



Boston University British Programmes
COM JO 416
The Foreign Correspondent – International Reporting
COM JO 416
David McNeil

Course Overview:

This course will introduce you to the world of the Foreign Correspondent. In the United States, ambitious reporters often seek an overseas posting because it could further their careers back home. In Britain, and many other parts of Europe, the job of Foreign Correspondent is seen as a full career, an end in itself, not just a means to promotion.

In JO416, you will examine the motivation and priorities of a Foreign Correspondent "someone who is paid to travel the world, live in interesting places and tell people about them" As the world shrinks, so we need to know more about other cultures. We cannot always "go there" and if we do, it is often only for a brief visit in which we can garner no more than an initial impression. A Foreign Correspondent lives and works in the country from which he/she is reporting for years at a time. He/she can provide insight, background and context, as well as report events as they happen. In this way, knowledge and understanding are spread.

So what is it like to be a Foreign Correspondent? What credentials - journalistic and linguistic - are required? How does a Foreign Correspondent "find" the news? How does he/she process it? What does he/she file - political, social and personal reporting.

Many successful Foreign Correspondents find themselves covering wars and if they do well the first time they report a war, they will be sent to cover other wars. A large part of this course is devoted to analysing the role of the War Correspondent. We examine photojournalism, television news and radio coverage of wars -- from the first media war (the Boer War) to the first television war (Vietnam) to modern times.

In JO 416, we will also examine the function of the Foreign Correspondent within the structure of an international newsgathering system. In this context, we will consider the role of television, radio, newspapers and the international news agencies. For example, why is radio still such an important source of news in the UK?

Reading List:

Scoop (set book) Evelyn Waugh
The First Casualty Philip Knightley
A Rumor of War Philip Caputo
From Beirut to Jerusalem Thomas Friedman
Live from the Battlefield Peter Arnett
Anyone Here Been Raped and Speaks English? Edward Behr

Assessment:

Your grade in this course is based on three assignments and an examination. Your first assignment will involve an analysis of British Television News and will be worth 10 per cent of your final grade. Your second assignment will require you to write a leader/editorial in the style of *The Economist* news magazine on a subject of topical interest to be chosen by the Tutor and will be worth 30 per cent of your final grade. For the third assignment, you'll need to produce an article written as though for publication by a newspaper or magazine in the United States on a subject dominating the headlines in the UK. That too will be worth 30 per cent of your final grade as will the exam, which will be sat over a maximum two-hour period. Five essay questions will be posed and you will select two from five. Each of the two essays will be given equal weight in the marking process.

GRADING SYSTEM

The following Boston University table explains the grading system that is used by faculty members on Boston University's British Programmes.

Grade	Honour Points	Usual%	Definition
A	4.0	93-100	Excellent
A-	3.7	89-92	
B+	3.3	85-88	
B	3.0	81-84	Good
B-	2.7	77-80	
C+	2.3	73-76	
C	2.0	69-72	Satisfactory
C-	1.7	65-68	
D	1.0	60-64	Low pass
F	0.0	Unmarked	Fail

Grading Criteria

A An exceptional grade that is only given to work that shows a consistent and outstanding level of insight and expression. This type of essay shows a rigorous and persuasive attention both to matters of detailed explication and to wider questions of evaluation. Crucially, this type of essay will also show real independence of thought expressed in fluent and well-written English.

A- A grade that is given to work that shows a commanding grasp of the central issues and also demonstrates an ability for close textual analysis combined with attention being paid to the larger implications of the analysis (whether this involves aesthetic, moral, political, or other considerations.) An appreciable degree of background reading and intelligent use of that reading is often shown at this level, and allowance is given here for the odd weak points and infelicities in phrasing

B+, B, B- This range of grades indicates descending levels of competence and thoroughness. On the whole, the B essay is less polished than the A essay, but a B+ essay will certainly still have to show commendably detailed stretches of analysis, a clear grasp of the central issues and some discussion of the implications of a student's close reading of any given text(s). Work within the B grades often shows evidence of reading in the secondary literature (critical commentaries and background reading) but also often shows an overdependence on such sources over and against making intelligent, critical and discrete use of that reading. The sharpening and exercising of your own critical responses is the target to aim for, and, whereas many essays in the B range show a good understanding of the ground gone over in class there is less evidence here of really independent analysis and appreciation. The difference between a B+, a straight B, and a B-, typically involves the frequency of spelling mistakes, awkwardness or solecisms in expression, or clumsiness in the exposition of your analysis or argumentation.

