

JOURNALISM
ENGLISH 467A / POLITICAL SCIENCE 253
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Fall 2022

DESCRIPTION: This seminar – the core course for Yale Journalism Scholars – is for those interested in understanding the changing role of journalism, in coming to grips with the challenges and opportunities related to the business model of journalism in a digital age, and in learning the practice of journalism. Grades will be based on participation and written work, with an emphasis on the final project. The goal of this course is to guide everyone to produce a grade A final project.

We will focus on both imaginative and critical thinking as it applies to reporting and to creating ways and forms of telling a story so that it has maximum impact in a world cluttered with media and experiencing profound challenges to making journalism economically viable.

However, this is not a theoretical exercise. We will be dealing with the hard-core questions of how good and “bad” journalism happens – from understanding how Harvey Weinstein was unmasked (and why it took so long) to understanding how polarizing issues, such as police use of force, are handled well or badly, to uncovering the workings or failings of some obscure but vital government agency (and getting people to care about it). We will also examine the modern economic challenges of journalism.

But above all, this is a course about the nuts and bolts of effective, fair reporting and presentation.

One or perhaps two extra (and voluntary) sessions may take place in New York City, so that students can meet with working journalists there, if that is possible.

I will meet with each student individually during the term as often as necessary in order to provide feedback, help with the final project, and (if requested) provide career guidance.

Guest instructors during two of the sessions will be Bob Woodward and a variety of successful journalists who took this seminar in prior years.

Successful completion of this course and other aspects of the Yale Journalism Scholars program will qualify students to be designated Yale Journalism Scholars. For more information on the Yale Journalism Scholars and the Yale Journalism Initiative, see <https://ocs.yale.edu/get-advice/yale-journalism-initiative>.

INSTRUCTOR: Steven Brill, a graduate of Yale College and Yale Law School, worked as a writer for *New York Magazine*, *Esquire*, and *Harpers* while in law school. In 1978, he was the author of a best-selling book on the Teamsters Union. A year later, he launched *The American Lawyer Magazine* and later expanded it into ten legal publications across the country. In 1991 Brill launched Court TV and, in 1998, *Brill's Content Magazine*. In 2009, he founded Journalism Online, LLC, to enable newspapers, magazines, and online publishers to earn revenue from the journalism they publish online. He has also written feature articles for *The New Yorker*, *New York*, *Harpers*, the *New York Times Magazine*, *The Atlantic*, *Fortune*, and *TIME*. In 2013, he authored a special edition of *TIME Magazine* – “Bitter Pill: How Medical Bills Are Killing Us” – about healthcare prices and profits. His book about American healthcare and the fight over Obamacare, also a best-seller, was published in early 2015 by Random House. His most recent book – *TAILSPIN: The People and Forces Behind America's Fifty-Year Fall – and Those Fighting to Reverse It* – was published by Knopf in May of 2018 and became a bestseller.

Brill currently serves as the co-founder and co-CEO of NewsGuard, a company dedicated to rating the reliability of online news sites, television news, and podcasts.

MEETINGS: Mondays, 9:00 – 10:50 a.m. EST

ENTRANCE REQUIREMENTS: The seminar is open to all sophomores, juniors, and seniors. In general, we are looking for a range of students from different backgrounds and offering different perspectives, as well as some with demonstrated commitment to and experience in journalism. Others without that background but who can write well, want to learn, and perhaps have an added dimension to offer in class discussions (such as an intense interest in politics, the arts, law, or economics) will also be considered.

Admission:

Each student must submit the following simple, two-part application package to sb@brillbusiness.com. **Please submit the package by noon on Monday, April 11, 2022.**

I will post with the English Department the final list of those accepted by Friday, April 22, if not earlier. I will also email all accepted students. Students who are accepted must confirm their acceptance within 24 hours of being notified of their acceptance. The cap for this year's course is 15 students.

The two-part application should consist of:

1. No more than two double-spaced pages: A written statement explaining your interest in the class and in the Yale Journalism Scholars program. This should also include your Yale class year, any previous writing courses that you have taken, a brief description of your extra-curricular activities and a description of your journalism experience, if any.
2. One writing sample – either an article that you have published in an on- or off- campus publication or something that you submitted for a class.

Applications are due at noon on April 11, 2022. Applicants will be notified of their result by 5:00 PM on April 22 at the latest. Students are advised to submit Instructor Permission enrollment requests in YCS only after they have been admitted and no later than 5:00 PM on Monday, April 25. Admitted students who do not request permission by April 25 may have their places eliminated. I will approve requests for admitted students by 5:00 PM on April 27. Approved students must then return to YCS to confirm changes and complete enrollment in the course.

READINGS: The syllabus provides an outline of what we will cover in the course. Readings will be available on Canvas, organized by week, and all books are available at the Yale bookstore. Most of the reading will be from the “Other Reading” materials described below, supplemented by these books:

BOOKS: James Stewart, *Follow the Story: How to Write Successful Non-Fiction*
Gay Talese, *The Gay Talese Reader*
Steven Brill, *TAILSPIN* (excerpts provided on Canvas)

OTHER READING: Various newspaper and magazine articles and online postings intended to illustrate different forms and methods (and successes and failures) of journalism, ranging from Woodward and Bernstein's original Watergate reporting, to trashy celebrity profiles, to analysis of the business of journalism, to longform pieces on various subjects. (All available on Canvas)

PARTNERS: You will be given an editing partner—a fellow seminar participant. You will edit his or her drafts and vice versa.

ASSIGNMENTS: **Please double space and include your name on all assignments.**

- Biographical profile -- 2,000 words -- of a classmate in the seminar
- Critiquing and editing of several published articles from time to time.
- Critiquing and editing your fellow students' work from time to time.
- Coming to class with one original story idea every other week.
- Writing a two-page strategic outline for an interview with a potentially hostile source.
- Creating, with two partners, a journalism enterprise that does good for the world and is financially self-sustaining.
- Final Assignment: 3,500-4,000 word publishable magazine (or e-magazine) feature story or three-part newspaper series – to be edited by your editing partner before final submission to me.