**Introductions**

Who is who; how do you like to be addressed?

How can you contact me?

What is the module about?

How is it taught?

**Etiquette:**

1. If unavoidable it is better to arrive late than not at all.
2. If you miss a seminar, please let me know.
3. Bring water/coffee with you if you like.
4. No question is a silly one. And it is better to ask than not to.
5. We can have opposing views and be passionate about them but we will be polite to each other.
6. Nobody expects that the seminar discussion will be recorded so please do not make a recording without having everyone’s consent.

**Session 1 discussion questions Harcup and O’Neill:**

1. Can you explain the concept of news values? Can you give me some examples?
2. What are the benefits and the limits of studying news values?
3. What approaches to the study of news values are discussed in the article?
4. What are the challenges in the area of online news?
5. Which findings of Harcup and O’Neill’s empirical study did you find interesting?

Concept:

News stories must generally satisfy one or more of the following requirements if they are to

be selected:

1. The power elite: Stories concerning powerful individuals, organisations or institutions.

2. Celebrity: Stories concerning people who are already famous.

3. Entertainment: Stories concerning sex, showbusiness, human interest, animals, an

unfolding drama, or offering opportunities for humorous treatment, entertaining photographs or witty headlines.

4. Surprise: Stories that have an element of surprise and/or contrast.

5. Bad news: Stories with particularly negative overtones, such as conflict or tragedy.

6. Good news: Stories with particularly positive overtones, such as rescues and cures.

7. Magnitude: Stories that are perceived as sufficiently significant either in the numbers

of people involved or in potential impact.

8. Relevance: Stories about issues, groups and nations perceived to be relevant to the

audience.

9. Follow-up: Stories about subjects already in the news.

10. Newspaper agenda: Stories that set or fit the news organisation’s own agenda

(Harcup and O’Neill 2001, 278–279).

Uses and limitations:

Identifying and recording the news values found within published pieces of journalism

cannot provide a complete explanation of the journalistic process but that does not

mean such study is without value. News values are worth studying because they inform

the mediated world that is presented to news audiences, providing a shared shorthand

operational understanding of what working journalists are required to produce to deadlines.

It is the way news values work in practice that results in them being articulated

and conveyed to new journalism trainees and journalism students, and they are also

used by public relations professionals and others aiming to obtain maximum news coverage

of events (or pseudo-events).

Approaches:

Ideological role of news selection: Hall (1973) suggested that news values themselves are part of an ideologically constructed way of perceiving the world that favours and “naturalises” the perspectives of powerful elites, a view echoed by Herman and Chomsky (1988) in their propaganda model and McChesney (2000). News values can be seen less as a reflection of what type of information citizens want or need, and more as a reflection of organisational, sociological and cultural norms combined with economic factors (Weaver et al. 2007). This leads Allern (2002) to propose a supplementary set of commercial news values, whereby sensationalist stories are most likely to be pursued; stories that are costly to pursue are less likely to make it into the news; and news subsidies, such as well-prepared press releases and photo opportunities, are more likely to be taken up by resource-starved and hard-pressed journalists, and translated into news items. This news subsidy by the public relations industry, described as pre-fabrication by Bell (1991), has been observed in “quality” media as well as less well-resourced news organisations (Lewis, Williams, and Franklin 2008).

Furthermore, who is applying news values can be as important as what news values are being applied. Using Bourdieu’s sociological approach, Schultz (2007, 197) argues that the degree of autonomy afforded to a journalist making choices about news will depend on the type of news organisation they work for, the type of journalism they produce, and the level at which they operate.

“With the digitisation of the production and dissemination of news, news discourse has become a visually enriched product. The lack of research concerning news values and imagery has been noted by only a handful of researchers.”

Online news:

Online news therefore presents journalists with instant feedback about whether their

news selection decisions (and methods of presentation) marry with those of significant

numbers of readers.

Updated news values based on findings:

Exclusivity: Stories generated by, or available first to, the news organisation as a result

of interviews, letters, investigations, surveys, polls, and so on.

. Bad news: Stories with particularly negative overtones such as death, injury, defeat and

loss (of a job, for example).

