

## Current Events Media and Celebrity Culture

JOUR 201 (#55587)  
TR 9:30-10:45 STFL 100

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Hours: M 9:30-11:00, T 3:00-4:30  
W 9:30-11:00, R 3:00-4:00

### Objectives

The primary goal of this course is to develop your ability to think critically about sources and information in an image-conscious and celebrity-driven era.

The U.S. president's main qualification for office is a television show, and his surrogates talk of "alternative facts." But before reality TV and fake news; before Breitbart, TMZ and Drudge; before the Kardashians and Duck Dynasty took over the world ... we had wildly sensational media. Newspapers, magazines and newsreel films catered to an audience hungry for scandal and scam. Hollywood gossip ran right alongside political commentary.

The idea of celebrity is based on a long history of image over substance, and people who were famous ... because they were famous. We'll track the contemporary scene of politics, entertainment and sports while looking back at the trends that got us here.

In this course you will:

- ◆ Examine media-celebrity culture from historical, economic and sociological standpoints. (Don't worry, the sociology is pretty cool.)
- ◆ Pay attention to the ways gender, race, ethnicity and religion affect celebrity status and media coverage.
- ◆ Read historical and contemporary analysis, sources and accounts, and watch video documentaries and artifacts.
- ◆ Follow current events, in both the celebrity and general news categories, which increasingly overlap.
- ◆ Work in a group to keep the class updated on an important and interesting personality or issue. The group will make a final presentation and file a project report.

Course content will free-wheel as events warrant.

### Materials and readings

This course has no required textbook. I will post readings and assignments – either Web links or PDFs– week by week on KU Blackboard.

You must be able to visit links at The New York Times, the Atlantic, Vanity Fair and other online publications. (If you run out of free access to the Times, you'll need to log on through School of Journalism computers.)

Follow me on Twitter. No, I mean it. Follow @HawkSoup, where I tweet about items that catch my attention in the world of journalism ethics and celebrity media.

## Participation

For full discussion participation points, students will take part every week in class or on a Blackboard discussion thread. We will announce the procedure and policy of getting credit for in-class discussion.

Discussion threads will be posted and announced by email after each class meeting. This gives students who don't like speaking up in large classes a chance to jump in. Comments must be substantive – not just “yes, I agree with Agnes,” or “I hate reality TV.”

Participation in class also means paying attention. **Phones are prohibited** unless a class activity or exercise expressly involves them. Many or most of you have tablets or laptops for note taking, and I encourage that. Some of you will find the lure of Instagram ... of far and distant websites ... too much to resist. And you know what? It's **screamingly obvious** that you're off in cyber-land. You'll be counted absent. **This class is a messaging-free zone.**

## Group work

A fair chunk of your grade will depend on work done in groups of five or six students. Groups will take on a semester project: You will follow an issue or celebrity; you'll give updates, make a final presentation and file a project report. I'll assign freshmen and seniors to groups for a balance of experience, and we'll work from there.

## Assignments

Exams (3)	35
Final project (group work)	30
Project updates (group)	10
Discussion participation	10
Attendance	10
<u>Quizzes &amp; other assgts</u>	<u>5</u>
Total	100

The form and requirements for the project updates and final project will be posted on Blackboard and discussed in lecture. **There is no final examination, but the third exam of the semester will be administered at the time of the final exam – 7:30 a.m. Monday, May 7.** I'm following University regulations concerning the administration of end-of-semester exams.

**The final project report is due on the last day of class.**

## Grading

A = 92.4 and above	C+ = 78.0-79.9%
A- = 90.0-92.3%	C = 73.0-77.9%
B+ = 88.0-89.9%	C- = 70.0-72.9%
B = 83.0-87.9	D = 60.0-69.9%
B- = 80.0-82.9%	F = 59.9 and below

## Academic honesty

If you cheat – fabricate, plagiarize, or get or give unauthorized aid on an exam – I will seek and apply the strongest appropriate penalty, up to and including having you tossed out of the School of Journalism. The School defines academic misconduct this way:

### **School of Journalism policy — Adopted 5/7/04**

The William Allen White School of Journalism and Mass Communications does not tolerate plagiarism, fabrication of evidence and falsification of evidence.

