

# History and Principles of Journalism

JO 150 Fall 2020



Lynsey Addario recounts her life as a combat photographer in *It's What I Do*, one of our required books.

JOHN MOORE Getty Images

## About this course

**T**his course deals with the events, institutions and individuals that have shaped journalism in this country.

Each time we meet, I'll have stories to tell. On your own, you will read three books. Three times during the term, we will have exams.

The secret to success in this class comes in showing up. So roll out of bed and come to class to learn about your legacy.

Here's a chance to find out about the role the press has played in our history.

The history of this country is the history of journalism. This is your story.

### Required:

- Lynsey Addario, *It's What I Do: A Photographer's Life of Love and War* (Penguin, 2015)

Professor **William McKeen**

**Office:** 131 COM; Phone: 353-3484

**Email:** [wmckeen@bu.edu](mailto:wmckeen@bu.edu)

**Office hours:** Tuesdays, 10-11 am,  
Wednesdays, 10 am - Noon  
Thursdays 1-2 pm and by appointment .  
All office hours held on Zoom

**Home page:** [williammckeen.com](http://williammckeen.com)

**Twitter:** @wmckeen

- William McKeen, *Outlaw Journalist: The Life and Times of Hunter S. Thompson* (W.W. Norton, 2008)

- Steve Weinberg, *Taking on the Trust: The Epic Battles of Ida Tarbell and John D. Rockefeller* (W.W. Norton, 2008)

Boston University provides students with subscriptions to *The New York Times* and *The Boston Globe*. Read them daily. Journalists must read.

This course is taught within BU's Learn From Anywhere format. Be sure to check Blackboard Learn frequently.

# Grading and related issues

There will be three tests. Since there is no textbook, you should conclude that attendance at the lectures is vital to success in the course.

The tests will have 25-30 questions from the lectures and five questions from the reading.

Your final grade is determined by your performance on the tests and class participation. And speaking of class participation: It should go without saying that I expect you not to talk, dance or make rude noises while I am trying to lecture. Any sort of disruptive behavior will be damaging to your grade. (See page four for more on grading.)

We follow the standard grading scale:

- 93 and up A
- 90 to 92.99 A-
- 87 to 89.99 B+
- 83 to 86.99 B
- 80 to 82.99 B-
- 77 to 79.99 C+
- 73 to 76.99 C
- 70 to 72.99 C-
- 67 to 69.99 D+
- 60 to 66.99 D
- 0 to 59.99 F

## Attendance

Attendance is critical. Come to class fully prepared. Be caught up on the readings. Be well informed. We will use Top Hat to keep a record of your attendance.

If you don't show up, the quality of class is diminished. Remember your John Donne (and, of course, remove the gender bias from this centuries-old quote):

*"No man is an island, entire of itself; every man is a piece of the continent, a part of the main; if a clod be washed away by the sea, Europe is the less.... (A)ny man's death diminishes me, because I am involved in mankind; and therefore never send to know for whom the bell tolls; it tolls for thee."*

In short, don't be a clod. But do be polite. There's no excuse for rudeness.

You will not be allowed to make up any missed work unless the reason for your absence is extremely grave (a death in the family or perhaps the contraction of some loathsome disease), and you call or email me *before* the class period to be missed.

I have strong feelings about attendance. It would be stupid to walk into Trader Joe's, fill your cart with yummy groceries, pay for the stuff, then tell the cashier, "Naw, you keep it." Yet that's what we often do in college. As Herman B (no period) Wells, chancellor of Indiana University (my beloved alma mater) once said: "Education is the one thing people pay for then do not insist upon receiving."

## Learning objectives

Students will:

- Develop an awareness and appreciation of the foundations of journalism in a free society
- Develop an awareness of the the role of journalism in modern society
- Develop an appreciation of key journalists, works of journalism and institutions in our history
- Develop an understanding of journalism's legacy in a free society.

# Course outline

Oh, the places we'll go

There are three tests, with most of the questions coming from the lecturers outlined below. If you miss a class, get the notes from a fellow student or from the recordings preserved on Blackboard.

Here are the required books:

- *It's What I Do* by Lynsey Addario
- *Outlaw Journalist* by William McKeen
- *Taking on the Trust* by Steve Weinberg

Tests are multiple-choice. Twenty- five questions come from the lectures and five questions from the book for that part of the course.

