Course Description:
Since it was founded in 1851, the New York Times has been a highly regarded and widely-read source for national and international news. It has won 114 Pulitzer prizes, more than any other news organization.\(^1\) Nytimes.com is the most popular news site in America, receiving more than 34 million unique visitors per month.\(^2\) The Times’s most significant recent accomplishment in recent years is managing to stay afloat as advertising revenues decline. Since the beginning of 2009, more than a hundred newspapers have gone out of business, thousands of jobs were lost, and both print ad sales and circulation declined. In 2009, Michael Hirschorn of the Atlantic declared that “at some point soon—sooner than most of us think—the print edition, and with it The Times as we know it, will no longer exist” (Hirschorn 2).

This class will provide a brief overview of the Times’s history before moving on to the decline of print media and the rise of digital media. We will consider the following questions during the course of the class: What elements, if any, distinguish the Times from other news sources? What are the Times’s goals and how well does it achieve them? Does the Times achieve political and social neutrality? In what ways has new media both challenged traditional journalism and provided opportunities for better, more engaged news reporting and storytelling? What does the future hold for journalism and news coverage? We will begin to answer these questions and more through thoughtful, critical inquiry into The New York Times.

Designed for Juniors and Seniors in the College of Arts and Sciences, Topics in Writing strives to improve students’ writing and critical thinking skills. Through sustained inquiry into a selected topic or issue, students will practice advanced forms of academic writing. The course emphasizes analysis, criticism, argument, and rhetorical knowledge, while also placing a premium on substantive, thoughtful revision.

Course Materials:
- The primary text for this class is the New York Times. You must have a digital or print subscription to the Times, which you should have access to every day in class. A digital subscription to the Times at the college rate is only 99 cents for the first four weeks, and then $7.50 per month (50% off) after that. To purchase a subscription go to: www.NYTimes.com/CollegeDiscount. **This is the only course requirement that has a cost.**
- The documentary Page One: Inside the New York Times. It will be available for streaming through Kaltura on the D2L website.
- PDFs of articles and chapters from relevant books will be available on the D2L course website.
- Twitter account. If you don’t already have one, you need to sign up for a twitter account and follow the New York Times (and some of the other NYT-related twitter accounts). This is the best way to get up-to-date news.

Important note: We may watch clips and short films in class that contain sensitive, upsetting, or offensive material. If at any time you are uncomfortable with the content, you may leave the room until the clip is over. Please feel free to speak to me privately about any concerns you may have.

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Course Objectives:

This 3000-level writing and rhetoric seminar satisfies upper-division core requirements because it extends rhetorical knowledge and writing skills by requiring students to study the genre of journalism and the different writing styles associated with it. This course is part of the statewide “Guaranteed Transfer” pathway of courses. In the context of statewide courses, this course meets the goals of an Advanced Writing Course (GT-CO3):

Rhetorical Knowledge: This course undertakes a rhetorical examination of the New York Times newspaper. We will analyze the rhetoric of news writing/reporting, argument/op-ed composition, investigative reporting, reviews, letters to the editor, and visual media. You will also be asked to switch between very different genres of composition and do so in a way that is rhetorical. We will also study texts relating to editing, argument, audience awareness and other rhetorical elements.

Writing Process: In this course you will learn to evaluate sources for accuracy, relevance, credibility, reliability and bias. Through the process of critical reading, writing and revision, you will learn to critique your own work as well as the work of your classmates as you draft and revise your writing assignments.

Writing Conventions: In this class you will extend your mastery of writing conventions, including structure and grammar. You will also become comfortable using genre conventions and vocabulary appropriate to your audience, purpose and medium.

Content Knowledge: By reading and writing about the Times on a daily basis you will gain a better understanding of important national and international current events and issues in journalism. You will expand your experience with the argument, or “position” paper by writing an op-ed editorial. You will also develop your ability to conduct research and produce a substantive research paper on a particular topic relating to the New York Times. Additionally, you will learn to produce documents that demonstrate a mastery of argumentation and intellectual fortitude.

Assignments and Grading:

Assigned Reading
You are expected to read several articles of different types in The Times every day (even on the weekends). I will assign specific articles or types of articles (see the course schedule for details) but I will also expect that you are up-to-date on current news stories. When you are working on major assignments, I will expect you to be familiar with articles and news coverage that relate to your chosen topics.

Minor Writing Assignments
Minor writing assignments include short summaries, responses, reflections and analyses that are between 1-3 pages. These assignments will be graded on a completion basis (you get full credit if you fulfill the assignment requirements). Guidelines for writing assignments will be posted on D2L and you are required to upload the assignments to the correct D2L dropbox on the day they are due.

