

Moravian College

SOC 370 – Seminar: Press Freedoms, Then as Now

Dr. Joel Nathan Rosen, Associate Professor of Sociology

PPHAC 311

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Office Hours: W 4p – 5p / Th 12n – 1p & 4p – 5p / F 12n – 1p

Or By Appointment

Course Description:

Press freedom was once thought to mark the foundation of a free and democratic society. Yet that ideal has historically been considered a genuine threat for some within the halls of power. This seminar will explore the concept of a free press, paying particular attention to its historical as well as socio-political developments through readings and discussions on topics ranging from the Jeffersonian model of a free press to the contemporary retreat from such ideals under the guise of public safety and similar debates.

Course Objectives:

This course aims at providing students with an understanding of the universality of stratification and the differences in the way people are stratified in different countries. The specific objectives of this course, thus, are as follows:

- to identify important variables on which press and press freedom revolve
- to examine the theories relative to a free press in both the abstract and the concrete
- to offer international and cross-cultural comparisons of the role of press and media in various nations
- to examine the consequences of restrictions of any sort when placed on print and/or electronic media
- to explore the above in a sociological fashion

Required Text:

- Mick Hume's *There Is No Such Thing As a Free Press...and we need one now more than ever.*
- There will be scores of supplemental reading offered throughout the semester including works by Lee Bollinger, Fred W. Friendly, George Seldes, etc. that will be distributed and/or posted throughout the semester (see Google Drive site)

Course Requirements:

Students will be required to take a midterm, review a source (to be part of larger project assignment), negotiate the terms of an 15-20 page term-type paper, a project that includes a separate annotated bibliography, and perform other tasks, including writing article assessments, participation, and taking any unannounced quizzes, etc., as befitting a senior level course.

The breakdown of grades is as follows:

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|---|-----|
| Misc. Work, Short Papers, Quizzes, Participation etc. | 20% |
| Midterm | 20% |
| Annotated Bibliography | 20% |
| Source Review | 20% |
| Paper/Project (with an Oral Component) | 20% |

As I typically employ letter grades on written assignments, I offer the below list of how each letter translates numerically:

- A+=100/A= 96/A-=93
- B+=89/B=86/B-=83
- C+=79/C=76/C-=73
- D+=69/D=66/D-=63
- F=55-50 [actual score depends on the severity of the error(s)/student will be notified]
- Failure to turn in work translates into a *ZERO*

Grade Scale:

- A=100-95/A-=94-90
- B+=89-88/B=87-84/B-=83-80
- C+=79-78/C=77-74/C-=73-70
- D+=69-68/D=67-64/D-=63-60
- F=59...

Grade Advisory – While I respect that students have to be grade conscious, it is imperative that students understand that:

I treat evaluations as professional—not personal!

Do not ask from me anything that steps outside the boundaries, and do not wait until *Zero Hour* to inquire as to your status. Moreover, it is your responsibility to keep abreast of your own grade calculations, and unless the circumstances are unique, I'll leave you to your own devices on that matter. Also, to save us all needless heartache, and in the

interest of propriety and mental health, I also have to insist on a twenty-four hour grace period before I will speak to you about any returned work. You may find that this cooling off period is exactly what we both need to come together rationally and in the spirit of liberal learning.

Finally, you are required to attend at least one office hour session during the semester, and it is mandatory that you appear during office hours to discuss/go over in much greater detail any assignment graded below a C-.

Classroom Decorum and Expectations:

Attendance – Class attendance is mandatory and vitally important to your success. Failure to attend on a regular basis not only puts your grade in jeopardy but may also be met with a lowered mark for participation.

- There are no excused absences. If you have a legitimate emergency, it is your responsibility to bring it to the attention of your instructor at your earliest convenience.

Tardiness – Tardiness to class is not only detrimental to the learning process but quite disruptive and unfair to those who make it to class on time regularly. Recurring tardiness shows a lack of respect for the classroom, the instructor, and one's fellow students and will not be tolerated. Therefore, once the door has been shut, you will not be permitted to enter.

Deadlines – Assignment deadlines are exactly that. Students are expected to comply with deadlines in accordance with all rules, guidelines, and expectations of each assignment proffered. Failure to do so will result in a tendering of no-grade for work not done to expectation or submitted on time. The policy for late papers is as follows:

- On minor assignments, you will be allowed to turn in one late assignment as long as it is within twenty-four hours for a one letter deduction. After your one exception, you will no longer enjoy this luxury
- Do not expect me to have to chase you down in order to turn in assignments!

