



MPJO 761-40: ENTERTAINMENT REPORTING

GEORGETOWN UNIVERSITY: MPS-JOURNALISM

Mondays, 6:00 p.m. to 9:25 p.m. | Summer 2017

Instructor: Judy Kurtz

Downtown campus, room C215

- Office hours are by appointment only

COURSE OVERVIEW

From performances attended by presidents at the Kennedy Center, to go-go concerts at the 9:30 Club, to celebrity-filled red carpets at the National Portrait Gallery, Washington is increasingly becoming a go-to destination for all things entertainment.

This course will teach students not only how to cover and critique the arts and pop culture, interview public figures, and produce entertainment news stories, but how to navigate the ever-changing media environment, confront the ethical issues facing the entertainment beat, and prepare for its future.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

Students will learn how to:

- Understand the history of entertainment journalism and its changing landscape.
- Label key entertainment publications, players, terms and current events.
- Navigate the tricky ethical landmines involving entertainment and gossip reporting.
- Develop a social media and personal brand as an entertainment journalist.
- Develop a portfolio of writing samples, including a feature story based on an interview with a celebrity/artist, a performing arts critique, and a mock red carpet article.

REQUIRED READING

“Dish” by Jeanette Walls

“The Importance of Being Famous” by Maureen Orth, selected passages

“How to Write About Theatre” by Mark Fisher, selected passages

ATTENDANCE

As outlined by the university, missing more than two classes will result in a final grade reduction



of one level (for example, an A will be converted to an A-). Absences for classes, beyond the initial two, will result in further reduction of the final grade. If you are absent for more than four classes, you will be in danger of failing this course.

If you have to miss a class for a family or medical emergency, you must let the instructor know in advance and work out a proposal for making up whatever work you will miss. Exceptions will be made only in extraordinary circumstances.

If, for whatever reason, you are unable to attend class, please obtain notes and assignments from other students for the material you missed.

Please show up to class on time. If you repeatedly show up tardy, it will have a negative impact on your grade — and you'll look bad in front of your fellow students.

CLASSROOM ETIQUETTE, CLASS PARTICIPATION AND OTHER GUIDELINES

Please do not use cell phones during class. If you are using a laptop, please do not surf the web during class.

Class participation is an integral part of this class and accounts for 10 percent of your grade. That includes showing up and participating in class discussions, demonstrating that you've done the weekly reading assignments and can contribute intelligent thoughts to the conversation. Engage in the class! You will get more out of it and so will the class.

Class discussions should be respectful and considerate of others' views and opinions.

Instructional continuity: In the event of a weather emergency (or any other widespread emergency) that would close the Georgetown Downtown building, we will arrange a make-up class or plan to meet virtually through online videoconferencing tools. More information will be provided on how this will work later in the semester.

ASSIGNMENTS

Students will produce a variety of entertainment news clips, including:

- A mock red carpet, in which they will create both a blurb and a reported piece on the "celebrities" they interviewed during the Hollywood premiere.
- A presentation on an artist of choice and analysis — including a critique of the ethics questions raised — of how entertainment news outlets have covered him or her.
- A pop culture review, taking a critical look at a music, theater, film, or museum exhibit and delivering a piece of criticism.



- A social media brand analysis, looking at a prominent entertainment journalist's accounts across multiple platforms.
- An interview with a celebrity/public figure for a feature-length article about that person.
- Students will also complete weekly news clips, where they analyze and critique one story of their choice each week involving entertainment news and how a topic or subject was covered.

Just like in a newsroom where deadlines are critical, late work (anything submitted a minute or more after it's due) without advance approval will not be accepted. All assignments, unless otherwise noted, should be emailed to the instructor.

GRADING

Your course grade will be based on the following:

Feature article:	20%
Red carpet article:	10%
Celebrity coverage presentation:	20%
Pop culture review:	20%
Class attendance and participation:	10%
Weekly news clip:	10%
Feature article:	10%
Total:	100%

Graduate course grades include A, A-, B+, B, B-, C and F. **There are no grades of C+, C- or D.**

A	100-93	B-	82.99-80
A-	92.99-90	C	79.99-70
B+	89.99-88	F	69.99-0
B	87.99-83		

The instructor will provide a warning by mid-semester to any student who appears to be on track for a poor final grade.

