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History and the Headlines A Special Topics Course in History and Journalism

TR 1:00 -02:15 PM WESCOE 4025

Why is this happening? Or, how could this happen? How did we get here?

We hear those questions a lot. In this course, we try to answer some of them. What happens today is not taking place in a vacuum. All events have a back story, a tale of decisions made or not made that have led to what we see in the headlines. This course invites students to delve into that back story, otherwise known as history. In a series of assignments that will teach you to master some of the basic forms of journalism, students will research and report on the history behind a variety of contemporary issues. (We've got a full semester planned but may switch topics as needed based on the news.)

The goals of this course are to help improve your:

- knowledge of current events
- understanding of the historical context for current events and diverse viewpoints
- research and writing skills
- ability to use various journalistic formats

Required reading:

-*The New York Times*, every day

-Assigned readings by instructors

Grading, Assignments and Policies

Given the large number of students in the class, late homework WILL NOT be accepted except in cases in which you show proof that you were hospitalized. If you are absent when homework assignments are handed out, please arrange with one of us to get the assignment as soon as possible so you don't miss the due date deadline. Also, there will be no make-up news quizzes.

Each student's final grade in this course will be based on the following:

➤ **5 Homework Assignments (Worth up to 10 points each for total of 50 points)**

Rubric for Homework Assignments: (We have adopted the following 10-point scale for homework. Given the pace of the assignments and the number of students in this class, we expect to be able to make only brief comments on your homework. If you have questions about a grade on an assignment, please ask one of us about it.)

10/9 pts. Excellent -- Highly informative and/or deeply reflective. Information supporting the topic is complete and accurate. Wording is precise. The writing explores the topic at different levels and does not simply make the same point from different perspectives. Outstanding content, organization and mechanics.

8/7 pts. Good-- Competent, functional information that makes a significant point efficiently in support of the topic. Details are thorough and accurate. Writing mechanics and organizational technique are of a high order.

6/5 pts. Acceptable -- Average, run-of-the-mill work. Undistinguished. Properly written, but the information or analysis is average quality. Content is adequate to identify the subject, but poorly organized. Other mechanics are good.

4/3 pts. Fair -- A combination of flaws in conceptualizing, researching, organizing and writing rendering the work not quite passable.

2/1 pts. Poor-- Weaknesses in thinking, writing technique, and/or professionalism have resulted in a failure on this assignment. Inaccuracies and other content errors, poor mechanics, bad organization.

0 pts – For late or missing assignments.

➤ **5 Mic Minute presentations related to each unit homework assignment (Worth up to 5 points each for a total of 25 points)**

Rubric for Mic Minute Presentations: (We have adopted the following 15-point scale for presentations.

5 Excellent -- Highly informative and/or deeply reflective, well-researched, well-organized and engagingly presented.

4 pts. Good-- Informative, well-organized, makes good use of sources and is clearly presented.

3 pts. Acceptable -- Average, run-of-the-mill. Content is adequate to identify the subject, but undistinguished in research and/or poor organization or communication.

2 pts. Fair -- A combination of flaws in conceptualizing, researching, organizing and presenting; not quite passable.

1 pts. Poor-- Weaknesses in thinking, researching, presenting have resulted in a failure on this assignment. Inaccuracies and other content errors, poor mechanics, bad organization.

➤ **5 News Quizzes (Worth up to 5 points each for total of 25 points) These will be given without warning so its incumbent on you to keep up with your reading of the NYT.**

*****There will be one extra credit assignment worth 5 points**

Your final grade in the class will be based on the following scale:

Points Total	Letter Grade
93 – 100	A
90 – 92	A-
87 – 89	B+
83 – 86	B
80 – 82	B-
77 – 79	C+
73 – 76	C
70 – 72	C-
67 – 69	D+
63 – 66	D
60 – 62	D-