C+, C, C- These grades indicate unsatisfactory work. Such essays may suffer from being too vague and generalised or else being excessively narrow in coverage; they may be seriously marred by errors of fact or errors of interpretation; they may involve only a crude repetition of areas covered in class without any demonstration of real intellectual engagement with the issues. The differences between a C+, a straight C, and a C- reflect the various degrees of inadequacy of organisation and presentation. Essays that are riddled with errors in spelling, punctuation and syntax, or are chaotic in argument and exposition, will fall into the lowest range.

D A marginal pass can be given where some but not all the elements of the course have been completed satisfactorily.

F The failing grade indicates the work is seriously flawed in one or more ways:

- *Obvious lack of familiarity with the material
- *So poorly written as to defy understanding
- *So brief and insubstantial that it fails to properly address the subject
- *Material presented is not relevant to the assignment
- *Demonstrates evidence of plagiarism

Boston University's code of student responsibilities

The value of any grade, credit, honour or degree received by a student presupposes that all work submitted by a student is his or her own. A student who

uses or relies upon the work of others or who, except under conditions expressly permitted by the instructor, furnishes assistance to another student, violates the standards of the University. Students must insist upon academic honesty and integrity from their fellow students and must report promptly any case of alleged academic conduct. Failure to do so is a violation of this code.

Plagiarism can take many forms, including the reproduction of published material without acknowledgement, or representing work done by others as your own. This includes the increasingly common practice of purchasing and downloading work from Internet 'paper mills'. You should be extremely careful when submitting work for this course that all work is correctly sourced. Print outs of web sites that have been used in research may be required by the lecturer in cases of a grade dispute and all web site based reference material should be kept by the student until after the end of the semester.

Your grades will be based on the following criteria: the relevance of your answer to the topic chosen, clarity of expression and continuity, explicit evidence of having read the main information and arguments in the required and supplementary reading. In addition, extra credit will be given for the strategic use of up-to-date illustrative material from the press or other media that you may have gathered during the course.

Terms and Conditions Students are expected to attend each session and to be punctual. A register of attendance will be taken. Leaving it to another class member to convey messages will not be acceptable. Any student, who is unable to attend a class, or take part in an assignment because of religious reasons, must give notice of the fact in advance. He/she will be required to make up for time lost. In this situation arrangements must be made with another student for class notes to be shared. Written papers must be delivered before agreed deadline, failure to hand in the paper will result in deducted marks. I will make some time available in each session for students to raise questions, etc. If you have problems with the availability of reading (all of which should be in the library), please don't hesitate to contact me through the Academic Affairs Office.

Plagiarism Boston University's Code of Student Responsibilities states: All students are responsible for having read the Boston University statement on plagiarism, which is available in the Academic Conduct Code. Students are advised that the penalty against students on a Boston University program for

cheating on examinations or for plagiarism may be "...expulsion from the program or the University or such other penalty as may be recommended by the Committee on Student Academic Conduct, subject to approval by the dean." The value of any grade, credit, honour or degree received by a student presupposes that all work submitted by a student is his or her own. A student who uses or relies upon the work of others or who, except under conditions expressly permitted by the instructor, furnishes assistance to another student, violates the standards of the University. Students must insist upon academic honesty and integrity from their fellow students and must report promptly any case of alleged violation of academic conduct. Failure to do so is a violation of this code. Plagiarism can take many forms, including the reproduction of published material without acknowledgement, or representing work done by others as your own. This includes the increasingly common practice of purchasing and downloading work from Internet "paper mills." Students should be extremely careful when submitting work for this course that all work is correctly sourced. Print-outs of web sites that have been used in research may be required by the lecturer in cases of a grade dispute and all web site based reference material should be kept by the student until after the end of the semester.

Chronology:

1. Course introduction.

The Foreign Correspondent -- motivation and priorities.

- function within the structure of an international newsgathering system
- sources and subjects
- essentials of technique

Set Assignment One

2. The Foreign Correspondent -- interviewing and filing

- "tricks of the trade"- The War Correspondent

3. Guest Speaker - Peter Mosley: The International News Agencies

Campaigning Journalism

4. The War Correspondent:

- a strategy for survival
- relations with the military
- censorship
- ethics

5. British Newspapers and Magazines
War and Television: The BBC in Vietnam
Set Assignment Two

6. British Television News: Production Values
Radio Journalism

7. Interactive workshop—press releases and the art of the interview
Making programmes at the BBC

8. POTUS on the move—the foreign correspondent and the White House press corps
The first media war

9. The Way Ahead
- the digital revolution
- citizen journalism
Analysis of set book -- Scoop, by Evelyn Waugh

The tutor, David McNeil, brings to this course vast experience as a Foreign Correspondent for twenty-one years with the BBC. For nineteen of those years, he was based outside the UK in the Middle East, Africa and the United States. He has covered numerous wars and insurrections and has reported for the BBC from 46 countries.