Each test covers a different book. These are unit tests. *We do not have a cumulative final examination.*

I have a journalism bibliography at the Courses tab of my website. Use it as a starter list for building a library.



Detail from a painting by ROBERT SHETTERLY

**Ida Tarbell** wrote the most thoroughly researched work of the Muckraking era, *The History of the Standard Oil Company*.

## Part 1: The Best of Times, the Worst of Times

*The companion book for the first section is Taking on the Trust, Steve Weinberg's biography of Ida Tarbell, the great investigative journalist of the Muckraking Era. One of the most diligent reporters in our history, she serves as an excellent role model for this part of the course. In this section we focus on some of the greatest moments in the history of American journalism, balanced by a few of our darkest hours.*

SEP	03	Th	Introduction
SEP	08	T	Early Rumblings of the Adversary Press
SEP	10	Th	Mucking About
SEP	15	T	The Muck Stops Here
SEP	17	Th	Fervent Idealists Teetering on the Brink of Righteousness
SEP	22	T	Heroes Schmeroes

continued

**Course outline** continuedPart 2: **Disturbers of the Peace**

*This section focuses on the creators of the flame and keepers of the flame. These are the pioneers – who invented American journalism and represent the best of that breed – the independent, autonomous journalist.*

SEP	24	Th	<b>The Fabulous Franklin Brothers</b>
SEP	29	T	<b>A Bum with Ideas</b>
OCT	01	Th	<b>The Main Street Militants</b>
OCT	06	T	<b>First Test</b> <i>25 multiple-choice questions from lectures, five multiple-choice questions on Taking on the Trust</i>

Part 3: **Common Denominators**

*We focus on sensationalism, from colonial times to the present. You'll run into a lot of familiar names: Pulitzer, Hearst and Murdoch, to name a few scoundrels.*

OCT	08	Th	<b>The Sun Also Rises</b>
OCT	15	Th	<b>The Scum Also Rises</b>
OCT	20	T	<b>Tie a Yellow Journalist Around the Old Oak Tree</b>

**Note:** No class on Oct. 13 due to BU's holiday schedule

Part 4: **Wars and Peace**

*The companion book to this section is It's What I Do by Lynsey Addario. One of the values we use in deciding what is news is "conflict." We tend to think of wars, so naturally, this section of the course shows the press at tumultuous times. However, there are other sorts of conflict – domestic wars, we call them – worth study.*

OCT	22	Th	<b>Have You Ever Heard of a Civil War?</b>
OCT	27	T	<b>The Worm's Eye View</b>
OCT	29	Th	<b>What's So Great About a Depression?</b>
NOV	03	T	<b>The Children's Crusade</b>

continued

**Course outline** continuedPart 5: **Empires**

*This section is devoted to individual histories of several media empires, including the New York Times, CBS News, the Saturday Evening Post, the New Yorker, the Washington Post, Rolling Stone, Life magazine, Time magazine and the Los Angeles Times*

NOV	05	Th	<b>The New York Times</b>
NOV	10	T	<b>Second Test</b> <i>25 multiple-choice questions from lectures, five multiple-choice questions on It's What I Do.</i>
NOV	12	Th	<b>The Saturday Evening Post and Time-Life</b>
NOV	17	T	<b>The New Yorker</b>
NOV	19	Th	<b>CBS and Rolling Stone</b>
NOV	24	T	<b>The Los Angeles Times and The Washington Post</b>

Part 6: **Pressing On**

*The circle is unbroken. We use this last section of the course to bring us back to some of the themes with which we started. I'm getting nostalgic already. The companion book for this section of the course is my biography of Hunter S. Thompson, Outlaw Journalist.*

DEC	01	T	<b>Citizen Twain</b>
DEC	03	Th	<b>Whatin'naammaChrist!</b>
DEC	08	T	<b>Zip! Zam! Zowie! Swoosh!</b>
DEC	10	Th	<b>Third Test</b> <i>25 multiple-choice questions from lectures, five multiple-choice questions from Outlaw Journalist.</i>



RICHARD AVEDON

**Katherine Graham** led her family newspaper, the *Washington Post* through some of its greatest trials and triumphs.

**A Note**

**T**his course does not follow the chronology of American journalism. It covers the territory thematically.

We consider the last 300 years of journalism on these shores in a somewhat unorthodox way. It seems like it's a good idea to go through this history, looking for themes and ideas and not conform to a diary-like telling of the story of American journalism.

