

Fall 2017  
The University of Texas at Austin  
School of Journalism

**Course Title: J395 News Literacy for the Digital Age (08166) meets with J349T (08017)**

**TTh 12:30-2:00 p.m.; BMC 4.204**

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**Course Description and Learning Objectives:**

A course created by Dr. Paula Poindexter for journalism and non-journalism majors to enhance understanding and critical thinking about news, journalists, journalism practice and ethics, the public's relationship with news, and the history and role of the press in a democracy. This course will also critique news media coverage, including its deficiencies, and examine the reasons for and solutions to the public's low levels of media trust and news literacy as well as declining news engagement.

As a result of taking News Literacy for the Digital Age, students will:

- Learn who is a journalist and who is not.
- Learn the meaning of news and the news values that influence what gets reported.
- Learn about news in the context of the purpose, principles, process, and history of journalism in a democratic society.
- Become more knowledgeable about news and the different news organizations that produce it.
- Develop critical thinking skills necessary to distinguish real news from fake news, alternative facts, falsehoods, biased news, opinion, gaslighting, and persuasive communication.
- Learn the elements of journalism and how to critically analyze news in its various formats.
- Become knowledgeable about journalistic ethics and ethical lapses.
- Develop a better understanding of how presidential elections and presidential administrations are covered, with special attention paid to leaks, anonymous sources, and fact-checking.
- Become familiar with surveys of journalists and depictions of journalists in the media and film.
- Understand the role of citizen journalists and bloggers who share the media landscape with journalists.
- Understand journalism and communication theories that help explain the process and impact of journalism.
- Understand the impact of social media, multimedia, and smartphones in the digital news landscape.
- Understand the challenges facing journalism.

**Required Readings, Materials, and Resources:**

Chapter 1, “Society Without News Consumers” in *Millennials, News, and Social Media: Is News Engagement a Thing of the Past?* by Paula M. Poindexter (NY: Peter Lang Publishing, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, forthcoming 2017).

Chapter 2, “News in the Mobile Age,” in *News for a Mobile-First Consumer* by Paula M. Poindexter (NY: Peter Lang Publishing, 2016).

“The American Journalist in the Digital Age: Key Findings” by Lars Willnat & David H. Weaver.

“Rolling Stone and UVA: The Columbia University Graduate School of Journalism Report: An anatomy of a journalistic failure” <http://www.rollingstone.com/culture/features/a-rape-on-campus-what-went-wrong-20150405>

*Millennials and News* on Facebook at <http://on.fb.me/Nlejee>. Other class materials will be posted, emailed, or distributed during class.

Other materials and links are listed under weekly assignments.

**Grading.** Plus and minus will be used in calculating course grades. The final course grade will be based on the following formula:

- |  |     |
|--|-----|
| 1. Attendance  | 20% |
| 2. Weekly Quizzes (Including News Literacy IQ)             | 15% |
| 3. Graduate Paper  | 15% |
| 3. Final Project   | 20% |
| 4. Completion Assignments:                                 | 30% |
| a. “Like” <i>Millennials and News</i> on Facebook          |     |
| b. Written responses to questions on readings, films, etc. |     |
| c. Weekly <i>Millennials and News</i> activities           |     |
| d. Other in-class activities                               |     |

**Attendance**, which will be taken at the beginning of class, is calculated as a percentage of days attended by total number of class days. There are no official excused absences but there is an opportunity to “bank” up to three attendance days in case they are needed. To qualify for the Attendance Bank, students can get up to three people who have not used the *Millennials and News* page to “like” the page by the beginning of class, Tues., Sept. 5. After confirming the “likes,” submit the names and addresses on the official *Millennials and News* Attendance Bank sheet by the deadline, Tues., Sept. 5.

The grade for **weekly quizzes**, which will include at least five questions from news posted on *Millennials and News* and/or required readings and in-class activities and discussions, will be calculated as a percentage of correct answers to all questions asked.

The grade for **completion assignments** is calculated as a percentage of completed assignments by total number of completion assignments. **Late completion assignments will not be accepted unless an arrangement has been made in advance.** If the attendance sheet is not signed for any reason, you must send an email to me before the next class and write a note with the date on the next day’s attendance sheet.