Social Media and digital participation
As mentioned above, you are required to have a twitter account for this class, and you need to check it regularly. I will periodically ask you participating in ongoing conversations by tweeting, retweeting, or favoriting other’s tweets. Twitter is the fastest way to get news, and it poses a huge threat to the NYT and other major news sources. Additionally, I will create a forum for us to have discussions online, either through facebook or google groups. You will be expected to participate in online discussions throughout the semester. You will also be asked to work in groups for specific class activities and assignments.
Major Writing Assignments: (To be eligible to pass the class, all major assignments must be turned in.)

“What is News?” Genre Comparison paper (1,000-1,500 words)
During the first few weeks of the semester, we will compare both the content and rhetorical elements of news articles, investigative articles, editorials, reviews, and other genres that exist in the NYT. For the first paper, you will read and compare two or three articles about the same (or closely related) topic but written in different genres in the NYT. For example, you might choose the topic of organic food. You could read an article about government regulation of organic labeling, an editorial about why it’s a good thing to eat organic food and a review of an organic restaurant. You would analyze and compare the rhetorical elements of the articles as well as the actual content.

Op-ed paper (1,000-1,500 words)
For your Op-ed paper, you will follow The Times’s guidelines for writing an op-ed piece and create your own argument about a current issue of your choice. Your editorial should adhere to the purpose, style and appearance of a Times opinion piece. Most importantly, the topic should be timely, well argued, and clearly written. It will be thoroughly drafted, workshopped and revised.

Research project
We will spend a significant amount of time working on this project, which has four main components: a proposal, bibliography, a paper (3,500-5,000 words) and a presentation. You will select a significant event or controversy, which has been covered by the Times, to study. The project will be structured around a question, put forth in your proposal, which asks how or why the Times’s coverage has shaped the mainstream media’s narrative of the event/controversy. Your primary texts will be Times articles, but you will also utilize other news sources and scholarly sources, depending on your topic. You will be asked to consider the social, political, and cultural ramifications of the Times’s coverage as well as what implications these ramifications have for the field of journalism. After completing the paper, you will put together a presentation on your topic for your classmates.

Reflection (850-1,000 words)
Here you will ask yourself questions related to your interaction with the news over the course of the semester, and analyze your responses and experiences. You may ask “How has reading The New York Times every day changed/affected my view of the world?” “Has reading a daily newspaper had an impact on my interest in the news and events in the world?” “What have I learned about mass media and current events over the last 16 weeks that might affect the way I vote?” These are just some of the questions we will consider and reflect on. You will write an essay that incorporates your responses and analyzes your work in the class.

Grade Breakdown

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment / Course Element</th>
<th>% of course grade</th>
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<tr>
<td>“What is News?” Comparison paper (1,000-1,500 words)</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Op-ed argument paper (1,000-1,500 words)</td>
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<td>Paper (3,500-5,000 words)</td>
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<td>Presentation</td>
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<td>Reflection paper</td>
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**Grading Scale**

**Attendance**
The seminar style of this class demands your active involvement. You have a responsibility to me, yourself and your classmates to show up for class on time, prepared, and with your course work. If you are more than 10 minutes late to class, you will be marked tardy. 3 tardies equal one absence. You are allowed 3 unexcused absences. Your grade will drop 3% for each additional absence. If you have 10 or more unexcused absences, you will fail the class. If you know ahead of time that you will be absent, it is a good idea to look ahead at work that you will be missing so that you don’t fall behind. It is your responsibility to find out what you missed.

**Late paper policy**
Because this class is structured around workshopping and revising your papers, is extremely important that you complete assignments on time so that you can participate in, and benefit from, the workshopping process. Please contact me before the assignment is due if you need an extension so that we can agree on a new deadline together. If you do not contact me and turn in an assignment late, 5% will be deducted per day from your grade for major assignments. For minor assignments, I will take away half of your participation points for that day because if you have not done the assignment, you cannot fully participate in class.

**Cell phones and Laptops:**
You may use your laptop, cell phone, or tablet to access the *New York Times* during class or other resources we discuss, but if these items become distractions, I will prohibit students from using them during class.

