

**JRN 418: International Reporting  
*and*  
IS 470: Writing about Global Issues**

**Fall 2014**

**Tuesdays, 4:30-7:10 p.m.**

**Willard Hall, Rm. 015**

**Prof. Mary D'Ambrosio**

Tel: 860-832-2734

Email: mary.dambrosio@ccsu.edu

Office: DiLoreto 208-009

**Office Hours**

T 2-3 p.m.

W 4:30-7:30 p.m.

Th 9:30 -10:30 a.m.

And by appointment

**Course Description**

This class will prepare you to write about life in other countries, and to cover international issues from the United States.

You'll analyze award-winning foreign reporting, and practice techniques foreign correspondents use. We'll also examine the main areas of international coverage: conflict, politics and diplomacy; the global economy; and domestic affairs as they engage with international questions. And we'll look at the larger issue of how to present balanced and evocative portraits of life in places your readers may never have seen.

We'll read and write about politics, business and finance, poverty and health, immigration, jobs, drug and sex trafficking, refugees, human rights, the environment, tourism and daily life.

You'll choose a country to follow for the semester. You'll then explore a related Connecticut ethnic community, and produce several stories about its affairs.

Alternatively, you may pick an issue or topic, such as sex trafficking, multinational business or drug violence, and report on how that issue is unfolding globally.

We'll discuss reporting challenges, such as corruption, physical danger and barriers to access. And we'll host a guest speakers when available.

**Assignments**

**Due**

1. Analyze the past two years of international coverage of your country or issue by major U.S. (and if you like, international) news outlets. How well have they covered your country, or issue?

1) Does the frequency and depth of reports keep readers reasonably well informed of major developments? 2) Have publications and news outlets chosen, or missed, appropriate angles? 3) Featured original reporting, or relied heavily on the news wires? Identify problems or failings. How could coverage be improved? Conduct a 15-minute Skype interview with a correspondent of one of these outlets, for an automatic half-grade bump up.

1,200 words

10%

Sept. 22

2. Develop a beat centered around an ethnic community in Connecticut, preferably related to the country you are following. You will generate three stories from this beat, ideally one news analysis, one feature story or profile and one story about a trend or controversy. At least one article should also include an interview with a consular official about business ties between your beat and Connecticut; and – if you are a journalism major -- at least one should incorporate a multimedia element, such as a photo essay, audio slideshow or short video. All stories must include links, and at least one piece of original captioned, credited art.

Each story should run 700-1000 words

60%

Oct. 6, Oct. 27, Nov. 17

3. You are the incoming New York Times or CNN bureau chief for your chosen country or region. Draft a coverage plan to submit to the foreign desk: what stories do you recommend your news outlet prioritize, and how do you plan to cover them? Which sources and/or officials do you hope to cultivate? What coverage and operational challenges will you face, and how will you overcome them? What resources (including language and safety training) do you think you will need?

1,000 words, plus a 10-minute class presentation

10%

Dec. 8

4. Class participation and readings

20%

### **Provisional Weekly Schedule**

#### **Week 1 (Sept. 2)**

##### **Introduction to the syllabus and the course**

**Reporting from abroad vs. reporting from home.** Connecting with a distant or virtual audience. Explaining cultural context.

Read for Week 2: Scoop, Book 1

#### **Week 2 (Sept. 9)**

**The big stories: key regions and languages.** Successful foreign reporting depends upon the correspondent's ability to develop sources in, and to penetrate, other cultures. The advantages of learning Spanish, French, Arabic or Mandarin Chinese.

Read for Week 3: Scoop, Book 2

### **Week 3 (Sept. 16)**

**Choosing stories that fit -- and fight -- the prevailing narrative.** Choosing which stories to cover is your first important decision. But sometimes that choice is made for you.