UNIVERSITY RESOURCES

Georgetown offers a variety of support systems for students that can be accessed on main campus or at the downtown location:

- MPS Writing Resource Program
202-687-4246
<http://writingcenter.georgetown.edu/>



- Academic Resource Center
202-687-8354 | arc@georgetown.edu
<http://ldss.georgetown.edu/>
- Counseling and Psychiatric Services
202-687-6985
<http://caps.georgetown.edu/>

STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES POLICY

Students with documented disabilities have the right to specific accommodations that do not fundamentally alter the nature of the course. Students with disabilities should contact the Academic Resource Center (Leavey Center, Suite 335; 202-687-8354; arc@georgetown.edu; <http://ldss.georgetown.edu/index.cfm>) before the start of classes to allow time to review the documentation and make recommendations for appropriate accommodations. If accommodations are recommended, you will be given a letter from ARC to share with your professors. You are personally responsible for completing this process officially and in a timely manner. Neither accommodations nor exceptions to policies can be permitted to students who have not completed this process in advance.

GEORGETOWN HONOR SYSTEM

All students are expected to maintain the highest standards of academic and personal integrity in pursuit of their education at Georgetown. Academic dishonesty in any form is a serious offense, and students found in violation are subject to academic penalties that include, but are not limited to, failure of the course, termination from the program, and revocation of degrees already conferred. All students are held to the Honor Code. The Honor Code pledge follows:

In the pursuit of the high ideals and rigorous standards of academic life, I commit myself to respect and uphold the Georgetown University Honor System: To be honest in any academic endeavor, and To conduct myself honorably, as a responsible member of the Georgetown community, as we live and work together.

PLAGIARISM

Stealing someone else's work is a terminal offense in journalism, and it will wreck your career in academia, too. Students are expected to work with integrity and honesty in all their assignments. The Georgetown University Honor System defines plagiarism as "the act of passing off as one's own the ideas or writings of another." More guidance is available through the Gervase Programs at <http://gervaseprograms.georgetown.edu/honor/system/53377.html>. If you have any doubts about plagiarism, paraphrasing and the need to credit, check out <http://www.plagiarism.org>.



SYLLABUS MODIFICATION

The syllabus may change to accommodate discussion of emerging topics. Also, the schedules of guest speakers may require some shifting of our agenda. The instructor will make every effort to provide as much advance notice as possible for any alterations.

CLASS SCHEDULE

Class 1 - May 22

Introduction to Entertainment Journalism

What is entertainment journalism? Are reporters who cover celebrities and Hollywood considered “journalists?” From the New York Times to BuzzFeed, we’ll explore the many forms entertainment journalism takes in today’s changing media landscape. We’ll discuss sites and news outlets you should be familiar with and reading daily throughout the course.

Assignments for next class:

- Read “Dish” by Jeanette Walls, Chapters 1 - 10

<https://www.amazon.com/Dish-Gossip-Became-News-Another/dp/038081045X>

- Read “An Introduction to Act Four” by Alyssa Rosenberg

https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/act-four/wp/2014/03/17/an-introduction-to-act-four/?utm_term=.e95ecf7c6827

- Weekly news clip
- Pick a celebrity to track news coverage

Class 2 – June 5

History of Entertainment Journalism

We’ll talk about the roots of covering entertainment, Hollywood, and the arts. How has coverage changed over the years? Has the role of entertainment journalists transformed over time?

Assignments for next class:

- Read “Dish” by Jeanette Walls, chapters 11-19
- Read “The Importance of Being Famous” by Maureen Orth, pages 17-27 and 303-305
- Weekly news clip
- Continue to track/prepare presentation on celebrity

Class 3 – June 12

The Culture of Celebrities

What is celebrity? How is fame cultivated? Why are some people famous for being famous?



We'll discuss the factors of fame and deliver oral presentations on top celebrity coverage.

Assignments for next class:

- Weekly news clip
- Read "How to Write About Theatre" by Mark Fisher:

https://www.amazon.com/How-Write-About-Theatre-Students/dp/1472520548/ref=pd_sim_14_2?ie=UTF8&psc=1&refRID=Y79312R24VTPEXE5P4T4

- Read "North" by Roger Ebert:

<http://www.rogerebert.com/reviews/north-1994>

- Read "A Short Guide to Writing About Film" by Timothy Corrigan:

<https://www.amazon.com/Short-Guide-Writing-about-Guides/dp/0205236391>

Class 4 – June 19

Reviewing Theater, Movies, Music, and More

We'll discuss the ins and outs of writing effective pop culture reviews. WTOP-FM film critic Jason Fraley will join as a guest speaker.

