

University of Wisconsin-Whitewater
Curriculum Proposal Form #3
New Course

Effective Term: 2121 (Spring 2012)

Subject Area - Course Number: PHILSPHY 121
(See Note #1 below)

Cross-listing:

Course Title: (Limited to 65 characters) Truth and the Media

25-Character Abbreviation: Truth and the Media

Sponsor(s): Chris Calvert-Minor

Department(s): Philosophy & Religious Studies

College(s): Letters and Sciences

Consultation took place: NA Yes (list departments and attach consultation sheet)
Departments: Communication Department

Programs Affected: Philosophy, Religious Studies, Liberal Studies

Is paperwork complete for those programs? (Use "Form 2" for Catalog & Academic Report updates)

NA Yes will be at future meeting

Prerequisites: None

Grade Basis: Conventional Letter S/NC or Pass/Fail

Course will be offered: Part of Load Above Load
 On Campus Off Campus - Location

College: Letters and Sciences **Dept/Area(s):** Philosophy & Religious Studies

Instructor:

Note: If the course is dual-listed, instructor must be a member of Grad Faculty.

Check if the Course is to Meet Any of the Following:

Technological Literacy Requirement Writing Requirement
 Diversity General Education Option: GH

Note: For the Gen Ed option, the proposal should address how this course relates to specific core courses, meets the goals of General Education in providing breadth, and incorporates scholarship in the appropriate field relating to women and gender.

Credit/Contact Hours: (per semester)

Total lab hours: 0 Total lecture hours: 48
Number of credits: 3 Total contact hours: 48

Can course be taken more than once for credit? (Repeatability)

No Yes If "Yes", answer the following questions:

No of times in major:

No of credits in major:

No of times in degree:

No of credits in degree:

Proposal Information: ([Procedures for form #3](#))

Course justification: This course is an introductory applied critical thinking course. All philosophy courses involve critical thinking, but this course explicitly addresses both the good philosophical practices of critical thinking and the failures in critical thinking present in our news media. The aim is to attract first-year students and teach them the right kind of philosophical critical thinking skills to navigate effectively our often fallacy-ridden media landscape. No other course offers this kind of critical thinking training concerning our media culture. Calvert-Minor taught two sections of this course successfully at Hamilton College (Fall 2008 – Spring 2009).

Relationship to program assessment objectives: By honing an awareness of ideological biases in the media, gaining a philosophical understanding of “bullshit” in the media, recognizing fallacies and pseudoreasoning in the media, considering what our responsibilities might be from what we have learned, and developing philosophical critical thinking skills, this course contributes to the following subject matter (SM), cognitive development (CD), and skills objectives (SK) of the philosophy program assessment program: identify major fields in philosophy (SMa); critically appraise philosophical arguments and theories (CDa&b); apply basic methods and techniques of reasoning and argumentation (SKa); develop philosophical arguments (SKb); and analyze philosophical texts (SKc). Class discussion, papers, and essay exams will also enable students to arrive at their own informed position on philosophical issues (CDa/SKb) and to write philosophically (SKd).

Relationship to the Goals of General Education: By having students read, discuss, and critically analyze, in oral and written modalities, primary philosophical texts in the areas of critical thinking, ethics, and social philosophy, by having students apply a wide array of critical thinking skills to the current media culture, and by moving students to arrive at informed views concerning critical thinking and the media culture, this course will enhance students’ abilities: “to think critically and analytically integrate and synthesize knowledge, and draw conclusions from complex information” (Goal 1); “to make sound ethical judgments based on the development of a personal value system, on an understanding of shared cultural heritage, and knowledge of past success, failures, and consequences of individual roles and societal choice” (Goal 2); “to acquire a base of knowledge common to educated persons and the capacity to expand that basis over their lifetimes” (Goal 4); “to communicate effectively in written, oral, and symbolic form” (Goal 5); and “to develop skills necessary for analysis and problem solving” (Goal 8).

