WRPR/LNGT 0206: Narratives in the News Media
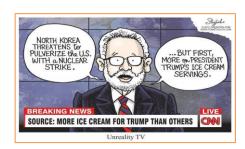# Spring 2020

Dr. Shawna Shapiro, Middlebury College
http://sites.middlebury.edu/shapiro/

Meets: T/Th 1:30-2:45pm in ADK CLT (Coltrane Lounge)
Contact info: sshapiro@middlebury.edu phone: x5977 (campus) or 206.919.6060 (cell)
        Office Hours in Carr Hall 201: T/Th 11:15am-12pm, 3-4pm, (or by appt)

Course Description

In this course we will consider questions such as: What linguistic strategies do the news media use to craft compelling stories? What are the dominant narratives at play about national and global social issues, and how are some journalists working to counter those narratives? We will employ Critical Discourse Analysis as a central framework, reading theoretical and empirical work by linguists such as Teun van Dijk, as well as from sociologists and political scientists. We will engage with "On the Media" and other podcasts, TED talks, documentaries such as *Outfoxed* (2004), and online magazines. Students will write for a variety of audiences.

Course Objectives

Students will…
- Critically examine their own relationship to news media
- Articulate relationships between language and power, as enacted in news media
- Understand the nature and purpose of discourse analysis as a research methodology
- Identify textual and multimodal features of news media discourse, and judge rhetorical effects of those features
- Read and critique empirical research employing various approaches to news media analysis
- Develop and facilitate their own empirical studies applying theories and methods from class, using relevant tools and technologies
- Write effectively for both academic and public audiences.

Readings/Resources

All required course readings and other materials will be available on Canvas (or elsewhere online, but with links posted to Canvas or sent via email). *You are <u>strongly encouraged</u> <u>to print</u> electronic readings, so that you can engage more closely in textual analysis.*

If you would like a good reference text, however, I would **recommend**:
Busá, M. G. (2013/2014). *Introducing the language of the news: A student's guide.* Routledge.
(This book should also be available via Davis Library).

Some of the websites we will be referencing most frequently in the course are:
1. <u>American Press Institute</u>
2. <u>Pew Research Center: News and Media</u>
3. <u>On the Media</u> (WNYC podcast)

Expectations

Academic community is an important aspect of this course, and cultivating that community requires the active presence and participation of each member. In this class, that means both speaking and listening. I am an Engaged Listening Fellow this semester, and will be experimenting with ways to deepen our dialogue together. We will be crafting some agreements for discussion together in class, including the following:

❖ Share airtime- step 'up' or 'back' as needed
❖ Avoid interrupting—allow others to finish their speaking
❖ Maintain confidentiality of students and stories.
❖ Attend to cell phones (and other technology) in ways that allow you and others to be as present as possible.

I also expect that you will organize yourself so that you are prepared for class and can submit assignments on time. This includes
• Making time to do the readings before class, focusing in particular on terminology
   o Keeping an electronic or handwritten journal where you record notes in preparation for class
• Having a folder/notebook in which to keep paper handouts and other materials
• Using multiple strategies (e.g., Google Drive, OneDrive, Dropbox) to back up your work (Note: A computer crash is NOT an excuse for late work!)

In the event of illness, please notify me (via email or phone) *before* the class that you will be missing. Multiple absences could have an adverse effect on your final course grade. Late or missed assignments will be penalized, unless extensions are arranged ahead of time.

Formatting for Written Work

Unless specified otherwise, written assignments should be double-spaced, 12-point font (Times New Roman), with 1-inch margins. APA citation style is preferred, but other formats may be accepted upon student request. All work submitted should include the Honor Code statement: *"I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid on this assignment*," with your signature. If you have worked with anyone other than a tutor (or Prof. Shapiro) on an assignment, please note that as well.

In class, we will talk more about academic integrity, including ways use sources appropriately, as well as when and how to collaborate with peers on particular assignments. For now, please remember that **plagiarism** usually involves using someone else's words or ideas as if they were your own. It can have very serious consequences, including academic suspension or even expulsion. For more information on plagiarism and how to avoid it, please visit https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research_and_citation/using_research/avoiding_plagiarism/is_it_plagiarism.html

For a self-guided tutorial about academic integrity at Middlebury, visit **go/ait**.

