you require technical assistance, please contact the [IT Help Center](#).

Additionally, I strongly encourage you to bring a laptop or tablet to class in order to complete the short activities that are planned for the class. A modern smartphone may suffice, though the activities will be optimized for devices with a full-size keyboard. ([Students may borrow laptops from the UMass Libraries](#).)

COURSE OBJECTIVES

This course is designed to help students achieve certain learning outcomes and competencies that are in line with an introductory course and its [General Education designations](#). At the conclusion of the semester, you should be able to:

1. Describe normative theories pertaining to the construction of news stories and their impacts of the public's understanding of foreign affairs.
2. Evaluate journalism cultures and describe the dominant journalistic role conceptions, epistemologies, and ethics of at least one non-U.S. country.
3. Explain alternative media ownership and economic models for journalism, as employed elsewhere in the world.
4. Analyze news content, critique the process through which it is crafted, and discuss the implications for how issues, groups, and individuals are portrayed and understood—both domestically and internationally.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Learning Materials: Each week, you will need to read 4-6 chapters from the required eBook (*The International Journalism Handbook*). The eBook is available in different formats to accommodate students with different needs. In addition to those chapters, you will be required to read two supplemental materials. These supplemental materials will typically be a mixture of think pieces and pieces of journalism (e.g., documentary, in-depth news story, etc.). Any of these materials may appear on a weekly quiz or in-class discussion or activity.

Weekly Quizzes: Each week, you will complete an online quiz that covers the key *concepts and ideas* in the learning materials we will be discussing that coming week. For example, the Week 2 Quiz will cover all of the learning materials listed under Week 2 on Moodle. Each quiz will be due on Monday at 5:15 p.m. and will open one week before that deadline. The quizzes are not timed and you are welcome to reference any notes or documents while you take a quiz. Additionally, you will be given two chances to complete the quiz; the *average* of your attempts will serve as the recorded grade. The goal of this requirement is to provide a low-stakes incentive for keeping up with your assigned materials, which should facilitate fruitful class discussions and help you identify learning gaps early on. Your two lowest quiz scores will be automatically dropped at the end of the semester.

Participation: Our classes will be devoted to discussing the learning materials for that week, often by tying the material to contemporary issues and events, and engaging in activities designed to help you make progress on your Course Project. There will be very little lecturing during class time, which means that your participation is crucial to the success of this course. At the end of each class, you will rate your own participation in that day's class. This will serve as the basis of your participation grade (see "Grading Approach" below). The goal of this requirement is to provide a mechanism for *active learning* and to promote different forms of engagement with the course material. I will enter participation grades into the gradebook at three different points in the semester in order to help you measure your progress. Your lowest participation score during *each* of these three periods will be automatically dropped. (This includes an absence.) Participation Period #1 covers Weeks 1-5. Participation Period #2 covers Weeks 6-9. Participation Period #3 covers Weeks 10-15. *Please note: You may attend classes/participate either in person or online (via Zoom) on any given day—but I will optimize the experience for in-person students.*

Course Project and Checkpoints: You will be working with three classmates on a group-based course project over the duration of the semester. You will be assigned, *based on your collective interests*, an issue of international scope as well as one journalistic outlet from each of two different countries (two organizations in total). The project will ultimately require you to synthesize the theories and concepts we've discussed in class; describe the context within which those journalistic outlets operate (i.e., the countries' media systems); evaluate the journalistic content produced by those outlets about the given issue; discuss your findings in light of what we've learned this semester; and reflect on what you learned from completing this assignment, and on what you might have done differently if you were a journalist working for those outlets. While the course project is due near the end of the semester, you will be submitting draft versions of the assignment at three different 'checkpoints' designed to ensure you are making good and timely progress. (Put another way, you'll be building up to the final submission and making your end of the semester less hectic.) The checkpoint assignments will be evaluated through a hybrid form of internal (within the group) and external (outside the group) peer evaluations (see "Grading Approach" below). The final submission will be graded by the instructor but will also involve an internal peer review mechanism. Groups and issue/outlet assignments will be finalized by the third week of the semester. Details for the Course Project, and all three of its Checkpoints, are posted on Moodle.