. Conflict: Stories concerning conflict such as controversies, arguments, splits, strikes,

fights, insurrections and warfare.

. Surprise: Stories that have an element of surprise, contrast and/or the unusual about

them.

. Audio-visuals: Stories that have arresting photographs, video, audio and/or which can

be illustrated with infographics.

. Shareability: Stories that are thought likely to generate sharing and comments via Facebook,

Twitter and other forms of social media.

. Entertainment: Soft stories concerning sex, showbusiness, sport, lighter human interest,

animals, or offering opportunities for humorous treatment, witty headlines or lists.

. Drama: Stories concerning an unfolding drama such as escapes, accidents, searches,

sieges, rescues, battles or court cases.

. Follow-up: Stories about subjects already in the news.

. The power elite: Stories concerning powerful individuals, organisations, institutions or

corporations.

. Relevance: Stories about groups or nations perceived to be influential with, or culturally

or historically familiar to, the audience.

. Magnitude: Stories perceived as sufficiently significant in the large numbers of people

involved or in potential impact, or involving a degree of extreme behaviour or extreme

occurrence.

. Celebrity: Stories concerning people who are already famous.

. Good news: Stories with particularly positive overtones such as recoveries, breakthroughs,

cures, wins and celebrations.

. News organisation’s agenda: Stories that set or fit the news organisation’s own agenda,

whether ideological, commercial or as part of a specific campaign.

**Chalaby, J. K. (2005). “From Internationalization to Transnationalization.”**

**Chalaby** distinguishes three phases in the development of international communication: internationalization, globalization and transnationalization. What characterizes each of these phases and what are the benefits of making these distinctions?

Thinking about your knowledge or personal experience of these developments, how significant do you think they are?

Internationalization:

Alongside the emergence of the first corporations with an international scope, such as telegraph companies and news agencies (Rantanen, 1997), the first international media markets developed. In technology, firms with cutting-edge expertise (e.g. Marconi), rapidly expanded their activities in several territories (Hills, 2002). In entertainment, the fledgling international film trade was first dominated by the French studios, and later overtaken by a Hollywood-based US film industry during the interwar period (Trumpbour, 2002).

Globalization:

A new paradigm began to emerge in the 1960s, when a series of innovations in the field of telecommunications – prompted by advances in computing, microelectronics and space-related technologies – provoked a second explosion in international communication. Most notable was the invention of fibre optic cables and geo-stationary communication satellites, which were progressively developed into global networks under the aegis of international organizations such as Intelsat and the International Telecommunications Union (Evans, 1987; Hecht, 1999). TV broadcast satellites enabled the instantaneous and worldwide circulation of sounds and images, and TV news began their planetary daily rounds via the news exchanges of broadcasters’ regional associations.

At the end of the 20th century, a borderless media system has developed whose backbone is a global communication network comprising fibre optic pipes and TV broadcast satellites. Its expansion is driven by the internationalization of media markets following deregulation and a worldwide integration of the media industry. The globalization of communication plays a determining role in the deterritorialization of capitalism and economic liberalism (Latouche, 1996) and is central to the globalizing process at large. Many fields of activities are currently integrating on a world scale and progressively turning into global systems (Held et al., 1999). Global communication adds to the flow of information, networks of communication and systems of exchange that intensify the interconnectedness of these fields and facilitate their worldwide integration (Chalaby, 2003).

Transnationalization:

A transnational media order is coming into being that is remapping media spaces and involving new media practices, flows and products. An international reach is no longer the preserve of Western-based conglomerates, as an increasing number of smaller media companies from

the developing world are expanding overseas, from Multichoice in South Africa to Zee Network in India (e.g. Thussu, 2005). Transnational TV channels have multiplied and grown in diversity over the past 10 years to include some of the most innovative and influential channels of our times. Many of them are at the heart of the transformation of regional media cultures, most noticeably in the Middle East, South Asia and even Africa, but also in Europe (Chalaby, 2005).

**Chalaby: Journalism as an Anglo-American Invention**

Key argument:

American and British journalists invented the concept of news in the 19th century

Do you find Chalaby’s key argument compelling?