Communication and Support

Communication and respect are very important to our course. I attempt to return all phone calls and emails within 24 hours, and expect the same of my students. Your feedback is essential to the success of this course. I will give you opportunities to tell me how the course is going, both in-class and anonymously, but I appreciate hearing from you at any point about your needs and experiences. If you encounter difficulties with any course material or assignments, please contact me **early** and **often**, so that I can help support you.

I also encourage (and occasionally require) students to take advantage of other support resources. This includes our assigned Peer Writing Tutor for this class, Zeke Hodkin: zhodkin@middlebury.edu. You are also welcome to work with other peer or professional writing tutors from CTLR- see **go/writingcenter** for info.

We have also worked with two librarians for this course in the past:
- Carrie Macfarlane (cmacfarl@middlebury.edu or go/carrie) -for help finding secondary sources and other general library questions
- Ryan Clement (rclement@middlebury.edu) – for help with data analysis

If there are any learning issues or other challenges that might impact your experience in this course, please communicate with me **as soon as possible**. Students who have Letters of Accommodation are encouraged to contact me as early in the semester as possible. For those without Letters of Accommodation, assistance is available to eligible students through the Disability Resource Center (formerly called Student Accessibility Services). Please contact Jodi Litchfield, the ADA Coordinator, for more information: litchfie@middlebury.edu or 802-443-5936. All discussions will remain confidential. See http://www.middlebury.edu/student-life/community-living/diversity-inclusivity/american-disability-act for more information.

Grading Breakdown

❖ Participation and class preparation = 25% (includes readings and short HW assignments in preparation for class, in-class and some online discussion, drafts of papers, meetings w/ Prof. S. Also includes attending **one out-of-class lecture or event**—see options in calendar below)

❖ Short Papers= 30% total

- News Consumer Autobiography (8%, 3-4 pages)
- Headline analysis (10%, ~3 pages)
- Discourse Analysis: Pilot Project (2-3 articles, 3-4 pages- 12%)

❖ Discourse Analysis Long Paper (7-10 pp., multi-draft)= 20%

❖ Letters to editor (drafted in-class and revised as needed)= 10% total (5% each)

❖ Multimedia project for a peer audience = 20% (5% presentation and reflection; 15% project)

OVERVIEW OF MAJOR ASSIGNMENTS
(more details on each assignment will be provided in class)

Short Papers

These papers function as reflection and skill-building opportunities, where you can practice doing various types of analysis we have been learning about. The skills in these papers will also be useful for your Discourse Analysis Research Project later in the semester. While I am grading these papers primarily on content, you will have the opportunity to revise them, if there is substantial room for improvement in the writing itself.

A. **News Consumer Autobiography (3-4 pp.):** In this paper, you'll reflect on your own experiences as a "consumer" of news media. In addition to describing some of your habits, preferences, and viewpoints, you'll consider the question: Am I a 'typical' Millennial (or Gen Z?) consumer? (You'll compare your experiences with trends documented in research we'll be reading in class).

B. **Headline Analysis (~3 pp.):** You will choose one news story and compile a list of 10-20 headlines on that story. (Make sure you're noting type of publication, audience, location, etc. for each headline. Also make sure the specific story is the same—not just the general issue/event!—i.e. compare 'apples to apples') You will then analyze those headlines, drawing on course readings and lectures, and your paper should advance a thesis about whether and how bias is present in the headlines about that particular news story. (If necessary, you may reference other features—e.g., lede/lead sentences, nut paragraphs, and images—to support your analysis). (NOTE: You are encouraged to build on this project for your larger, Discourse Analysis project.)

C. **Discourse Analysis: Pilot Project (3-4 pp.):** You will analyze 2-3 accounts of a particular news event/story, focusing on one or more of the following: (headline/lead, structure/layout, sourcing, framing, tone/attitude, word choice, etc.). Your paper should begin with an introduction that offers a rationale (both why you're focusing on this event and why you chose these 2-3 publications to analyze), as well as a hypothesis explaining what you expected to find. Your intro should reference course materials/concepts that are relevant to your analysis. The body of your paper will present your findings and suggest possibilities for further research, which you can (will, I hope!) pursue for your longer discourse analysis paper (see below).

