PWR: Writing on the New York Times  
WRTG 3020, section 023  
Spring, 2005  
Instructor: Juliet Wittman

Office hours: MWF 1 to 2 p.m. and by appointment, Environmental Design Building (ENVD) IB80 (lower level); (303) 735-4772  
jwitts@aol.com

Texts:

The New York Times. Subscribe at 1-888-698-2655

Articles and essays as assigned.

Student papers: Papers will be workshopped in class, and you will need to make copies of your papers for distribution to your fellow students.

Relevant websites:
  - The Guardian: www.guardian.co.uk  
  - Times of London: www.thetimes.co.uk  
  - British Broadcasting Corporation: www.news.bbc.co.uk  
  - The Paperboy (a gateway to newspapers from around the world): www.thepaperboy.com  
  - Accuracy in Media: www.aim.org  
  - Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting: www.fair.org

Recommended supplemental texts:

  - *The Elements of Style*, Strunk and White  
  - *On Writing Well*, William Zinsser  
    A first-rate dictionary and a college handbook, such as *The Everyday Writer*, Andrea A. Lunsford, Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's.

Course description:

In this class, you will learn to:
  - Write clearly-thought-out analytic and argumentative pieces
  - Hone research skills
  - Practice revision. Learn to critique both your own writing and that of others
  - Read closely, so that you not only understand the primary meaning of a given text, but are also alert to preconceptions, cultural bias and attempts--both honest and dishonest--to persuade
  - Start to understand the role of news in society, as well as how your own world view is shaped by the mass media

Attendance and participation:

Since this is a workshop class, attendance is crucial; participation counts for 15 percent of your final grade. More than three unexcused absences can result in your final grade falling by one fraction of a letter (from A to A-, etc.); six absences may earn you an F.

Writing Center: Individual tutoring is available for students at every writing level. You can make an appointment at: wrtghelp@colorado.edu; help with research can be obtained in Norlin Library, room E303.

Disability policy: If you qualify for accommodations because of a disability please submit to me a letter from Disability Services in a timely manner so that your needs may be addressed.

Plagiarism: I will follow the recommendations of the University Honor code in cases of academic dishonesty.

Assignment sequence (there will be in-class exercises and short at-home assignments in addition to the following):

Jan. 24: Argument essay on objectivity in the media (3-5 pages)
Feb. 4: Argument rewrite

RESEARCH PROJECT:

Feb. 28: Interview (3-5 pages)
March 7: Literature review (4 pages)
March 7-March 18: Class presentations
March 28: Research paper (8-10 pages)
April 4: Research paper rewrite

April 18: Obituary (3 pages)
April 25: Obituary rewrite

Weekly schedule:

Jan. 10-14: What is news? The role of the newspaper
Start thinking about possible research projects; Read Postman and Rosenblatt (handouts)

Jan. 17-21: What is news, cont. The concept of objectivity
Read Brit vs. Yank, Columbia Journalism Review
Write opinion paper on objectivity (3-5 pages), due Jan. 24

Jan. 24-28: Objectivity continued; bias in media; liberal vs. conservative; small-group critique
Rewrite opinion paper, due Feb. 4
Jan. 31-Feb. 4: How to slant a story; objectivity debate; conferences
Feb. 7-Feb. 11: Research topics; use of sources; interviewing
Start setting up your interview; start research if you haven't already
Find interview models for yourselves in the Times
Feb. 14-18: More on interviews
Feb. 21-Feb. 25: Investigative journalism, guest speaker; literature reviews
Write up interview, due Feb. 28

**Feb. 28-March 4:** Logic and argument; what makes a good thesis?; small-group critique

Write lit. review, due March 7
Prepare presentation

**March 7-11:** Presentations

**March 14-18:** Presentations continue

**March 21-25:** Spring break

Write research paper, due March 28

**March 28-April 1:** The role of the reviewer; descriptive writing; full-class critique

Research paper rewrite due April 4

**April 4-8:** Corporatization and We the Media

**April 11-15:** Obituary: private-public document; guest speaker

Write a review or an obituary, due April 18

**April 18-22:** In-class critique, We, the Media cont.

Rewrite review or obit., due April 25.

**April 25-29:** Final conferences; wrap-up and celebration

**Some books on the press**

*Speaking of Journalism: 12 Writers and Editors Talk About Their Work*, by William Zinsser, HarperPerennial

*The Press Effect: Politicians, Journalists and the Stories that Shape the Political World*, by Kathleen Hall Jamieson and Paul Waldman, Oxford University Press

*A Mathematician Reads the Newspaper*, by John Allen Paulos, Basic Books

*What Liberal Media? The Truth About Bias and the News*, by Eric Alterman, Basic Books

*Blinded by the Right: The Conscience of an Ex-Conservative*, by David Brock, Crown

*Bias: A CBS Insider Exposes How the Media Distort the News*, by Bernard Goldberg, Perennial Currents