Read for Week 4: Scoop, Book 3

**Assignment #1 / Coverage critique due – Sept. 22**

### **Week 4 (Sept. 23)**

**The FOIA, censorship, sourcing and the role of citizen journalism.** U.S.-based reporters have a great advantage in the Freedom of Information Act, which offers access to copious public information. That disappears once you leave the country. How to deal with access barriers, corruption, unreliable sources and publishers' passion for citizen journalism.

### **Week 5 (Sept. 30)**

**Covering politics and diplomacy.** The American influence, and how U.S. efforts to further its strategic interests affect your work.

Discussion of coverage critiques

Read for Week 6: Coups, Chaps. 1 through 5

### **Week 6 (Oct. 7)**

**Covering conflict and disaster.** One of the major areas of international coverage. Do we give it too much priority, in relation to its importance and impact?

Read for Week 8: Coups, chaps 6 through 11

**Beat story #1 – Oct. 6**

### **Week 7 (Oct. 14)**

**People, poverty and human rights.** Covering human rights issues. Tracking foreign debt, aid and trade. How countries spend the money they get. Is wealth trickling down?

**Covering events through people and stories:** Screening of “Which Way Home” (90 minutes)

<http://articles.latimes.com/2009/aug/22/entertainment/et-way-home22>

**Victimized by the sob story**

[http://www.salon.com/2014/05/28/heres\\_why\\_it\\_matters\\_when\\_a\\_human\\_rights\\_crusader\\_builds\\_her\\_advocacy\\_on\\_lies/](http://www.salon.com/2014/05/28/heres_why_it_matters_when_a_human_rights_crusader_builds_her_advocacy_on_lies/)

### **Week 8 (Oct. 21)**

**Covering the global economy.** The globalization controversy. The activities of multinationals. The role of the IMF, the World Bank and the World Trade Organization. Wall Street and international banking. Writing about economic and financial crisis.

Discussion: Review of beat story #1, with a discussion of issues encountered in the field. How can you win the trust of your sources? Report across cultural and linguistic barriers?

Read for Week 9: Coups, chaps 12 through 17

**Beat story #2 due Oct. 27**

**Week 9 (Oct. 28)**

**Covering domestic issues, the environment and sports.** Covering global warming, the threat of water shortage and the degradation of forests. Health funding and politics: shortages of supplies and professionals, the effects of Western pharmaceutical companies' pursuit of profits, the faster spread of disease. The role of NGOs and the WHO.

Read for Week 10: Redundant? chaps 1 through 3

**Week 10 (Nov. 4)**

**Documentary screening and discussion: "Reporter"** (about the career of NYT columnist Nicholas Kristof)

Read for Week 11: Redundant? chaps 4 through 6

**Week 11 (Nov. 11)**

**Working with the foreign reporting triumvirate:** fixer, driver and interpreter.

Read for week 12: Redundant? chaps 7 through 11

**Beat story #3 due Nov. 17**

**Week 12 (Nov. 18)**

**Safety, emergencies and jail.** Your press pass can protect you; it can also get you into trouble.

**Week 13 (Nov. 25)**

**Foreign reporting careers, then and now.** Bureaus, stringing and parachuting. Considering the future of foreign correspondence.  
Possible Skype interview with a foreign correspondent.

**Week 14 (Dec. 2)**

**Here Comes Everybody**

The impact of local reporters and citizen journalism

**Story pitching, and working with editors**

**Week 16 (Dec. 9) Student presentations of coverage plans**

Coverage plan due (Dec. 8)

**Course Materials**

**Readings**

Our readings will comprise both standout journalism -- books, book excerpts and articles -- and substantive reports, by such agencies as the UN, IMF, Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch.

Students are expected to regularly read the New York Times, Foreign Policy and the Economist; to listen to NPR and the BBC World Service; and to watch CNN.

### **Books**

Mort Rosenblum, Coups and Earthquakes

Evelyn Waugh, Scoop

Richard Sambrook, Are Foreign Correspondents Redundant?

