

## Course Outline - JRN 506 – International Journalism

Winter 2012

Tuesday 1 – 4 p.m. RCC 203

Updated March 31. All underlined words are hyperlinks.

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### Calendar description

This course examines the history and practice of the journalism of global affairs. Topics covered include foreign and war correspondence; reporting on international organizations, development issues and natural disasters; and techniques for reporting in remote or unfamiliar surroundings. The practice of journalism is situated in the context of broader international political, economic and military trends. Students examine the challenges faced by journalists who report on global events, including attempts to control the flow of information and the rapid evolution of newsgathering technology.

*Lab: 3 hrs.*

*Prerequisite: JRN 303, JRN 304, JRN 305 or JRN 314*

*Course Weight: 1.00 Billing Units: 1*

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### Dates of classes (2012)

All classes are held on Tuesdays from 1 to 4 p.m. in RCC 203.

January 10	February 28
January 17	March 6
January 24	March 13
January 31	March 20
February 7	March 27
February 14	April 3
NO CLASS February 21 (study week)	April 10

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### Instructor: Paul Knox

**Office hours:** Thursday 2-4 p.m. RCC-175

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## Introduction

Welcome to JRN 506, International Journalism! This course is about global news, global audiences and global networks. It's about how international news is reported and received. It's about preparing yourself for international assignments – everything from compiling the right kind of background information to figuring out what kind of flak jacket to take along. And it's about responsibilities – to our audiences, to those we meet in our travels, and to ourselves.

Marshall McLuhan believed that television would shrink the world into a “global village.” Ryszard Kapuscinski, a brilliant globe-trotting correspondent, called McLuhan's prediction “one of the greatest mistakes of modern culture.” Human society, he wrote, is “more like the anonymous crowd at a major airport, a crowd of people rushing along in haste, mutually indifferent and ignorant.” If Kapuscinski is right, the implications are truly ominous, for information networks in the post-television age have a staggering capacity to reinforce indifference and amplify ignorance.

But technology can be harnessed to other ends, and this is where journalism can make a difference. It has never been easier to transmit news in the form of text, sound and images from remote corners of the world. It has never been easier to pull together background information about global events and issues. And with people migrating in unprecedented numbers in search of prosperity and security, it has never been more important to understand the conflicts that divide them, the relationships that bring them together, and their dependence on the finite resources of Planet Earth. The best global reporters – well trained, politically conscious, culturally aware – bring us their stories. In a small way, and sometimes in a not-so-small way, great international journalism makes global villagers of us all. .

To tackle this challenge, we'll look at the origins of international reporting and its evolution into a complicated system of information flows. We'll talk about the critical issues facing modern news organizations and individuals who seek to report on global events. We'll look at the way news is reported, techniques for preparing and executing international assignments, threats faced by journalists and safety precautions. We'll also look at the different arenas in which global journalism is performed: zones of military conflict, disaster areas, environmental and social battlefields, and the halls of diplomacy. You'll find yourselves returning to themes already touched on in your journalism studies – wresting information from uncooperative officials; sifting reliable sources from unreliable ones; awareness of the pitfalls inherent in reporting on unfamiliar communities.

My goals for this course are simple. I hope you'll leave JRN 506 feeling that you understand something of how international news works and that you are prepared to develop international stories and undertake assignments abroad – wherever “abroad” may be for you.

## Format

We meet on Tuesday from 1 to 4 p.m. in RCC 203. Despite the calendar designation, this is not a lab set-up. Classes will be a mixture of lectures, guest speakers and other presentations.

## Readings

**Required texts** (available at the Ryerson bookstore):

Ryszard Kapuscinski, *The Other* (introduction by Neal Ascherson). London and New York: Verso, 2008.

This book, a philosophical reflection by one of the modern masters of global reporting, is short and therefore modestly priced (\$18.50). It will serve as the backbone for our discussions. We will return to it frequently.

Owen, John, and Heather Purdey, eds. *International news reporting: frontlines and deadlines*. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009.

This book, unfortunately, is not so modestly priced (\$45.95). But it brings together practical pieces by accomplished international journalists that pack in a lot of information.

