

WRPR/LNGT 0206: Narratives in the News Media

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Office Hours in Carr Hall 201: Mon 11-12pm; T/Th 3-4pm (or by appt)

Course Description

In this course we will consider questions such as: What linguistic strategies do the news media use to craft compelling stories? What are the dominant narratives at play about national and global social issues, and how are some journalists working to counter those narratives? We will employ Critical Discourse Analysis as a central framework, reading theoretical and empirical work by linguists such as Teun van Dijk, as well as from sociologists and political scientists. We will engage with “On the Media” and other podcasts, TED talks, documentaries such as *Outfoxed* (2004), and online magazines. Students will write for a variety of audiences.

Course Objectives

Students will...

- Critically examine their own relationship to news media
- Articulate relationships between language and power, as enacted in news media
- Understand the nature and purpose of discourse analysis as a research methodology
- Identify textual and multimodal features of news media discourse, and judge rhetorical effects of those features
- Read and critique empirical research employing various approaches to news media analysis
- Develop and facilitate their own empirical studies applying theories and methods from class, using relevant tools and technologies
- Write effectively for both academic and public audiences.

Readings

1. Busá, M. G. (2013/2014). *Introducing the language of the news: A student's guide*. Routledge.

This text should be available via the Middlebury (online) Bookstore, but can also be found via Amazon and other booksellers.

2. We will also engage with a variety of other readings and media, which will be posted to Canvas. *You are strongly encouraged to print electronic readings, so that you can engage more closely in textual analysis.*

Expectations

Academic community is an important aspect of this course; cultivating that community requires the active presence and participation (including both speaking and listening) of each member. Unexcused absences and late or missed assignments will be penalized. In the event of illness, please notify me (via email or phone) *before* the class that you will be missing. Multiple absences could have an adverse effect on your final course grade. While I do not have a specific policy about use of technology in the classroom, I expect you to be mindful about using devices in a way that allows you and your peers to remain present and engaged.

I also expect that you will organize yourself so that you are prepared for class and can submit assignments on time. This includes

- Making time to do the readings before class, focusing in particular on terminology
- Having a folder/notebook in which to keep course handouts and other materials
- Using multiple strategies (e.g., Google Drive, OneDrive, Dropbox) to back up your work (Note: A computer crash is NOT an excuse for late work!)

I also expect you to take ownership of your own learning. You will have frequent homework assignments early on to reinforce your learning from the readings.

Formatting for Written Work

Unless specified otherwise, written assignments should be double-spaced, 12-point font (Times New Roman), with 1-inch margins. APA citation style is preferred, but other formats may be accepted upon student request. All work submitted should include the Honor Code statement: "*I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid on this assignment,*" with your signature. If you have worked with anyone other than a tutor (or Prof. Shapiro) on an assignment, please note that as well.

In class, we will talk more about academic integrity, including ways use sources appropriately, as well as when and how to collaborate with peers on particular assignments. For now, please remember that plagiarism usually involves using someone else's words or ideas as if they were your own. It can have very serious consequences, including academic suspension or even expulsion. For more information on plagiarism and how to avoid it, please visit <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/589/01/> .

For a self-guided tutorial about academic integrity at Middlebury, visit [go/ait](#).

Communication and Support

Communication and respect are very important to our course. I attempt to return all phone calls and emails within 24 hours, and expect the same of my students. Your feedback is essential to the success of this course. I will give you opportunities to tell me how the course is going, both in-class and anonymously, but I appreciate hearing from you at any point about your needs and experiences. If you encounter difficulties with any course material or assignments, please contact me **early and often**, so that I can help support you.

I also encourage (and occasionally require) you to work with other peer or professional tutors from CTLR- see [go/writingcenter](#) for info. We also have a Peer Writing Tutor assigned to our class, who has some experience with journalism and media: **Devin McGrath-Conwell** (dmcgrathconwell@middlebury.edu).

If you have a disability or learning issue of any kind that might impact your studies, please communicate with me as soon as possible. For formal accommodations, please be sure to contact Student Accessibility Services (directed by Jodi Litchfield- litchfie@middlebury.edu). See <http://www.middlebury.edu/campuslife/diversity/ada/> for more information.