Book Discussion: In Week 3, you will be assigned a non-fiction book written by an international journalist. *(Please do not purchase a book before being assigned it!)* You will be expected to read the book over the course of the semester. Then, near the end of the semester (Week 13), you will participate in an online book discussion with classmates who have read the same book. Specifically, you will be given a series of questions to help spur a discussion. That discussion will begin with you posting one 'Discussion Starter' video to Flipgrid (a platform we'll be using)

prior to the first deadline. Then, you will respond to *two* 'Discussion Starter' videos posted by other students *who read the same book* by a second deadline. Finally, you will respond (in one video) to all of the students who commented on *your* 'Discussion Starter' video by a third and final deadline. While this may sound complicated, I assure you it's actually quite simple and you will be provided with a step-by-step guide for completing the assignment. The goal of this assignment is to foster conversations that challenge and expand your interpretations while allowing you to apply the concepts learned in the course to the situations and arguments presented in books by or about professional journalists.

Extra Credit: Extra credit opportunities will be made available over the course of the semester. A student may receive *no more than 10 extra credit points* over the course of the semester. Extra credit will only be offered when it advances course objectives and will not disadvantage students electing not to participate in extra credit opportunities. All opportunities will be posted on Moodle under the heading, "Extra Credit Opportunities."

Questions/Office Hours: Should you find yourself struggling with any aspect of this class (e.g., assignments, ideas, etc.), I'd encourage you to post your question to the "Questions About Course/Content" forum on Moodle, which is listed under "Course Information" near the top of the page. I ask you to post the question there first because (a) there is a chance that someone has already asked your question, so you can quickly find an answer to it, (b) one of your peers may be able to answer your question before me, and (c) my answer can serve as a helpful guide for your peers, in addition to you. Should your question be of a more personal nature (e.g., about your grade or sensitive matters), please come see me during my Office Hours—which is basically a time set aside for engaging with students about *anything*. I encourage you to [schedule an appointment](#) for Office Hours to ensure I can be fully attentive to your needs. If you are not available at those times, please e-mail me so we can schedule another time to meet.

GRADING POLICY

Grade Calculation: Your course grade will be calculated as follows:

- Weekly Quizzes: 80 points (10 each; two lowest grades dropped)
- Participation: 90 points (5 each; lowest grade dropped for each participation period)
- Course Project Checkpoints: 90 points (30 each)
- Course Project Submission: 70 points
- Book Discussion: 40 points
- (Total: 370 points)

Group Work: Just under half of your grade in this class will be derived from group assignments (the Course Project). This is because I strongly believe in the value of collaboration for synthesizing ideas. It is also useful for any communications professional to learn how to play nice with others and resolve conflict in group settings. You will be assigned into a group of four students, and you will be expected to sit by your group mates in class to engage in any in-class activities. With each checkpoint submission (and the final submission), you will be given a chance to rate your group mates' contribution to the assignment. Thus, each member of a group may receive a different grade on an assignment. We will use a system called CATME to help form groups and for intra-group peer assessment. This is a platform that my previous students have found to be very useful and fair.

Grading Philosophy: I am experimenting with a *social learning* approach in my classes this year. A component of that is *assessment as learning*, which basically means that I am trying to turn

the act of grading into an educational experience. In practice, this means that I will rely largely on self-evaluations and peer evaluations when determining the grades for some of the different course requirements. I am doing this for two main reasons. First, peer grading is actually a good way to *learn* because it not only allows you to see how others approached the same challenge but it forces you to actively process their responses (in order to offer an evaluation). Second, having me assign the grades can have the unintended effect of promoting ideological conformity by having students produce work based on what they think *I want*, which is not the most conducive way to *learn*. Instead, I aim to employ what is called *authentic assessment*, by having at least two strangers offer their evaluation of your work.

