

COM 410

History of Mass Communication

Joe Marren
213 Bishop
X-3794

Office: Monday & Wednesday morning
marrenjj@buffalostate.edu
www.joemarren.com

Text: *Historical Methods in Mass Communication* (Revised Edition), by James D. Startt and Wm. David Sloan. Other readings will be handed out in class or posted on ANGEL.

Expectations: This course is about the historical development of the media (meaning both news – print and broadcast – and public relations) in the United States. Since our system was influenced by the Enlightenment, we'll briefly delve into philosophy.

Media history will be broadly studied along two themes: The media's response to censorship and its response to technology. So class readings, lectures and discussions will focus on broad currents in U.S. history along political, economic, socio-cultural and technological lines. At the end of this course students should be conversant in the historical development of the American mass media model.

While it is important to know the names and bios of major printers, editors, publishers, broadcasters and PR practitioners, it is more important to **analyze** their roles vis-à-vis censorship and technology. Thus, there will be no standardized tests but rather a series of projects that will get students to think and put themes in context with historical trends. The journalistic standards and practices of today grew out of those contributors and their times. So a central theme of this course is that a free press and free speech are vital for a democracy to survive the ravages of despots and the mob.

Final project (due May 8): Each student will complete a semester-long oral history project of not less than 10 pages in lieu of a final exam. The project must focus on a media outlet (either daily or weekly newspaper, broadcast station or public relations agency) and its workers. **All proposals must be approved in writing by Feb. 21.** Get started on this soon, it cannot be put off to the last few weeks. The entire project is worth 40 percent of your final grade.

This will be graded in stages:

- An abstract (worth 10 percent) is due Feb. 21.
- An outline (topical or chronological) and list of sources and potential sources is due March 20. This will be worth 10 percent
- The completed paper is due May 8 (worth 20 percent)

Midterm evaluations (March 18 and 20): Each student – or a group of students – will write a five-page paper and give an oral presentation on a media history topic that has not

received much academic study. Topic examples can include the minority press, the Native American press, the religious press, the ethnic press, foreign-language press, the alternative press, women in the media, etc. Press is defined rather broadly here to include print as well as broadcast, and rhetoric. This will be worth 20 percent of the final grade. If students work in pairs or teams, each will get the same grade. So it is up to the team to police participation.

Mini-papers: There will be several videos shown in class:

- The role of the African-American press (viewing Feb. 21, with paper due Feb. 26)
- “Empire of the Air,” on the development of radio (viewing @March 11 & 13, with paper due March 18)
- Aristophanes’ “The Clouds,” as part of our study of rhetoric. We’re not actors, but each student will read a role, even if it is in the Chorus (a’la Greek drama). We’ll read this @April 22 and 24, with the paper due April 29.

After each viewing and the play students will write a short (**2 or 3 pages**) paper on a theme from each. The theme questions will be posted on ANGEL. Each of these papers will be worth 10 percent of the final grade, for a total of 30 percent.

Participation: Class discussions will be conducted in an environment of respect and tolerance for people and their ideas. However, I also realize that in a large setting not everyone can make a meaningful contribution or feel comfortable speaking in front of a group. So there will be a variety of ways to participate. But you **MUST** participate, 10 percent of your grade depends on it. Alternative ways to participate are:

- At the end of each class hand in a piece of paper either summarizing the main point of the lecture in a sentence, or ask a question about the “murkiest” part.
- Contribute material for class. Bring in relevant newspaper or magazine clippings, or printouts from a Web site, that touch on a class discussion point.

Attendance: You are expected to be here on time and ready to participate. If you are late please be respectful of those you are interrupting and try to be quiet. A pattern of lateness &/or not attending will affect the participation grade (meaning you’ll get 0 out of 10 possible points).

Assignments: All writing assignments must be typed and proofread. Assignments are due on the assigned day. **No late assignment will be accepted.**

Academic Integrity: Cheating and plagiarism will not be tolerated. College guidelines on academic misconduct will be enforced. Academic misconduct could lead to failing the course or being dismissed from school. More details are available on the college’s Web page at <http://www.buffalostate.edu/library/research/plagiarism.asp#buf>

Final Grade: The final grade will be calculated according to the following formula:

Final project – 40%

3 short papers (10% apiece = 30% total)

Midterm presentation – 20%

Participation – 10%

- For a D (6 points) in participation, you attend occasionally and sit like a lump.
- For a C (7 points) you attend regularly but participate minimally.
- For a B (8 points) you attend regularly and participate occasionally, asking questions and offering comments.
- For an A (10 points) you attend regularly and participate frequently, asking relevant questions, offering insightful comments, and contributing to the overall learning environment of the classroom.

Generally that means:

90+ points = A

80-90 points = B

70-80 points = C

60-70 points = D

less than 60 points = E (failure)

SCHEDULE (subject to change)

Week 1 Jan. 22 & 24

Introduction to subject & final project

Week 2 Jan. 29 & 31

Enlightenment underpinnings & historiography

"The Man Time Forgot" on ANGEL

chapters 1-3

Week 3 Feb. 5 & 7

The colonial and Revolutionary press

Paine's "The Crisis" on ANGEL

John Peter Zenger on ANGEL

Week 4 Feb. 12 & 14

Frontier journalism & Penny Press

chapters 4-5

US Map in 1840s on ANGEL

Week 5 Feb. 21

African-American press video

abstract due

chapter 7

Week 6 Feb. 26 & 28

The Yellow Press and the peoples' champs

ASSIGNMENT 1 DUE

Ida Wells' "Lynch Law in Georgia" on ANGEL

L. Frank Baum editorials on ANGEL

Week 7 March 4 & 6

20th century journalism

chapter 9 & handout #1

TR cartoon on ANGEL

Week 8 March 11 & 13

Empire of the Air

Week 9 March 18 & 20

Oral presentations

ASSIGNMENT 2 DUE

Outline due

Week 10

OFF

Week 11 April 1 & 3

Broadcasting's beginnings

chapter 10 & handout #2

Week 12 April 8 & 10

Jazz journalism & the media in the 20th century

handouts #3 & #4

Reality TV on ANGEL

Week 13 April 15 & 17
Magazines, Advertising and PR
handouts #5 & #6
PR cartoon & PR museum on ANGEL

Week 14 April 22 & 24
The Clouds

Week 15 April 29 & May 1
Wrap-up
ASSIGNMENT 3 DUE
handouts #7 & #8