

WRPR/LNGT 0206: Narratives in the News Media Spring 2019

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Meets: T/Th 9:30-10:45am in ATA 100A

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Office Hours in Carr Hall 201: Mon 11am-12pm; T/Th 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 strongly encouraged to print 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. [American Press Institute](#)
2. [Pew Research Center: News and Media](#)
3. [Columbia Journalism Review](#)
4. [On the Media](#) (WNYC podcast)

Expectations

Academic community is an important aspect of this course; cultivating that community requires the active presence and participation (including both speaking and listening) of each member. Unexcused absences and late or missed assignments will be penalized. 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. While I do not have a specific policy about use of technology in the classroom, I expect you to be mindful about using devices in a way that allows you and your peers to remain present and engaged.

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
 - 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!)

I also expect you to take ownership of your own learning. You will have short homework assignments from time to time, to reinforce your learning from the readings/media.

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://writingcenter.unc.edu/tips-and-tools/plagiarism/> .

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) you to work with other peer or professional tutors from CTLR- see [go/writingcenter](#) for info. We have two Peer Writing Tutors assigned to this class: Avery Lopez (alopez@middlebury.edu) and Grace Metzler (gmetzler@middlebury.edu)

We will also be working with two librarians in this course:

- 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 you have a disability or learning issue of any kind that might impact your studies, please communicate with me as soon as possible. For formal accommodations, please be sure to contact Student Accessibility Services (directed by Jodi Litchfield- litchfie@middlebury.edu). See <http://www.middlebury.edu/student-life/community-living/diversity-inclusivity/american-disability-act> for more information.

Grading Breakdown

- ❖ Participation and HW assignments (includes readings and short HW assignments in preparation for class, in-class and some online discussion, drafts of papers, meetings w/ Prof. S.)= 20%
- ❖ Short Papers= 30% total
 - News Consumer Autobiography (8%, ~3 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)= 25%
- ❖ Letters to editor (drafted in-class and revised as needed)= 5% each= 10% total
- ❖ Multimedia project for a peer audience = 20% (5% presentation and reflection; 10% 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 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 (e.g., from Newseum.com or other databases) on that story. (Make sure you're noting type of publication, audience, location, etc. for each headline) 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

Letters to the Editor

Letters to the editor offer you the opportunity to think about how you could channel your course learning into real-world writing. Each short 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 genre 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.

COURSE CALENDAR (tentative)

Feb 12 (T)- Course introduction/overview, partner interview. (topic: Why examine news media?)
Preview readings for Thurs.

Feb 14 (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. [Pew Research- News Use Across Social Media \(2018\)](#)

2. [Gen Z news consumption \(2018 report from Brodeur company study\)](#)

In class: Compare above sources with additional data—e.g. Pew’s 2017 “[5 facts](#)”
Discuss News Consumer Autobiography (due Sun).

Due by Sun Feb 17th (Canvas): News Consumer Autobiography (short paper, -3 pp.- see description in syllabus).

Feb 19 (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”](#)). In class: Discuss headline analysis paper.

Feb 21 (Th). (topic: Analyzing news headlines). Guest visit from Prof. Bleich (PSCI).
Read Bleich et al, 2018 (PDF- focus on highlighted portions). Also skim [ThoughtCo 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: Compare top 5 national or international headlines from two different news sources.
Notice content, tone, and language of headlines.

****Feb 22 (Fri). Required out-of-class lecture: Yamiche Alcindor, 5:00-6:30pm in Mead Chapel.**
“My journey through journalism: A perspective from PBS White House Correspondent”
(Please inform Prof S. ASAP if you have a conflict).

Due by Sun Feb 24 (Canvas): Headline Analysis (short paper, 2-3 pp- see description in syllabus).

Feb 26 (T)- Debrief from Alcindor lecture and Bleich visit. (topic: Framing in news media). Read [Citizen's Handbook- Framing](#) (overview) and [Crawley et al, 2015](#) (focus on overall findings and implications). (NOTE: PDFs of both articles 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 (will be referenced in class):

[critical media blog- tutorial on framing](#). // "[Framing Theory](#)"- [Mass Communication blog](#).

HW: Return to headlines from last Thurs—look for framing strategies (take notes in journal).

