
37:575:300

Writing in Labor Studies & Employment Relations

Rutgers University: Spring 2025 Semester

School of Labor Studies and Employment Relations

This course explores the intersections of news media literacy and op-ed writing, equipping students with the skills to critically analyze and effectively engage with today's news media landscape while also arming them with vital professional writing abilities that will serve them well for any nearly any professional pursuit of their choosing. Students will learn to evaluate credibility by becoming familiar with identifying reputable news media sources, as well as fake news, so as to sharpen their news media literacy.

The course emphasizes ethical practices and encourages thoughtful engagement with diverse perspectives. Students will explore the historical and cultural forces shaping contemporary media while honing their ability to communicate ideas with clarity and persuasive argumentation through class participation and discussion. This class provides a foundation for both understanding media's role in society, including on the labor and employment front, while developing strong, informed voices in public discourse.

Contact / Scheduling Information

Instructor: Dr. Andrew Kennis

Phone: (917) 829-1971 (cell; texts, if desired, preferred via Whatsapp; SMS texts arrive slower)

Email: Dr.Andrew.Kennis@rutgers.edu

Class Hours: Wednesdays via Zoom, from 2:00pm to 5:00pm (EST)

Office Hours: Wednesdays via Zoom from 5:00pm to 6:00pm (EST) or by appointment.

Course Objectives

Through hands-on teaching, students will develop professional writing techniques to craft compelling, well-researched op-ed pieces suitable for potential publication. By the end of the semester, students will have sharpened their critical thinking, enhanced their ability to assess news sources and produced a portfolio of several op-eds that address contemporary issues with clarity and persuasive argumentation. The class is well-suited for aspiring labor, human resources and/or media professionals, or anyone interested in navigating and contributing to an increasingly complex information ecosystem.

Course Materials

There are no textbooks or books required for purchase for this course. All assigned readings and viewings will be posted via Canvas and organized by modules.

Course Requirements:

- **Op-Ed Papers:** The main requirement for this course is to write and submit two research-driven, op-ed papers focusing on a given current event and/or policy issue and two more follow-ups of both of the op-eds. The 1st paper will be at least 1000 words (about 2 single-spaced pages) and will be submitted on a pass / rewrite basis (rewrites will mostly only be required for students who fail to meet the minimum requirements). A final version of the 1st paper will be turned in at a later date for an actual grade and will count for **25%** of your final grade.

The same approach will be taken for the 2nd op-ed paper as well, though it will be at least 1250 words (about, 2.3 single-spaced pages). First, the 2nd op-ed paper will be submitted and evaluated on a pass/rewrite basis. Secondly, a subsequent submission will be undertaken on a graded basis that will aim to improve upon the first submission and will count for **35%** of your final grade. Detailed and additional requirements in regards to both papers will be posted on Canvas. There will be significant support provided by not only the professor for both of these principal assignments but also by our university's writing center and our college's reference librarians.

NOTE: Artificial intelligence will be *permitted* to be used as an *aid* for the second, graded submissions of both op-ed papers but is *strictly* prohibited, for the first round of each op-ed submission. Please see the plagiarism policy, noted on the 5th page of the syllabus.

- **Attendance:** A vital requirement for this course is *attendance* (with active class participation and listening, of equal importance as well) and accounts for **20%** of your final grade (however, see the “freebie” policy below). Students who miss four classes or more, will *not* be able to pass the course unless an alternative arrangement is worked out and approved by me and taken on at the student's initiative as well. Attendance for *every* class counts, including even our first class. Attendance is graded separately than participation even though the two are certainly related.

- **“Freebie” Policy:** As a result of the importance of participation in this course, attendance is made that much more important. There are no “excused” or “unexcused” absences in this class. Instead, if a student manages to limit their absences to two classes or less by the end of the semester, they will *still* earn *full* credit for attendance. Those who have perfect attendance or only miss one class, will earn extra credit toward their final grade. Students who miss more than two classes, however, can hinder their final grade and substantially so if absences eclipse more four classes or more, which would put into peril being able to pass the class.

- **Participation:** Individual participation during class discussions will account for **20%** of the final grade. All students are required to participate, actively listen and substantively contribute to discussion based on the weekly readings and viewings assigned for each and every class throughout the entirety of the semester.