Penalties for plagiarism, fabrication or falsification can include a failing grade for this course and expulsion from the School of Journalism and Mass Communications.

If you have any questions about what constitutes plagiarism, fabrication or falsification, please consult the professor(s) of this course.

*The following definitions are from Article II, Section 6, of the University Senate Rules and Regulations, revised FY98.*

**Plagiarism** - Knowingly presenting the work of another as one's own (i.e., without proper acknowledgement of the source). The sole exception to the requirement of acknowledging sources is when the information or ideas are common knowledge.

**Fabrication and Falsification** - Unauthorized alteration or invention of any information or citation in an academic exercise.

## Weapons Policy

Individuals who choose to carry concealed handguns **are solely responsible to do so in a safe and secure manner in strict conformity with [state and federal laws](#) and [KU weapons policy](#).**

Safety measures outlined in the KU weapons policy specify that a concealed handgun:

- Must be under the constant control of the carrier.
- Must be out of view, concealed either on the body of the carrier, or backpack, purse, or bag that remains under the carrier's custody and control.
- Must be in a holster that covers the trigger area and secures any external hammer in an un-cocked position.
- Must have the safety on, and have no round in the chamber.

## School Laboratories

The School provides computer and broadcast laboratories for student use. Adequate laboratory resources are available for students who complete their assignments in a timely manner. The hours for the computer lab in 105 Stauffer-Flint are posted outside the lab. Computers are available on a first-come, first-served basis. Hours for the Weir Production Laboratory are posted in the Dole Center. Students may sign up for editing time and equipment on a first-come, first-served basis on the online reservation system at <http://journalism.ku.edu/dole-center>. Sign-up

instructions are on the website. Remember, all posted lab times are subject to change. Plan to work Monday through Friday.

### **Incllement Weather**

The University – and the University alone – has the right to cancel or delay classes for weather. KU sends text alerts when classes are canceled. To determine whether weather conditions have altered class times, call the KU snow line: (785) 864-7669 (785-864-SNOW).

### **Students with Disabilities**

The University of Kansas is committed to helping all students learn. If you have a special need that may affect your learning, please contact your lab instructor as soon as possible. Please be aware that the Student Access Services coordinates accommodations and services for all students who are eligible. If you have a disability for which you wish to request accommodations and have not contacted this office, please do so as soon as possible. Please also contact the instructor privately in regard to this course. Additional information can be found at <http://access.ku.edu>

### **Journalism School policy on classroom attendance:**

"No student may add a journalism class after the 20th day of a semester.

"Students must attend their classes and laboratory periods. Instructors may take attendance into account in assessing a student's performance and may require a certain level of attendance for passing a course. Instructors may choose to drop students from a course, based on attendance, without consent.

"The School of Journalism reserves the right to cancel the enrollment of students who fail to attend the first class or laboratory meeting."

"The KU Office of Student Financial Aid is required by federal law to determine whether students who receive aid are attending each class in which they are enrolled. Instructors are required to report to that office absences of students who have stopped attending and names of those who have enrolled but never have attended. Students who do not attend classes may be required to repay federal and/or state financial aid.

"Students who receive any form of financial aid should learn all requirements including minimum hours of enrollment and grades to qualify for and retain that aid."

### **Copying or Recording**

Course materials prepared by the instructor, as well as content of all lectures presented by the instructor, are the instructor's intellectual property. Video and audio recording of lectures without instructor consent is prohibited. On request, the instructor usually will permit students to audiotape lectures on the condition that these audiotapes are only used as a study aid by the individual making the recording. Unless the instructor gives explicit permission, recordings of lectures may not be modified and must not be transferred or transmitted to any other person, whether or not that individual is enrolled in the course.

## Things have a way of changing

From the KU University Senate Rules and Regulations:

2.1.2 Information about the basis for evaluating students' performance and about the requirements that students must fulfill should be made available to students, preferably in writing, within the first two weeks of class. Students who are not in class when such information is provided are responsible for knowing it. Students are also responsible for subsequent announcements about course content and grading policies. **This information should not be considered a contract; the information may be revised as the course progresses, provided students are given timely notice of such revisions.** (emphasis added)