If a break from chronology causes difficulty, please let me know. There are a number of good books that trace the chronology of American journalism.

The best narrative history of journalism is *Covering America* by my colleague Christopher Daly. You will enjoy it.



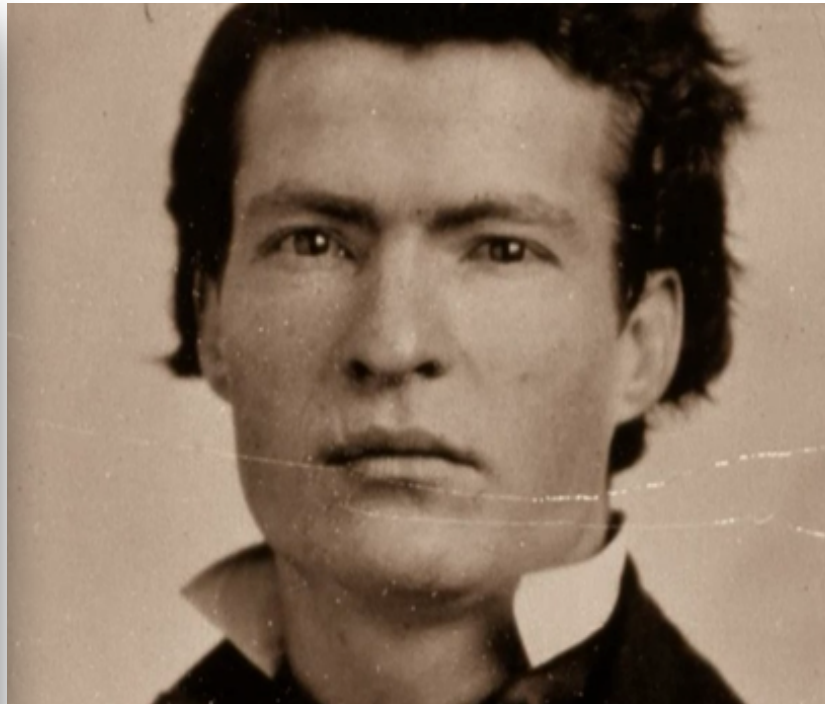
## Fine print

BU has a student honor code. Take this pledge: "On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in doing the assignment."

I will not tolerate cheating. If I discover that you have violated the honor code, I will do everything I can to boot you from the class and from the college.

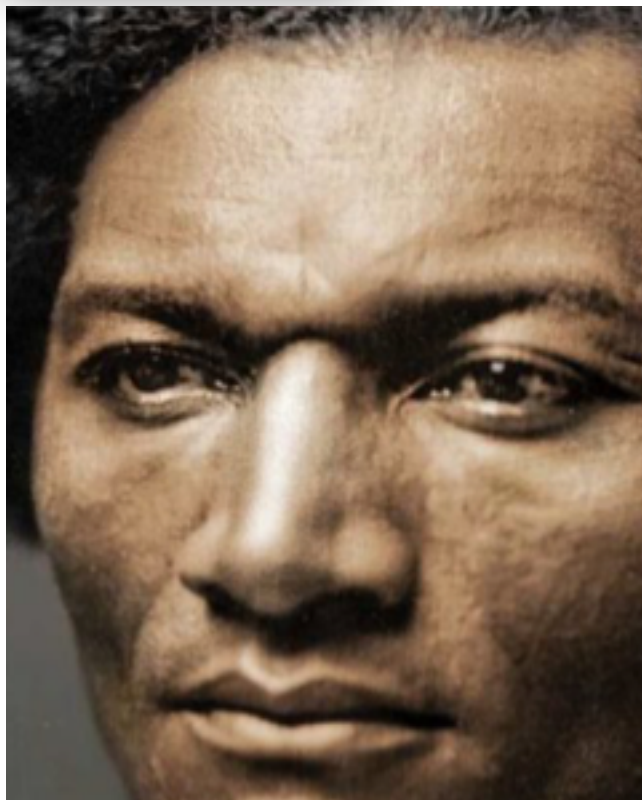
The Boston University academic conduct code is here: [www.bu.edu/academics/resources/academic-conduct-code/](http://www.bu.edu/academics/resources/academic-conduct-code/)

Also see [bu.edu/policies](http://bu.edu/policies) to learn about reporting sexual harassment and sexual misconduct. More information follows.