Other readings are included in this outline. Most are posted as e-reserve items on Blackboard. You'll be notified of additional materials during the semester, and you may also receive printed handouts. Readings will include a mixture of journalism (contemporary and historical) and scholarly articles.

## **Responsibilities**

**Academic integrity, course management, appeals, access, accommodation and academic consideration: Please read carefully the material on these topics that appears at the end of this outline, especially the sections on plagiarism, fabrication and other forms of cheating.**

## **Professionalism**

Please show up on time for all scheduled classes and complete scheduled readings before the class. Please don't schedule routine medical appointments, paid employment or work for other courses during class time. Don't plan interviews for stories in this course during class time either. During class hours, use laptops and mobile devices only for activities related to this course. Turn off your phones or set to vibrate.

## **Research and IT skills**

As university students you are expected to be familiar with basic computing systems, including word processing, remote communication and networking, e-mail and Internet research practices. You are also expected to be familiar with Ryerson's Library, particularly the use of its electronic data bases as research tools. The use of Factiva is especially recommended. This resource contains more than 5,000 news and scholarly data bases, including most major English-language daily newspapers, newsmagazines, television and radio programs in transcript, magazines and academic journals. It is considered indispensable by many journalists on the job and is invaluable for background on current issues. Its search tools are superior to those of Lexis-Nexis, although Lexis-Nexis contains some data bases lacking in Factiva.

IT problems are not a valid reason for missing deadlines. Please keep your equipment in working order. Save and back up your work regularly.

## **Style**

Please follow APA style (the one without footnotes) for references and include a list of works consulted with your assignments. If you're referring to lectures, guest speakers or other in-class material, APA-style references are not necessary as long as you make it clear in the text what you're referring to. For spelling, capitalization and other style points, use the online style book of The Canadian Press. Use your credentials (supplied by the School of Journalism) to [log in](#).

## Communication

JRN 506 is on Blackboard. The site will contain readings and assignments where appropriate. You may be advised in advance of changes to the course schedule. This may include additional readings and adjustments in assignments related to breaking news.

If you e-mail me from a non-Ryerson account I'll reply to that account. However, in accordance with Ryerson policy, **all official notifications, including those that may affect your grades**, will go directly to your Ryerson e-mail account (xxxxx@ryerson.ca). **Make sure there's room in your Ryerson mailbox to receive these messages.**

## Course Evaluation

You'll be asked to complete a formal evaluation, known at Ryerson as a Faculty Course Survey, before the end of the semester. I may ask you earlier for structured feedback. Beyond that, I'm eager to hear suggestions for improving the content and conduct of the course. Please don't be shy about this.

## About your instructor:

I've been a journalist since my mid-teens and a journalism teacher since 2005. I spent many years at *The Globe and Mail*, arriving in 1978 and moving through several different reporting, editing and management jobs, many of them in international news. I was a foreign correspondent based in Mexico City and Rio de Janeiro, wrote the Worldbeat column on global issues and was foreign editor in 2004-2005. Before joining the *Globe* I worked at the *Vancouver Sun* and the *News Letter* (Belfast, Northern Ireland). I attended the University of British Columbia and studied at Harvard University as a Nieman journalism fellow. In 2000 I received the Maria Moors Cabot prize for reporting on the Americas from Columbia University. I've also been a commentator in English and Spanish for *Radio Canada International*.

At Ryerson I was chair of the School of Journalism from 2005 to 2010. I taught feature reporting and news reporting in Fall 2011. In Winter 2012 I also have the International Journalism course in the Master of Journalism program.

Journalism, in my view, has a bright future – not least because good journalism is as much in demand as ever. Mastery of technique and a thorough knowledge of our craft and its challenges can help journalists make a difference by making good choices in their work. Scholarly study and reflection on the past and present is important, too. My research interests include the cultures of journalism, international news coverage by Canadians, journalism as literature, Canadian journalism education and challenges to freedom of expression. I support the work of Canadian Journalists for Free Expression, a non-profit group that works on behalf of threatened and harassed journalists in Canada and around the world.

I'm here to share my experience, contacts and any insight I may have acquired. I strongly encourage you to take advantage of office hours and other opportunities to ask questions, clear up uncertainties or simply share thoughts.

