Instructor: Catherine F. Schryer
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Course Description:
This course provides students with an opportunity to investigate the resources and constraints that characterizes the media, especially the Canadian media. The course also provides experience in using many of the stylistic practices present in such media. Much of the course is oriented to hands-on practice and analysis, and much of this practical work will take place during the workshop sessions or in discussion groups.

Required Texts:

Braden, M. and R. Roth. Writing for the Mass Media
Supplementary Course Material for English 408A

Books that will be referred to a lot:
Canadian Press Style Guide (1999) In the library reserve area PE1403.C35
Globe and Mail Style Guide (1990) In the library reserve area PE1403.G56
Collection of videos also available for individuals or groups to consult

Policies

1. No plagiarism please. You should all know the drill by now, and, if you don’t, the University policy is attached at the end of the course outline.

2. It’s really important to keep up with the activities in the course because they prepare you for your assignments and are often needed in workshop. Please bring your file with you to class. I will collect the file at least 2 or 3 times during the course.

3. The assignments and portfolios must be turned in on time. 2 marks per day up to 10% of the grade will be deducted for late assignments and portfolios.

Assignments
1. Analyzing the News. (total 20%)
   This assignment consists of two parts:
a. A one page on-line document that summarizes your group’s findings regarding the social construction of news in one news venue in Canada. (5%)

b. A paper (1,500-1,800 words) in which you 1. discuss the social construction of news in Canada and 2. discuss the resources and constraints that affect journalistic practices in Canada. (15%)

2. The Role of Public Relations (10%)
A report on the role of public relations specialists at the University of Waterloo or Wilfrid Laurier University. (10%)

3. Writing-for-the media: Style portfolio (15%)
Hand in your writing-for-the-media portfolio. Indicate which 3 items should be evaluated. The portfolio should contain short course assignments related to style.

4. Editing the News (15%)
Edit the writing-for-the-media files (both the style and genre portfolios) of another course participant using a coloured pen or pencil. At the end of the file, advise the writer as to which items they should submit for evaluation.

5. Writing for the media: Genre portfolio (30%)
Hand in your writing-for-the media portfolio. Indicate which two items should be evaluated. The portfolio will consist of three items: a press release, a feature piece on a subject of your choice, an editorial piece based on a presentation and interview with an international editor who will be visiting campus in March.

6. Activity file. 10%
This file consists of activities, group and individual, required to complete the assignments. This file will be graded for completion and for effort.

Course Schedule

Week 1  Introduction

- Stylistic differences between academic and media writing
- Public Relations and the Press

Reading: Braden and Roch. Chapter one

In class activity: Interview another student about their future plans. Write up your interview into a brief new story.

Week 2  Analysing the News

Tuesday. January 8

Readings: Fowler: The Social Construction of News
Braden and Roch: pp. 79-87
Osler: News: A Mirror to Ourselves
Activity: Write a brief report (1-2 pages) summarizing some of the selection processes identified in the readings.

Thursday January 10  
Readings: Porter: What is News?

Activity: Write a few paragraphs summarizing what Porter adds to your knowledge of the news selection process.

In-class activity: In your groups design a tracking device (heuristic, gird or check-off sheet) to help your group keep track of the news selection process over the following weekend. Your device should reflect the selection criteria present in the course readings.

Week 3 Analysing the News  
Tuesday January 15

Readings: Vipond: The Economies of the Mass Media

Activity: Over the weekend, listen to and watch the news whenever possible. Focus on analyzing your group’s particular media outlet. Use your tracking device to record the news present in your media outlet.

In-class activity: In groups compare and record the results of your tracking activity

Thursday January 17  
Readings: Romanow and Sonderlund. Canadian Audiences and Their Mass Media.  
Vipond. Culture and Mass Media

Activity: Write a brief report (1-2 pages) outlining some of the resources and constraints faced by the mass media in Canada.

Week 4 Writing for the Media  
Tuesday—January 22

Class Presentations: Do a group power point presentation (5-7 minutes) of the results of your media survey. Your results must be made accessible to the class through an electronic site or hard copy.

Thursday—January 24  
Readings: Braden and Roth, Chapters 2, Chapter 4 pp. 88-98.