**Expectations of Students.**

1. Always come to class ready to learn and prepared to participate.
2. Listen, take notes and participate during class discussions.
3. Attend all classes and oral presentations.
4. Meet all assignment deadlines. Late completion assignments will not be accepted.
5. If an emergency prevents a student from meeting the deadline of an assignment, the student must notify the instructor prior to the deadline.
6. Always turn in professional-level written work. Points will be deducted for spelling, grammatical, punctuation, and capitalization errors. **Hand-written completion assignments must be legible.**
7. **Abide by the University of Texas at Austin Honor Code, which reads:**  
“The core values of The University of Texas at Austin are learning, discovery, freedom, leadership, individual opportunity, and responsibility. Each member of the university is expected to uphold these values through integrity, honesty, trust, fairness, and respect toward peers and community.”
8. **Abide by the University of Texas at Austin Policy on Scholastic Dishonesty, which reads:** The University defines academic dishonesty as cheating, plagiarism, unauthorized collaboration, falsifying academic records, and any act designed to avoid participating honestly in the learning process. Scholastic dishonesty also includes, but is not limited to, providing false or misleading information to receive a postponement or an extension on a test, quiz, or other assignment, and submission of essentially the same written assignment for two courses without the prior permission of the instructor. By accepting this syllabus, you have agreed to these guidelines and must adhere to them. Scholastic dishonesty damages both the student’s learning experience and readiness for the future demands of a work-career.

Students who violate University rules on scholastic dishonesty are subject to disciplinary penalties, including the possibility of failure in the course and/or dismissal from the University. See:

[http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/sjs/acint\\_student.php](http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/sjs/acint_student.php).

9. **Students with disabilities** may request appropriate academic accommodations from the Division of Diversity and Community Engagement, Services for Students with Disabilities, 471-6259.

#### 10. **Counseling and Mental Health Services**

Taking care of your general well-being is an important step in being a successful student. If stress, test anxiety, racing thoughts, feeling unmotivated or anything else is getting in your way, there are options available for support.

For immediate support:

Visit/Call the Counseling and Mental Health Center (CMHC): M-F 8-5p | SSB, 5th floor | 512-471-3515 | [cmhc.utexas.edu](http://cmhc.utexas.edu)

CMHC Crisis Line: 24/7 | 512.471.2255 | [cmhc.utexas.edu/24hourcounseling.html](http://cmhc.utexas.edu/24hourcounseling.html)

CARE Counselor in the Moody College of Communication is: Abby Simpson, LCSW

CMA 4.134 | 512-471-7642 (Please leave a message if she is unavailable)

FREE Services at CMHC:

Brief assessments and referral services

Mental health & wellness articles - [cmhc.utexas.edu/commonconcerns.html](http://cmhc.utexas.edu/commonconcerns.html)

MindBody Lab - [cmhc.utexas.edu/mindbodylab.html](http://cmhc.utexas.edu/mindbodylab.html)

Classes, workshops, & groups - [cmhc.utexas.edu/groups.html](http://cmhc.utexas.edu/groups.html)

## **Fall 2017 Calendar of Assignments and Activities**

### **1. Week of August 28:**

**First Day of Class, Thursday, August 31; Introductions, Course Goals, Learning Objectives, Expectations**

- a. News Literacy IQ Quiz

- b. Introduction to *Millennials and News* on Facebook
- c. Introduction to *Millennials and News* Attendance Bank
- d. Review Assignments Due, Tues., Sept. 5

## 2. Week of September 4:

### Definitions, Fundamentals, and Pivotal Moments in Journalism and U.S. History

- a. Organize groups and discuss responsibilities
- b. The News Media Landscape
- c. Reading and Completion Assignment Due, Tues., Sept. 5: Chapter 1, Society Without News Consumers? in *Millennials, News, and Social Media: Is News Engagement a Thing of the Past?* 2<sup>nd</sup> edition by Paula M. Poindexter (NY: Peter Lang Publishing)
- d. Definitions
- e. Pivotal Moment in Journalism and U.S. History: View: *All the President's Men* followed by Completion Assignment and Discussion
- f. *Millennials and News* Completion Assignment: Before class on Tuesday, “like” the *Millennials and News* page and comment on a story that gets your attention.
- g. Millennials and News Attendance Bank Due
- h. Correct answers to News Literacy IQ Quiz
- i. **Weekly News Literacy Quiz: Thursday**

## 3. Week of September 11:

### Finish “All the President’s Men,” followed by completion and discussion

### Reporting Failures in Journalism History: From the Iraq War to Rolling Stone’s “A Rape on Campus”

- a. View: Bill Moyers’ “Buying the War” with written Completion Assignment due at conclusion of film and Group-led discussion
- b. *Millennials and News* Completion Assignment: Before class on Thursday, comment on a story on *Millennials and News* that was posted between Mon. and Thurs.

### Weekly News Literacy Quiz: Thursday

## 4. Week of September 18:

### Continue Reporting Failures

Complete Bill Moyers’ “Buying the War” with written Completion Assignment due at conclusion of film, and Group-led discussion

Read: “Rolling Stone and UVA: The Columbia University Graduate School of Journalism Report: An anatomy of a journalistic failure <http://www.rollingstone.com/culture/features/a-rape-on-campus-what-went-wrong-20150405>

*Millennials and News* Completion Assignment: Before class on Thursday, comment on a story that was posted on *Millennials and News* between Mon. and Thurs.