**The Writing Center**
Location: Norlin Commons, near the laptop checkout area
Phone number: 303-735-6906 (administrator: Melynda Slaughter)
Email: wrtghelp@colorado.edu
Website (you can register and make appointments online): [https://ucb.mywconline.com/register.php](https://ucb.mywconline.com/register.php)

If you want additional help with your writing, the Writing Center is a great place to go to talk about ideas, improve your thesis or essay organization, or just generally work on your writing skills. The Writing Center will not “edit” your work for you; it is a place for collaborative writing and learning. Sessions are 50 minutes and are by appointment only. I would advise you to think ahead and make appointments at least a week in advance.
University Policies & Procedures

Academic Honesty / Plagiarism
Plagiarism is the act, whether deliberate or unintentional, of passing off someone else’s work as your own, from one sentence to an entire paper. Any act of plagiarism will result in automatic failure of that paper, and possible failure of the course. To help me detect plagiarism, I may use resources such as turnitin.com, and I will follow the guidelines suggested by the University Honor Code.

All students of the University of Colorado at Boulder are responsible for knowing and adhering to the academic integrity policy of this institution. Violations of this policy may include: cheating, plagiarism, aid of academic dishonesty, fabrication, lying, bribery, and threatening behavior. All incidents of academic misconduct shall be reported to the Honor Code Council (honor@colorado.edu; 303-735-2273). Students who are found to be in violation of the academic integrity policy will be subject to both academic sanctions from the faculty member and non-academic sanctions (including but not limited to university probation, suspension, or expulsion). Other information on the Honor Code can be found at http://www.colorado.edu/policies/honor.html and at http://honorcode.colorado.edu

Students with Disabilities
If you qualify for accommodations because of a disability, please submit to your professor a letter from Disability Services in a timely manner (for exam accommodations provide your letter at least one week prior to the exam) so that your needs can be addressed. Disability Services determines accommodations based on documented disabilities. Contact Disability Services at 303-492-8671 or by e-mail at dsinfo@colorado.edu. If you have a temporary medical condition or injury, see Temporary Medical Conditions: Injuries, Surgeries, and Illnesses guidelines under Quick Links at Disability Services website and discuss your needs with your professor.

Religious Holidays
Campus policy regarding religious observances requires that faculty make every effort to deal reasonably and fairly with all students who, because of religious obligations, have conflicts with scheduled exams, assignments or required attendance. In this class, If you know that you will miss class or not be able to meet an assignment due date because of observation of a religious holiday, please let me know within the first two weeks of class so we can make accommodations. See full details at: http://www.colorado.edu/policies/fac_relig.html

Classroom Behavior
Students and faculty each have responsibility for maintaining an appropriate learning environment. Those who fail to adhere to such behavioral standards may be subject to discipline. Professional courtesy and sensitivity are especially important with respect to individuals and topics dealing with differences of race, color, culture, religion, creed, politics, veteran’s status, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity and gender expression, age, disability, and nationalities. Class rosters are provided to the instructor with the student's legal name. I will gladly honor your request to address you by an alternate name or gender pronoun. Please advise me of this preference early in the semester so that I may make appropriate changes to my records. See policies at http://www.colorado.edu/policies/classbehavior.html and at http://www.colorado.edu/studentaffairs/judicialaffairs/code.html#student_code

Discrimination and Harassment:
The University of Colorado Boulder (CU-Boulder) is committed to maintaining a positive learning, working, and living environment. The University of Colorado does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, age, disability, creed, religion, sexual orientation, or veteran status in admission and access to, and treatment and employment in, its educational programs and activities.
(Regent Law, Article 10, amended 11/8/2001). CU-Boulder will not tolerate acts of discrimination or harassment based upon Protected Classes or related retaliation against or by any employee or student. For purposes of this CU-Boulder policy, "Protected Classes" refers to race, color, national origin, sex, pregnancy, age, disability, creed, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, or veteran status. Individuals who believe they have been discriminated against should contact the Office of Discrimination and Harassment (ODH) at 303-492-2127 or the Office of Student Conduct (OSC) at 303-492-5550. Information about the ODH, the above referenced policies, and the campus resources available to assist individuals regarding discrimination or harassment can be obtained at http://hr.colorado.edu/dh/

Sexual Harassment
The University of Colorado Policy on Sexual Harassment applies to all students, staff, and faculty. Any student, staff or faculty member who believes s/he has been sexually harassed should contact the Office of Sexual Harassment at 303-492-2127 or the Office of Judicial Affairs at 303-492-5550. Information about the OSH and the campus resources available to assist individuals who believe they have been sexually harassed may be found at http://www.colorado.edu/sexualharassment/
Schedule of assignments
(Please note: Since we are studying the news, events or stories might develop that will influence what we study in the class. This schedule of assignments is subject to change with advance notice)