Participation – Classroom discussions are a big part of the learning process. Your participation is not requested—it is required. Failure to do so is both in bad taste and could conceivably be detrimental to your ability to learn effectively.

Disruptions – Disruptive behavior, including talking, unengaged behavior, i.e. reading a book, magazine, or newspaper, sleeping, chronic tardiness alongside loud entrances, and any other unfortunate breach will not be tolerated. Learning is an active process, and failure to actively engage not only threatens the individual's ability to learn but also affects others.

Academic Honesty – You are all responsible for knowing and adhering to the code of academic honesty here at Moravian College. For those of you unfamiliar with this code, it can be found on pages fifty-two through fifty-seven in your student handbook.

Please Note: It is your responsibility to see to it that these expectations and guidelines are met satisfactorily and consistently. I take the classroom quite seriously, and I expect all of you to do the same as well.

Out of Class Submission Expectations:

- a title page with a suitable title, your name, the course, section, and my name all spelled correctly
- 12 font (Times New Roman in black) with default margins and double-spaced
- page numbers
- a *References* section (if necessary) at the end of the work done in the most recent citation form of your choice (depends on your major and other factors)¹
- for every unedited internet site there must be at least ***two*** published sources
- with few exceptions, single & two-digit numbers (*zero through* ninety-nine) are to be spelled out; three digits are to be written numerically
- be wary of overuse of abbreviations and/or contractions
- a staple in the upper left hand corner (no frilly covers)

****Please Note that all in-class work must be done in blue or black ink****

On Writing and Research:

As this instructor is particularly driven by written expression, you should expect that there will be an emphasis placed on written expression in this course. I should also like you to know from the start that I spend a great deal of time pouring over your writing and expect that you will read and explore my commentary on all things ranging from content to grammar, punctuation, and syntax. Please try to check your ego at the doors and realize that this is a learning experience while convincing yourself that blips and missteps are all part of the process.

You should also note that where applicable, this instructor expects his students to deal directly with all matters relating to the citation process. Failure to do so will be dealt with harshly with penalties ranging from a zero on work not properly documented to a formal report to the proper academic disciplinary committee.

¹ Work not properly cited will not be graded and could be brought to the Academic Standards Committee under a charge of plagiarism. If you have questions, please seek me out. Also, *Wikipedia* and other types of non-academic encyclopedias will under no circumstances be considered legitimate sources!

A Note on Individual Accommodations:

Students who wish to request accommodations in this class for a disability should contact Elaine Mara, assistant director of learning services for academic and disability support at 1307 Main Street, or by calling 610-861-1510. Accommodations cannot be provided until authorization is received from the Academic Support Center.

Also, as the college's Writing Center is located in a building that is not accessible to persons with mobility impairments, those in need of further assistance or accommodation are encouraged to contact the center at 610/861-1392.

A newspaper is a device for making the ignorant more ignorant and the crazy crazier.

-H. L. Mencken, American Journalist



TOPICAL OUTLINE OF COURSE

Unit I – Tracing the Evolution of a Free Press (Variety of Readings to Be Posted accordingly)

- **conceptualizing press freedom**
- **its origins & historical ramifications**
- **colonial America's response to incursions on communication**
- **the 1st Amendment**
- **the politics of a free media**
- **what is a balanced press?**
- **propaganda and celebrity in their historical context**
- **media outlets: large and small**
- **McCarthyism & Watergate: the beginning of the end?**

Midterm Exam approximately 20 February

Annotated Bibliographies Due approximately 27 February

Unit II – Where We Are at Present: Framing Contemporary Discussions (Hume Book, et al)

- **Mick Hume and the problem of the coordinating conjunction**
- **ethics in modern reporting**
- **popular discontent and a culture of envy**
- **the media's gone and done it now**
- **revisiting propaganda and celebrity**
- **Murdoch, *News of the World*, and the Leveson backlash**
- **Why we need a free press now more than ever**

Source Reviews Due approximately 13 March

Presentations to begin 11 April

Papers Due Wednesday 30 April No Later Than 11:59PM...No Exceptions!