Grading Breakdown

- ❖ Participation and HW assignments (exercises from Busá, online and in-class discussion, peer review, mtgs w/ SS, etc., pre-writing and early drafts, etc) = 20%
- ❖ Short Papers (three, 2-3 pp. each)= 25% total
 - Personal reflection (5%)
 - Headline analysis (10%)
 - Content analysis (10%)
- ❖ Discourse Analysis Long Paper (7-10 pp., multi-draft)= 25%
- ❖ Letter to editor (1-2pp., based on Contrastive Analysis Paper)= 10%
- ❖ Multimedia project for a peer audience = 20% (5% presentation; 10% project, 5% reflection)

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OVERVIEW OF MAJOR ASSIGNMENTS

(more details on each assignment will be provided in class)

Short Papers

These papers function as reflection and skill-building opportunities, where you can practice doing various types of analysis we have been learning about. The skills in these papers will also be useful for your Discourse Analysis Research Project later in the semester. While I am grading these papers

primarily on content, you will have the opportunity to revise them, if there is substantial room for improvement in the writing itself.

- A. News Media Autobiography (2-3 pp.):** In this paper, you'll reflect on your own experiences as a "consumer" of news media. In addition to describing some of your habits, preferences, and viewpoints, you'll consider the question: Am I a 'typical' Millennial consumer? (You'll compare your experiences with trends documented in research we'll be reading in class).
- B. Headline Analysis (2-3 pp.):** You will follow 2-3 publications, comparing their headlines on a particular issue, community, or geographic region over a period of several days. In your analysis, consider WHAT stories are covered as well as HOW the headline frames those stories. Draw on course readings, as needed, to discuss the significance of your findings.
- C. Content Analysis (3-4 pp.):** You will contrast 2-3 accounts of the same event from different news publications, focusing on aspects of content we have discussed thus far in class (e.g., headline/lead, structure, sourcing, tone/attitude, point of view). After presenting the differences (and possibly similarities), consider the "So What?" of your analysis, and suggest one or more research questions that you could pursue more fully, if you were to undertake a more in-depth and sustained analysis of news media coverages of this event.

Discourse Analysis Research Project (7-10 pp.)

For this project, you will craft a research question that can be answered with corpus-based discourse analysis of news media. Your paper will include a Rationale that draws on secondary sources (both concepts/theories and other studies) to make the case for your analysis, a Methods section that articulates what you did and why, and Findings, Discussion/Implications, Limitations, and Suggestions for future research. We will complete this project in stages, as follows:

- a. Proposal, including annotated bibliography of 5 or more relevant secondary sources
 - With written and in-person feedback/guidance from Prof. S
- b. In-class data analysis workshops with individual work time
- c. Presentations of work in-progress
- d. First draft, with peer review and/or peer tutor feedback
- e. Revised draft, with feedback from Prof S.
- f. Final draft, with Researcher's Memo

Letter to the Editor and Multimedia Project

These final two assignments allow you to synthesize what you have learned from the course and to connect with an audience beyond the classroom.

Your **letter to the editor** will respond to a recent article in the *Campus* or another publication that you engage with regularly, and should be written in a way that shows awareness of the genre conventions (content, style, tone, etc.) for this type of writing, including being concise, engaging, and persuasive.

The **multimedia project** is your opportunity to educate your peers about something you've learned from the course. There are numerous options for this project, from creative nonfiction to an interactive website to a poster or other visual media. I encourage you to do something you will find enjoyable, and to consider how to share your course learning in a creative and engaging way. You will conduct peer review of this project both during and outside of class. The final draft/version of projects will be published within Middlebury or for a wider audience (We'll discuss options together). You will also write a reflection that explains what you wanted to accomplish with the project and discusses its strengths and weaknesses. Grading criteria for this project will be determined in consultation with each student.

COURSE CALENDAR (tentative)

Feb 13 (T)- Course introduction/overview, partner interview. Preview readings for Thurs. (NOTE: *Please order Busà (2013/2014) text ASAP, so you can have it for Tues 2/20*).

Feb 15 (Th)- Young, 2015 (American Press Institute study)- Available [here](#) and on Canvas. *Please print and bring to class.* (topic: Habits of News Consumption in U.S.)

In class: Compare with data from Pew Research. Discuss paper due Sun. If time: Preview Busà Ch 1.

Due by Sun Feb 18th (Canvas): News Media Autobiography (short paper, 2-3 pp.- see description in syllabus).

Feb 20 (T)- Busà Ch 1 and 2. (Basics of News Media). Do p. 38 Activities 2-3 (bring notes to class). Discuss headline analysis paper.

Feb 22 (Th) Busà Ch 6 (Headline/lead). Do pp. 92-93 Activities 2 and 3 (bring notes to class). In-class: form issue groups. (possible guest lecturer?)

Due by Sun Feb 25 (Canvas): Headline Analysis (short paper, 2-3 pp- see description in syllabus).

Feb 27 (T)- Bleich et al, 2016. Skim/excerpts from other Bleich "under review" (Tone/attitude/valence analysis). Visit from Prof. Bleich (Poly Sci).