Grading Approach: In line with the grading philosophy described above, you will determine the quality of your participation yourself at the end of each class via a short survey. (That assessment will be blended with a basic completion check for in-class activities.) For each Project Checkpoint assignment you submit, you will evaluate the assignment submitted by one other group (external evaluation) and perform a peer evaluation of the contributions of your groupmates (internal evaluation). *(Failure to submit these evaluations in a timely manner will result in a loss of 25% of the possible points for that assignment.)* I will take an average of all of the external evaluations for each Project Checkpoint (you will typically receive four), with the result serving as the group's grade for that assignment. That group grade will then be adjusted for each individual group member through the internal peer evaluations. In instances where there is a significant discrepancy across the evaluations, I will intervene and determine the final grade myself. As you can imagine, this grading approach demands honesty and trust, so please take the responsibility seriously and act honorably. I reserve the right to override any grade in this class or change the grading policy to an instructor-led approach, but I have not had to do that in the past. *(Note: The quizzes are not subject to this approach. They will be graded automatically within Moodle in order to provide immediate feedback. Similarly, the Book Discussion assignment grading and the external review for final Course Project submission will be completed solely by me so as to not add to students' particularly high workload at the end of the semester.)*

Monitoring Your Grade: I encourage you to calculate your grade throughout the semester to know where you stand. To calculate your grade, log on to our Moodle course site and click on "Grades." Under "Course Total" (last row), divide the value in the third column ("Grade") by the maximum value in the fourth column ("Range"). That will be your percentage, at that time, which you can translate into a letter grade by reviewing the Grading Standard below. For example, if my "Course Total" halfway through the semester is 124 points and the maximum value in the "Range" is 150 points, then my percentage is 82.67% ($124/150 = 0.8267$), which corresponds to a B-. The Moodle course totals will take any drops/extra credit into account. *(Note: Early on in the semester, Moodle may automatically drop an assignment you completed because it is your lowest-scored item at that time—even if you got a 100% on it. This will effectively self-correct over the course of the semester, but please keep this in mind when calculating your grade.)*

Grade Distribution: Grades will be given on an absolute scale (not curved). This means that your grades will be based only on your accomplishments and that you are not in competition with other students for grades in this course.

Grading Standard:

- A: Achievement that is outstanding relative to the level necessary to meet course requirements. (A: 93-100%; A-: 90-92.99%)
- B: Achievement that is significantly above the level necessary to meet course requirements. (B+: 87-89.99%; B: 83-86.99%; B-: 80-82.99%)

- C: Achievement that meets course requirements in every respect. (C+: 77-79.99%; C: 73-76.99%; C-: 70-72.99%)
- D: Achievement that is worthy of credit even though it fails to meet fully the course requirements. (D+: 67-69.99%; D: 60-66.99%)
- F: Represents failure and signifies that the work was either completed but at a level of achievement that is not worthy of credit or was not completed. (F: 59.99% and below)
- I (Incomplete) – This grade is rare and will be assigned at the discretion of the instructor. An incomplete grade will be considered only when documented, extraordinary circumstances beyond control, or ability to anticipate, prohibit timely completion of the course requirements. Additionally, students must (1) have successfully completed a substantial portion of the required coursework and (2) be determined by the instructor to be capable of completing the remaining coursework within one calendar year. An Incomplete will not be granted to students presently failing the course. Students requesting an Incomplete must enter into a written agreement with the instructor establishing the coursework to be completed and the timeframe in which it will be completed.

Attendance: Attendance is not formally required in this course, but it is a prerequisite for participating in discussions and activities (which is a course requirement). Students may attend class either in-person or online (via Zoom) whenever they like. *If you are feeling ill, please do not come to class; instead, join us remotely.* That said, I do encourage attending class in person when possible because it is just a better experience—it will be easier to hear your fellow students and participate, and I will be focusing on the in-person experience.

Excused Absences: *You do not need my permission to miss a class, nor do you need to notify me about any absences.* The automatic drop policy for the participation requirement allows you to miss two classes *for any reason* during each of the three participation periods. If you are faced with a *long-term absence* (i.e., a concussion that requires you to miss multiple classes or an extended illness), please e-mail me so we can make reasonable accommodations to ensure you're able to continue learning. One common accommodation is to excuse you from an entire participation period. However, I do not excuse students from individual classes or activities because it is an unworkable system in a class this size.

