

News and information in the digital age

Term:	Fall
Lessons per week:	1 x 120 mins
Language:	English
Instructor:	James Thomson
Form of study:	lecture+seminar

Course Objectives

- > To achieve a basic understanding of the processes by which news is gathered, edited and published.
- > To examine the ways in which journalism contributes to the acquisition of knowledge.
- > To explore the role and value of accurate news and information in society and in rational policy- and decision-making.
- > To consider the ways in which news and information are manipulated, the reasons why this happens, and strategies for identifying and counteracting it.

Contents

Introduction – what is news?

Facts, “alternative facts”, lying in public office

The history and future of the news media

The mechanics of newsgathering and reporting

Trust, narrative and perspective

Editorial judgement, the public interest, bias and influence

Conspiracy theories in the news media

Disinformation, in theory and practice

Propaganda

Free speech

Media ownership and influence

Politicisation of the media

These subjects will be illustrated with reference to three case studies:

1. Freedom of speech in Hong Kong and China
2. Recent US presidential elections, the Trump presidency, and their effects on the news media
3. The effect of social media, especially Facebook, on news consumption and perceptions

Obligatory Readings

Primary Sources

Rauch, J. (2021). *The Constitution of Knowledge: A Defense of Truth*. Brookings Institution Press.

News stories and columns, as assigned by the tutor.

Secondary Sources

ABC Media Watch, weekly episode (approximately 15 minutes).

Other audio and video sources, as assigned.

Evaluation Criteria

40% Active participation in classes, class discussions, class preparation

30% Writing work – essays, short tests in class, research

30% Presentation and defence of own, and evaluation of other student's, readings and research

Course Evaluation (%)

A – excellent: 100-93%,

B – very good: 92-84%,

C – good: 83-74%,

D – satisfactory: 73-63%,

E – sufficient: 62-51%,

Fx – fail: 50-0%.

Passing a course assumes that the student was not absent from more than 4 lessons.