

Syllabus and General Guide
Department of Journalism and Mass Communications
Course Number: JMC 586, *Special Topics*
Spring 2006 Credit Hours: 3

- I. **Title: *Special Topic: Film in Journalism*, meets Thursdays 4 – 7 p.m., Wilson 115.**

- II. **Catalog Description.** The course is a seminar for seniors and graduate students concerning “a current topic affecting mass media,” in this case an examination of journalistic practices and ethics as portrayed in certain American cinema of the past 35 years.

- III. **Purpose:** The course is designed to enhance the student’s effectiveness as a consumer of news media, and casts light on various dimensions of journalistic practice, to include editorial functions and ethics. Students will be engaged in the examination of background issues in news reporting, using the platform of near-modern and contemporary Hollywood film.

- IV. **Course Objectives:** Emphases are placed upon mass media as an agent in public opinion and global public debate, including its impact upon citizenry and cultural schema. The framework of “role-playing” will most often be employed, wherein students will be asked to analyze both practical and ethical journalistic issues from the mindset of characters as portrayed in the films.

- V. **Content Outline:**
 - A) Discussion of the mass media’s social role and ethical obligations;
 - B) Analyses of 10 films or portions of films which concern information-gathering; publishing; conflicts of interest; and standards of photojournalism;
 - C) Analyses of film-depicted conflicts between First Amendment interests and other -- sometimes contrasting -- rights, principles or laws.

- VI. **Instructional Activities:** Lecture, class discussion and debate. Ongoing class discussion using the BlackBoard computer platform is required, as is consumption of contemporary media content.

- VII. **Field, Clinical or Laboratory Experiences:** Use of Internet, consumption of media content, particularly film clips in class.
- VIII. **Resources:** Modern film; journal articles available at Waterfield library.
 - *Newsweek* magazine, the *Louisville Courier-Journal*, and other print resources may be called upon. Also, students will need to access web sites for research and background.
- IX. **Grading Procedure:** A total of 1,000 points may be garnered through successful completion of course components. The scale is:
 900 - 1,000 = "A"
 800 - 899 = "B"
 700 - 799 = "C"
 600 - 699 = "D"
 Below 600 = "E"

Itemized Course Components:

TEN WRITTEN REPORTS (at 80 points apiece).....	800 pts.
CLASS ATTENDANCE & INVOLVEMENT	200 pts.

Graduate students will have a 15-page research paper due in April, and factored in at 20% of their final grade.

- IX. **JMC Department Attendance Policy:** Attendance and punctuality are required. Just as your punctuality and presence would be expected on a professional job, you are expected to attend all classes and to be there on time. A legitimate reason for absence, such as illness or a university-related trip, should be brought to the instructor's attention by notifying the instructor of an absence ahead of time, just as you would notify a professional employer. Work missed because of an excused absence may be made up as provided elsewhere in this syllabus, but work missed because of an unexcused absence may not. Unexcused absences will thus negatively affect a student's final grade.
- Students missing more than 25% of classes will automatically fail the course, no matter the reason for the absences. Substantial lateness to class will count as an absence.

- XI. **Academic Honesty:** Cheating, plagiarism (submitting another person's material as one's own), or doing work for another person who will receive academic credit for it are impermissible. This includes the use of unauthorized books, notes, or other sources in order to help oneself or a classmate during examinations; the unauthorized copying of examinations, assignments, reports, or term papers; or the submission

of unacknowledged material as if it were the student's own work. Disciplinary action may be taken beyond this course — see the MSU Student Bulletin. **Note:** *Faculty reserve the right to invalidate any examination or other evaluative measures if evidence exists that the integrity of the work has been compromised.*

- XII. **Text & References:** No prescribed text, although books on the subject of media criticism could prove quite useful to students. Suggestion: *Media Literacy, 3rd Ed.*, by W. James Potter (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Pub.) Film criticism resources can also be found at: <http://www.lib.berkeley.edu/MRC/filmstudies/reviewslist.html>
- XIII. **Prerequisites:** Senior or graduate standing. **Verbal and written proficiency in the English language are essential.**

Instructor:
Dr. John Dillon

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**MSU College of Business and Public Affairs,
policies to be aware of:**

* Academic Honesty:
<http://www.murraystate.edu/cbpa/PDF/Honesty.pdf>

* Code of Ethics:
<http://www.murraystate.edu/cbpa/PDF/Ethics.pdf>

* Appeals and Grievance Procedure:
<http://www.murraystate.edu/cbpa/PDF/Appeals.pdf>

Murray State University Non-Discrimination Policy Statement:

Murray State University does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, disability, age, religion, or marital status in admission to educational programs and activities, or employment practices in accordance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (revised 1992), Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990.

Schedule:

Week of Class	Topic / Film or Film Component	Materials Due
Jan. 19	Introduction: Journalistic Practices, Situational Ethics and Orientation to the Course	Class notes
Jan. 26	Film 1: ABSENCE OF MALICE	Class notes
Feb. 2	Film 2: THE CHINA SYNDROME	ABSENCE: WRITTEN REPORT
Feb. 9	<i>Role of the Journalist, Torn Loyalties</i>	CHINA SYNDROME: WRITTEN REPORT
Feb. 16	Film 3: SHATTERED GLASS	Class notes
Feb. 23	Film 4: THE INSIDER	SHATTERED: WRITTEN REPORT
March 2	Film 5: LIVE FROM BAGHDAD	INSIDER: WRITTEN REPORT
March 9	Film 6: BROADCAST NEWS	BAGHDAD: WRITTEN REPORT
March 16	Film 7: UP CLOSE & PERSONAL	B'CAST NEWS: WRITTEN REPORT
March 20 →	SPRING BREAK WEEK	
March 30	<i>Role: Journalistic & Source Ethics as Practiced</i>	UP CLOSE: WRITTEN REPORT
April 6	Film 8: ALL THE PRESIDENT'S MEN	Class notes
April 13	Dillon @ conference, no class	-----
April 20	Film 9: FARENHEIT 9-11	PRESDT'S MEN: WRITTEN REPORT
April 27	<i>Then & Now: "Old vs. New" Journalism</i>	
May 4	Film 10: THE PEOPLE VS. LARRY FLYNT	FARENHEIT: WRITTEN REPORT

**The "final exam" is actually the final report on "The People vs. Flynt."
Graduate student papers are also due at the final exam time.**