

Journalism and Global Civil Discourse

IDS 350

Grand Valley State University

Fall 2020

Tuesday and Thursday 10:00 a.m.–11:15 a.m.

Professor Jeff Kelly Lowenstein; Lake Superior Hall 277

Room: This class is 100% online. Depending on technical availability, we will meet via Blackboard Collaborate Ultra or Zoom.

Pronouns: he/him/his

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Virtual Office Hours: 10:00 a.m. -11:30 a.m. Monday, 9:00 a.m. to 10:30 a.m. Wednesday, and other times by appointment.

Credits

3

“My experience has allowed me to know that the threats (to journalists) are real.”

Ignace Sossou, Beninese journalist who was imprisoned during the first six months of 2020 for accurately tweeting the comments of a public prosecutor.

Overview and Course Objectives:

Welcome to Journalism and Global Civil Discourse!

This is a seminar course designed to address and discuss current issues in journalism and global civil discourse. Beginning with an exploration of what civil discourse means and how we can apply it in our class, it will go on to look at the consequences for civil discourse of the conflict between journalists trying to share accurate information and those governments, individuals and organizations who are working to misinform the public.

During the early part of the course we will focus largely on how these issues play out in the United States in the buildup to, and aftermath of, the November elections. At the same time, we will also see how this dynamic exists in other countries throughout the world. We are very fortunate to have the support of a team of Computer Science students who will be working throughout the semester on helping us build a Global Civil Discourse map. By the end of the course students will be more engaged and critical news consumers with a broader, more informed perspective on journalism and civil discourse on local, national and international levels.

This course/seminar requires significant initiative and enterprise by its participants.

Course Objectives:

After successful completion of the course the student should be able to

- a. Practice the elements of civil discourse inside and outside of the classroom setting.
- b. Identify the efforts journalists and others are using to share accurate information about what is happening in the world.
- c. Articulate the strategies governments, organizations and individuals use to discredit journalists and misinform the public.
- d. Develop an understanding of the many opportunities available on campus, in the community and the world at large.
- e. Discover and report on issues around journalism and global civil discourse as presented in a broad range of academic, trade and popular sources (print, broadcast, video and online).

Prerequisites: Junior Standing

Brief Instructor Bio:

Jeff Kelly Lowenstein is the Padnos/Sarosik Endowed Chair of Civil Discourse at Grand Valley State University. His work has been published by The New Yorker and the Chicago Tribune, among many other publications, and has received local, national and international recognition. A Fulbright Scholar, Specialist and Teacher, Kelly Lowenstein holds a master's degree in journalism from Northwestern University, a master's degree in education from Northeastern University, a master's certificate in refugee trauma from Harvard University and a bachelor's degree in History from Stanford University. He has written or edited six books.

Classroom Policies and Attendance:

Regular attendance is critical to your success in this course. You must communicate before class if you will not be attending. At the same time, because of the ongoing effects of the COVID-19 virus, **attendance will *not* be factored into your grade.** Updates, announcements, discussion, and additional reading will be posted on the Blackboard page for this class. Be sure to check it at least once a week.

Assignments are due by the start time of the class period stated. E-mailed assignments are permitted with time stamp serving as proof of "on time" submission. This course is subject to the GVSU policies listed at <http://www.gvsu.edu/coursepolicies/>.

Required Text:

Readings will be posted to Blackboard or handed out in class. Students should also check with the GVSU library for materials as recommended through E-reserve.

Extra Credit:

At my discretion, extra credit projects may become available to you during the semester. Please feel free to see me if you have an idea you want to propose. I will also let the class know about extra credit opportunities.

Students with Special Needs or Those Requiring Accommodation:

Please let me know early in the semester to make arrangements necessary to accommodate a special situation. If you need academic accommodations because of a learning, physical, or other disability, please contact Disability Support Resources (DSR) at 331-2490. Furthermore, if you have a physical disability and think you will need assistance evacuating the classroom and/or building in an emergency situation, please make me aware so that I can develop a plan to assist you.

In case of fire: Immediately proceed to the nearest exit during a fire alarm. Do not use elevators. More information is available on the University's Emergency website located at <http://www.gvsu.edu/emergency>

A word about academic honesty:

It is expected that you will only submit work of your own creation in this class. Cheating and/or plagiarism (including use of anyone else's work without attribution) will result in a grade of "0" for the assignment and will be referred to the department chair for possible failure of the course.

If you are ever in doubt as to whether you should cite a source or have any questions regarding academic honesty, please see me.

A word about community:

We will be a community for the upcoming semester. As the instructor I bear responsibility for the classroom environment, and this is something to which we all contribute. My goal is that we work to create a space for the respectful exchange of ideas and where we can grow through taking risks, failing, reflecting and improving.

It is important to me that everyone feels safe as a person in the class. Please let me know if you have a nickname or set of personal pronouns you prefer me to use. If for some reason you do not feel comfortable in the class, I encourage you to contact me via email, text or by coming to office hours so that we can address the concern and resolve the issue.

Meeting online for an entire semester is a very different thing from meeting in person. Here are some guidelines for our new scenario. We will talk about this together during the first day of class.