When comparing French and UK/US newspapers of the 19th century Chalaby concludes:

“Anglo-American newspapers contained more information and their news-gathering services were much more developed than those of French dailies. Distinctive journalistic discursive practices, such as reporting and interviewing, were also invented and developed in America. By creating the modern conception of news and developing journalistic practices, the Americans and the British achieved a unique discursive revolution.” P. 313

Among the causes of this revolution he lists:

1. Cultural – in France the literary discourse was considered of higher value than the journalistic one, this was not the case in UK and US
2. Political – in Britain and US coercion of the press lasted shorter than in France; political struggles were limited in UK and US to parliamentary bipartisanism and were less violent
3. Economic – advertising market developed faster in UK and US
4. Linguistic and international – English – easy to condense language and England/London had central position in the world before WWI

**Curran et al: International News and Global Integration: A five-nation reappraisal**

The study challenges the premise that foreign news tends to be reported in divergent ways – that it is domesticated – to reflect the interests and identity of the home nation.

It looks at three international events: the US Presidential election, the Greek General Election and the election of the President of China by the National People’s Congress in 2012 and the reporting on these in China, Japan, Germany, the United Kingdom and the United States.

Conclusion:

The Greek and US elections in 2012 were reported in very similar ways in the leading news media of five countries located in different continents. In the case of the 2012 Chinese election, there were striking affinities in the news reporting of four out of five countries. Powerful forces that make for global conformity include the dominance of a small number of international news agencies, the emergence of a transnational journalistic culture, the hegemony of market liberal thought, the legacy of the Cold War, and the shared perspectives of allied states.

**News as a social and cultural construct:**

Three approaches in the sociology of news production:

1. Political-economy perspective
2. Culturalist
3. Constructionist

Constructionist perspective:

Objective reality is not knowable, instead what we have are discourses/constructions of reality – some of them hegemonic – proponents of this stance in relation to news: Tuchman, Fishman

There are many critiques of this approach (a whole approach indeed – the realist one) and many proponents as well, see e.g. Lau, R. W. (2012) “‘Re-theorizing news’ construction of reality: A realist-discourse-theoretic approach”, *Journalism*, 13(7), pp. 886–902. doi: 10.1177/1464884911432660. Lau provides two empirical examples, one of them is the MMR vaccine scandal in which news coverage effectively constructed a reality that was completely in contradiction from actual scientific knowledge about MMR vaccines.

Culturalist perspective:

Esser: sound bites and news cultures:

How do journalists do their jobs depending on the political and media cultures of a given country?

The model expects journalistic attitudes that favor more frequent interventions in campaign news to flourish in a *political culture* in which public opinion is more cynical and distrustful of political institutions because it creates a climate in which adversarial journalism seems socially acceptable; *media culture* that is leaning toward a more pragmatic approach (guided by strict news values and a general skepticism toward statements made by those in power) than to a sacerdotal approach (regarding the reportage of political news and positions as an inherently important service to democracy that must be provided as of right); highly *professionalized journalistic community* that has achieved a status of independence from outside interference (especially from political control), the development of autonomous and distinctively journalistic criteria that guide the production of news, and the evolution of proactive, party-distant role perceptions such as interpreter, critic, watchdog, or entertainer; highly *professionalized election campaign* characterized by a strong focus on news management, message control, and restricted media access; *political structure* with weak party organizations, weak party loyalties in the electorate, and weak influence of party ideologies on social life; or *media structure* that is subject to only very light state regulation and in which broadcasters are less guided by public service obligations but more by commercial considerations, profit orientations, and competitive market pressures. With regard to dependent variables, the model expects that a high level of journalistic intervention will lead to shorter candidate sound bites but longer journalist sound bites, candidate sound bites with less policy content but attack-related and campaign buzz–related content, image bites that portray candidates in a less authoritative light and show journalists in more potent light, and a smaller amount of election news coverage in general.

