Catalog Course Description
Students explore the role of news in United States history, from its raucous beginnings at the time of the American Revolution to its tumultuous present in a world of "all news all the time." The course gives students the tools to analyze and understand how print, broadcast and online news organizations have evolved over time. Students study the First Amendment, examine parallels between issues raised by the explosion of online journalism and earlier periods in journalistic evolution, and explore other issues confronting the contemporary journalist. In looking at how news has evolved, the class also discusses the ethical dilemmas faced by those practicing journalism.

Course Objectives
This is a course in the history and principles of journalism. The course often helps students decide if this is the major for them or not. Although students from other, related fields take it, the course is aimed at those who are seriously interested in journalism as a career. Therefore following the news is essential. Lectures, readings, field trips and discussions will lead students through the historical evolution of news, an introduction to the persons that shaped journalism, a description of today’s major news media and a critical appraisal of their performance and their legal/ethical limitations in a free, dynamic, capitalist society. Our context will be local, national and international.

Students will finish the course not just with the knowledge of dates, places and names of old media and journalists, but with an understanding of who they were/are the key players in journalism, what they’ve done, when and where they operated, why they are important and how we have arrived at the journalism of today. The importance of truth telling, accuracy, fairness, ethical behavior, source verification and the legal limitations to media freedom will be at the core of the course lectures/discussion and students will be familiar with these concepts.

Text
"Mass Communication: Living in a Media World," by R. Hanson (4th ed). (EXCL. chs. 7 and 8)

ALSO: a. You should read regularly one of the two Boston dailies AND either The New York Times or The Washington Post as well as one newsmagazine such as Time, Newsweek, the Economist or the U.S. News and World Report. Observing a non-mainstream news medium would be especially welcomed and challenging not only for you but also for all your fellow students with whom you may share your findings.

b. You should also watch/listen daily to newscasts on ABC, CBS, NBC, CNN, PBS, Fox News, the BBC (through WBUR 90.9FM, Boston) and/or Al Jazeera America.

c. Follow the web sites of a. and b. above as well as those of the Huffington Post, Slate, Reuters, AP, CBC, The Guardian (U.K.), The Times of London and note differences in news selection, angle language and illustration. Foreign language sites are especially welcome.

You will not do well in this class if you are not well informed.

Course Plan
This is a lecture-discussion class. The discussion part is for you and is conducted by you and the instructor and/or guest lecturers. Be prepared to discuss current events and their media treatment and impact. Use knowledge obtained from the textbooks as a context for what's going on in contemporary news coverage.

Assignments and Grading
Correct spelling and grammar are essential for the exercises in this class. Use a dictionary, ask questions, etc., but make sure that your assignments are typed cleanly and that you use the language properly. Language is at the center of our work.

Assignments: a. One two-page (double spaced) news analysis comparing/contrasting the front pages of two broadsheet newspapers of the same day (250-300 words, 20 pts.) AND b. one two-page
Factual errors within stories. Graded without this information. Inaccuracies in this information will be dealt with in the same manner as a lack of awareness about the standards for sources or quotes in the news, which states, in part, that "the attempt of any student to present as his or her own work, the work of others or by making up quotes, sources or stories will undermine not only their own careers but also the public's trust in the entire profession. There is no room for them in journalism or in the Department of Journalism."

More specifically, anyone in this class caught violating the trust between writer and reader by plagiarizing the work of others or by making up quotes, sources or stories will automatically fail the course and face possible suspension from the College. This departmental standard is based on the Emerson College plagiarism policy, which states, in part, that "the attempt of any student to present as his or her own work, the work of another or any work which he or she has not honestly performed...renders the offender liable to immediate suspension." If you are unclear about the standards for sources or quotes in the news, please see me. As the faculty handbook notes, "A lack of awareness of the regulations governing plagiarism and cheating on the part of the students does not exempt a student from the responsibility to abide by the College's regulations."

Information attribution plays a vital role in the life of a journalist because it helps determine a story's credibility. You should always attribute the information you are presenting. For a scholarly paper, you should use appropriate notations (footnotes, endnotes, etc.). For a news story, you should identify the source by name and title AND at the end of the story give your instructor/editor the source's phone number. Stories will not be graded without this information. Inaccuracies in this information will be dealt with in the same manner as factual errors within stories.