Participation/Attendance

- Classroom discussion. Filling a seat isn't enough. Each student is expected to participate in classroom discussions. And that means completing the assigned reading and homework so we can have good discussions. We are looking for compelling questions and insightful comments from you.
- Attendance. If you are not here, you cannot participate. **You will be allowed a total of ONLY two absences from class. Use your absences for illness, deaths and emergencies. You will lose 5 points for each additional absence unless you have been hospitalized and show proof.**

Academic Misconduct

This is the extremely unhappy portion of the syllabus. Academic misconduct includes disruptive behavior, plagiarism, cheating, behavioral problems, and forgery of, among other things, another student's work or a professor's signature (for a full definition, see <https://documents.ku.edu/policies/governance/USRR.htm#art2sect6>). Students who run afoul of KU's rules in any of these areas will automatically be referred to the department and Strong Hall, where the fact that you cheated can go into your permanent record. Consequences in the class for academic misconduct may range from failure on an assignment to dismissal from the course.

Students who have problems with academic misconduct often cite stress, putting off projects, illness or being jammed up with multiple assignments due in the same week. None of these is a legitimate excuse. Plan your semester carefully from the beginning and arrange your work schedule so you can avoid such situations. The Office of Student Success offers free workshops on how to manage your time. If you cannot submit your assignments on time, it is your responsibility to notify me ASAP. We can work out alternative due dates if you have a legitimate reason for being late.

Plagiarism is theft, and the academic community treats it accordingly. Incidents of plagiarism are subject to severe sanctions and you should avoid jeopardizing your future. Basically, plagiarism is using another person's words or ideas without giving them credit for this. You should submit only your own original work. A complete copy of the university policy on plagiarism, including definitions and methods of avoidance, is available at: www.writing.ku.edu/instructors/docs/ku_handbook.html and <http://www.writing.ku.edu/students/docs/integrity.shtml>

We use a digital plagiarism detection program to check all work that is not written in class. If you have more questions, the Writing Center (<http://www.writing.ku.edu>) offers suggestions on how to avoid plagiarism.

The History Department's policy and procedures regarding academic misconduct are available at: <http://www.history.ku.edu/undergraduate/>.

Students with Disabilities

Students who are eligible should seek the help of Student Access Services. They will give you a piece of paper telling us what assistance you need. We will comply with whatever Student Services recommends, but we must see and sign that paper first. Student Access Services is located in 22 Strong Hall / phone: 785-864-2620 (V/TTY). For information about their resources, see <http://disability.ku.edu>.

Class Schedule

(Subject to change at discretion of instructors)

Unit One: The New President

Donald Trump will be sworn into office on Jan. 20, so we will spend the first couple of weeks of class talking about this historic changing of the guard.

Jan. 17: The First Hundred Days (Weber) – When did the first 100 days start being a thing and what have presidents done with it

Jan. 19: Women and Politics in American History (Weber) – go back to Abigail Adams and “mind the women,” to women’s rights movement, WWI, 19th Amendment. Resurrection of women’s movement in ‘60s, ERA, Roe v. Wade.

Reading for next class: <http://www.niemanlab.org/2013/05/objectivity-and-the-decades-long-shift-from-just-the-facts-to-what-does-it-mean/>
<http://1e9svy22oh333mryr83l4s02.wpengine.netdna-cdn.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/NRFall2016.pdf>

Jan. 24: Coverage and the 2016 election—issues and impact for journalists(Fine)

Jan. 26: Guest Speaker: Henry “C.J.” Jackson

Readings for the next class:

<http://dailytrojan.com/2016/04/21/include-sexual-assault-college-rankings/>

<http://www.thecrimson.com/article/2016/12/14/sanctuary-campus-label/>

Jan. 31 How to write an editorial about a national issue that would matter to your peers (Fine)

**HW 1 assigned: Editorial (worth 10 pts.) and Mic Minute presentation (worth 5 pts)
Mic Minute presented next class; Opinion piece due Monday, Feb. 6, by 5 p.m.**

Feb. 2: H&H mic minute: students give 60-75 second presentation on the issue they want to write about: (I,e what’s the issue, why would a UDK reader care, what are the various views, what’s your early view)

Unit Two: Black Lives in America

February is Black History Month, so we will use the first part of the month to examine briefly the African American experience in the United States and the current iteration of the Civil Rights Movement, Black Lives Matter.

