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THE GEORGE WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY

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SCHOOL OF MEDIA  
AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS

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## Fall 2008 Course Descriptions

**Media in a Free Society** (SMPA 50). Taught by Sean Aday. The role of mass communication in democratic political systems: informational requirements of democracy, sources of political information and the role of news media and other channels in creating and disseminating it; issues relating to propaganda and public information; and the interaction between information flows and democratic political culture. Not open to SMPA majors.

**Introduction to News Writing and Reporting.** (SMPA 110 – multiple sections). Fundamentals of news reporting and writing, with emphasis on the print media. News judgment, information gathering skills, and crafting news and feature stories. Regular in-class and outside reporting and writing exercises. Directly admitted freshmen may enroll in their second semester; all other freshmen need departmental permission. Laboratory fee, \$100. (Open to non-majors: WID credit).

**Advanced News Reporting** (SMPA 111 – two sections). Taught by Albert May & Michael Shanahan. Reporting, writing, and computer skills for covering beats and developing in-depth news stories. Techniques in researching, observing, and interviewing to frame stories of public interest; outside and in-class reporting and writing assignments. *Prerequisite: SMPA 110.* Laboratory fee, \$100. (WID credit).

**Media, Politics & Government** (SMPA 128.80). Taught by Steven Roberts. Media, Politics & Government (SMPA 128.80). Taught by Steven Roberts. This course exams the impact of media on politics and public policy. It is taught out of current newspapers (and websites), not textbooks, and this fall will focus on the presidential election that will take place during the semester. Other topics range from Laura Bush's role as a surrogate for the president and John Stewart's role as a political commentator to the internet's role in the democracy protests in Burma. Permission of instructor required. Contact: sroberts@gwu.edu

**Photojournalism** (SMPA 133.10). Taught by John Echave. Elements of effective news and feature photos, including study and evaluation of slides taken by students. Picture selection, cropping, captions. Student costs include film and developing. Laboratory fee, \$75.

**Publication Design** (SMPA 134.10). Taught by Mason McAllister. Design, editing, layout, and photo selection for newspapers and magazines. Selecting and editing stories; writing headlines and photo captions; sizing and cropping graphic materials; laying out pages. Ethics of editing. Student costs include film and developing.

**Broadcast News Writing** (SMPA 135.10). Taught by Mark Feldstein. This course will teach you basic reporting and news writing for radio and television. You will learn the fundamentals of writing and reporting news and feature stories. You will also be exposed to some basics about oral and visual presentation, as well as distinctions between local, network, and cable news. In addition, you will learn to understand and apply broadcast techniques to think critically about what you see on the news, as well as the work of others. By the end of the semester, you should be able to produce scripts suitable for air at a collegiate level. Prerequisite: SMPA 110. (WID credit).

**Broadcast News Reporting** (SMPA 136.10). Taught by Roxanne Russell. Advanced techniques in television news reporting and editing. Students produce, shoot, and edit news packages by teaming up to report in the field. Prerequisite: SMPA 110. (WID credit).

**Broadcast News Studio Production** (SMPA 137.10) Taught by Roxanne Russell. An in-depth introduction to the studio, learning how to produce interviews and public affairs shows, culminating in the production of *The Source*, GW's weekly newscast. Recommended prerequisite: SMPA 135 or 136. Laboratory fee, \$75.

**Washington Reporting** (SMPA 140.10). Taught by Michael Shanahan. Examination of reporting and writing techniques used in news coverage of American politics and the national government. Some discussion of covering presidential politics. The class assumes students are reporters writing stories for regional newspapers and uses Washington as a laboratory to cover Congress and the Executive Branch of government. Prerequisite SMPA 110.

**Campaign Reporting** (SMPA 141.10). Taught by Albert May. Development of news gathering and writing skills needed for the coverage of political campaigns. Using in-class exercises and outside assignments, students acquire reporting and writing proficiency to illuminate how campaigns work and how politics affects the lives of citizens. In the fall term, the class will be following and writing about the 2008 presidential campaign. Prerequisite: SMPA 110. (WID credit).

**Narrative Journalism** (144.10). Taught by Janet Steele. The narrative or story-telling tradition in journalism. Students experiment with narrative techniques in a series of written exercises and a final project. Enrollment limited to 15 students with preference given to upper-class SMPA majors and graduate students. (WID credit). Prior completion of SMPA 110 is strongly recommended, as basic reporting and writing skills are essential to success in the course.

**Editorial and Persuasive Writing** (SMPA 145.10) Taught by Steven Keller. Techniques of editorial and column writing; editorial page and public affairs programming; function of commentary in a free press. Prerequisite: SMPA 110. (WID credit).

**Public Affairs and Government Information** (SMPA 151.10). Taught by John Czwartacki. Aspects of information and public affairs functions of government agencies at all levels. Role of the information specialist. Writing and editing for government publications.

**Principles of Public Relations** (SMPA 152.10). Taught by Jim Spellman. Principles, problems, ethics, and law of public relations for government, private concerns, educational and other public institutions.

**Political Campaign Advertising** (SMPA 155.10). Taught by Professor Steven Keller. Introduction to the theory and practice of campaign advertising. Emphasis on televised political campaign spots, but a range of campaign advertising media are included: radio, direct mail, and the Internet.

**Political Debate** (SMPA 156.10). Taught by Professor Steven Keller. Theory and practice of political debate. The campaign context, candidate strategies, debate issues, and debates and voter behavior. Participation in classroom debates.