WEEK 1

M 8/25: Introduction to the class

W 8/27: Overview of syllabus, navigating the Times website
READ:
1. Syllabus (on D2L)
2. Reader’s Guide to the New York Times:
   http://www.nytimes.com/content/help/site/readerguide/guide.html
4. “The First Issue: Imagining How a Paper Was Born” by Michael Chabon
5. “When Newspapers were Newsmakers” by John Noble Wilford
6. Read the timeline for the NYT from 1851-Present day. ** Important: you must read all the sections of the timeline**
   http://www.nytimes.com/who-we-are/culture/our-history/

F 8/29: NYT coverage of Ferguson
READ:
1. “What Happened in Ferguson?”
   http://nyti.ms/1sWNm3G
2. “A fair inquiry for Michael Brown”
   http://nyti.ms/1mnfqHG
3. “Reactions to the Shooting in Ferguson, Mo., have sharp racial divides”
   http://nyti.ms/1mryBjE
4. “Constructing a conversation on Race”
   http://nyti.ms/1AzLu3k
5. “Timeline for a body: 4 hours in the Middle of a Ferguson Street”
   http://nyti.ms/1mAexeT
6. “Michael Brown spent last weeks grappling with problems and promise”
   http://nyti.ms/1mG2EUH
7. "An ill-chosen phrase, 'no angel,' brings a storm of protest" by NYT Public editor
   http://nyti.ms/1txihnr
WEEK 2

M 9/1: LABOR DAY NO CLASS

W 9/3: Coverage of Ferguson by other news sources
DUE: Response 1: NYT vs. other news sources (details on D2L)
READ:
1. “Ferguson Protests prove transformative for many” by Matt Pearce

2. “What is was like in the streets on Ferguson’s worst night” by Joel Anderson
   http://www.buzzfeed.com/joelanderson/what-it-was-like-in-the-streets-on-fergusons-worst-night

3. “On the ground in Ferguson: Monday in pictures”

4. “What I Saw in Ferguson” by Jelani Cobb

5. “Darren Wilson’s first job was on a troubled police force disbanded by authorities” by Carol Leonnig, Kimberly Kindy, and Joel Achenbach
   http://wapo.st/1prBGF5

6. “Behind the best pictures from Ferguson, with Getty photography Scott Olson” by Joe Coscarelli

F 9/5: Historical parallels: looking at the Civil Rights era
DUE: Response 2: Historical parallels (details on D2L)
READ:
1. “Return to Hayneville” by Gregory Orr
   http://www.vqronline.org/dispatch/return-hayneville

2. “Ferguson images evoke civil rights era and changing visual perceptions” by Randy Kennedy and Jennifer Schuessler
   http://nyti.ms/1oTtxJe

3. “Photos from Ferguson and 1960s protests side by side make it clear how little has changed” by Cate Matthews
   http://huff.to/1Aif2Cw

4. “Ferguson, Watts and a dream deferred” by Thomas Edsall
   http://nyti.ms/1pCfaA7

5. “On the death of dreams” by Ta-nehisi Coates
WEEK 3

**M 9/8:** Introduce “What is News?” paper, discuss rhetorical and content elements of different genres

**READ:**
1. “End Times” by Michael Hirschorn from the *Atlantic*  

2. Familiarize yourself with all the different sections of the NYT website

**W 9/10:** Outlining the “What is News?” paper, discussion of current events

**F 9/12:** Peer workshop  
**DUE:** 1st draft of “What is News” essay for in-class workshop (paper and D2L)

WEEK 4

**M 9/15:** Current Events day

**W 9/17:** *Page One* documentary  
**DUE:** You must have watched *Page One* by class and be prepared to discuss it (streaming through Kaltura)

**F 9/19:**  
**DUE:** FINAL draft of “What is News” essay (paper and D2L)

WEEK 5

**M 9/22:** Introduce op-editorial paper  
**READ:**
1. “And Now a Word From Op-Ed” by David Shipley on nyt.com  

2. “What We Talk About When We Talk About Editing” by David Shipley on nyt.com  


**W 9/24:** Studying the structure of the op-ed  
**READ:**
1. Read ALL op-ed articles published between 9/15-9/22  

2. Watch the 10-minute video “A Brief History of the Art” about the illustrations in the Op-ed section on nyt.com  

   --Additionally, read this particular op-ed:  
   3. “Don’t Harsh our Mellow, Dude” by Maureen Dowd  
   [http://nyti.ms/1o7jrmO](http://nyti.ms/1o7jrmO)
F 9/26: Examining specific columnists
DUE: Response 3 (Specific columnist)
1. Pick one specific op-ed columnist to study and read AT LEAST 10 of their recent columns
2. Read the columnist’s bio and the other social media pages they have (twitter, blog, videos, facebook page, etc.)