## Assignments (with proportion of final grade)

The work components of this course are primarily writing assignments. For each one you will be given a numerical mark. These will be added together to form a total out of 200, which will be divided by two and converted to a letter grade for the course.

Each of you will be assigned a country at random at the beginning of the course. *[Historical note for AEJMC-ICD readers: the students drew slips of paper out of a Panama hat, each slip bearing the name of a country. I heard more than one comment along the lines of “OMG I have no idea where that is ...] Half of your final grade will come from assignments specifically related to this country and half from assignments related to the general course material. There is no participation mark and I don't take attendance, but your written work is expected to include discussion of relevant course readings, as well as material and presentations covered in class.*

Marking criteria and complete details will accompany each assignment. In contrast to some other 500-level courses, we will not be producing multi-media or non-text work in JRN 506.

**Assignments are due at the beginning of class (1:10 p.m.) on the specified date. Please note that you're required to submit all assignments *except* the country dossier and take-home exam in both electronic (via e-mail) and hard-copy formats. The dossier and take-home are required in electronic format only. Further details are included on the individual assignments.**

**Please double-space all written work.**

**Early filing:** Handing work in early is a great stress-management technique. You won't be penalized for it. You can leave hard copy in my mailbox or slip it under my door (RCC 175).

**Late filing:** After marking the work, I'll deduct 15% of the assigned mark (rounded to the nearest whole number) for each full or partial 24-hour period beyond the deadline.

A guide to my marking techniques, *How I mark up your work*, is on Blackboard.

Here's the assignment schedule with brief summaries and due dates:

**1. Letter home #1 (maximum 20 marks or 10%).** Like all courses, this one is an intellectual journey, and I'm asking you to report on your travels in your letters home. They'll be based on course readings, lectures and guest appearances up to the due date. You may think of them as blogs or diary entries if you like. Minimum 600 words, suggested maximum 900 words. **Due February 7.** This is the first due date for a mark in the course, and is before the final drop date.

**2. Country dossier (maximum 30 marks or 15%).** You'll prepare a background file on your assigned country of the type required by a journalist covering a major international story, or about to be sent to cover it. It will include basic data, a survey of key social, economic, political and cultural information about the country, and a list of key issues that need to be watched. You'll use a mixture of sources – library materials, online resources and interviews. **Due February 28.**

**3. Letter home #2 (maximum 20 marks or 10%).** In your second letter, I'll be looking for some evolution of your thoughts about the concepts and issues we discuss, and how you see them relating to the practical concerns of reporting international stories. Minimum 600 words, suggested maximum 900 words. **Due March 13.**

**4. Coverage survey and story proposal (maximum 70 marks or 35%).** Sticking with your assigned country, you'll write a survey of recent and not-so-recent work by journalists who work or have travelled there. You'll try to contact one or two of them, ask about the story behind their work, and probe for their ideas about further stories. You'll also submit one story idea that could be done while visiting your country. **Due April 3.**

**5. Take-home exam (maximum 60 marks or 30%).** This has three parts: your third and final letter home, and answers to two questions you choose from a list provided. They are designed to test your comprehension of key concepts discussed in the course. **Distributed April 10, due April 23.**

Here's Ryerson's numerical-to-letter-grade conversion table:

**A+ 90-100, A 85-89, A- 80-84, B+ 77-79, B 73-76, B- 70-72, C+ 67-69, C 63-66, C- 60-62, D+ 57-59, D 53-56, D- 50-52, F 0-49**

## Week-by-week class schedule

**Readings** are available through the library databases unless otherwise indicated.

### Week 1, Jan. 10:

**Guest: Rick Westhead**, former South Asia bureau chief, *The Toronto Star*.

Summary of the course; questions and answers. Selection of assigned countries; design of template for dossier. Encounter with a veteran foreign correspondent.