Course Requirements (continued):

- **Quizzes and Exams**: There will be **no** quizzes, exams or homework assignments for this course other than weekly readings and viewing assignments, which will serve as the basis for subsequent class discussion and participation.
- **Weekly Required Readings and Viewings**: Each student is expected to complete *all* of the reading assigned for each class *before* each class begins and should have all readings for the designated class printed out and/or stored digitally, for in-class use and consultation. The extent students participate each class directly relates to what will be their eventual participation grade.
- **Guest Lecturers, Zoom Appearances and Video Clips**: for any given course I teach, I strive to keep my own voice as a limited one. Instead, class discussion, as noted above, is considered a bedrock of the course. In this same spirit, an array of guest speakers appearing live via Zoom and/or through taped clips, are also a staple of this course. Anywhere between two and four (or perhaps even more) guest speakers will be welcomed to our course.
- **Extra Credit**: if a student misses more than three classes in a semester and wishes to make up for their absences, they can arrange to do so by approaching me and potentially gaining my *approval*. Within reasonable limits, no student will be denied the opportunity to do extra work. Extra credit can also be garnered by doing at least a 1000 word analysis of a particular issue relating to the course & agreed upon beforehand with the instructor.
- **Final Grade Distribution**: **Op-Ed Paper #1: 25% || Op-Ed Paper #2: 35% || Participation: 20% || Attendance: 20%**

Thematic Modules: *current planned chronological order of leading themes of weekly assignments but subject to change as a result of our class wide poll.*

I. Political Economy of Leading Mainstream Media and Platform Conglomerates

II. Professional Journalism: Political, Social and Labor Implications of its Demise on Democracy and Society

III. Algorithmic Racism, Sexism and Discrimination

IV. Theoretical & Practical Exploration of Artificial Intelligence

V. Op Ed Writing Instruction

Trajectory of Class Sessions and Course Readings

As for how we will organize the class sessions and the trajectory of the course, it will be done in the following manner and basically in three phases: a reading and viewing assignment phase, where the leading pillars and modules of the course are addressed; a writing instruction phase, where the lessons learned from the first phase of the class are incorporated while popularly suggested and voted upon topics are assigned as well; and a guest speaker phase, whereby leading experts from all over the world will be welcomed to our class while students are simultaneously undertaking, completing and even delivering their writing assignments. Particularly during this last phase, and to a certain degree during the second phase too, the extent of reading and viewing assignments will have decreased markedly, and purposefully, thus affording the time necessary for students to focus on their research and writing preparation responsibilities. At the same time, the reading and viewing assignment load during the first phase and earlier part of the semester, will be more substantial than subsequent parts of the semester.

As a result of this plan, the first class session will be dedicated to introducing each of us to each other and to the course as a whole. It will be the prime opportunity for students to shape and mold the syllabus to quite a meaningful degree. We will discuss topic options and also even eventually undertake a poll so as to directly incorporate student input and related needs into the course itself.

Most of the course will take on at least one sub-theme stemming from the leading modules and pillars of the course noted above and duly based on the priority order given by a class-wide poll. There has been a purposeful limitation to the amount of leading topics planned for the course so as to give us a cushion to interject several class lessons based on topics that will again, be voted upon and decided by the class as a whole.

Especially by the time first open topics are decided upon and approved, course readings will have already shifted from more theoretical and scholarly-oriented reading assignments to more current event and topic-oriented readings (i.e. the readings will be plenty *easier* to digest). Finally, the last third part of the semester will exclusively feature both guest speakers and writing submissions.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

While I encourage students to work together to understand theories and concepts, all presentation work must be your own unless arranged with prior approval by me to be a co-presenter and/or group effort. If you cite an author or use his/her ideas, please cite properly.

A plagiarized presentation or evidence of cheating will result in a failing grade for both the assignment and the course itself. Moreover, plagiarism may result in disciplinary action by the university.

DISABILITY STATEMENT

In order to receive consideration for reasonable accommodations, a student with a disability must contact the [New Brunswick Office of Disability Services](#), participate in an intake interview, and provide documentation related to your disability.

To begin this process, please complete the [registration form on the ODS web site](#).

If your request for reasonable accommodations is (hopefully!) approved, your campus's disability services office will provide you with a Letter of Accommodations. Please share this letter and discuss any accommodations you may need with me as early (!) in the semester as possible.

RUTGERS TECH SUPPORT

Helpdesk: [Rutgers Office of Information and Technology](#)

Phone: 833-648-4357 (833-OIT-HELP)

Email: help@oit.rutgers.edu