

Welcome to the Press in America - Journalism 1002 Summer 2025, Session 2

Instructor:

Gail B. MacDonald

About your instructor:

I retired on Jan. 1, 2025 as a professor in residence for the journalism department in Storrs, where I taught for about 16 years. I'm a veteran journalist and the author of two local history books. I'm currently contracted for a third book. As a journalist, I worked full-time for The Day and as a freelancer wrote regularly for The New York Times, Rhode Island Monthly and numerous other newspapers and magazines. I live in New London.

Meeting logistics:

This is an online blended course with two, two-hour synchronous online sessions per week, plus asynchronous off-line work required.

The synchronous sessions are Tuesdays and Thursdays 1:30 p.m. to 3:30 p.m.

First synchronous session is Tuesday, July 15

Last synchronous session is Thursday, August 14

Textbook:

"Covering America, A Narrative History of a Nation's Journalism" by Christopher B. Daly, University of Massachusetts Press

Access to the text is available at no additional cost via the university's subscription to Project Muse. Follow this link: <https://muse-jhu-edu.ezproxy.lib.uconn.edu/book/13662>.

Other requirements:

Articles and readings posted to huskyct

At least two of these three movies:

Citizen Kane

The Post

Spotlight

How to stay in touch:

If you have questions or concerns at any point in the semester, please don't hesitate to reach out to me. I'm available in these ways:

UConn email: gail.macdonald@uconn.edu

Schedule an appointment for an online meeting

Talk to me before or after class sessions
Message via huskyct

Huskyct:

Our course schedule, assignments, deadlines and other important information will be posted on our course huskyct site. Please check it regularly.

However, please note that the synchronous online sessions will provide important information students will need in order to succeed in the course. **Student attendance at these sessions is expected.**

Course Objectives

The course will cover the development and evolution of the American press from the colonial era to the 21st century.

By the end of the course, students should:

- Understand press freedom in the U.S., know why it's guaranteed and why that guarantee is vital to our democracy
- Identify and understand the major eras of American journalism, how its practice and role changed through time
- Understand the variety of journalism practiced, including news writing, opinion writing and advocacy journalism across platforms including broadcast, print and digital
- Understand the role journalism has played in effecting social and political change
- Understand the responsibility for diversity of journalism in terms of race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation and more
- Become familiar with the ethical principles by which journalists work and how those principles have evolved over time
- Know how journalists practice their craft - both in the past and today

Overview of the Course

The founding fathers regarded journalism as a foundation of the country's democracy and took steps to protect it from governmental interference. Journalists are responsible for ensuring the public is well-informed about issues and events. They also are watchdogs over governmental and corporate wrongdoing, corruption and excess. Investigative journalism has exposed great wrongs. Occasionally, individual journalists who ignored the principles of the profession have done great harm.

Christopher Daly writes in our required textbook that “journalism is central to the experiences of most Americans” but strangely “missing, muted, or understated” in most histories. And yet journalism provides major source material for historians.

We will cover American journalism—from early letterpress printing to print, radio and television, and the internet—from early European settlements in North America to the present. This course will cover influential journalists, minority journalists whose important work has sometimes been forgotten, and movements in media. It will discuss journalism’s principles and social value. It will cover changing ways information has been disseminated. The history of journalism helps us understand today’s volatile debates about the press.

This course tells this history often through individual journalists, including both award-winning and famous and not-so-well-known reporters who influenced how the craft developed.

Diversity Statement

The UConn Journalism Department strongly encourages students to seek out assignment ideas and journalistic experiences that will help them hear, understand and tell the stories of people whose circumstances or backgrounds are unlike their own. Diversity includes areas such as race, gender identity, ethnicity, native language, citizenship status, age, physical or mental or emotional challenges, educational level and political views, among others.

This course will expose students to a broad range of American journalists who have chronicled American life through lenses of geography, race, gender, religion, culture, and economic situation. Students will be expected to bring the experience of many points of view into their own spirit of inquiry here.

Assignments and grading

The major work for the semester is as follows:

- Two tests - one taken at around the mid-point of the summer session and one at the end of the session - 30%

Tests will be a combination of multiple choice questions and short answer questions.

- Project examining a notable journalist or specific era of journalism - 30%
- Four discussion assignments - 20%
- Participation - 20%

In addition, an extra credit writing assignment will be provided near the end of the semester for students who would like to boost their grades.

Details about all assignments will be provided well before work needs to be completed.

Meeting deadlines

Late work is not accepted. Students will receive a zero for work not completed by deadline.

Any student having difficulty keeping up with course work should talk to me and consult with the Dean of Students and/or CSD.

Academic Misconduct

Plagiarism, fabrication or completing assignments via AI is not acceptable practice. Instances of serious misconduct are grounds for failing the course. Please also follow this link to read other important university policies regarding academic misconduct:

<https://provost.uconn.edu/faculty-and-staff-resources/syllabi-references/>

Course Schedule

Please note - the schedule could change slightly, but advance notice will always be provided. Because of the short duration of summer sessions, it's important students take all responsibilities seriously from day one of the course. Keeping up with the required work is essential.

Week 1 - July 15 and July 17

Introductions and foundations

The Colonial Press

Slavery, abolitionism and the changing news scene

Out of class work: Reading, Daly Chapters 1, 2, 3 and 4

Week 2 - July 22 and July 24

Muckrakers, Yellow Journalism and War

New technologies, new platforms

Out of class work: Reading, Daly Chapters 5, 6, 7 and 8

Movie: Citizen Kane

Discussion One

Week 3 - July 29 and July 31

World War II Journalism

Increasing Corporatization of News

Investigative Journalism and the Modern Era

Out of class work: Reading, Daly Chapters 9, 10, 11

Discussion Two

Test One

Week 4 - August 5 and August 7

Vietnam, Pentagon Papers, Watergate

The Digital Age

Out of class work: Reading, Daly Chapters 12, 13

Semester Projects

Discussion Three

Movie: The Post

Week 5 - August 12 and August 14

The Current Journalism Landscape

Where are we going?

Out of class work: Reading, Daly, Chapters 14, 15 and conclusion

Reading: Daly, Chap. 15 and conclusion

Discussion four

Movie: Spotlight

Test two