Relationship to the Core Courses: Needless to say, the critical thinking skills learned in this course will enhance students’ learning in all of the core courses. In particular, however, materials from this course will enhance students’ studies in: GENED 110 (World of the Arts) by educating and critiquing how images and art can be used in persuasion; GENED 130 (Individual and Society) by critically assessing the epistemic value of news and social media as they influence individuals and society; GENED 120/140 (Historical or Global Perspectives) by critically assessing the plasticity of social/cultural/historical perspectives the media generates and the epistemic value the media plays in our history and how we perceive the rest of the world; and GENED 390 (World of Ideas) by providing the critical thinking tools necessary to evaluate the variety of ideas and thinkers presented in the course.

Budgetary impact: Almost nothing. The class will not require additional staffing as it will be another course in the class rotation, being offered every other spring semester as part of load. The library holdings supporting this class are adequate, and the department’s library allocations budget will be more than sufficient for minor supplements to current library holdings.

Course description: There is a vast array of media outlets, political talking heads, and mass-marketed paraphernalia that claim to know what you should know, how you should feel about it, and what the best things are for you. We live thoroughly *media-ted*. This course critiques our current media culture on the veracity/rationality of their epistemic claims.

Course objectives and tentative course syllabus: [See attached syllabus.](#)

Bibliography: UWW Library Supporting Materials (secondary sources)

- Azzouni, J. 2006. *Tracking reason: Proof, consequence, and truth*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
- Barnes, J. 2007. *Truth, etc.: Six lectures on ancient logic*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
- Bennett, D. 2004. *Logic made easy: How to know when language deceives you*. New York, NY: W.W. Norton & Co.
- Bracken, C. C. and Skalski, P. D. 2010. *Immersed in media: Telepresence in everyday life*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Brandom, R. 2000. *Articulating reasons: An introduction to inferentialism*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Breen, T. H. 2005. *The marketplace of revolution: How consumer politics shaped American independence*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
- Buikema, R. and van der Tuin, I. 2009. *Doing gender in media, art and culture*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Carey, J. and Elton, M. 2010. *When media are new: Understanding the dynamics of new media adoption and use*. Ann Arbor, MI: Digital Culture Books/University of Michigan Press and the University of Michigan Library.
- Carroll, S. and Fox, R. 2010. *Gender and elections: Shaping the future of American politics*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.
- Davidson, D. 2005. *Truth and predication*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Doctor, K. 2010. *Newsonomics: Twelve new trends that will shape the news you get*. New York, NY: St. Martin's Press.
- Halligan, B. and Shah, D. 2010. *Inbound marketing: Get found using Google, social media, and blogs*. Hoboken, NJ: Wiley.
- Insight Media. 2008. *Critical thinking analyzing problems and decisions* (Videorecording). New York, NY: Insight Media.
- Krippendorff, K. 2004. *Content analysis: An introduction to its methodology*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Lambiase, J. and Reichert, T. 2006. *Sex in consumer culture: The erotic content of media and marketing*. Mahwah, NJ: L. Erlbaum Associates.
- McCaffrey, P. 2010. *The news and its future*. New York, NY: H.W. Wilson Co.
- Norris, C. 2006. *On truth and meaning: Language, logic and the grounds of belief*. New York, NY: Continuum.
- O'Hear, A. 2002. *Logic, thought, and language*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.

TRUTH AND THE MEDIA

Philosophy 121
Spring 2012

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REQUIRED TEXTS

On Bullshit, H. Frankfurt (2005)
Bullshit and Philosophy, eds. G. Hardcastle & G. Reisch (2006)
News: The Politics of Illusion, L. Bennett, 7th edition (2006)
Being Logical: A Guide to Good Thinking, D. Q. McInerney (2005)
D2L Course Reader

COURSE OVERVIEW

Believe me – this class will fix the energy crisis, solve world hunger, bring Republicans and Democrats together, make dogs love cats, and win you the Nobel Peace Prize. Okay, that's a load of BS, but here's the point: there is a vast array of media outlets, political talking heads, and mass-market paraphernalia that claim to know what you should know, how you should think about it, and what the best things are for you. We live thoroughly *media-ted*. What we will do in this class is take a close philosophical look at some elements of the media to try and sort fact from fiction, or at least start to tell how we may be being duped. We will philosophically critique our current media culture on the truth/objectivity of their epistemic claims. Our units are:

1. What is the "Media?"
2. Mass Media & Ideology
3. On Bullshit
4. Common Fallacies
5. The Newsroom
6. What is our Responsibility?



LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Throughout the semester, our main concern is to develop critical thinking skills that will help us analyze the messages and meanings from the media. Our objectives are (1) to hone an awareness of ideological biases in the media, (2) to gain an understanding of "bullshit" in the media, (3) to recognize fallacies in the media, (4) to consider what our responsibilities might be from what we have learned, and (5) develop great critical thinking skills. The skills we learn will apply directly to the media, but they are essential skills for everyday use.

COURSE EXPECTATIONS

Philosophy classes thrive on good discussions; discussions help to process our readings and to spark the creativity to critique those readings and develop novel insights based on them. Thus, every student should attend every class. But more is needed than attendance; effective participation means adequate preparation. And adequate preparation means that you need to do the assigned readings for the day and be ready to discuss them. You'll find that philosophy is best learned as it is practiced in frequent, informed dialogue.



A WORD ABOUT "SAFE SPACE"

We are all different people coming from different backgrounds. My hope is that in our discussions we can all respect these differences in a way that both allows us to be who we are, while also allowing others to be who they are. Let's make this a "safe space" by refraining from attacking people's identities, and yet, still welcome the expression of any and all ideas. In a nutshell, let's critique our hearts out at the level of ideas being mindful of our treatment and respect of others.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

There are five assignments for our course plus a participation grade. Here is the point breakdown:

Media Diary	50
Newspaper Study	150
Minor Paper	150
Roundtable	200
Major Paper	300
Participation	150
Total	1000

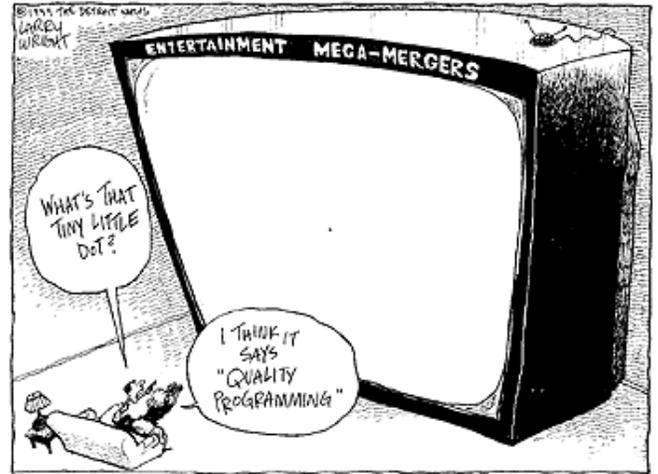
This is my grading scale: A/940-1000, A-/900-939, B+/870-899, B/840-869, B-/800-839, C+/770-799, C/740-769, C-/700-739, D+/670-699, D/640-669, D-/600-639, F/0-599.

Late work will not be accepted unless there is a well-documented, legitimate reason. Likewise, make-up exams will not be given unless there is a well-documented, legitimate reason.

I will provide more detailed instructions on these assignments, but here are brief descriptions.

Media Diary

To understand the role mass media plays in your own life, you will comprehensively document your media usage and viewing for a period of seven days. Document and describe as many situations and as many kinds of media you are exposed to and consume.



Newspaper Study

You will write a critical commentary (4 pgs) on the ideological bias of one newsprint publication. Select 5 articles on one theme from the publication of your choice and explain how these articles demonstrate ideological bias. Use both content analysis and audience response to make your case. I will require a rough draft of your commentary before you turn in your final draft, and the rough draft will count for 1/3 (or 50 points) of the allotted 150 points for the assignment.