### Week 2, Jan. 17:

**The Other: Who do we cover, and for whom? An examination of subjects, audiences and interlocutors on the global stage.**

**Readings:** *The Other* (assigned text – entire work).  
*International news reporting*, Preface and Chapter 1.

**Film:** Peter Weir, *The Year of Living Dangerously*

The film is set in Indonesia, a former Dutch colony, in 1965. The popularity of once-revered independence leader Sukarno is declining rapidly as the country's economy deteriorates. He turns increasingly for support to the Indonesian Communist Party, alienating the United States and other anti-communist nations. Guy Hamilton (Mel Gibson) arrives as correspondent for the Australian Broadcasting Service and is greeted by his driver, Kumar. He soon meets photographer Billy Kwan (Linda Hunt, in an Oscar-winning performance) and as the two begin working together a many-layered relationship develops. Things get more complicated when Hamilton meets Jill Bryant (Sigourney Weaver), a British Embassy worker who becomes a more-than-close friend -- and a source.

### Week 3, Jan. 24:

**International news and its audiences: from its origins to the present**

**Guest: Sonia Verma, International Reporter, *The Globe and Mail*.**

**Readings:**

Stephens, Mitchell. *A History of News: from the drum to the satellite*. New York: Viking, 1988: 32-68. (E-reserve)

Rantanen, Terhi. "The cosmopolitanization of news." *Journalism Studies* 8(6) (2007): 843-861. (E-reserve)

Cole, Jaci, and John Maxwell Hamilton. "A natural history of foreign correspondence: a study of the Chicago Daily News, 1900-1921." *Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly* 84 (1): 151-166. (E-reserve)

Hess, Stephen. *International News and Foreign Correspondents*. Washington: Brookings Institution Press, 1996: 28-46. (E-reserve)

## **Week 4, Jan. 31:**

### **International news and its audiences: an overview of current issues**

**Guest: Tony Burman**, Velma Rogers Graham Research Chair in News Media and Technology, Ryerson School of Journalism

#### **Readings:**

*International news reporting*, Chapter 8

McNair, Brian, *Cultural chaos: journalism, news and power in a globalised world*. (E-book, available through library catalogue.) Milton Park: Routledge, 2006, 101-154 and 199-210.

Patrick Lee Plaisance, "The journalist as moral witness: Michael Ignatieff's pluralistic philosophy for a global media culture." *Journalism* 3(2), 2002: 205-222. (E-reserve)

Thurman, Neil, "The globalization of journalism online: a transatlantic study of news websites and their international readers." *Journalism* 8(3), 2007: 285-307. (E-reserve)

Gwyn, Richard, "Welcome to the multi-polar century." *Toronto Star*, Jan. 1, 2010: A23. (Available through Factiva.)

## **Week 5, Feb. 7:**

**Guest: Oakland Ross**, International Reporter, *Toronto Star*.

### **How it's done, part I: past and present models for reporting international news**

#### **Readings:**

*International news reporting*, Chapters 2 and 3

Hamilton, John Maxwell, "In the foothills of change." *Columbia Journalism Review*, 47(6) (2009): 51-54. (E-reserve)

Hamilton, John Maxwell, and Eric Jenner. "Redefining foreign correspondence." *Journalism* 5(3) (2004): 301-321. (E-reserve. An earlier, more detailed treatment of the material in the CJR article.)

“Our mission” and “Year-end statement from president and co-founder Philip Balboni.” *GlobalPost* (online news service), <http://www.globalpost.com/mission-statement>, accessed Jan. 25, 2010.

## **Week 6, Feb. 14:**

**Guest: Igor Malakhov**, freelance journalist with experience in Moscow and Toronto

**How it’s done, part 2: Being there, getting there, getting the story and getting it out**

### **Readings:**

*International news reporting*, Chapters 4, 12 and 13

Poynter Institute. International reporting basics: what you need to know before you go. Online short course at <http://www.newsu.org/courses/international-reporting-basics-what-you-need-know->. (Please take this little course - it should take less than an hour. It covers a lot of things such as visas, health tips, what to pack, what to expect, whom to trust, and so on.)

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**Feb. 21: Study week.** No class.

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## **Week 7, Feb. 28:**

**Life, culture, human interest**

**Guest: Ryan Pyle**, Canadian documentary photographer living in Shanghai, China.

Ryan is looking forward to speaking with us about “journalism beyond war and disaster” and his efforts to carve out a space for what he calls “lifestyle” documentary work that focuses on human interest, culture, social and economic life, how people live, how they work, how they interact with one another, the environment, culture, and so on. He’ll talk about living and working in China and the way in which he’s come to grips with the question of The Other in China. You can check out his work at [www.ryanpyle.com](http://www.ryanpyle.com).

