The American Journalistic Mind

Instructor: Donald L. Shaw

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Office Hours: Wednesdays 1:30-3:30, and by appointment

Meeting Time and Place:

Course Objectives and Requirements: We will explore the motivations of major journalists (defined broadly) from three points of view. Using autobiographies (in some cases biographies) as primary sources, we will seek to find 1) how the journalists studied defined the profession of journalism; 2) how these journalists described the relationship between journalism and the civic community; and 3) how these journalists personally related to the profession. This is in the intellectual tradition of history. It does not assume a detailed history of American journalism but some major topics will be covered by the teacher in the early sessions of the seminar.

Details of Course:

The format will be that of a seminar, which means that you will be participating in discussions and will be doing research on your own, reporting back to class. You will be writing about three journalists of your interest. The class will not necessarily be writing about the same journalists although there may be some overlap. You will select a journalist, find an autobiography (a biography if necessary), read the account, and write an analysis of that journalist from the point of view of the three questions above. You will give a report to the class, and turn in a copy to the teacher. You will do this for three journalists. At the end of the semester, you will combine your findings of the three journalists into a single paper of about 15-20 pages, with endnotes, and that will constitute the final examination. We will share research as we go along. I may call on some of you to assist me in certain parts of the course. Each of the three papers will count toward 15% of the grade, 45% for all three, and the final paper will count for 55% of the grade. Shorter exams are not planned. You are expected to do in-depth historical research. There will be additional readings from time to time, provided by the instructor. There will be some lectures, early in the course, to provide a general background in American journalism history.

Core Values of the Field

The course aims to address some of the core values of the field; specifically we will

1. demonstrate an understanding of the history and role of professionals and institutions in shaping communications,
2. demonstrate an understanding of professional ethical principles and work,
3. promote the process of thinking critically, creatively and independently,
4. conduct research and evaluate information by methods appropriate to the communications professions in which we work or plan to work,
5. write correctly and clearly in forms and styles appropriate for the communications professions, audiences and purposes they serve, and
6. critically evaluate our own work and critique that of others for accuracy and fairness, clarity, style and grammatical accuracy.

Dates and Assignments

AUGUST

August 19: Introduction to the topic/ 4 ages

August 26: Finding journalists to study

SEPTEMBER

September 2: Preliminary results of search for journalists

September 9: Who have you picked for your first journalist, and why? Also, how to organize a paper.

September 16: Trends in journalism history/ the rise and fall of media

September 23: Report # 1 (5 pages, with oral report)

September 30: Topics in journalism history

OCTOBER

October 7: Topics in journalism history

October 14: Topics in journalism history

October 21: Report # 2 (5 pages, with oral report)

October 28: Topics in journalism history

NOVEMBER

November 4: Topics in journalism history

November 11: Topics in journalism history

November 18: Report # 3 (5 pages, with oral report)

November 25: Workshop on writing (a preliminary draft, outline of final paper)

DECEMBER

December 2: Draft of final paper (20+ pages, with endnotes)

Final paper due at the time schedules for the final examination.