Late Assignments and Extensions: Assignments are *not* eligible for late submissions or extensions. There are four reasons for this. First, you have *at least* one week to complete all assignments (aside from the participation ones), so there is ample time to complete them. Second, most assignment categories have some form of automatic drop that is designed to account for unforeseen circumstances or involve group work. Third, out of respect to your classmates' schedules, we have to follow a consistent and predictable timeline in order to ensure the peer evaluations are completed successfully and that feedback is received in a timely fashion. Finally, I am overseeing almost 140 students across my classes this semester and it is simply not workable for me to keep up with different deadlines and late submissions. Trust me, I've tried.

Coursework Resubmission: Assignments are only eligible for resubmission in extraordinary circumstances and with the permission of the instructor.

COURSE EXPECTATIONS

Student Expectations: Students are expected to: (1) be open-minded; (2) engage in the course material and in class discussions; (3) respect their peers and instructor; (4) work hard, within the limits of the workload policy; (5) be aware of information posted on Moodle and disseminated by the instructor via e-mail, including deadlines; and (6) discuss their concerns with the instructor as they arise.

Instructor Expectations: You should expect me to be: (1) open-minded; (2) respectful and constructively critical of you, your opinions and your work; (3) helpful in achieving the course objectives; and (4) responsive, both in terms of providing feedback and addressing your concerns. My goal is to help you learn, and I welcome feedback on my performance. You will be given an opportunity to provide anonymous feedback around the middle of the semester, but I encourage you to send me an e-mail or schedule an appointment to share any concerns or suggestions you might have. I really do want you to succeed.

Classroom Conduct: I am responsible for maintaining a positive and orderly classroom environment. To facilitate this, students are asked to (1) be respectful of the wide range of views that may be presented in the class; (2) give their classmates and the instructor the opportunity to finish their statements; and (3) raise their hands to ask questions or engage the instructor in a non-disruptive manner. Different perspectives are encouraged, provided they are presented in a constructive manner. If a student feels that their learning is being negatively impacted by the actions of the instructor or another student, they should make their concerns known to the instructor. Students whose behavior is disruptive may be asked to leave the classroom or be removed from the Zoom stream. When in doubt, follow the Golden Rule.

Zoom Etiquette: Students who choose to join us over Zoom are asked to keep themselves muted during our large-class discussions and use Zoom's hand-raising functionality to chime in. Please note that in order to protect the privacy of students and promote an honest discussion, our Zoom sessions will *not* be recorded. Additionally, you are forbidden from recording them yourself. (Doing so is thus illegal as it would be a violation of Massachusetts' recording laws, which requires all-party consent.)

Names and Pronouns: Everyone has the right to be addressed and referred to by the name and pronouns that correspond to their gender identity, including the use of non-binary pronouns. Students are encouraged to update SPIRE to indicate their preferred pronouns. A student's chosen name and pronouns are to be respected at all times in the classroom.

Face Coverings: The default policy for this course is that all students are required to wear a face covering in class, in the immediate space outside of the classroom, and when visiting for Office Hours. Acceptable face coverings include disposable surgical masks, KN95, KF94, and N95 masks, or the use of double-masking with a surgical mask below a cloth mask. Masks should fully cover both the mouth and nose. If I see a violation of the policy, I will gently ask you to take corrective action. However, repeated or willful violation of the policy will result in a referral to the [Student Conduct and Community Standards Office](#) for disciplinary action. *I want to be clear that I am taking a highly risk-averse approach to the class to protect all of my students, which means that my standards may be higher than the base requirements at UMass throughout the semester. I certainly don't enjoy wearing a mask, but they work and our minor discomfort is less important than a colleague's health.* If you are uncomfortable with these requirements, I encourage you to participate via Zoom.

ADDITIONAL POLICY REMINDERS

Mental Health and Stress Management: As a student, you may experience a range of issues that can cause barriers to learning, such as strained relationships, increased anxiety, alcohol/drug problems, feeling down, difficulty concentrating and/or lack of motivation. These mental health concerns or stressful events may lead to diminished academic performance and may reduce your ability to participate in the class. As the instructor, I want to work with you and can be particularly helpful *if you discuss this with me ahead of time*. I also encourage students to contact the [Center for Counseling and Psychological Health](#) to develop a strategy for dealing with these issues. If you're unable to or do not wish to speak with a counselor, please know you always have someone to talk to in me.