Bettman Archive

**Mark Twain** found his voice — one of the great voices of our literature — as reporter for the *Territorial Enterprise* in Nevada. Looks kind of like actor Dennis Quaid here, doesn't he?



Bettman Archive

**Frederick Douglass** was a runaway slave when he began writing for the *Liberator*, Boston's abolitionist newspaper.

## Some final words

Consider this syllabus a contract. I've made promises I intend to keep. By not dropping the class, I assume you accept the conditions.

There are two guiding philosophers in my life: Elvis Presley (who said, "If this ceases to be fun, we will cease to do it.") and my late mother (who said, "If we all liked the same thing, it would be a pretty dull world.") Those two great thinkers shape my approach to this course.

I hope this course deepens your interest in journalism history and helps you understand the legacies of these storytellers.

# Five important policies

## 1. Sexual misconduct

Boston University is committed to fostering a safe, productive learning environment. Title IX and our school policy prohibit discrimination on the basis of sex, which regards sexual misconduct — including harassment, domestic and dating violence, sexual assault and stalking. We understand that sexual violence can undermine students' academic success and we encourage students who have experienced some form of sexual misconduct to talk to someone about their experience, so they can get the support they need. Confidential support and academic advocacy resources can be found with the Center for Sexual Assault Response and Prevention (SARP)

See: [bu.edu/safety/sexual-misconduct/](https://bu.edu/safety/sexual-misconduct/)

## 2. Equal opportunity

BU has strict guidelines on classroom behavior and practices when it comes to the treatment of students and guests on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, age, mental or physical disability, genetic information, military service, national origin or due to marital, parental or veteran status. Discrimination for any of these reasons is prohibited.

See: [bu.edu/policies/ethics-governance/](https://bu.edu/policies/ethics-governance/)

## 3. Disability services

If you are a student with a disability or believe you might have a disability that requires accommodations, please contact the Office for Disability Services (ODS) at 617.353.3668 to coordinate any reasonable accommodation requests. ODS is at 19 Deerfield St., on the second floor.

See: [bu.edu/disability](https://bu.edu/disability)

## 4. Student athletes

All student athletes should be provided with a sheet from Student Athletic Support Services regarding absences throughout the semester. These sheets should be handed in as soon as possible, to avoid potential conflicts and so arrangements can be made to provide for missed lecture notes, classwork or discussion.

## 5. Academic Conduct Code

All Boston University students are bound by the Academic Conduct Code. Please review the code to ensure you are acting responsibly and ethically in regard to your academics.

See: [bu.edu/academics/policies/academic-conduct-code/](https://bu.edu/academics/policies/academic-conduct-code/)

# Some words about journalism

Favorite fancy-pants or funny quotes

The purpose of journalism is to irritate, infuriate and inform.

**JESS LEWIS GARDNER III**

*A student in the first class I ever taught*

The past actually happened, but history is only what somebody wrote down.

**A. WHITNEY BROWN**

*Author and former 'Saturday Night Live' performer*

All good research — whether for science or for a book — is a form of obsession.

**MARY ROACH**

*Science journalist*

It is not death or torture or imprisonment that threatens us as American journalists. It is the trivialization of our industry.

**TED KOPPEL**

*Formerly of ABC News*

The job of the newspaper is to comfort the afflicted and afflict the comfortable.

**FINLEY PETER DUNNE**

*Early 20th century journalist*

The principal difference between a horse and a man is that you cannot rely on a horse to gather news.

**MARK TWAIN**

*Who needs no introduction*

I would be a journalist if for no other reason than I would rather drink with journalists than any other people on Earth.

**HUNTER S. THOMPSON**

*Doctor of Gonzo Journalism*

I wouldn't be here if there were no trouble. Trouble is news, and gathering news is my job.

**MARGUERITE HIGGINS**

*Celebrated war correspondent*

Reporters aren't very bright as a general rule. I mean, most of us learn to write when we're kids. Then we go on to other things.

**BOBBY KNIGHT**

*Retired basketball coach*



**Marguerite Higgins** covered three wars.

If journalism is good, it is controversial by its nature.