Discourse Analysis Project (7-10 pp.)

For this project, you will (ideally) build on your pilot project (see above), putting together a larger data set (a "corpus" of at least 10 articles), in order to test a new or expanded hypothesis. We will have read studies in class that can serve as methodological models for your project. Your final paper will include an Intro/Rationale (~2 pp) that draws on secondary sources (both concepts/theories and a similar studies) to make the case for your analysis and offer an initial hypothesis; a Methods section (1-2 pp.) that articulates what you did and why (including how you put together your corpus, how you analyzed data, etc.); and an organized set of Findings and Implications (3-5 pp), as well as Limitations and Suggestions for future research (~1p.). We will complete this project in stages, and you will have the opportunity for guidance and feedback at each phase:

a. Proposal (written or via in-person meeting w/ Prof. S.)
b. In-class data set compilation and analysis workshops with individual work time
a. Presentations of work in-progress
b. First draft, with peer review and possibly peer tutor feedback
c. Revised draft, with feedback from peers and Prof S.
d. Final draft, with Researcher's Memo

Letter to the Editor

Writing letters to the editor offers you the opportunity to think about how you could channel your course learning into real-world writing. Each letter will respond to a recent article in the *Campus* or another publication that you engage with regularly, and should be written in a way that shows awareness of the appropriate conventions (content, style, tone, etc.) for this type of writing, including being concise, specific, and engaging. These letters will be drafted in class, but can be submitted at the end of the day, if you need more time to finish them.

Multimedia Project

The **multimedia project** is your opportunity to educate your peers about something you've learned from the course (and to synthesize that learning for yourself). There are numerous options for this project, from creative nonfiction to an interactive website to a poster or other visual media. I encourage you to do something you will find enjoyable, and to consider how to share your course learning in a creative and engaging way. You will conduct peer review of this

project both during and outside of class. The final draft/version of projects will be published within Middlebury or for a wider audience (We'll discuss options together). You will also write a reflection that explains what you wanted to accomplish with the project and discusses its strengths and weaknesses. Grading criteria for this project will be determined in consultation with each student. Sample student work will be examined in class.

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COURSE CALENDAR (tentative)
NOTE: Readings will be in Canvas>>Files OR Canvas>>Pages>>Online Readings

Feb 11 (T)- Course introduction/overview, building a community of reflective news consumers. (topic: Why examine news media? Ourselves as news consumers) Preview readings for Thurs.

Feb 13 (Th)- read Young, 2015 (American Press Institute study; PDF also on Canvas)
(topic: Habits of news consumption in U.S.)
        Optional additional readings (will be referenced in class):
        1. Reuters Institute_Digital News Report (2019- summary pp. 10-11)
        2. Gen Z vs. Millenial news consumption (2018 report from Brodeur company study)
           In class: Compare above sources with additional data—e.g. Pew Research Center
           Discuss News Consumer Autobiography (due Sun).

***Out-of-class opt #1**: Th 2/13 @7-8:30pm in Wilson Hall: Naomi Klein- climate change journalist

Due by Sun 2/16 or Mon by request (Canvas): News Consumer Autobiography (short paper, -3-4 pp.- see description in syllabus).

Feb 18 (T)- (topic: Intro to media basics)**.** Terms to learn/review: *headline, lede/lead, puns/rhymes (word play), alliteration, passive vs. active voice, verb tense (uses in news reporting), hyperbolic/sensationalist language, sourcing, allusion, inclusive language, neutral/objective reporting, multimodality, newsworthy*
Readings/resources:

    1. API's "Elements of Journalism" (overview)
    2. 7 News Values (Walsh, 2017)
    3. Wikihow: Analyzing newspaper language

    HW: Choose 1 recent new media story and look for elements from above (take notes in journal). *Bonus challenge*: Look at web vs. print layout to see how they differ (e.g, Newseum "front pages"). (Bring notes to class). In class: Discuss headline analysis paper.