Minor Paper

Identify an instance of bullshit in contemporary political media and discuss why and/or why not it is bad. Your paper will be 3-4 pages.

Roundtable

In small groups, you will script, perform, and film an 8 minute "Meet the Press" roundtable on one topic. Your roundtable will include both good argumentation AND faulty argumentation (though each of you will be as convincing as possible to try and fool us). We will all watch your filmed roundtables in class, and then you will assess the arguments of the other roundtables besides your own.

Major Paper

In this 5 page paper, you will argue for two epistemic problems you find in the media and address what our responsibilities might be in light of them. I expect you to form your paper substantially around the material we cover in class,

but I certainly welcome papers on other epistemic problems in the media we do not address.

ON WRITING

We will work hard on your writing both on your essay exams and your Final Papers. Do not be afraid of criticism and rough drafts turned in early to me for comments almost ALWAYS make for better papers and better grades if the comments are taken seriously.

I will evaluate your writing according to five areas:

- (1) Focus/Thesis
- (2) Organization & Coherence
- (3) Analysis & Argumentation
- (4) Documentation
- (5) Language Use & Conventions

When I hand out your final paper assignment, I will explain how to do well in each of these areas. You will earn points for each of these areas.

For a great resource on writing (e.g., getting started, style, grammar, organization, citation), please consult www.wisc.edu/writing. Please also consult The Writing Center in McCutchan Hall for excellent hands-on help. Their website is www.uww.edu/acadsupport/tutorial/writing.html.

Please be aware that **plagiarism** is a serious offense. Refraining from plagiarism is easy – simply avoid using someone else's words or ideas as your own. If

you quote or paraphrase a source other than your own mind, please use proper citation. For more information on what is plagiarism, please consult your student handbook.

ON PARTICIPATION

I do not have an attendance policy. Instead, I pay close attention to your participation in class, and I give you a participation grade at the end of the course. Thus, if you do not attend class, you are obviously not participating in class, and that will adversely affect your grade.

ACADEMIC HONESTY

My assumption is that all of you will meet the highest standards of academic integrity. In case I am wrong, students who violate academic honesty will be reported for Academic Misconduct and subject to disciplinary measures up to and including a grade of zero for the assignment, failure of the course, and other sanctions described in UWS Administrative Code Chp. 14.

SPECIAL NEEDS

Students with special needs should contact me promptly so that I can make the appropriate accommodations. For example, students needing additional time for exams should see me immediately. All discussions will be confidential.

**Always Trust What You Read
Without QUESTION**



All Written With YOU In Mind

*Cheerfully provided by all those who know what
is best for everyone, everywhere.*

UNIVERSITY POLICIES

The University of Wisconsin-Whitewater is dedicated to a safe, supportive & nondiscriminatory learning environment. It is the responsibility of all undergraduate and graduate students to familiarize themselves with University policies regarding Special Accommodations, Misconduct, Religious Beliefs Accommodation, discrimination and Absence for University Sponsored Events. (For details please refer to the Undergraduate and Graduate Timetables, the "Rights and Responsibilities" section of the Undergraduate Bulletin; the Academic Requirements and Policies and the Facilities and Services sections of the Graduate Bulletin; and the "Student Academic Disciplinary Procedures" [UWS chapter 14]; and the "Student Nonacademic Disciplinary Procedures" [UWS Chapter 17]).

Sample Reading and Assignment Schedule

All readings are subject to change as we proceed. Due dates for graded assignments will not change. To understand the schedule, each reading and assignment is to be completed by the class time it is assigned.