**Language and Politics** (SMPA 159.10). Taught by Peter Loge. Connections between language and the political world. Theory and practice of language in politics and the impact on the creation and consumption of politics.

**Campaigns and Elections** (SMPA 161.10). Taught by Sean Aday. It's almost a cliché to call the 2008 presidential race "historic," yet there's also no question it is. This course is designed to be a seminar on various aspects of political campaigns, with a focus on the role of the news media. Because of the timing this semester (i.e., fall of a presidential election year), we will be spending a great deal of time looking at events as they unfold, trying to connect the theory we're reading with the day-to-day reality of the campaign. We will also hear from people working in and covering campaigns, including former SMPA alumnae. The class has a lot of reading, but also a lot of lively discussion and debate.

**Media Law** (SMPA 173). Taught by Christopher Sterling. The course surveys the constantly changing legal context of both print and electronic journalism, including libel, privacy, reporting on the courts, obscenity and indecency, media ownership, copyright, advertising, political advertising, and public broadcasting.

**Media Management** (SMPA 175.10). Taught by Reginald Murphy. Decision making, strategic planning, and daily operations of all types of media organizations. Sales strategies, promotion, and research.

**Changing Media Technology** (SMPA 176.10). Taught by Kerric Harvey. Examination of current and likely future trends in electronic media, with emerging emphasis on radio, television, and cable, including developments in technology, programming, and public policy and their cultural implications.

**Media History** (SMPA 177.10). Taught by Mark Feldstein. American media from colonial times to the present, set against a backdrop of ongoing political, social, and economic developments. The development of press, radio, television, cable, satellite, and the Internet; government regulation and media relations; journalistic rights and responsibilities

**Documentary** (SMPA 179.10). Taught by Frank Sesno. In this class, we will seek to understand and examine the documentary and its various genres. We will look at its origins, how it has changed and what its future may be. We will strive to understand documentary's component parts – exposition, story arc, conflict, character, resolution. And we do all this by beginning from a central premise: that a documentary should be built around engaging ideas and characters, and told through compelling story and effective production. Students will analyze different types of documentaries, seek to understand how research, character, visual imagery, and production can come together to create a powerful experience that can transcend place and time.

**Political Communication and The Presidency** (SMPA 194.12). Taught by Lee Huebner. For more than forty years, Richard Nixon was among the country's most controversial and influential voices, a central figure in debates about communism, the cold war, civil rights, Vietnam, China, and Watergate. His career also helped shape the evolution of political communication, e.g. the development of speechwriting (the instructor was once a Nixon speechwriter), debating, the tv address, political advertising, opinion polling, media consulting and strategic press relations. This course will look at these developments, largely through the prism of Richard Nixon, and at Nixon, largely through the prism of his communication strategies.

**The Changing Media Landscape: Election 2008 as a Case Study** (SMPA 194.13). Taught by Carin Dessauer. Election 2008 is showcasing the changed media landscape like never before. Internet news started in 1995 and while the news world has adapted since then, 2008 is being viewed as a defining year for media. In the last presidential election, You Tube, Facebook and MySpace were not a force. Election 2008 will be used as a case study to examine the state of multi-platform or converged media and to engage students to make decisions as if they were working as journalists, bloggers, campaign operatives or media managers covering the unfolding story. Students should expect: much discussion, projects and assignments related to the “live” unfolding story; interesting and current reading assignments (including new book releases); and, meetings with and site visits to news organizations and online political players.

**Radio News: History & Practice** (SMPA 195.10). Taught by Michael Freedman. A combination lecture and lab course which explore's America's first form of electronic journalism from its creation in the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century to today's digital age. The class will study the underpinnings of today's news formats, listen to historic broadcasts, learn radio writing techniques, write and record newscasts, and gain hands on experience by visiting Washington offices of national media organizations.

**Washington Reporters** (SMPA 195.13). Taught by Stephen Hess. Thirty years ago—before Cable TV, before the Internet, when people still read afternoon newspapers—I set out to explain the state of Washington journalism. My findings were published in *The Washington Reporters* (Brookings, 1981). This is our starting point. We are going to try to trace what has happened since, the meaning of change, and the consequences. We will do this largely by asking questions. You will go “into the field” to interview reporters, editors, producers. Other journalists will be interviewed in class.

**Convergence and the Future of Journalism** (SMPA 195.14) Taught by Michael Shanahan. This is a course about the contemporary state of newspaper and broadcast journalism and their transition toward the Internet Age. Will traditional journalism values survive? What are the economic forces causing declines in newspaper readership and loss of viewers for the network evening news? Are bloggers journalists? Why do young people not read newspapers? Will independent nonpartisan journalism survive? Will reporters all become bloggers and web writers? Who are citizen journalists?

**Covering Washington: A Roadmap for the Career Journalist** (SMPA 195.14). Taught by Fall 2008 Shapiro Fellow, John Fialka. How has the Washington press corps struggled to penetrate the darkness that characterizes many institutions and issues? How is the changing nature of the media changing the way reporters in Washington do their work? This course provides a brief immersion in the history, philosophy and the economics that have shaped today's media and the business of covering Washington in particular. Budding reporters and editors who don't understand the quirks, triumphs and failures of the past will find it difficult to navigate the rough terrain that now confronts serious news gatherers. Those who succeed will have to contend with a public that increasingly distrusts or ignores them, publishers who view the news as a commodity, and a stock market that thinks print journalism is dead. The how and the why of this is explained by John Fialka, a veteran Wall Street Journal reporter and author, guests from the news business and public life, and an entrepreneur or two from the rapidly-growing world of Internet publishing.