Comparative Media Systems / Sociology of News  
Spring 2008

E58.2184.001 (G93.2072.001, FAS/Sociology)  
Tuesdays, 7:15-9:25 p.m., Silver 409

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Course Description
How does journalism differ around the world? And to the extent that it does, why?  
Beyond the personal idiosyncrasies of individual journalists and media owners, which  
factors play the greatest role in shaping “national news cultures”: professional values and  
traditions, level and type of commercialism, government regulations, bureaucratic  
pressures or organizational dynamics, and/or audiences? Too much of our media criticism  
proceeds from hunches and assumptions, rather than real evidence, for the simple reason  
that it limits itself to a single national context (and often a single time period).  
Adequately sorting out the factors that shape our media environment can best be  
accomplished via comparative research. This course offers a conceptual roadmap to such  
a project as well as a close empirical look at the news media in a variety of national  
contexts. In addition to analyzing the factors that structure news media systems and the  
roles that media play in democratic societies, the course incorporates (1) a survey of  
research methods appropriate for comparative investigations; and (2) national and  
comparative case studies, representing the major types of Western European journalistic  
“models” as well as some important non-European variants.

Teaching / Course Objectives
* to provide students with a thorough understanding of how news media  
differ around the world;  
* to provide students with knowledge of the major explanatory and  
normative theories of the news;  
* to equip students with the research methodologies needed for comparative  
media research, including analysis of official political and economic data,  
ethnography, in-depth interviewing, and content analysis;  
* to help students gain greater critical perspective on the way journalism is  
practiced in their own countries, and thus to appreciate the advantages and  
disadvantages of other media systems, vis-à-vis various democratic  
normative ends.
Texts

Required Books (Available at NYU Bookstore)


Pdf texts: Available on Blackboard under “Course Documents” (indicated in schedule with asterisk).

Course Assignments and Evaluation

Evaluation of your performance in this course will center around three elements:

(1) Participation and In-Class Presentation/Critique of One Week’s Reading (15 percent): Attendance is the prerequisite obviously but alone is not enough. I expect you to have read the readings before the class meets. You are expected to have read all assigned texts, and you may be called upon randomly to confirm that you have read them. What I am looking for is not some single correct answer but rather a serious engagement with the readings. Did you take from them one or two significant ideas or form any questions? Are you in fact participating in the class’s collective search for knowledge and insight? For at least one of the week’s readings, either individually or working in a group, you will provide a short in-class presentation (10-15 minute summary and critique).

(2) Midterm Take-home Exam (35 percent of final grade): This exam will measure your critical understanding of key concepts and theories in the sociology of news and comparative media studies.

(3) Research Paper (50 percent of final grade): In this theoretically-framed empirical paper of 20-25 pages, you will conduct original empirical research grounded in the sociology of media. Cross-national or internationally-oriented research is strongly encouraged. A detailed research prospectus will be due midway through the semester,
and all topics must be approved by the professor. Your paper must include some form of primary research, such as content analysis of media texts, images, or design; surveys; in-depth interviews; ethnography; and/or analysis of data on government policies or media markets. PhD students are allowed to draw upon their ongoing dissertation research, as long as links are made to the theoretical concerns of this course. In exceptional circumstances, papers offering an original and well-formulated theoretical synthesis/critique may also be accepted. After you turn in your paper, keep a copy. You are responsible for providing a copy of the paper if the original is lost.

**Grading Policies**

It should go without saying that plagiarism is strictly prohibited. This policy will be strictly enforced.

“Plagiarism, one of the gravest forms of academic dishonesty in university life, whether intended or not, is academic fraud. In a community of scholars, whose members are teaching, learning and discovering knowledge, plagiarism cannot be tolerated. Plagiarism is failure to properly assign authorship to a paper, a document, an oral presentation, a musical score and/or other materials which are not your original work. You plagiarize when, without proper attribution, you do any of the following: Copy verbatim from a book, an article or other media; Download documents from the Internet; Purchase documents; Report from other’s oral work; Paraphrase or restate someone else’s facts, analysis and/or conclusions; Copy directly from a classmate or allow a classmate to copy from you.” (NYU Steinhardt School of Education Statement on Academic Integrity)

**Assignments:**
1) must be turned in on-time: late assignments will be down-graded (one full grade per week late);
2) must be stapled, if more than one page;
3) must have your name at the top of the page;
4) must have all pages numbered.

Any assignments not formatted as indicated in 2) through 4) will be downgraded an additional 1-3 points.

Finally, you will find that I am very accessible and willing to discuss readings and assignments with you. If you cannot meet me during my office hours, I am usually available immediately before or after class.

