ENGLISH 467A: JOURNALISM

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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, global age, and in learning the practice of journalism. Grades will be based on participation and written work, with an emphasis on the 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.

*But 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 uncovering the workings or failings of some obscure but vital government agency (and getting people to care about it) to understanding the modern economic challenges of journalism. This is also a course about the nuts and bolts of effective writing and presentation.*

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

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 [*http://writing.yalecollege.yale.edu/journalism-initiative*](http://writing.yalecollege.yale.edu/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. In the last six years, he has also written feature articles for *The New Yorker*, the *New York Times Magazine*, *The Atlantic*, *Fortune*, and *TIME*. In 2011, he wrote *Class Warfare: Inside the Fight To Fix America’s Schools*. 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 latest 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 also became a best seller.

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

MEETINGS: Mondays, 9:00 – 10:50 a.m. in LC 103

ENTRANCE REQUIREMENTS: The seminar is open to all sophomores, juniors, and seniors. In general, we are looking for a range of students – 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), which they might want to apply to journalism.

Admission:

Each student must submit the following simple, two-part application package to [sb@brillbusiness.com](mailto:sb@brillbusiness.com). **Please submit the package by the evening of Monday, August 13, 2018.**

I will post with the English Department the final list of those accepted by Friday, August 17, if not earlier. I will also email all accepted students. There will be a short wait list, too.

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.
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.

READINGS: The syllabus provides an outline of what we will cover in the course.  The course packet is available at TYCO, 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: John Hersey, *Hiroshima*

James Stewart, *Follow the Story: How to Write Successful Non-Fiction*

Gay Talese, *The Gay Talese Reader*

Steven Brill, *TAILSPIN* – to be handed out in class.

OTHER READING: Various newspaper articles, magazine pieces 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 celebrity profiles, to bulletins on Supreme Court decisions, to data-centric journalism at *ProPublica*. (All assembled in the course packet.)

ASSIGNMENTS:

* Biographical profile -- 2,000 words -- of the person sitting next to you in this 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 well 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 one of your classmates before final submission to me.

ADDITIONAL NOTE: Because we will regularly discuss current journalism, all participants in the program should be prepared to bring a laptop or tablet to class.