Portfolio: Do either exercise 1 or 2 on p.49 of B and R (under Suggestions for the Pros)  
Do Activity 2 (under Mastering the Message) p. 95 B and R.
Week 5.  Writing for the Media  
Tuesday --- January 29  
Readings: Tasko: CP Polices  
           Tasko The Working Journalist  

Portfolio: Do exercise 2 and 5 B and R pp. 121-123 (under Mastering the Message)  

Due: Analyzing the News Assignment  

Thursday—January 31  
Readings: Braden and Roth Chapter 6  
           Romanow and Sonderlund. Broadcasting  

Portfolio: Do Exercise 2. B and R (under Suggestions from the Pros) p. 150.  

Week 6. Interviewing  
Tuesday – February 5  

Readings: Braden and Roch, Chapter 3.  
           Connell. Personalities in the Popular Media  
           Fowler. Conversation and Consensus  

Activities: Locate and copy a front page newspaper article. Identify the sources of information. Write a brief report outlining the sources used in your article and speculating as to why the article accessed those sources.  

In-class activity: Prepare a set of interview questions for media guest for next class.  

Thursday—February 7  
In-class activity--- interview with media representative (s)  

Due: Writing for the Media file: Style Portfolio  

Week 7 Public Relations  
Tuesday – February 12  

Readings: Heath. Critical Perspectives on Public Relations  
           Hunt and Gurnig. Planning and Executing the Public Relations Campaign  

Activity: Collect 3 or 4 public relations documents related to the University of Waterloo or Wilfrid Laurier University. Write a brief report identifying any aspects of public relations planning that you can see operating in your documents  

Thursday – February 14  
Readings: Braden and Roch, Chapter 9
Berg and Robb. Crisis Management and the ‘Paradigm Case’

In-class Activity: Design a set of interview questions for public relations specialists.

Activity: Select a topic for your own “softnews” feature topic. Write a few paragraphs explaining why you have selected your topic: why would it be interesting to readers? Why are you the right person to explore this topic? What access to information do you have on this topic? Who do you know to interview?

Reading Week

Week 8 Writing for the Media: Genres
Tuesday—Feb 26
In-class activity: Interview public relations specialists

Thursday—Feb 28
Readings: Braden and Roch Chapter 7

Portfolio: Write a press release based on interview with public relations specialist.

Activity: Start a “future features file” on your own feature piece. Do a search of Newscan and locate at least 3 or 4 articles to help you develop your topic.

Week 9 Writing for the Media: Genres
Tuesday—March 5
Reading: Braden and Roch Chapter 7

Activity: In groups locate a newspaper article or magazine feature and complete Practice Exercise 7.4 in B and R. p.171. Present your findings to the class

Thursday—March 7
Activity: Conduct an interview to gather information about your feature piece. Put interview notes in your activity file.

Week 10. Writing for the Media: Genres
Tuesday—March 12
Readings: Braden and Roth. Chapter 8

Activity: On the internet or in the library locate editorial and opinion pieces written by Lewis Lapham, the editor of Harper’s Magazine. Bring at least 2 or 3 examples to class.

In-class activity: Do an analysis of Lapham’s style using the workshop material provided.
Thursday—March 14
Activity: Using the internet and other sources find as much as you can about Harpar’s and its former editor.

Activity: Write a report (1-2 pages) on your analysis of Lapham’s style

In-class activity: Share your findings about Harpar’s with other members of the class—via short reports.

Week 11. Writing for the Media: Genres

Tuesday —March 19

In class Activity: Compile your findings about Harpar’s and its editor. Draft a series of interview questions.

Thursday— March 21
Portfolio: Draft of feature story due. Editing workshop.

Week 12. Writing for the Media

Tuesday—March 26
In-class Activity: design interview questions for the editor of Harper’s

Thursday—March 28
Interview with editor of Harper’s Magazine.

Portfolio due Monday, April 8.

1 The Arts Faculty Council requires the following note on all course outlines:
   “All students registered in the courses of the Faculty of Arts are expected to know what constitutes an academic offense, to avoid committing academic offenses, and to take responsibility for their academic actions. When the commission of an offense is established, disciplinary penalties will be imposed in accord with Policy #71 (Student Academic Discipline). For information on categories of offenses and types of penalties, students are directed to consult the Summary of Policy #71 (Student Academic Discipline) which is supplied in the Undergraduate Calendar (p1:11). If you need help in learning how to avoid offenses such as plagiarism, cheating, and double submission, or if you need clarification of the discipline policy, ask your course instructor for guidance. Other resources regarding the discipline policy are your academic advisor and the Undergraduate Associate Dean.”