WEEK 6

M 9/29: Peer workshop
DUE: 1st draft of op-ed paper for in-class workshop (paper and D2L)

W 10/1: Scandals at the Times: Sexism and discrimination at the Times
READ:
1. “Chap. 6: The Girls in the Balcony” from The Girls in the Balcony (on D2L)
2. “Chap. 8: The Other Shoe” from The Girls in the Balcony (on D2L)

F 10/3: The Lawsuit and its outcome
DUE: Response 4 (The Girls in the Balcony)
READ:
1. “Chap. 9: The Suit” from The Girls in the Balcony (on D2L)
2. “Chap. 10: The Single Worst Moment” from The Girls in the Balcony (on D2L)

WEEK 7

M 10/6: Current events day
DUE: Final op-ed paper (paper and D2L)

W 10/8: The legacy of Boylan et al. v. Times
READ:
1. Excerpt from Chapter 12 (“Promises”) of Girls in the Balcony
2. “Woman in Florida Rape Inquiry Fought Adversity and Sought Acceptance” by Fox Butterfield with Mary B.W. Tabor on nyt.com

3. “Public and Private; A Mistake” by Anna Quindlen on nyt.com

4. Editor’s note of apology, published April 26, 1991 on nyt.com

5. “Media Memo; Times article Naming Rape Accuser Ignites Debate on Journalistic Values” By William Glaberson on nyt.com
F 10/10: Scandal at the Times: Jayson Blair and plagiarism
READ:
1. “Introduction,” “The first signs of scandal” and “Jayson Blair” from *Hard News: The Scandals at the New York Times and their Meaning for American Media* by Seth Mnookin on D2L

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**WEEK 8**

M 10/13: Introduce research project and wrap up Jayson Blair controversy
DUE: Response 5 (Jayson Blair)
READ:
1. “One Week in May,” “The Times’s Report” and “The Fallout” from *Hard News* (on D2L)

2. “Correcting the Record; Times Reporter who Resigned Leaves Long Trail of Deception” published May 11, 2003 on nyt.com

3. SKIM the list of corrections to Blair’s articles published May 11, 2003 on nyt.com

W 10/15: the Post-Jayson Blair era
READ:
1. “A New Team in Place” from *Hard News* (On D2L)

2. “The Times chooses Veteran of Magazines and Publishing as its First Public Editor”

3. “Newsroom diversity: a casualty of Journalism’s financial crisis” by Riva Gold

F 10/17: Selecting a topic and starting research

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**WEEK 9**

M 10/20: Current events day
DUE: Proposal and bibliography (D2L and paper)

W 10/22: Scandal at the Times: Judith Miller and the war with Iraq
READ:
1. “Course Corrections” from *Hard News* (On D2L)


3. “The Source of the Trouble” by Franklin Foer
http://nymag.com/nymetro/news/media/features/9226/

4. “Reassessing Miller” by Jack Shafer
http://www.slate.com/articles/news_and_politics/press_box/2003/05/reassessing_miller.2.html
F 10/24: Outlining the research paper
DUE: Outline for research paper (on D2L)

WEEK 10

M 10/27: Wikileaks and Julian Assange, Edward Snowden
READ:
2. More articles TBA

W 10/29: Jill Abramson controversy
DUE: Response 6
READ: TBA

F 10/31: Peer workshop
DUE: 1st draft of research paper (paper and D2L)

WEEK 11

M 11/3: Documenting your research

W 11/5: Strategies for revision

F 11/7: Current events day
DUE: 2nd draft of research paper

WEEK 12

INDIVIDUAL CONFERENCES (to discuss 2nd draft of research paper)

WEEK 13

M 11/17: Developing the research paper

W 11/19:
DUE: Final version of Research paper (D2L and paper)

F 11/21: Looking ahead-presentations

WEEK 14

11/24-11/28 THANKSGIVING BREAK

WEEK 15

M 12/1: Introducing the presentation assignment

W 12/3: Looking at sample presentations and outlining your own presentation
F 12/5: Introducing the reflection paper

WEEK 16

M 12/8: Presentations

W 12/10: Presentations

F 12/12: Presentations

**** Final Reflection paper is due by midnight on Monday, 12/15 ****
YOU ARE NOT REQUIRED TO ATTEND THE FINAL EXAM FOR THIS CLASS