Digital Journalism
Communication 117/217
T/Th 3:15-4:45, Wallenberg 127
Stanford University
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Over the last two decades, shifts in media technologies, corporate structure and
the organization of public life have combined to transform the practice of journalism.
This course aims to explore these shifts, with an eye to seeing how they affect
journalism’s role in society. At the same time, the class will introduce you to the
techniques of journalism in digital media and offer you conceptual and practical tools
with which to join the fray. By the end of the course, you should have a clear sense of the
various ways journalists have taken up digital media and a sense of how you might use
those media yourself. You should also have a broad understanding of the ways in which
recent social and economic developments have changed both the practice of journalists
and the nature of the publics to which they speak.

Readings:

Pablo J. Boczkowski, Digitizing The News: Innovation in Online Newspapers.

Dan Gillmor, We the Media: Grassroots Journalism by the People, for the People.

Bill Kovach and Tom Rosenstiel. The Elements of Journalism: What Newspeople Should

Course Reader: Available at the Bookstore.

Academic Computing Resources at Stanford: While this is an analytical rather than a
skills-oriented course, you will be expected to have a basic familiarity with Stanford’s
resources for creating and posting materials to the web. These can be found online at
Assignments:

*Conversion Exercise:*

You will be asked to convert an existing, for-print story into a story for the Worldwide Web. You will post this story in your Stanford web space.

*Two Critical Papers:*

You will be asked to write two brief critical papers on one of several assigned topics drawing on course readings and our in-class examination of media. Please be aware that these need to be *analytical*, not journalistic, pieces of writing. Papers will need to deal with readings closely and skeptically, weigh opposing points of view, and present a compelling case for your own argument. What will determine your grade will be less the position you take than the sophistication and rigor with which you support it.

  - Paper 1 Due: Tuesday, January 25
  - Paper 2 Due: Tuesday, February 15

*Final Paper:*

You will be asked to choose a single media artifact, person, or organization. Drawing on readings from across the course, as well as original research, you will explore the ways that digital media and associated organizational forms shape your subject’s relationship to the public.

  - Written Proposals Due: Tuesday, February 22
  - Papers Due: Hard copy, to my faculty mailbox, by 12 Noon, Thursday, March 17.

*Grading:*

Conversion Exercise: 10%

Critical Paper 1: 20%

Critical Paper 2: 20%

Final Paper: 30%

Participation: 20%
Expectations:

Participation:

You’ll need to come to each class with the reading done and sufficiently digested for you to participate actively in discussion.

Writing:

Newsroom rules apply: Your work needs to come in on time and should represent your best work at every level. Assignments that come in late or with errors of fact, grammar or spelling will be penalized. As ever, the Honor Code applies as well.

Course Schedule:


1: Tuesday, January 4:

Introductions: Where are we?

Key Question: Where is “news” in the digital environment?

2: Thursday, January 6

What Was Journalism? What was “the” public? What are digital media? What are its publics?

Readings:

- Boczkowski, Digitizing The News, Chapter 1.

Key Question: How are journalistic routines, industry structures, and technology related to journalism’s public role?
Part 2: Mass Journalism in Transition

3: Tuesday, January 11

A Taxonomy of Digital News:

Readings:
- Jay David Bolter and Richard Grusin, Remediation, Ch’s 1, 11, 12
- Boczkowski, Digitizing the News, Ch. 3.

Key Question: What kinds of news forms have emerged in the digital environment? How do they shift mass journalism’s relationship to its audience?

4: Thursday, January 13

Writing for Digital Media:

Readings:
- Amazoning The News (see site too: http://www.hypergene.net/ideas/amazon.html)

Resources for Web Design:
- http://www.webstyleguide.com/ A Web style guide put together by Yale University’s Center for Advanced Instructional Media
- Vincent Flanders’ legendary site, http://www.webpagethatsuck.com/ with examples of all that can go wrong…

Key Question: How can you “tell a story” in digital media?

5: Tuesday, January 18

Telling Personal Stories in Digital Media:

Readings:
• Philip E. Agre, “Find Your Voice: Writing For a Webzine” Available online at: http://polaris.gseis.ucla.edu/pagre/zine.html (AVAILABLE ONLINE ONLY)

Web Resources:
• Center for Digital Storytelling web site: http://www.storycenter.org
  • see especially: http://www.storycenter.org/canada/storytelling.html
• WBEZ Chicago, “This American Life”
  • see http://www.thislife.org/

Key Questions: What innovative strategies have journalists used to bring non-journalists into the storytelling process? How have they used digital media to do so?