Developed further by cultural studies:

Given a wide range of epithets—including the collective knowledge journalists need to function as journalists, the “culturological” dimensions of the news, and the examination of “journalism as popular culture”—this type of inquiry has produced a fruitful line of scholarship that links the untidy and textured *materiel* of journalism— its symbols, ideologies, rituals, conventions, and stories—with the larger world in which journalism takes shape. Approached as more than just reporters’ professional codes of action or the social arrangements of reporters and editors, the cultural analysis of journalism sees the world of news as offering up a complex and multi-dimensional lattice of meanings for all those involved in journalism, “a tool kit of symbols, stories, rituals and world views, which people use in varying configurations to solve different kinds of problems.”

Pronouncedly interdisciplinary and self-reflexive, cultural inquiry addresses journalism

by traversing an analytical track with two somewhat incompatible edges. It both sees journalism through journalists’ own eyes, tracking how being part of the community comes to have meaning for them, and queries the self-presentations that journalists provide. Emphasizing “the constraining force of broad cultural symbol systems regardless of the details of organizational and occupational routines,” the cultural analysis of journalism moves decidedly in tandem with, but in opposition to, the pronounced and conventional understandings of how journalism works. Undercutting the pronounced sense of self that journalism professionals have long set forth regarding their practices and position in the world, cultural inquiry assumes that journalists employ collective knowledge to become members of the group and maintain their membership over time, yet presumes that what is explicit and articulated as that knowledge may not reflect the whole picture of what journalism is and tries to be. Cultural inquiry thus travels the uneven road of reading journalism against its own grain while giving that grain extended attention. Analysis here considers the meanings, symbols and symbolic systems, ideologies,

rituals, and conventions by which journalists maintain their cultural authority as spokespeople for events in the public domain. Such work has been impacted by developments elsewhere in the academy, including research on the sociology of culture, an interest in constructivism in philosophy, a turn in anthropology and folklore toward the analysis of symbols and symbolic forms, a move toward ethnography in linguistics, and growing scholarship in cultural history and cultural criticism, all of which have heightened interest over the past two decades in thinking about culture as an analytical locus, broadening the template by which the cultural dimensions of journalism could be examined. (for more see Zelizer, B. (2004) “When facts, truth, and reality are God‐terms: on journalism's uneasy place in cultural studies”, *Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies*, 1(1), pp. 100-119, DOI: 10.1080/1479142042000180953)

**Political economy perspective:**

Across 15 financial years, the publishers returned meagre evidence that the news they distributed across digital platforms could achieve commercial sustainability while upholding

its public interest value. Furthermore, the reports highlighted that as the publishers’ hold on

traditional monopoly distribution structures were breaking down, so too were their relationships

with advertisers who were prioritising new digital platforms to reach consumers.

The study highlighted a consistent market failure in supporting public interest journalism.

News operations that prioritised news’s commodity value (DMGT, Trinity Mirror, GMG’s regional division) remained operationally profitable primarily through significant cost-cutting, tightening the resource parameters for news production. The publishers embodied three different conceptions of public interest journalism and three portfolio approaches. Nevertheless, they exhibited few signs of a market solution to the robust resourcing of public interest journalism. GMG (Scott Trust) excepted, neither did managerial discourse attach a high priority to sustaining journalism’s values paradigm in corporate contexts where news-related revenues were falling. Arguably, the digital era has eroded the traditional market value of newspaper publishers being seen as authoritative disseminators of news. This study suggests it may also be enfeebling corporations’ managerial and commercial justifications for acting as operational contexts to journalism’s values paradigm.

Cawley, A. (2019) “Digital Transitions”, *Journalism Studies*, 20(7), pp. 1028-1049, DOI: 10.1080/1461670X.2018.1481348

**Zelizer: When facts, truth, and reality are God‐terms: on journalism's uneasy place in cultural studies.**

What is the benefit of an approach focused on culture when studying journalism?