## **Weekly News Literacy Quiz: Thursday**

### **5. Week of September 25:**

Press Credibility and Ethical Failures

Read, Chapter 2, “News in the Mobile Age” in *News for a Mobile-First Consumer* by Paula M. Poindexter (NY: Peter Lang, 2016)

*Millennials and News* Completion Assignment: Before class on Thursday, comment on a story on *Millennials and News* that was posted between Mon. and Thurs.

## **Weekly News Literacy Quiz: Thursday**

### **6. Week of October 2:**

**News Consumers, Timeline, and Theories**

## **News Engagement Day: Tuesday, October 3**

**The News Consumer: Engagement, Preferred News, Platforms, Attitudes, Socialization**

Journalism and News Literacy Timeline and Journalism and Communication Theories

*Millennials and News* Completion Assignment: Before class on Thursday, comment on a story posted on *Millennials and News* between Mon. and Thurs.

## **Weekly News Literacy Quiz: Thursday**

### **7. Week of October 9:**

**Covering the News**

Journalists’ Backgrounds, Journalism Principles, Attitudes, and Process

Read: “The American Journalist in the Digital Age” with Completion

Read: “Appendix E: Ethical Guidelines for Journalists Using Social Media” in *News for a Mobile-First Consumer* by Paula M. Poindexter (NY: Peter Lang, 2016).

Podcast: “Traveling to the heart of a story with Tracy Dahlby” (Reporting in Foreign Countries):

<http://www.news-excellence.org/podcast-traveling-to-the-heart-of-a-story-with-tracy-dahlby/>

View: “Page One: Inside the New York Times” followed by Completion and Group-Led Discussion

Journalism Skills Refresher:

1. Storytelling: <https://youtu.be/hYQvrik2Tv4>
2. Telling a story with text: <https://youtu.be/pxZzxfwcOZs>
3. Telling a story visually: <https://youtu.be/kAdoAEFEc4o>
4. Telling a story with audio: <https://youtu.be/AwQmXTFCU7A>
5. Telling a story with graphics: <https://youtu.be/y34SY-cxnYs>

“Interviewing Politicians and Public Leaders”: [https://journalistsresource.org/tip-sheets/reporting/interviewing-politicians-advice-molly-ball?utm\\_source=JR-email&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_campaign=JR-email](https://journalistsresource.org/tip-sheets/reporting/interviewing-politicians-advice-molly-ball?utm_source=JR-email&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=JR-email)

*Millennials and News* Completion Assignment. Before class on Thursday, comment on a story posted on Millennials and News between Mon. and Thurs.

**Weekly News Literacy Quiz: Thursday**

**8. Week of October 16:**

**Continue “Page One,” followed by Completion and Discussion**

Also, Anonymous sources, reporting on social media, verification, fact-checking, and journalists reporting on news media performance.

*Millennials and News* Completion Assignment. Before class on Thursday, comment on a story posted on Millennials and News between Mon. and Thurs.

**Weekly News Literacy Quiz**

**9. Week of October 23:**

**Case Studies**

**Charlottesville and Harvey**

*Millennials and News* Completion Assignment. Before class on Thursday, comment on a story posted on Millennials and News between Mon. and Thurs.

**Weekly News Literacy Quiz**

**10. Week of October 30:**

**TBA**

*Millennials and News Completion* Assignment. Before class on Thursday, comment on a story posted on Millennials and News between Mon. and Thurs.

**Weekly News Literacy Quiz: Thursday**

**11. Week of November 6:**

**Challenges to Journalism, including profitability, attacks on the press, credibility, diversity, polls, fake news, use of anonymous sources, social media, etc.**

*Millennials and News* Completion Assignment. Before class on Thursday, comment on a story posted on Millennials and News between Mon. and Thurs.

**Weekly News Literacy Quiz: Thursday**

**12. Week of November 13:**

**Challenges to News Literacy**

Distribute and Begin Final Project

*Millennials and News* Completion Assignment. Before class on Thursday, comment on a story posted on Millennials and News between Mon. and Thurs.

**13. Week of November 20:**

**Continue Work on Final Project**

Millennials and News Completion Assignment. Before class on Thursday, comment on a story posted on Millennials and News between Mon. and Thurs.

**Holiday: Thanksgiving, November 23**

**14. Week of November 27:**

**Continue Work on Final Project.**

**15. Week of December 4:**

**Final Project Presentations**

**Evaluations**

Our Last Class Day: Thursday, December 7

Last University Class Day, December 11