Political Communication
Fall, 2009
Thursdays, 4:55-7:05
Bobst LL143

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Course Description & Objectives

The course focuses on communication aspects of international politics, using conflict and peacemaking/peacekeeping as a major analytical and critical tool. Lecture-based, scholarly material as well as research-based seminar format discussions will serve to actively expose students to topics such as roles, powers, and constraints of the media in international politics; media-government and media-opposition relations in international politics; and journalism and diplomacy styles in international politics.

Using case studies from the Middle East (Iraq, Israel-Palestine, etc.), former Yugoslavia, and others suggested by students, course contents include an introduction to media and politics in conflict and peace processes, and chapters on professional dimensions (techniques, narratives, ethics, and professional risks and safety in war and peace coverage); political discourse in war and peace; media and government; war journalism and peace journalism; and traditional and public diplomacy.

By the end of the course, students should be able to accomplish the following learning objectives:

1. Rationally and critically analyze, evaluate, and discuss political dimensions of communications on international and global levels;
2. Identify characteristics of media performance in the coverage of international conflict, peacemaking, and peacekeeping, including: reality constructions; messages and meanings; constraints and relations with controlling forces; discourse and contexts; technology, ideology, and ethics.
3. Collect, analyze and synthesize research data as a basis for understanding and explaining political communications at the international and global levels.
4. Apply knowledge acquired about media expected and actual behavior in international conflict, peacemaking and peacekeeping to other dimensions of international political communications.
Method

The course is planned as a joint intellectual effort, and a dialogic process between the instructor and the students. In practical terms this includes:

- **Lectures by the instructor and screenings of visual materials** combined with oral discussions, and based on readings and on written critical papers on bibliographical items;
- **Presentations** by students and discussions of items from the list of readings, according to a preplanned schedule;
- **Submission of written critical summaries**: 2 for each student: 1 of the presentation, one by independent choice, approved by the instructor.
- **Independent background work** whereby the instructor and the students will share basic information on relevant names and events used in lectures, screenings, presentations and papers. This information will be posted in the course website or distributed via email.
- **Final Essay** – Critical essay on a topic learned in the course according to knowledge and insights acquired from class presentations and discussions.

**Required Readings and Video/DVD Screenings**

[http://mwc.sagepub.com/cgi/content/abstract/1/2/177](http://mwc.sagepub.com/cgi/content/abstract/1/2/177)


Covering Conflict

[http://das.sagepub.com/cgi/content/abstract/18/2/123](http://das.sagepub.com/cgi/content/abstract/18/2/123)

[http://das.sagepub.com/cgi/content/abstract/19/1/5](http://das.sagepub.com/cgi/content/abstract/19/1/5)


Jake Lynch Interview TMS, u-tube. [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Qtmlxcq6Ce4](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Qtmlxcq6Ce4)


Ruigrok, N. (2008), "Journalism of attachment and objectivity: Dutch journalists and the Bosnian War", Media, War & Conflict, 1, 293 http://mwc.sagepub.com/cgi/content/abstract/1/3/293
Shinar, D. & G. Stoiciu. (1992) "Media Representations of Socio-Political Conflict:

http://hij.sagepub.com/cgi/content/abstract/7/2/58
Traber, M. & A. Davis (1991),"Ethics of War Reporting”. Media Development,

http://ire.sagepub.com/cgi/content/abstract/20/4/439
http://www.usip.org/media/global_diplomat/index.html
Expectations and Grading

Grades are assigned to each course component, according to the following procedure:

1. **Overall performance**

   **Attendance**: The success of the course is highly dependent on full attendance and participation. Absence involves the loss of valuable information and insight. If you know ahead of time that you will not be able to attend class, I would appreciate a heads up, as it may have a bearing on how class time is structured. While there is no penalty for a reasonable amount of absence, unless you have an unbelievable exceptional excuse for missing class on the day that a presentation or other assignment is due, you will be penalized 35% of your grade for that assignment.

   **Preparation**: You are expected to come to class each week fully prepared, which means having read all assigned readings, and having done so in a way that demonstrates adequate comprehension of the material. It also means that you should come to class having spent some time having carefully reflected on course material, lectures and discussion in a way that allows you to develop a set of questions, critiques, and discussion points related to course material.

   **Participation**: Participation includes contributing insights, questions, explanations, and ideas to class discussions, contributing outside material (such as background information that cannot be fully provided otherwise in a one-semester-long course), etc. Since each student will take some responsibility for the conduct of the course, I expect that you will be prepared to engage with both me and your fellow classmates who, I will assume have valuable knowledge and perspectives on the course material being covered.

