

History and Principles of Journalism

JO 150 Spring 2024



Meghan Twohey (left) and **Jodi Kantor** of the *New York Times* are authors of *Chasing the Truth*

About this course

This 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* (Penguin, 2015)

Professor **William McKeen**

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- Ta-Nehisi Coates, *Between the World and Me* (Spiegel and Grau, 2015)
- Jodi Kantor and Meghan Twohey, *Chasing the Truth* (Philomel, 2022)

Boston University provides students with subscriptions to *The New York Times* and *The Boston Globe*.

Read them daily. Journalists *must* read.

Be sure to check Blackboard 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.

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.

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.

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,

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.**

chancellor of Indiana University (my beloved alma mater) once said: "Education is the one thing people pay for then do not insist upon receiving."

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
- *Between the World and Me* by Ta-Nehisi Coates
- *Chasing the Truth* by Jodi Kantor and Meghan Twohey

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.



Ta-Nehisi Coates is the author of *Between the World and Me*.

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

The companion book for the first section is *Chasing the Truth* by Jodi Kantor and Meghan Twohey. They serve as excellent role models 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 dark hours.

JAN	18	Th	Introduction
JAN	23	T	Early Rumbblings of the Adversary Press
JAN	25	Th	Mucking About
JAN	30	T	The Muck Stops Here
FEB	01	Th	Fervent Idealists
FEB	06	T	Heroes Schmeroes

continued

Course outline continued

Part 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.

FEB	08	Th	The Fabulous Franklin Brothers
FEB	13	T	A Bum with Ideas
FEB	15	Th	The Main Street Militants
FEB	20	T	First Test <i>All multiple choice – 25 questions from my talks, five on Chasing the Truth.</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.

FEB	22	Th	The Sun Also Rises
FEB	27	T	The Scum Also Rises
FEB	29	Th	Tie a Yellow Journalist Around the Old Oak Tree
MAR	05	T	Polyester Journalism

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.

MAR	07	Th	Have You Ever Heard of a Civil War?
MAR	19	T	The Worm's Eye View
MAR	21	Th	What's So Great About a Depression?
MAR	26	T	The Children's Crusade
MAR	28	Th	Second Test <i>All multiple choice – 25 questions from my talks, five on It's What I Do.</i>

Spring Break is March 9 - 17

continued

Course outline continued

Part 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.

APR	02	T	<i>The New York Times and The New Yorker</i>
APR	04	Th	<i>Curtis Publishing and Time-Life</i>
APR	09	T	<i>CBS and Rolling Stone</i>
APR	11	Th	<i>The Los Angeles Times and The Washington Post</i>

Part 6: The Honor Roll

The circle is unbroken. We use this last section of the course to celebrate some of the greatest members our tribe. I'm getting nostalgic already. The companion book for this section of the course is Between the World and Me by Ta-Nehesi Coates.

APR	16	T	<i>Against the Grain</i>
APR	18	Th	<i>Afflicting the Comfortable</i>
APR	23	W	<i>WhatinannaChrist!</i>
APR	25	Th	Third Test <i>All multiple choice – 25 questions from my talks, five on Between the World and Me</i>
APR	30	T	<i>End of the Line</i>

We do not have a final exam. The April 25 test is the third unit exam.



Katherine Graham led the *Washington Post* through some of its greatest triumphs.

A Note

This 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 history of journalism is Chris Daly's *Covering America*.

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/

Also see bu.edu/policies to learn about reporting sexual harassment and sexual misconduct. More information follows.



Nellie Bly was America's first celebrity reporter.



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

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.

Some words about journalism

Favorite fancy-pants or funny quotes

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

JESS LEWIS GARDNER III
Student in my first class

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

A. WHITNEY BROWN
Author and former 'Saturday Night Live' performer

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

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

You can't rely on a horse to gather news. This is the principal difference between a horse and a man.

MARK TWAIN
Who needs no introduction

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

MARGUERITE HIGGINS
Celebrated war correspondent



Lynsey Addario is the author of *It's What I Do*.