Workload Policy: According to UMass policy, one undergraduate credit represents three hours of academic work per week, averaged over the semester, in order to complete the work of the course to achieve an average grade. Thus, a four-credit course is equivalent to roughly 12 hours of work per week (two and a half hours inside the classroom and nine and a half hours outside of it). This class is designed to have a regular amount of workload, though some weeks may be a bit busier than others.

Course Grade Changes: Questions about course grade changes should be directed to the instructor. After contacting the instructor, you may also reach out to the department chair, <NAME>. Alternatively, you may contact the [Ombuds Office](#). Grade changes will be made only when there is evidence of an error in grading and/or recording of a grade.

Scholastic Misconduct: You are expected to do your own academic work, interview your own sources, and cite or attribute sources as necessary. Failing to do so is scholastic dishonesty. Scholastic dishonesty means plagiarizing; cheating on assignments or examinations; engaging in unauthorized collaboration on academic work; taking, acquiring, or using test materials without faculty permission; submitting false or incomplete records of academic achievement; acting alone or in cooperation with another to falsify records or to obtain dishonestly grades, honors, awards, or professional endorsement; altering, forging, or misusing a University academic record; or fabricating or falsifying interviews, data, research procedures, or data analysis. *Proven scholastic misconduct will result in a course grade of F and possible further sanctions, including suspension or expulsion.* If you have questions about scholastic misconduct, please review [these materials](#) or contact the instructor.

Accommodations: I am committed to providing quality education to all students regardless of ability or need. Determining appropriate accommodations is a collaborative process. As a student, you must register with Disability Services and provide documentation of your disability. I will then work with you and Disability Services to attempt to accommodate the learning environment to suit your needs and will provide essential information about the course in an alternate format. I have tried to create all course materials for this class with accessibility best practices in mind, but I'm happy to work with you if there's a better way to deliver that content. For more information, please see the [Disability Services website](#) or have a conversation with me.

Sexual Harassment: "Sexual harassment" means unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors and/or other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature. This kind of conduct has the effect of unreasonably interfering with a student's work or academic performance and can create an intimidating, hostile, or offensive environment. Such behavior is not acceptable in the University setting and most certainly not in my class. Complaints about sexual harassment should be reported to the instructor and/or the [Equal Opportunity Office](#).

Diversity and Equal Opportunity: I am committed to an educational environment that respects all participants' identities. I encourage students to offer their own perspectives and to keep an open mind to the multiplicity of perspectives. However, I take intolerance very seriously and will refer students to the [Dean of Students Office](#) for disciplinary action if they engage in disrespectful or, worse, hateful conduct. Complaints about prejudicial conduct should be reported to the instructor and/or the [Equal Opportunity Office](#).

Academic Freedom: Academic freedom is a cornerstone of the University. Within the scope and content of the course as defined by the instructor, it includes the freedom to discuss relevant matters in the classroom. Along with this freedom comes responsibility. You are encouraged to develop the capacity for critical judgment and to engage in a sustained and independent search for truth. You are free to take reasoned exception to the views offered in any course of study and to reserve judgment about matters of opinion, but you are also responsible for learning the content of any course of study for which you are enrolled. If you are concerned about your academic freedoms in this class, please contact either me or the head of the Journalism Department, <NAME>.

Sale of Notes: I strive to make my work freely accessible as part of my academic mission, and have a particular disdain for leeches who seek to profit off it. Any sale of the learning materials for this course, any posted notes and videos, or any content produced by anyone other than you is expressly forbidden. I also expressly forbid the recording of my class, whether it be a lecture I am giving or a discussion I am facilitating. Again, I am generally happy to share my materials freely, but I will use every tool available to me to go after individuals and organizations seeking to profit off my work. At minimum, students found to be in violation of this policy may be subject to discipline under University policies.

COURSE SCHEDULE

The most up-to-date version of the course schedule may be found on the Moodle course page.