Feb 20 (Th). (topic: Analyzing news headlines). Read Bleich et al, 2018 (PDF- focus on highlighted portions). Also skim ThoughCo article on "headlinese" (Nordquist, 2017) and re-visit Wikihow from Tues as needed. Terms to learn/review: *summary line/blurb, nut paragraph, headlinese, ellipses/synthetic language, nominalizations/noun string/stacking, sentiment analysis, coding (of data).*

HW: Collect 4-5 headlines for the same story and notice similarities/differences. Be sure to compare 'apples to apples.' (Bring notes to class). In class: Read sample Headline Analysis papers

Due by Sun Feb 23 (Canvas) or Mon by request: Headline Analysis (short paper, ~3 pp- see description in syllabus).

Feb 25 (T)- (Topic: content/structure of news stories). Terms to learn/review: *Lead/Lede, nut graf/paragraph, inverted pyramid structure, hourglass structure, other elements of narrative news*
Readings (all short)

1. API's Journalism Essentials: What makes a good story? (and browse subsections)
2. API's Journalism Essentials: Organize a story (and browse subsections)
3. ThoughtCo's overview/history of inverted pyramid—and others (Rogers, 2018)
4. Poynter's overview/history of hourglass (Scanlan, 2003)
   HW*:* Take notes on the structure of 1 of the articles you have chosen for your Discourse Analysis Pilot Project (also consider looking at other elements—e.g. framing, sourcing, etc.)

Feb 27 (Th)- ONLINE activities in lieu of class. (topic: Sourcing and point of view).

Due Sun 3/1 or Mon by request: Post ideas for Discourse Analysis Pilot Project to online discussion, including links or attachments with text of at least 1 article (Canvas).

Mar 3 (T): (topic: Framing in news media). Visit from Erik Bleich to discuss framing/content analysis. Read Citizen's Handbook- Framing (overview) and Crawley et al, 2015 (focus on overall findings and implications). Also review highlighted portions of Bleich & van der Meer, 2018. (All are available as PDFs are on Canvas).
 Be able to: *Explain framing, identify most common frames (e.g., victim, villain, conflict, responsibility, cause/problem/solution, law and order vs. health/safety), notice framing strategies in headlines*

Optional resources (may be referenced in class):
Critical media blog- tutorial on framing. // "Framing Theory"- Mass Communication blog

Mar 5 (Th)- Bring drafts of short paper 3 (Discourse Analysis Pilot Project, 3-4 pp., see description in syllabus) for peer review. Writing Workshop.

*Out of class opt #2: Emily Bernard (UVM)- *Black is the Body*- (storytelling!) 3/5, 4:30pm, Wilson.

Due Sun Mar 8 (Canvas): Discourse Analysis Pilot Project (short paper, 3-4 pp.- see description in syllabus)

Mar 10 (T)- (topic: syntax/grammar analysis). Read Hale, 2012 (NY Times) and Busà Ch 7 (PDF on Canvas) Terms to learn/review**:** *nominalization, passive voice, grammatical agent, action vs. relational verbs, theme/rheme.*

> **HW:** Do Busà pp. 114-115, Activities 4 and 5 (take notes in journal). Also look for linguistic elements in headlines/articles from previous assignments).

Mar 12 (Th)- Busa Ch 9 (PDF on Canvas) and Hiltner, 2017 (NYTimes). (topic: Word choice)
Terms to learn/review: *Germanic vs. Latinate vocabulary, hyperbolic/sensationalist language, neologism, irony (in news), dichotomization, action verbs.* Optional resource: Accuracy in Media blog post on word choice

* **Out-of-class opt #3,** Th 3/12 @ 3:30pm Carrie Teippen (Chatham U.)- narratives/rhetoric of Southern cookbooks

Due Sun Mar 15 (Canvas): Proposal for Discourse Analysis Project. (Include *rationale, research question(s), hypothesis*, *methods,* and at least *2 other studies* you could use as rationale/background.) **OR** sign up to meet with Prof. S on Mon 3/16.