- I strongly encourage you to **turn on your computer's camera.**
- Please do your best to **avoid distracting environments** (public spaces, loud common areas, etc).
- You're more than welcome to use a unique digital backdrop for our virtual meetings, but **make sure they're tasteful.**
- Please make sure **your audio is muted** until you either signal your desire to talk or I call on you to do so.

Assignments:

- You will do a Goals, Passion and Assets assignment at the beginning of the semester to help chart your course for your studies. Details will be provided in class.
- You will have a 10-minute presentation about a journalism and global civil discourse issue that is of particular interest to you. You should be ready to get a conversation started as well as to answer questions. Topics can be a journalism and civil discourse trend, issue, development, person, or publication.
- You will have a reflection piece based on one of the guest speakers who presents to the class. Details will be provided in class.
- You will have a solutions paper based on a key issue in journalism and global civil discourse that you identify.
- The culminating project needs to have a written component, but can take a variety of different forms. If you want to do a term paper, it should be 6-8 pages with a minimum of 10 different sources, appropriately cited (APA style) within the text, etc. A one-page, typed project proposal is required and is part of the grade. Final projects will be presented to the class, and, possibly, other people like Padnos/Sarosik board members, funders or professors. Topics can be a journalism trend, issue, development, person, or publication, and can build on the content of your presentation and/or what the guest speaker addressed. It includes a reflection on what you learned during the course of the project and the course.
- You are expected to be an active news consumer throughout the semester. Do some combination of reading at least one newspaper per day, watching or listening to at least one broadcast news program per day, surfing the web, and keeping up on social media. We'll spend a certain amount of the class checking in on what is happening on local,

state, national and international levels, on how media outlets are covering it and on what is happening within the industry.

Grade Percentages:

Attendance/Participation	20%
Goals, Passion Assignment	5%
Presentation	10%
Guest Speaker Reflection	10%
Solutions Paper	10%
Final Project Proposal	5%
Final Project Checkpoint	10%
First Draft Final Project	10%
Final Project	20%

All points earned will be added together for a numeric grade for the class. Letter grades will be assigned as follows:

- 93-100 A
- 90-93 A-
- 83-87 B
- 80-83 B-
- 87-89 B+
- 77-79 C+
- 73-77 C
- 70-73 C-
- 67-69 D+
- 63-67 D
- 60-63 D-
- 59 and below F

The last date to drop this class with a grade of “W” is November 20 by 5:00 pm.

Office Hours/Additional Help

I am happy to meet with you outside of class if you need assistance with material or have questions about what we are learning. My virtual office hours are Monday from 10:00 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. and Wednesday from 9:00 a.m. to 10:30 a.m. However, I will make sure to make time for you if you ask for it.

I can also be reached during reasonable hours by email or by text at (312) 532-7902.

TOPICS WE WILL COVER DURING CLASS INCLUDE THE FOLLOWING:

Civil Discourse; Journalism in the United States and the World; Press Freedom Guarantees; Universal Declaration of Human Rights; Misinformation Strategies; Social Media; Presidential and Vice-Presidential Debates; Information Ecosystems.

WEEKLY PROGRESSION OF ASSIGNMENTS:

Week 1: September 1, 3 Course Introduction, Overview and Introductions, Goals, Passion and Assets Assignment, Building Community, Introduce and Define Civil Discourse, Identify Key Issues.

Week 2: September 8, 10 Start to think about Global Civil Discourse Map, Sam Johnson and Nick Moran. Presentations Begin; Continue Civil Discourse Discussion, Librarian Kim Ranger.

Week 3: September 15, 17. Presentations Continue; Civil Discourse Readings, Discussion, Global Civil Discourse Map Check in. Key Issues Discussion.

Week 4: September 22, 24. Presentations Continue; Misinformation Strategy Discussion.

Week 5: September 29, October 1. Presentations Continue; Global Civil Discourse Map Check In. Presidential Debate Preparation and Debrief

Week 6: October 6, 8 Presentations Continue; Vice Presidential Debate Preparation and Debrief.

Week 7: October 13, 15 Identify topic for final project, Global Civil Discourse Map Check In, Presidential Debate Preparation and Debrief

Week 8: October 20, 22 One-page final project proposal due. Presidential Debate Preparation.

Week 9: October 27, 29 Presidential Debate Debrief, Identify issue for Solutions paper, Global Civil Discourse Map Check in, Election Preview.

Week 10: November 3, 5 Research for final project, Presidential Election and Debrief, Solutions Paper Due.

Week 11: November 10, 12 Work on final project, Global Civil Discourse Map Check in, Project Checkpoint Due.

Week 12: November 17, 19 Work on final project. Guest Speaker Reflection Due.

NOVEMBER 20- DROP WITH A “W” DEADLINE.

Week 13: November 24 First Draft of final project due.

THANKSGIVING VACATION

Week 14 December 1, 3 Revise, fact check final project. Global Civil Discourse Map Check in.

Week 15 December 8, 10 Final Key Issue Discussion, Presentation Preview, Final project check-in.

Week 16 Thursday, December 17: 10:00 a.m. to 11:50 a.m.

FINAL PROJECT IS DUE. STUDENTS WILL PRESENT THEIR WORK DURING THE CLASS.

PLEASE NOTE THAT THIS SYLLABUS IS A ROADMAP THAT CAN CHANGE AS EVENTS ARISE.