Due: Conversion Exercise

6: Thursday January 20

Organization, Technology and Multi-Mediated Storytelling:

Readings:

Bozckowski, Digitizing the News, Chapters 5, 6 and 7

Key Questions: As pre-digital media organizations adopt digital media, how do organizational issues and new technologies shape the work they do?

7: Tuesday, January 25

Speedy Networks, New Gatekeepers:

Readings:


Key Questions: How do the ways that digital media increase the speed of news production and enhance the use of networks as news producers challenge pre-digital journalistic ideals?

Due: Critical Paper #1
8: Thursday, January 27

Show Me the Money: Networked Technology and Financial Concentration:

Readings:


Key questions: How do financial pressures shape the potential of online journalism to serve the public? Do new media free us from the problems of media conglomeration?

9: Tuesday, February 1

Metajournalism:

Readings:


Web Resources:

- Mediachannel: http://www.mediachannel.org/
- Freedom Forum: http://www.freedomforum.org/
- Jim Romenesko at Poynter: http://www.poynter.org/column.asp?id=45
- Poynter: http://www.poynter.org/
- Editor and Publisher: http://www.editorandpublisher.com/editorandpublisher/
- Matt Drudge: http://www.drudgereport.com/

Key Question: What role do networks of individuals, think tanks and other intermediaries play in shaping the news?

10: Thursday, February 3

“Personal” journalism: Pundits, Freelancers and Public Intellectuals:

Readings:

- Dan Gillmor, *We The Media*, Introduction, Chapters 1, 2, 3, 6, 7, 9, 12

Web resources:
• Bloggers of your choice
• Spinsanity: http://www.spinsanity.org/
• Dave Weinberger: http://www.evident.com/

Resources for Bloggers:

Key Question: What’s the difference between a blogger, a journalist, a pundit and an intellectual? Or is there one anymore?

Part Three: New Publics, New Journalistic Forms:

11 Tuesday, February 8

Rethinking “The” Public:

Readings:


Web resources:
• MoveOn.Org: http://www.moveon.org/
• Howard Dean’s Campaign Site: http://www.deanforamerica.com/
• City of Palo Alto: http://www.city.palo-alto.ca.us/
• Acción Zapatista: http://studentorgs.utexas.edu/nave/

Key Questions: What kinds of “publics” are emerging in and around digital media? What might the role of journalism be in a world of multiple publics?
12 Thursday, February 10

New Communities, New Routines: The Alternatives:

Readings:

- Leon V. Sigal, Sources Make The News, in Manoff & Schudson, Reading the News, pp. 9-37

Key Question: How do the politics of community news producers, news routines and new technologies interact?

13 Tuesday, February 15

Guest Lecture:

Pablow Boczkowski, Digitizing the News

Due: Critical Paper #2

14 Thursday, February 17

Identity Media:


Web Resources:

- Black Planet: http://www.blackplanet.com/
  - Also home to MiGente.com and AsianAvenue.com
- Alternet http://www.alternet.org/
Key Questions: How does the perception of shared identity serve to organize discourse on the Web? How do journalists interact with these new forums?

**15 Tuesday, February 22**

*News Communities:*


Key Questions: How do network forums work? What roles do they play in the creation and circulation of news?

*Due: Written Pitches for Final Papers*

**16 Thursday, February 24**

*Guest Lecture:*
Carlos Dada, Editor, *El Faro*

Review *El Faro* before coming to class: [http://www.elfaro.net/](http://www.elfaro.net/)

Review Final Paper Proposals

**17 Tuesday, March 1**

*Reputation Economies and Information Networks:*

*Open Source News*
- Howard Rheingold, *Smart Mobs*, “The Evolution of Reputation”

*Web Resources:*
Key Question: How are the dynamics of open source production processes affecting the ways journalists serve the public?

18 Thursday, March 3

_Code as Law_

Readings:

Web Resources:
- Googlenews
- Ebay.com

Key Questions: How are social processes being written into and performed by computer code? What are the implications of this process for journalists?

_Due: Critical Paper #2_

_Part Four: Journalism’s Public Role, Revisited_

19 Tuesday, March 8

What is journalism for, now?

Readings:
- Kovac and Rosenstiel, _The Elements of Journalism_, pp. 9-110

Key Question: Given the new organizational, economic and discursive forms associated with network technologies, can journalists still serve a single public?

20 Thursday, March 10

_Journalism in a Global Key_

Readings:
- Kovach and Rosenstiel, The Elements of Journalism, pp. 111-198

Key Question: Can digital journalists serve local and global audiences at the same time?