Mar 1 (Th)- **NO CLASS**- Online discussion (Canvas) of Busà Ch 3 (Sourcing news) and Ch 8 (Attitude/point of view), including individual and group components (e.g., pp. 47-48 Activity 2).

***Mar 2 (Fri)**- "Immigration and DACA in an Age of Uncertainty"- 4:30pm, Wilson (EC opp!)

Mar 6 (T): Busà Ch 5 (Story structure). *Before class:* Post links/pdfs for 2-3 articles to Canvas, along with initial observations of contrasts in tone/attitude, sourcing, structure, or other elements (ideally related to your issue group!). In-class analysis workshop.

Mar 8 (Th)- Bring drafts of short paper 3 (Content Analysis, 3-4 pp.) for peer review. Writing Workshop.

[Also check out **RCGA international conference March 8-10:** Extra Credit opportunity!]

Due Sun Mar 11 (Canvas): Content Analysis (short paper, 3-4 pp., drawing on Busà and other readings)

Mar 13 (T)- Busà Ch 7 (Linguistic/Syntax Analysis) and Ch 9 (Word Choice). Do pp. 114-115, Activities 4 and 5 (bring notes to class). Preview corpus of “Events of March 2nd” (EM2) articles in focus groups: Content, Structure, Tone/Word Choice, Other. Practice developing research questions/hypotheses.

Mar 15 (Th)- Research/Analysis Workshop: Bring notes on “March 2nd” corpus (Canvas). Read through and begin annotating before class. Demonstrate tools/methods (e.g. Voyant)
Bring computers to class! [Also possible visit from librarian or technologist.]

Due Sun Mar 18 (Canvas): Proposal for Discourse Analysis Paper (6-8 pp.). Include *research question(s), hypothesis, methods,* and 3-5 *relevant secondary sources* (e.g., from Busà),
*Also, opportunity to revise short papers, if applicable. (see details in syllabus)

Mar 20 (T): Research/Analysis Workshop. Bring computer and/or paper texts for analysis.
[Possible visit from librarian or technologist.]

Mar 22 (Th): Presentations and peer feedback re: Discourse Analysis Papers. (Bring handout/other visual with findings).

[All week: opportunities to meet with SS]

March 26-30: *SPRING BREAK*****

Apr 3 (T): Peer review full drafts of Discourse Analysis Papers. (Bring 4 **hard copies** to class).

***Apr 4 (W) 7pm:** Screening of “Man on Fire”- (Extra credit opportunity!)

Apr 5 (Th): Writing Workshop. Reading/HW to be determined (e.g., read other content analysis studies).

[Meetings w/ SS and/or tutors all week]

Due Sun Apr 8 (Canvas): draft of Discourse Analysis Paper, focus on Rationale, Methods, and initial Findings/Discussion.

Apr 10 (T): Hardin & Whiteside, 2010 (Canvas). [Optional additional reading: [LaFrance, 2016 in Atlantic](#)] (topic: Feminist approaches to news media analysis. Also news framing in general)

Apr 12 (Th): Reading/media TBD. Visit from Susan Greenberg- (topic: Other critical approaches to news media analysis).

[NOTE: For Tues Apr 17, watch film: *Outfoxed* (on Reserve in Davis Library) or *Post-Truth Times* (Amazon Prime video, others?)]

Apr 17 (T)- Watch *Outfoxed* and *Post-Truth Times*. (topic: Bias in News media)

Apr 19 (Th)- Readings TBD. (topic: Fake News and Junk Food News).

Also discuss Letter to Editor and Multimedia Project.

***Fri Apr 20-** Spring Student Symposium (Extra credit opportunity!)

[Meetings w/ SS and/or tutors all week]

Apr 24 (T): Peer review final draft of Discourse Analysis papers- focus on Findings/Discussion/Implications, etc.

Apr 26 (Th): Watch [Sally Kohn TED talk](#). Other reading TBD- [Flanagan, 2017 \(*Atlantic*\)](#)?
(topic: Polarization in News Media, Role of Social Media)

Due Fri Apr 25 (Canvas): Final draft of Discourse Analysis paper

Due Sun Apr 27 (Canvas discussion): Letter to Editor (first draft)

May 1 (T)- (tentative topic: News and Satire- readings TBD)

By Wed May 2: Peer review comments (written or audio) on Letter to Editor

May 3 (Th)- Topic TBD

Due Sun May 6 (Canvas online discussion): Revised draft of Letter to Editor

May 8 (T): Showcase multimedia projects- get feedback (invite friends?).
Course response forms.

May 10 (Th): Showcase multimedia projects- get feedback (invite friends?). Course wrap-up.

Due Tues May 15: Multimedia project, plus reflection.