All week: meetings with with Prof. S and/or PWT

Mar 17 (T): TBD- Possible visit from Media Professor Hub Brown (Syracuse U).
Mar 19 (Th): Workshop for Letter to Editor #1 (1-2 paragraphs). (Bring computer to class, with article you're responding to- could relate to DA project). Also during class: Check-ins on DA research.
   HW: By end of day (Thurs): Post Letter to Editor #1 to online discussion. (Extra credit if you submit 'for real! ☺- email screenshot to Prof. S)

*Out-of-class opt #4: Th 3/19 **@** 4:30pm**-** location TBD**.** Heather Jean Hendershot (MIT)- "From Water Cronkite to Sean Hannity: Making Sense of the Rise and Fall of the 'Public Interest' Standard in TV News"?

Due Fri Mar 20 (or in meeting w/ SS): Update on DA project (post to Canvas):
What is your revised research question? Which articles are you examining (and why), What are you looking for? What are you finding thus far? What are your next steps?

March 23-27 ***SPRING BREAK***

Mar 31 (T): (topic: Critical literacy and news media analysis). Mini-presentations of methods and initial findings from Discourse Analysis projects. In lieu of reading**:** Listen to one of *On the Media*'s Consumer Handbooks (jigsaw share in class)

Apr 2 (Th):   In lieu of regular class: Peer review (in class or electronic - see instructions on Canvas). Possible additional online activities.

Due Sun Apr 5 (Canvas): Draft of Discourse Analysis Paper, with Writer's Memo (*What's working well? What's left to do? What would you like feedback/support on?)*

You should continue working on your DA paper this week. Meetings with Prof. S and PWT will be available.
Apr 7 (T): (topic: Gender bias in news media) Read LaFrance, 2016 (*Atlantic),* and Pittman, 2019 (NBC). Optional readings (will be referenced in class:
   1.   Hill, 2012 (Guardian- gender bias on front pages)
   2.   *NYTimes* Opinion editors, 2019

Apr 9 (Th): Susan Greenberg, Professor of the Practice and former
Newsweek reporter). (topic: The real-world of news reporting—on polarizing issues). Reading: "I Smoked Weed with My Son"- WA Post. / Optional: Why Colleges Should Ditch Honor Codes

Due Sun Apr 12 (Canvas): Final draft of Discourse Analysis paper, with Researcher's Memo (extensions available upon request)

All week: Meetings available w/ Prof. S and PWT all week
Apr 14 (T)- (topic: Social media literacy and fake news). Visit from Dr. Amy Collier (DLINQ).
Readings (all fairly short):
    1. Info-Environmentalism: An Introduction
    2. Why Students Can't Google Their Way to the Truth
    3. Attention in the Scarcity

Apr 16 (Th)- (tentative topic: Satire OR Multimodal news). Short readings TBD. Talk through final
project options.

[Fri 4/17: Final **out-of-class opp**: Spring Student Symposium]

Due Sun Apr 19th (or Mon by req): Proposal for final multimedia project. (Canvas- indiv or pair)

Apr 21 (T): (topic: News as "Info-tainment"/Junk Food News). Watch *Outfoxed* (on Youtube;
DVD also on Reserve in Davis Library). [Possible alternative film?]
Choose 1 of 3 additional readings: Dickinson, 2011-*Rolling Stone* (more Fox) **OR** Byers, 2013-
(MSNBC) **OR** Explore Smart 2018 (FOX, CNN, MSNBC). Also discuss Multimedia Project.

Apr 23 (Th): Letter to editor #2 (or possible alternative: social media post). Post to Canvas by end
of day- EC if you submit/post "for real"). Also check-in about multimedia projects.

This week: Meetings available w/ Prof S. re: final project
Apr 28 (T)- topic: Polarization in News Media). Listen to (or read transcript for) On Being's
conversation between Sally Kohn and Erick Erickson.
Optional additional: Watch Sally Kohn TED talk on "emotional correctness" (vs. PC).

May 1 (Th)- (topic/ readings Satire, Multimodal news, or other?). Also check-in re: multimedia
projects.

Optional due Sun May 3 (Canvas): Submit draft of multimedia project.

Meetings w/ Prof S. available this week
May 5 (T): Showcase multimedia projects- get feedback (invite friends?).
(tentative topic: Diversifying your news diet). Course response forms.

May 7 (Th): Showcase multimedia projects (cont'd). Course takeaways and wrap-up.

Due Tues May 12 (Canvas): Multimedia project, including author reflection