Feb. 7: Slavery to Civil Rights (Weber) – a quick overview of the African American experience, starting in 1620 and going up to the death of MLK in 1968. Include Dred

Scott and Plessy v. Ferguson decisions, Civil War, Reconstruction and Jim Crow, lynching, Klan, Klan at KU. Then Civil Rights with Brown v. Board, lunch counters, assaults.

Feb. 9: How to do historical research/write a backgrounder on a seminal race-related event for Kansan.com (Weber, Fine)

HW 2 assigned: Backgrounder due Monday, Feb. 20 at 5 p.m.

Mic Minute assigned: presented Feb. 16

Reading for the next class: TBA

Feb. 14:

--- Diversity: current trends in news and newsrooms (Fine)

Feb 16: H&H mic minute - Students present a positive or negative example of diversity in the news

Feb. 21: Open Topic

Unit Three: Science

History and journalism are full of breakthroughs about life on this planet and in the galaxy. We'll take a look at some important science-related issues today and reflect on how they were viewed in the past and how they're being covered today.

Feb. 23: Science and history (Weber)

Feb. 28: Trends in science coverage (Guest speaker: TBA)

March 2: How to develop a Q&A with a research scientist (Fine)

HW 3 assigned Q&A and Mic Minute

Mic Minute presented March 7; Q&A w/photo from interview due Monday, March 13 at 5 p.m.

March 7: H&H Mic Minute: Students present a recent story about the science-related issue they want to explore and info about the KU researcher they hope to explore it with for their Q&A. Q&A choice requires Weber or Fine's approval since we want to avoid students interviewing the same researcher.

March 9: Open, for help from profs

Unit Four: Sports

March is, of course, the month of March Madness for men's and women's hoops; baseball's spring training is under way; and spring football is also ready to begin.

March 14: Title IX (Jenny) – how it came to happen, what it says, what its implications have been. Women sports reporters in locker rooms.

March 16: Coverage of Sports and Society issues (Indian Mascots; coming out of Gay athletes, concussions, etc.) (Fine or speaker)

HW 4 assigned: Profile of an historic sportsperson related to an issue currently in the news (uses alternative story form) and Mic Minute. Both due March 30 at start of class.

SPRING BREAK

March 28: Open topic

March 30 and April 4: H&H Mic minute- Presentations of sports personality profiles

Unit Five: Religion, War, and Terror

April is a big month for Christians (Palm Sunday, Easter) and Jews (Passover). Holocaust Remembrance Day also falls in this month. In our world today, religious and ethnic tensions have contributed to violence in the Middle East and terrorism worldwide.

April 6: The Sunnis, the Shiites, and the Kurds (Weber) – backgrounder on the various peoples involved in Iraq and the Arab world generally and the partitioning of the Mideast.

April 11: Mideast war and the U.S. (Weber, Fine)

April 13: Immigration and terrorism/ The continuing impact of 9/11 (Weber, Fine)

April 18: Art and War—all-class visit to the Spencer Art Museum WW1 collection.

***** All students are required to attend the class at the Spencer Art Museum on campus. For those who want extra credit, there will be an Optional Mic Minute Assignment worth five points presented on April 25.**

April 20: **HW 5 assign: 10 things every KU student should know about an issue related to the unit topics such as defense spending/immigration policy/terrorism/the Mideast, etc. and Mic Minute. Both Due: May 4 by start of class**

April 25: ***Optional Mic Minute presentations by students who want extra credit (worth up to five points)—Students present brief background and image on a war-related art image and how it relates to today

April 27: Open, for meeting with profs

May 2: Open topic

May 4: H&H Mic Minute

Yahoo, we're through!