**Grading Standards:**

A = excellent. Outstanding work in all respects. Your papers and essays are thoroughly researched, appropriately documented, logically organized and rhetorically convincing. Your analysis is not only comprehensive and sound, but creative and original. In short, you not only get it, but begin to see through it!

B = good. Your understanding of course materials is complete and thorough, and there is at least some evidence of your own critical intelligence at work. You demonstrate basic competence in research, writing and oral presentation.
C = adequate. Your writing is vague and incoherent or riddled with grammatical or spelling errors. You do not make proper use of source materials, and there is little depth or concreteness to your research or analysis. Your understanding of concepts and ideas is incomplete and often misguided, but there is at least some evidence that you “got” something from this course.

D = unsatisfactory. Work exhibits virtually no understanding or even awareness of basic concepts and themes of course. Your participation has been inadequate or superficial. Either you have not been paying attention or you have not been making any effort.

F = failed. Work was not submitted or completed according to the basic parameters outlined in the course syllabus (basic requirements for page length, topical focus, types and number of sources).

Grades are calculated according to the following scale:
94-100 A; 90-93 A-; 87-89 B+; 83-86 B; 80-82 B-;
77-79 C+; 73-76 C; 70-72 C-; 67-69 D+; 63-66 D; 60-62 D-; 0-59 F
Schedule (subject to revision):

1.22 Normative Models of the Press

1.29 Sociology of News: Major Empirical Approaches

For further reading:

2.5 News and Economic Constraints: Ownership
Baker, Media Concentration and Democracy

For further reading:
2.12 Political Constraints
Bennett et al., *When the Press Fails*

For further reading:
--Paolo Mancini. 2000. “Political complexity and alternative models of
journalism: The Italian case.” Pp. 265-78 in J. Curran and M-J. Park, Eds., *De-
Ethic of Objectivity and Its Political Origins.” *Political Communication*, 23: 173-
185.

2.19 Comparative Research Methods and Models
Hallin and Mancini, *Comparing Media Systems* (chs. 1-4)
18 in J. Curran and M-J. Park, eds., *De-Westernizing Media Studies*. London:
Routledge.
Political Communication Research.” Pp. 87-111 in F. Esser and B. Pfetsch, eds.,
*Comparing Political Communication: Theories, Cases, and Challenges.*
Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

For further reading (methods):
--Myra Marx Ferree, William Anthony Gamson, Jürgen Gerhards, and Dieter
Rucht. 2002. *Shaping Abortion Discourse: Democracy and the Public Sphere in
Germany and the United States*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
ideological change,” pp. 58-86 in *We Keep America on Top of the World.*
London: Routledge.
--Daniel C. Hallin and Paolo Mancini. 1984. “Speaking of the President: Political
Structure and Representational Form in U.S. and Italian TV News.” *Theory and
Contrasts in Narratives of the KAL and Iran Air Incidents.” *Journal of
--David H. Weaver. 1998. “Journalists Around the World: Commonalities and
Differences,” pp. 455-480 in D.H. Weaver, ed., *The Global Journalist*. Cresskill,
NJ: Hampton Press. (re: survey methods)
2.26 News Media and Journalistic Fields (I)
Benson and Neveu, Bourdieu and the Journalistic Field, chs. 1 (Benson and Neveu), 2 (Bourdieu), 4 (Marchetti)

RESEARCH PAPER PROSPECTUS DUE FRIDAY, 2.29, 5 PM, IN MY MAILBOX OR BY EMAIL (3 pp.: 2 pp. specification of research question and detailed description of sampling, methods, etc.; plus 1 page of references)

3.4 News Media and Journalistic Fields (II)
Benson and Neveu, Bourdieu and the Journalistic Field, chs. 5 (Benson), 6 (Champagne and Marchetti), 7 (Duval), and 11 (Schudson)
*TAKE-HOME EXAM DISTRIBUTED IN CLASS: DUE FRIDAY, 3.7, 5 PM, IN MY MAILBOX OR BY EMAIL

3.11 CASE STUDIES: Polarized Pluralist and Democratic Corporatist Media Systems
Hallin and Mancini, Comparing Media Systems, chs. 5 and 6

For further reading:


3.17-3.21 Spring Break

3.25 NO CLASS

MAKEUP CLASS (to be scheduled): Analysis of News Form and Images


For further reading:


4.1 CASE STUDY: Mexico
Hughes, *Newsrooms in Conflict*

For further reading:

4.8 CASE STUDY: Al Jazeera

4.15 METHODS WORKSHOP
Students will present summaries of their research design and preliminary findings.

4.22 CASE STUDY: Foreign Correspondents

For further reading:

4.29 CASE STUDIES: Internet and the Global Public Sphere?

For further reading:

FINAL PAPER DUE: TUESDAY, 5.6, 5 PM, IN PROFESSOR’S MAILBOX