### **Plus readings drawn from:**

Martha Gellhorn, The Face of War

Ernest Hemingway, Byline

Joan Didion, Salvador

Anthony Shadid, Night Draws Near

Slavenka Drakulic, Café Europa

Thomas Friedman, The World is Flat

Nicholas Kristof, Half the Sky

William Greider, One World, Ready or Not

Carlo Levi, Christ Stopped at Eboli

Neal Ascherson, Black Sea

Pico Iyer, Falling off the Map

Catherine Boo: Behind the Beautiful Forevers

Alan Goodman (ed), The World on a String: How to become a freelance correspondent

### *Articles and NGO reports*

United Nations Development Program Human Development Report

Jeff Garten, Big Ten Emerging Markets

Correspondents may no longer be central to what we learn about the world; the new foreign reporting <http://www.niemanlab.org/2010/12/oxford-study-whats-the-future-of-foreign-reporting/>

The correspondent is dead, long live the correspondent

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2010/dec/08/long-live-the-foreign-correspondent>

No more reporting behind readers' backs

<http://www.nytimes.com/2009/03/15/weekinreview/15GIRIDHARADAS.html>

Is it true people aren't interested in foreign reporting?

<http://www.nieman.harvard.edu/reports/article/102449/A-Former-BBC-Producer-Takes-a-Fresh-Look-at-Foreign-News-Its-the-Audience-Stupid.aspx>

## **Course Policies**

### **Attendance Policy:**

We'll do some of our most important work in class, so attendance is key. A death in the immediate family or a severe illness (doctor's note required) are the only excuses accepted for absences. If you miss more than two classes, your final grade will drop by one letter.

### **Deadlines: No Late Assignments Accepted**

Missing deadline is a grave offense in journalism; a closely-researched, beautifully-written story is of no value if it lands on the editor's desk as the magazine is going to print.

Likewise, assignments for this class must be turned in on deadline.

Complete deadline assignments to the best of your ability within the assigned time frame. This is difficult at first, but gets easier with practice.

### **Grading:**

A= Excellence; the work is publishable with only minor changes.

A-/B+ = Well-written with appropriate use of facts. The article may have a "hole" or need some additional material, but it is free of factual errors and has no more than one or two grammar or punctuation errors.

B = Generally good work. The writing is solid, but the lead needs more work. More factual detail is usually needed.

B-/C+ = Awkward phrasing, syntax, grammar, and punctuation have derailed the piece, distracting from the strengths. More reporting may be needed.

C = Average. Several organizational, writing and/or reporting problems. Contains factual errors or insufficient factual information. Many spelling, grammar and punctuation errors.

C-/D+ = Generally indicates careless work: Factual errors, grammar and punctuation mistakes; word usage problems. Needs more research.

D/D- = Poor work. Many things have gone wrong. Please meet with me.

F= Please meet with me to discuss your work, and to set up a plan for improvement.

### **How Publishing your Work Earns You a Higher Grade:**

Publishing two stories in a professional newspaper, magazine or digital publication bumps your grade up by a half letter (these must be news or feature articles, not opinion pieces, reviews or blog posts). Please submit evidence of publication to me.

### **Academic Misconduct:**

Disruptive classroom behavior, cheating, and plagiarism can jeopardize your standing in this class. Plagiarism, the use of work (ideas, words, images, tables, code, mathematical formulas) other than your own without appropriate attribution, will result in an automatic “F” for the course, and possibly further disciplinary action. Do your own work. Ignorance of the rules is not justification for plagiarism. Make sure you understand how to attribute work for printed and online sources.

**Submitting Assignments:**

Please post all completed assignments to the class **Blackboard Learn** site. I will return your work, with comments and grades, on the same interface. **Please do not email me assignments.**

**If You Have Special Needs:**

Please contact me privately to discuss your needs if you believe you require course accommodations based on the impact of a disability or medical condition, or if you have emergency medical information to share. You must provide me with a copy of your accommodation letter from Student Disability Services, so I can make appropriate arrangements.

*I look forward to working with you!*

-###-