Dates	Topics	Readings	Assignments
Week 1	What is "the Media?"	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Devereux selections (D2L) 	
Week 2	What is "the Media?" The Frankfurt School on ideology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Devereux selections (D2L) Horkheimer & Adorno (D2L) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Media Diary due
Week 3	The Frankfurt School on ideology Marcuse	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Marcuse, "Introduction"/"The New Forms of Control" (D2L) 	
Week 4	On Media Effects Ideology, Truth, & Objectivity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gauntlett (D2L) No reading 	
Week 5	Defining Bullshit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Frankfurt 	
Week 6	Defining Bullshit More on Bullshit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cohen (B&P) Kimbrough, Douglass (B&P) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rough draft of Newspaper Study due
Week 7	More on Bullshit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evans, Neumann (B&P) 	
Week 8	More on Bullshit The Basic Principles of Logic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Taylor (B&P) McInerney 	
Week 9	Arguments Common Fallacies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> McInerney 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Final draft of Newspaper Study due
Week 10	Common Fallacies Participation Quiz	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> McInerney 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Form small groups for roundtables
Week 11	The Newsroom	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bennett 	
Week 12	The Newsroom	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bennett No reading 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Minor Paper due Videotaping of roundtables
Week 13	FALL OR SPRING BREAK	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No reading 	
Week 14	What is our Responsibility?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bennett Latour (D2L) 	
Week 15	What is our Responsibility? Class Roundtables	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Preti (B&P) No reading 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assessing the arguments of the roundtables
Week 16	Major Paper due		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Major Paper due

Detailed Reading List

(in order of schedule)

- Devereux, E. 2003. *Understanding the media*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Horkeimer, M. and Adorno, T. 1944/1969. The Culture industry: Enlightenment as mass deception. In *Dialectic of enlightenment*, pp. 120-167. New York, NY: Continuum.
- Marcuse, H. 1964/1991. Introduction to the first edition. In *One-dimensional man*. pp. xli-xlix. Boston, MA: Beacon Press.
- Marcuse, H. 1964/1991. The new forms of control. In *One-dimensional man*. pp. 1-18. Boston, MA: Beacon Press.
- Gauntlett, D. 1998. Ten things wrong with the 'media effects' model. In *Approaches to audiences: A reader*. Edited by R. Dickinson, R. Harindranath and O. Linné. London: Arnold.
- Frankfurt, H. 2005. *On bullshit*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Cohen, G. A. 2006. Deeper into bullshit. In *Bullshit and philosophy*, pp. 117-36. Edited by G. Hardcastle and G. Reisch. Chicago, IL: Open Court Publishing Company.
- Kimbrough, 2006. On letting it slide. In *Bullshit and philosophy*, pp. 3-18. Edited by G. Hardcastle and G. Reisch. Chicago, IL: Open Court Publishing Company.
- Douglass, H. 2006. Bullshit at the interface of science and policy: Global warming, toxic substances, and other pesky problems. In *Bullshit and philosophy*, pp. 215-28. Edited by G. Hardcastle and G. Reisch. Chicago, IL: Open Court Publishing Company.
- Evans, M. 2006. The republic of bullshit: On the dumbing-up of democracy. In *Bullshit and philosophy*, pp. 185-202. Edited by G. Hardcastle and G. Reisch. Chicago, IL: Open Court Publishing Company.
- Neumann, V. 2006. Political bullshit and the stoic story of the self. In *Bullshit and philosophy*, pp. 203-14. Edited by G. Hardcastle and G. Reisch. Chicago, IL: Open Court Publishing Company.
- Taylor, K. 2006. Bullshit and the foibles of the human mind, or: What the masters of the dark arts know. In *Bullshit and philosophy*, pp. 49-62. Edited by G. Hardcastle and G. Reisch. Chicago, IL: Open Court Publishing Company.
- McInerney, D. Q. 2005. *Being logical: A guide to good thinking*. New York, NY: Random House.
- Bennett, L. 2008. *News: The politics of illusion*. New York, NY: Longman.
- Latour, B. 2004. Why has critique run out of steam? From matters of fact to matters of concern. *Critical Inquiry* 30, 225-48.
- Preti, C. 2006. A defense of common sense. In *Bullshit and philosophy*, pp. 19-32. Edited by G. Hardcastle and G. Reisch. Chicago, IL: Open Court Publishing Company.