Ryan is very good at disseminating his work. He has a very thorough and easy-to-use website, he blogs a lot and he’s very open and friendly about what he does. It’s important that we think about the image as well as the text side of international reporting. Ryan isn’t primarily a word guy, although he often works jointly with writers, and he can talk about some of the issues that arise when word and image people work together. Don’t make the mistake of thinking he doesn’t have a keen sense of political and social issues – he’s very passionate about China, but has a well-developed critique of the government and political system and its effect on the Chinese people.

Doing what he does, Ryan has also had to become good at the business side of freelancing. So he’s going to give us some do’s and don’ts about that side of things – how he deals with editors halfway

around the world, how he makes sure he gets paid, how he harnesses technology to his own advantage. Many of these tips would work just as well for writers as for photographers.

**Readings:**

*International news reporting*, Chapter 5.

**Week 8, March 6:****Covering humanitarian emergencies and international development**

**Guest: Avril Benoit**, communications director, Médecins Sans Frontières Canada

**Readings:**

*International news reporting*, Chapter 14  
NGO website links as distributed

**Week 9, March 13:****Covering global science and environment stories**

**Guest: Alanna Mitchell**, science/environment journalist and analyst

Some of the most interesting and significant international journalism has nothing to do with breaking news. On Thursday we'll have the privilege of meeting Alanna Mitchell, one of Canada's top science journalists, who has travelled around the world reporting on environmental crisis zones.

Alanna is a Ryerson Journalism grad with a degree in Latin literature and English literature from the University of Toronto. She was a reporter for the Financial Post for three years and then joined The Globe and Mail, where she served as Calgary bureau chief and on several news beats. She is now an independent writer and consultant on environmental issues, and an associate of the International Institute for Sustainable Development.

Alanna is the author of two books, *Dancing at the Dead Sea: tracking the world's environmental hotspots* (2004) and *Sea sick: the global ocean in crisis* (2009). For her reporting from Madagascar in 2000 she was named the best environmental journalist in the world by the World Conservation Union (IUCN) and the Reuters Foundation. The prize was a fellowship at Oxford University. She was awarded the Atkinson Fellowship in 2008 and spent a year studying the emerging links between neuroscience and education, travelling to England, France and Australia. For *Sea sick* she won the 2010 Grantham Prize for excellence in reporting on the environment.

**Readings:**

Mitchell, Alanna. *Sea sick: the global ocean in crisis*. Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 2009, pp. 100-

121 (Ch. 5)

Mitchell, Alanna. "Could this child's struggle to survive help to spark a wave of extinction that threatens humanity? A special report from the vanishing forests of Madagascar." *The Globe and Mail*, April 15, 2000: F1. (Available on Factiva. This was the story that won Alanna the IUCN-Reuters Foundation fellowship at Oxford.)

## **Week 10, March 20:**

### **Journalism and human rights**

**Guest: Rachel Pulfer**, executive director, Journalists for Human Rights

#### **Readings:**

*International news reporting*, Chapter 9

Please check out the following websites:

Journalists for Human Rights <http://www.jhr.ca>

Canadian Journalists for Free Expression <http://www.cjfe.org/>

Committee to Protect Journalists <http://cpj.org/>

Reporters Sans Frontières <http://www.rsf.org/-Anglais-.html>

## **Week 11, March 27:**

### **Covering conflict; pitfalls of international and cross-cultural reporting**

**Guest: Graeme Smith**, *The Globe and Mail*

Bearing in mind our focus on the relationship between the journalist and the Other, we'll take a look at some of the things that affect our ability to fairly represent reality.

#### **Readings:**

*International news reporting*, Chapters 10 and 11

Palmer, Jerry, and Victoria Fontan. "Journalists and fixers in Iraq." *Journalism* 8(1) (2007): 5-24. (E-reserve)

International News Safety Institute <http://www.newssafety.org/index.php>

**Week 12, April 3:****Television, social media and international news**

**Guest: Tashauna Reid**, associate producer, CBC News, *The National*

**Readings:**

MacKinnon, Mark, “The Twitter war.” *The Globe and Mail*, May 22, 2010, A12. How tweets drove popular uprisings in Thailand and provided an essential way to cover it.