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
Late basketball coach

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

MORLEY SAFER
Formerly of CBS News

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 un-lived, but if faced with courage, need not be lived again.

MAYA ANGELOU
Acclaimed poet and actor, speaking at President Clinton's first inauguration

Journalism is what we need to make democracy work.

WALTER CRONKITE
Longtime CBS News newsman, managing editor

Six things to know

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 & Prevention (SARP) at <http://www.bu.edu/safety/sexual-misconduct/>.

2. Equal opportunity. BU has strict guidelines on classroom behavior and practices when it comes to 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. Please refer to the [Equal Opportunity/Affirmative Action Policy](#) for more details.

3. A positive classroom. At your discretion, please alert me to anything related to preferred pronouns, preferred name or nickname, or any extenuating circumstances or trigger warnings (personal, medical, etc.) that might impact your classroom experience. I want to make sure you have the most positive experience in the classroom as possible. If work that gets shown in this class, professional or student-generated, offends you in anyway, please mention it in class or talk to us privately about it so that we can all learn from each other. This is not to say we will ever restrict freedom of speech or water down an aggressive or edgy idea, but we want to discuss anything that someone deems troublesome or offensive.

4. Disability and access services. If you are a student with a disability or believe you might have a disability that requires accommodations, please contact the [Office of Disability and Access Services](#) (DAS) at 617-353-3658 to coordinate any reasonable accommodation requests. DAS is located at 25 Buick Street, on the third floor.

5. Student athletes. All student-athletes should be provided with a sheet from Student-Athlete 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.

6. Academic code of conduct. All BU students are bound by the [Academic Conduct Code](#). Please review to ensure you are acting responsibly and ethically in regard to your academics.

Additional resources

In addition to the resources listed above, please know that we are here to help you find the resources to help you get through stressful times.

Support services

<https://www.bu.edu/com/resources/current-students/student-support/>

COM Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

<https://www.bu.edu/com/about-com/diversity-equity-inclusion/>

Newbury Center for First-Generation Students

<http://bu.edu/newbury-center>

COM Writing Center

<https://www.bu.edu/com/for-current-students/the-com-writing-center/>

Dean of Students office

<https://www.bu.edu/dos/>

Note: Any student who is experiencing food or housing insecurity and believes this may affect their performance in the course is urged to contact the Dean of Students for support. In addition, please notify the professor if you are comfortable in doing so. This will enable us to provide any resources that we may possess.

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.

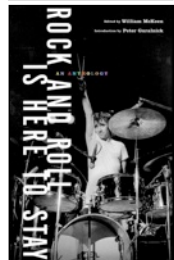
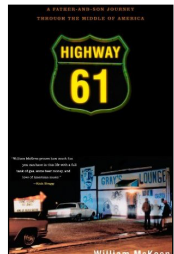
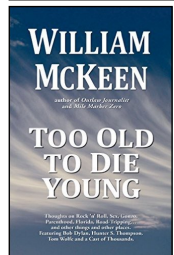
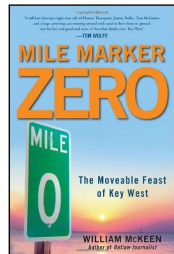
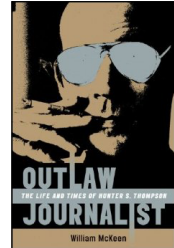
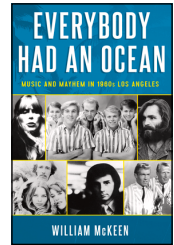
Some of my books:

- *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 a non-profit in Chicago; Savannah, a nurse in Boston; Jack, an artist in residence at my residence; Travis, a baseball and business major at Rivier University and Charley, a business major at Miami of Ohio. I also have five magnificent granddaughters, Mabel, Pearl, Rose, Myer, and Vivienne. A grandson is due momentarily.

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 served 13 years as chairman at BU, for a grand total of 25 years in that job I'm delighted to be a full-time faculty member again. I've been at BU since 2010 and I think it's a darn swell place.

I hope you enjoy the course.

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.