Assignments for next class:

- Submit pop culture review
- Read "He's got a 'Downton Abbey '-inspired office, but Aaron Schock won't talk about it" by Ben Terris:

https://www.washingtonpost.com/lifestyle/style/hes-got-a-downton-abbey-inspired-office-but-rep-aaron-schock-wont-talk-about-it/2015/02/02/1d3f1466-ab1f-11e4-abe8-e1ef60ca26de_story.html

- Read "White House Party Crashers Shock Outsiders"

<http://www.cbsnews.com/news/white-house-party-crashers-shock-outsiders/>

- Read "Washington gossip is dead. Long live Washington gossip" by Patrick Gavin

https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/washington-gossip-is-dead-long-live-washington-gossip/2014/05/08/10b86152-d528-11e3-aae8-c2d44bd79778_story.html

- Weekly news clip

Class 5 – June 26

Gossip

Gossip is no longer relegated to the back pages of newspapers, now it's an industry devoted to covering every whisper about some of the world's biggest stars. We'll discuss the world of gossip, the tricky ethical issues a gossip columnist faces, how gossip items can snowball into hard-hitting news stories, the criticism of the beat, and its future. The Daily Mail's Nikki Schwab will join as a guest speaker.

Assignments for next class:



- Submit revised pop culture review
- Weekly news clip
- Read background on film and celebrities for mock red carpet
- Start brainstorming potential feature subjects

Class 6 – July 3

Rocking the Red Carpet

We'll get you red carpet-ready to cover a staple of entertainment reporting: the red carpet. A mock red carpet will give you the chance to interview the stars of a hot, new movie and offer the experience of covering a fast-paced, high-intensity event.

Assignments for next class:

- Submit red carpet story
- Weekly news clip
- Read "Frank Sinatra has a Cold" by Gay Talese:

<http://www.esquire.com/news-politics/a638/frank-sinatra-has-a-cold-gay-talese/>

- Read "The Duke in his Domain" by Truman Capote:

<http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/1957/11/09/the-duke-in-his-domain>

- Read "Justin Bieber Would Like to Reintroduce Himself" by Caity Weaver:

<http://www.gq.com/story/justin-bieber-gq-interview>

- Read "A Very Revealing Conversation With Rihanna" by Miranda July:

http://www.nytimes.com/2015/10/12/t-magazine/rihanna-miranda-july-interview.html?_r=0

Class 7 – July 10

High-Profile Feature

Even some of the most seasoned journalists find the art of crafting a feature-length profile on a well-known person to be especially challenging. This class will break down the keys to writing an informative profile and Q&A that will hook readers.

Assignments for next class:

- Pitch of 3 possible feature subjects
- Weekly news clip

Class 8 – July 17

Becoming Social Media Savvy and Writing for an Online Audience

Filing a story and calling it a day doesn't cut it these days for most journalists — a social media presence can not only be helpful, but crucial in helping to develop sources and a following. We'll discuss how to navigate the waters of Twitter, Facebook, and more, and how to document your entertainment coverage on social media, along with crafting stories that pop on



the web.

Assignments for next class:

- Read “I was a Junket Whore” by Eric Snider:

<http://www.ericdsnider.com/snide/i-was-a-junket-whore/>

- Weekly news clip
- Submit social media brand analysis
- Read “The Puppet Masters” by Catherine Seipp:

http://ajrarchive.org/article_printable.asp?id=783

Class 9 – July 24

Ethics of Entertainment

How do you deal with ethical issues unique to the entertainment beat? From pushy PR gurus, to pay-for-play trips, to party swag bags, to anonymous sources, to clickbait headlines, to withholding stories, we’ll unpack the Pandora’s box of ethical concerns facing today’s entertainment journalists.

Assignments for next class:

- Read “News Flash” by Bonnie Anderson:

<https://www.amazon.com/News-Flash-Journalism-Infotainment-Bottom-Line/dp/047040177X>

- Submit feature first draft
- Weekly news clip

Class 10 – July 31

Criticism

Entertainment reporting has its fair share of critics. In this class we’ll discuss the roots of this criticism, the issues facing today’s journalists, and whether covering celebrities is considered journalism. A guest speaker will join us.

Assignments for next class:

- Weekly news clip

Class 11 – August 7

The Gatekeepers

How to deal with publicists and managers who control Hollywood clients and how to develop sources. Amanda Hunter, marketing and communications director for The Phillips Collection.

Assignments for next class:

- Weekly news clip



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- Submit feature final draft

Class 12 – August 14

Landing a Gig

So you know how to pen a great story, how to interview a VIP, and the way to feature your work on social media — now, how do you get a job as an entertainment reporter? We'll learn how to put together an eye-popping reel and clips, interview techniques, and ways to brand and market yourself to take your career to the next level.