2. **Assignments**:

   Specific assignments in the course include, for each student:

   - one class presentation of a pre-selected item from the list of readings, and a written critical summary of the item (s) presented (no more than 2 pages, font size 12, 1.5 space), to be submitted no later than one week following the presentation;

   - one written critical summary of a reading item selected by the student through independent research, and approved by the instructor (no more than 2 pages, font size 12, 1.5 space), to be submitted anytime after class 5;

   - at least two written pieces of background information to be submitted to the instructor (and following approval) circulated for all class members, following the submission of each critical summary.

   - One final essay on a topic approved by the instructor, based on class discussions and readings to be submitted no later than December 14 (approved by the instructor, no more and no less than 10 pages, font size 12, 1.5 space), using at least 6 sources from the list of readings and 6 sources obtained independently.

**Examples of Readings for Independent Research Paper and Final Essay**

*moredtexts available from instructor*


[www.eco.regener-online.de](http://www.eco.regener-online.de)


3. **Grades:** will be assigned based on the satisfactory completion of each of the assignments. Individuals’ whose performance and assignments are satisfactory will receive an A. Grades will decline by one letter grade after that.

- Class presentation + written summary of item presented – 20% of final grade
- Written summary of item selected through independent research – 20% of final grade
- Two written pieces of background information – 10% of final grade
- Final essay – 50% of final grade

4. **Quality of Work and Academic Integrity:** You are expected to complete quality work reflective of your intellectual abilities, your fitness for admission to this university and to this department. This includes the amount of research and work put into your readings and assignments, your attention to details such as proper grammar, punctuation, vocabulary, writing style and format. You are expected to turn in your own work. **Plagiarism will not be tolerated under any circumstances.** Critical works of various texts abound in the public arena, be assured that should you, in light of your failure to devote the requisite time and attention to your assignments, choose to rely on any of them without proper citation and referential use, you will be caught, and you will fail this course no questions asked.

5. **Reasonable Accommodation Policy:** If you have a disability that affects your performance in this course, please notify me at the beginning of the semester and necessary special arrangements can be made to accommodate you.

**Schedule (subject to alteration)**

**Chapter 1: Classes 1 – 2 – Sept. 10-17**

Introduction: Media and Politics in Conflict and Peace Processes

(Conflict types and characteristics, media roles and powers in international politics)

- **Sept. 10 Class 1** - Course presentation and Lecture - Shinar 2003
- **Sept. 17 Class 2** - Student Presentation 1 –(2 st.) Asymmetric Conflicts (Kalb & Saivetz, Jacoby)

**Chapter 2: Classes 3-5 – Sept. 24, Oct. 1, 8**

Professional Dimensions of International Political Communication

- **Sept. 24 Class 3** - Film Screening and discussion (Schechter – Iraq War coverage)
• Oct. 1 Class 4 - Student presentation 2: (1st.) techniques (Roeh & Ashley, Shinar & Stoiciu); (1 st.) journalists risks and safety (Tumber, Covering Conflict); (1 st.) new technologies and political communication - Sakr

• Oct. 8 Class 5 - Student presentation 3: narratives (2 st.):(Baudrillard + Bird & Dardenne/ Gaviely-Nuri) and ethics (1 st.) (Traber & Davis – principles + Shinar & Stoiciu - technologies)

Chapter 3: Classes 6-8 – Oct. 15, 22, 29

Political Discourse in War and Peace


• Oct. 22 Class 7 – Student presentation 4 (2 st.) Mandelzis & Peleg , Amani

• Oct. 29 Class 8 - Student presentation 5 (2 st.) Former Yugoslavia - Erjavec & Volcic, Ruigrok

Chapter 4: Classes 9-10 – Nov. 5, 12

Relations media-government/media-opposition & media roles in international conflicts, crises and peace processes.

• Nov. 5 Class 9 - Film Screening - Schechter (Iraq) Student presentation 6 (2 st.) Pintak & Ginges, Mellor

• Nov. 12 Class 10 -

Chapter 5: Classes 11-12 – Nov. 12, 19

Politics, War journalism and peace journalism.

• Nov. 12 Class 11 – Video Screening - Jake Lynch Interview TMS; Lecture – Shinar 2007

• Nov. 19 Class 12 - Student presentation 7 (2 st.) Shinar 2008; Student presentation 8 (2 st.), constraints (Blasi)

Chapter 6: Classes 13-14 – Dec. 3, 10 (Nov 26 – Thanksgiving)

Politics, Media, and Traditional and public diplomacy;

• Dec 3 Class 13 – Lecture – Excerpts from the Neaman Document + Student Presentation 9 (1 st.) – Aronczyk

• Dec 10 Class 14 - Video screening – Media as Global Diplomat

Class 15 Dec. 17 – Wrap-Up