Given a wide range of epithets—including the collective knowledge journalists need to function as journalists, the “culturological” dimensions of the news, and the examination of “journalism as popular culture”—this type of inquiry has produced a fruitful line of scholarship that links the untidy and textured *materiel* of journalism— its symbols, ideologies, rituals, conventions, and stories—with the larger world in which journalism takes shape. Approached as more than just reporters’ professional codes of action or the social arrangements of reporters and editors, the cultural analysis of journalism sees the world of news as offering up a complex and multi-dimensional lattice of meanings for all those involved in journalism, “a tool kit of symbols, stories, rituals and world views, which people use in varying configurations to solve different kinds of problems.” (p. 101)

When exploring journalists’ practices and identities there are benefits to a cultural approach:

Pronouncedly interdisciplinary and self-reflexive, cultural inquiry addresses journalism

by traversing an analytical track with two somewhat incompatible edges. It both sees journalism through journalists’ own eyes, tracking how being part of the community comes to have meaning for them, and queries the self-presentations that journalists provide. Emphasizing “the constraining force of broad cultural symbol systems regardless of the details of organizational and occupational routines,” the cultural analysis of journalism moves decidedly in tandem with, but in opposition to, the pronounced and conventional understandings of how journalism works. Undercutting the pronounced sense of self that journalism professionals have long set forth regarding their practices and position in the world, cultural inquiry assumes that journalists employ collective knowledge to become members of the group and maintain their membership over time, yet presumes that what is explicit and articulated as that knowledge may not reflect the whole picture of what journalism is and tries to be. Cultural inquiry thus travels the uneven road of reading journalism against its own grain while giving that grain extended attention. Analysis here considers the meanings, symbols and symbolic systems, ideologies, rituals, and conventions by which journalists maintain their cultural authority as spokespeople for events in the public domain. Such work has been impacted by developments elsewhere in the academy, including research on the sociology of culture, an interest in constructivism in philosophy, a turn in anthropology and folklore toward the analysis of symbols and symbolic forms, a move toward ethnography in linguistics, and growing scholarship in cultural history and cultural criticism, all of which have heightened interest over the past two decades in thinking about culture as an analytical locus, broadening the template by which the cultural dimensions of journalism could be examined. (p. ibid.)

**Pamela Taylor Jackson: News as a Contested Commodity: A Clash of Capitalist and Journalistic Imperatives**

The article focuses on journalism’s democratic role – news as a source of reliable and truthful information, journalists as watchdogs of democracy etc. – and considers the threat of increased commodification to this role. The argument is built on insights from philosophy, ethics, regulation and is rather complex.

The article proposes that news is a specific type of commodity – contested commodity, a commodity that cannot be fully subjected to market forces but needs regulation. Taylor Jackson draws on the work of Margaret Radin who considers

how far society should go in permitting people to buy and sell certain elements of personhood like babies, kidneys and corneas, and sexual acts, referred to as contested commodities. She argued that some aspects of being human should not be bought and sold because they have a dignity that goes beyond price. Yet economic, political, ethics, and legal scholars are not in agreement on the inappropriateness of such transactions. The debate over the nature of contested commodities is full of “painful and puzzling controversies”— deliberation over whether or which items related to personhood should be subjected to market exchange (Radin, 2005, p. 81). (p. 148)

Taylor Jackson also looks at specific characteristics of news as a commodity to further argue for regulation rather than the free market:

Media critic Ben Bagdikian argued that the result of such market journalism is editorial content designed “not primarily for the needs and interests of the audience but for the audience-collecting needs of advertisers” (1992, p. 8). This poses a dilemma for news because an informed electorate is a public good just like education; it produces an external benefit in society, which is an educated citizenry voting on leaders and policy decisions. It helps foster a better, more equitable society for everyone. Thus, there are negative consequences to inadequate information or under-produced public interest news in the process of democratic interaction. Indeed, there cannot be a true democracy without an informed electorate. The traditiona lmarket model of economics suggests the consumer demand for a good is positively related to its quality. However, with commercially produced news, the public interest quality of a story is often inversely related to consumer demand. As McManus noted, rational advertisers can be expected to support a news program generating the largest audience (or readership) likely to purchase the products offered, at the lowest cost per viewer (or reader).

In *What Kind of a Commodity Is News* (1992b), McManus pointed out that another problem is that news consumers often cannot discern the quality of news. Audiences and readers often are unable to determine the accuracy of stories and do not know whether they are receiving a full account of the most important stories of the day. (pp. 153-4)

She also points out that when the quality of news suffers, “that leads to a negative externality: the decline in social welfare from a less-informed electorate. … Thus, the economic logic of maximizing profits conflicts with the journalistic logic of maximizing public understanding.” (p. 155)