\_\_\_\_\_, “How the crackdown unfolded.” *The Globe and Mail (Breaking News)*, May 19, 2010. MacKinnon’s tweets over a 32-hour period.

BBC News, “Haiti devastated by massive earthquake.” BBC News online front page, Jan. 13, 2010. Background for the discussion of Twitter’s importance in quake coverage.

Moore, Jina, “Did Twitter, Facebook really build a revolution?” *Christian Science Monitor*, June 30, 2011. Retrieved July 1, 2011 from Msnbc.com. Discusses the role of social media in the Arab Spring.

Vissens, Anna, “BBC tips for curating Twitter feeds – from the Russian election.” Posted March 9, 2012 on BBC College of Journalism Discussion blog.

Project for Excellence in Journalism, [How blogs, Twitter and mainstream media have handled the Trayvon Martin case.](http://www.journalism.org/2012/03/30/special-report-how-blogs-twitter-and-mainstream-media-have-handled-trayvon-m/) Posted March 30, 2012 at <http://www.journalism.org/2012/03/30/special-report-how-blogs-twitter-and-mainstream-media-have-handled-trayvon-m/> .

**Week 13, April 8:****Wrap-up, questions, discussion of themes with instructor**

**Readings:** TBD

**April 16—29, exam period.**

## Academic integrity, course management and appeals

**All work you submit must be entirely your own. You must attribute all quotations and give sources for information.**

**Plagiarism** in journalism is particularly serious. The submission by a student of work written by someone else will not be tolerated. **Fabrication** (making stuff up) is another form of dishonesty. Penalties for fabrication, plagiarism and other forms of cheating will range from failing an assignment to failing the course and **will include a disciplinary notice** placed on your academic record.

Often this type of cheating happens when a student becomes overwhelmed with personal and/or academic difficulties. If you are in distress, please consult your instructor or Ryerson's counselling centre rather than taking an irreversible step.

**Further warning: A misspelled proper name or an error of fact can lead to a failing grade on any assignment.** This is a school-wide policy designed to emphasize that a journalist's chief responsibility is to get it right.

As additional guidance, please note the following:

You are required to adhere to Ryerson University's Code of Academic Conduct, which covers plagiarism and other transgressions, and the Code of Non-Academic Conduct. You are also required to adhere to the School of Journalism's Rules of Conduct, which contain greater detail about truth-telling issues specific to the practice of journalism. These are in the school's student handbook. **Please pay particular attention to the section on verifiability (fabrication)**. The handbook includes the School's Reporting Guidelines, with which you should be familiar.

Ryerson's policies on undergraduate course management and appeals (Senate policies 134 and 145) set out in detail the responsibilities of academic units, instructors and students. Please become familiar with them. Please note that **re-grading requests** must be made within 10 working days of the return of the assignment.

## Access, accommodation and academic consideration

**Accommodation of disabilities or other special needs:** Ryerson and the School of Journalism are committed to providing as much access and accommodation as possible. Accommodation of disabilities is governed by the university's policy. Please tell me about any such requirements as soon as you can. It's best to register with Ryerson's Access Centre so that special requirements can be properly co-ordinated. Please also let me know if accommodations prove unsatisfactory or new requirements arise during the term.

**Accommodation of religious, aboriginal and spiritual observance:** This is governed by Ryerson's policy. Students should make requests in the first two weeks of the course. Formal requests must be made within two weeks of an affected deadline, test or exam, or as soon as the date of the observance is known.

**Academic consideration on medical or compassionate grounds:** This is governed by Ryerson's policy. A Ryerson Medical Certificate must accompany all requests for consideration on medical grounds. It should be submitted within three working days of the missed deadline or date of an academic obligation. Documentation should also accompany requests for consideration on compassionate grounds.

**Ryerson does not allow academic consideration for obligations missed because of employment commitments. Please do not ask for this.**