Feb 28 (Th)- (topic: Sourcing and point of view). Walk through Emily & Brigett's [tutorial: Intro to sourcing/quotations](#). Also read Benson & Wood (2015)- (PDF- focus on highlights and tables).

Terms to learn/review: *official vs. unaffiliated sources, governmental vs. nongovernmental sources, direct vs. indirect quoting/speech, frameless quotes.*

Optional readings for 2/28 (will be referenced in class):

[NPR blog- ethics of sourcing](#)

[FAIR article on official sources](#)

[API article on sourcing, hierarchies, and verification](#)

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

Mar 5 (T): In class: Workshop with Carrie Macfarlane (librarian) on finding primary articles and secondary sources for Discourse Analysis project. (other topic: Structure of news articles).

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.)

Mar 7 (Th)- Bring drafts of short paper 3 (Discourse Analysis Pilot Project, 3-4 pp.) for peer review. Writing Workshop.

[EC opp! **Thurs 3/7-Sat 3/9:** RCGA international conference on migration. Prof. S on Sat ☺]

Due Sun Mar 10 (Canvas): Discourse Analysis Pilot Project (short paper, 3-4 pp.- see description in syllabus)

Mar 12 (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 14 (Th)- **NO CLASS- Online activities due Fri 3/15** (Canvas) related to 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](#)

Due Sun Mar 17 (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 3/18.

All week: opportunities to meet with Prof. S and/or PWT

Mar 19 (T): Research/analysis workshop with Ryan Clement (librarian). No reading, but explore [Voyant](#) and [AntConc](#) before class. Bring computer/device for in-class work.

Mar 21 (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)

Due Fri Mar 22 (or earlier): short written 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 25-29 *SPRING BREAK*****

Apr 2 (T): (topic: Critical literacy and news media analysis)

In lieu of reading: Listen to one of *On the Media's* [Consumer Handbooks](#) (jigsaw share in class)

Talk-through findings from Discourse Analysis projects (also general check-in).

Apr 4 (Th): Peer review 3-5 pages of Discourse Analysis Papers (Intro/Rationale + Methods **OR** Findings and Implications. Bring 4 **hard copies** to class).

All week: Meetings available w/ Prof. S.

Due Sun Apr 7 (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 9 (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 11 (Th): Visit from Prof. Susan Greenberg (Professor of the Practice and former *Newsweek* reporter). (topic: The real-world of news reporting). Readings TBD. In-class: Pairing for peer review.

Due Sun (Apr 14): Peer review (comments, audiorecording, or written summary) for Discourse Analysis Paper, plus Writer's Response to peer review (Summarize feedback, discuss next steps).

All week: Meetings available w/ Prof. S and PWT all week

Apr 16 (T)- (topic: News as "Info-tainment"). Watch *Outfoxed* ([on Youtube](#); DVD also on Reserve in Davis Library) **OR** *Post-Truth Times* (Amazon Prime).

Choose 1 of 3 additional readings: [Dickinson, 2011-Rolling Stone](#) (more Fox) **OR** [Byers, 2013- \(MSNBC\)](#) **OR** Explore [Smart 2018](#) (FOX CNN, MSNBC)

Apr 18 (Th)- (tentative topic: Fake News and/or Junk Food News).
[EC opp: **Fri Apr 20-** Spring Student Symposium]

Due Sun Apr 21 (Canvas): Final draft of Discourse Analysis paper, with Researcher's Memo

Apr 23 (T): (topic: Social media literacy). Visit from Dr. Amy Collier (DLINQ). Also discuss Multimedia Project. 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 25 (Th): (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).

Apr 30 (T)- Letter to editor #2 (post to Canvas by end of day). Must be submitted 'for real' by **Fri**. Also talk through multimedia projects.

May 2 (Th)- (topic/ readings TBD- Multimodal news?). Possible visit from Communications staff.

Due Fri May 3: Submit letter to editor to publication (email 'proof' to Prof. S)

Optional due Sun May 5 (Canvas): Submit draft of multimedia project.

May 7 (T): Showcase multimedia projects- get feedback (invite friends?).

(short topic: News and Satire- readings TBD). In class: Also do course response forms.

May 9 (Th): Showcase multimedia projects (cont'd, if needed). Course wrap-up: *What did you notice when you checked the news this morning?*

Due Tues May 14 (Canvas): Multimedia project, including author reflection