**JULIAN ASSANGE**

*Wikileaks founder*

I would trust citizen journalism as much as I would trust citizen surgery.

**MORLEY SAFER**

*Formerly of CBS News*

If you're good at it, you leave no fingerprints.

**LILLIAN ROSS**

*Longtime reporter for the New Yorker*

Be outrageous, ridicule the fraidy-cats, rejoice in all the oddities that freedom can produce.

**MOLLY IVINS**

*Former reporter and columnist*

History, despite its wrenching pain, cannot be unlived, but if faced with courage, need not be lived again.

**MAYA ANGELOU**

*Poet, speaking at President Clinton's first inauguration*



# Instructor biography

I worked for newspapers and magazines before I started teaching. My first job, at *The Courier-Tribune* in Bloomington, Ind., lasted until that fine little newspaper went out of business. I was at *The Palm Beach Post* briefly and then joined *The American Spectator*, then served two years at *The Saturday Evening Post*. While at the *Post*, I helped edit a couple of books, including an anthology called *The American Story*.

Since I started teaching, I've taken several short term jobs — sometimes in the summers, sometimes night work on the copy desk during the school year — on *The Norman (Okla.) Transcript*, *The Courier-Journal* (Louisville, Ky.), *The Tampa Bay Times* and *The Gainesville (Fla.) Sun*. I've written reviews and features for *The Orlando Sentinel*, *The Tampa Bay Times* and *The Boston Globe* fairly regularly since 1989.

I earned a bachelor's in history and a master's in journalism from Indiana University, writing a historical survey of the portrayal of journalists in popular culture. I earned my Ph.D. in higher education administration from the University of Oklahoma, though that was largely a history degree.

Some of my books:

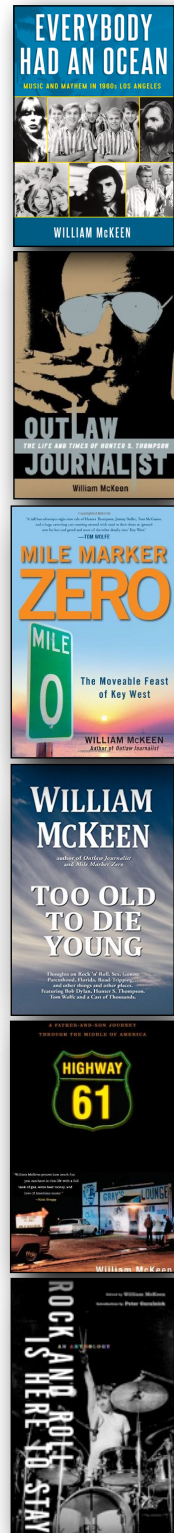
- *Everybody Had an Ocean* (Chicago Review Press, 2017) tells the story of the intersection of music and crime in the Los Angeles rock'n'roll world of the 1960s.
- *Too Old to Die Young* (Dredger's Lane, 2015) is a collection of articles, short stories, reviews and other stuff.
- *Homegrown in Florida* (University Press of Florida, 2012) is a collection of stories about growing up in Florida.
- *Mile Marker Zero* (Crown Books, 2011) is about the writers, artists, actors and musicians who found their artistic identities in Key West.
- *Outlaw Journalist* (W.W. Norton, 2008) is a biography of Hunter S. Thompson.
- *Highway 61* (W.W. Norton, 2003) is a memoir of a 6,000-mile road trip with my eldest son.
- *Rock and Roll is Here to Stay* (W.W. Norton, 2000) is an anthology tracing the history of popular music.

I have seven children — Sarah, a designer in New York; Graham, chief environmental officer for the Indiana University system; Mary, who works for Chance the Rapper in Chicago; Savannah, a nursing student in Florida; Jack, an artist in residence at my residence; and Travis and Charley, teen-age scholars at Cohasset High School. I also have four magnificent granddaughters, Mabel, Pearl, Rose and Myer.

Before becoming professor and chairman of the Boston University Department of Journalism, I taught at Western Kentucky University for five years, the University of Oklahoma for four years, and the University of Florida for 24 years, the last dozen as department chairman. I've been at BU since 2010 and I think it's a darn swell place.

I hope you enjoy the course.

*Wm. McKeen*



**Shameless plug:** I have seven children who'd like to go back to three meals a day. Feel free to purchase several copies to support this cause.