San José State University
School of Journalism & Mass Communications
Jour 50, Navigating the News, Section 1, Fall 2026

Course and contact Information

Instructor: Richard Craig

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Office Hours: Wednesday 3:00-6:00 p.m., and by appointment

Class Days/Time: Monday-Wednesday 10:30 - 11:45 a.m.

Classroom: DBH133

Faculty Web Page

Course materials such as syllabus, handouts, notes, assignment instructions, etc. can be found on my faculty web page at http://www.profcraig.com. You are responsible for regularly attending class and checking your email to learn any updates.

Syllabus Supplement

You are required to read all information on this syllabus and on the syllabus supplement, which lists policies that apply to all my classes. It is available on the class home page and on the Web at http://www.profcraig.com/syllsup.html.

Course Description

Introduction to different forms of news media we consume to become informed and engaged citizens, and how media shape our world. Development of skills to critically evaluate the credibility of news sources, distinguish between real and fake news, and examine contemporary news events and news media coverage in cultural, historical, environmental, and spatial contexts. This class is for students who aspire to be informed citizens and want to understand how media shape the world around them. Students will learn how different kinds of media work to make them better and smarter news consumers.

Learning Objectives

GE Learning Outcomes (GELO) for Area D1

Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

GELO 1: Students will be able to place contemporary developments in cultural, historical, environmental, and spatial contexts.

GELO 2: Students will be able to identify the dynamics of ethnic, cultural, gender/sexual, age based, class, regional, national, transnational, and global identities and the similarities, differences, linkages, and interactions between them.

GELO 3: Students will be able to evaluate social science information, draw on different points of view, and formulate applications appropriate to contemporary social issues.

GELO 4: Students will be able to recognize the interaction of social institutions, culture, and environment with the behavior of individuals.

Course Learning Outcomes (CLO)
Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

1. Identify various categories of news including breaking news, features, investigations, and opinion/editorials.

2. Demonstrate the ability to think critically about news sources they find on the Internet. Parse between real and fake news.

3. Demonstrate knowledge of important news stories covered by local, national and international news agencies, as well as the diversity dynamics that impact those stories, and the people who read them and are impacted by them. Students will be able to identify the dynamics of ethnic, cultural, gender/sexual, age based, class, regional, national, transnational, and global identities and the similarities, differences, linkages, and interactions between them. (GELO 2)

4. Apply appropriate journalistic standards in the evaluation of the full spectrum of content in newspapers, magazines, broadcast media, the internet, and social media. Demonstrate ability to examine contemporary news events and news media coverage in cultural, historical, environmental, and spatial contexts. (GELO 1)

5. Demonstrate knowledge of various newsgathering practices. Students will be able to evaluate social science information in various news media, and assess how or whether they draw on different points of view. Students will offer critiques to improve news reporting appropriate to contemporary media practices and social issues. (GELO 3)

6. Demonstrate understanding of media issues, audiences, journalism standards and practices as they apply to your role as a citizen. Students will critique multidisciplinary news and source material of topics relevant to policy and social action at the local, national, and/or international levels. (GELO 4).

ACEJMC Professional Values and Competencies

The SJSU Journalism Department is accredited by the Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communications (ACEJMC). The Department strives to have all of our major-required courses help students meet the ACEJMC's 12 Professional Values and Competencies, which are described here under **Professional Values and Competencies**: http://www.acejmc.org/policies-process/principles/

Library Liaison

The School of Journalism and Mass Communications' library liaison is Estella Inda. She will be available to help you with any research tasks or other questions about gathering information for stories. Estella can be reached via email at estella.inda@sjsu.edu.

Required Texts/Readings

Navigating the News: A Guide to Understanding Journalism; edited by Richard Craig
The book discusses several aspects of understanding, creating and analyzing news coverage. More than 50 professional journalists share insights on how they gather, edit and report news, and discuss what critical audiences should expect from their news coverage.
The textbook will be supplemented by readings on the class Web page. Please get in the habit of regularly checking for new readings.

Textbook is available from the Spartan Bookstore and numerous online outlets. Other required online readings will be posted on the class home page throughout the semester. You will receive advance notice for all additional readings.

Assignments and Grading Policy

Structure:
Regular class participation in discussions is required, as are readings from the text and assorted handouts and/or assigned online articles, four quizzes (the top three grades will count), and two exams. If you must miss a class, please be sure to contact me beforehand and arrange to get notes from a classmate. Regular class attendance and showing up on time are vital – repeated unexcused absences and/or lateness will be noted and hurt your participation grade.

Grading:
- **In-class exercises: 10 percent**
- **In-class quizzes (3 of 4): 25 percent**
- **Midterm exam: 25 percent**
- **Final exam: 25 percent**
- **Class discussion/participation: 15 percent**

Quizzes:
There will be four in-class quizzes throughout the semester, as shown in the schedule. They will be held at the beginning of class meetings, so you will need to show up on time. There are no provisions for makeups, so be sure to set the quiz and exam dates aside in your schedule.
The quizzes will be simple and straightforward, in multiple-choice format, and will test your general understanding of readings (if you read the chapters and come to class, you should sail through them). Quizzes will not take up an entire class period – roughly the first 10 minutes – so there will be a shortened class

discussion afterwards. **Only your three highest quiz grades will** count – if you do poorly on one quiz or need to skip one for personal reasons, you'll still be all right.

Exams: Exams will be more detailed than quizzes in terms of reading and lecture content (a combination of multiple choice and short answer). The second exam is noncomprehensive (i.e. covers only material from after the midterm).

Written work: You may not use AI to write any part of any written assignment. Any violation of this will result in failing the course. This is not a writing class, so any written work you turn in will not be held to the highest standards for grammar, style, etc., but you are expected to do your own work.

The midterm will be held Wednesday, October 14 and the final will be given Monday, December 7. Both exams will be held in the usual classroom at the usual class time. Please keep your schedule clear for these – the exams will **only** be in person and given during these times. I will publish a study guide a week or so before each exam and allow some in-class time for questions.

See syllabus supplement for information on attendance, deadlines, academic honesty and other issues not covered here.

Diversity and Controversial Issues

Throughout the semester, we will discuss matters relating to differences in race, culture, social class, sexuality and many other issues. In the beginning, this may seem uncomfortable, but my goal is to create an environment where we can talk about such matters thoughtfully, frankly and with respect and empathy.

Likewise, we will deal with matters involving social standards of what is deemed acceptable and unacceptable by media audiences and society in general. The objective is to enlighten, not offend, but we will talk about why certain types of content might upset certain audiences and not others. The aim is to create an atmosphere of respectful discussion, where all can express their opinions. The class works best when we all feel free to contribute.

University Policies

Per University Policy S16-9, university-wide policy information relevant to all courses, such as academic integrity, accommodations, etc. will be available on Office of Graduate and Undergraduate Programs' Syllabus Information web page at http://www.sjsu.edu/gup/syllabusinfo/.

JOUR50: Navigating the News, Fall 2026 Course Schedule

Schedule is subject to change; students will be notified of any changes via email. ***Readings are in italics.***

Week	Dates	Topics, Readings, Assignments, Deadlines
1	Aug. 24-26	Defining news: What it is, and what it isn't Making news: What reporters and editors do *Craig, Introduction, Chapter 1*
2	Aug. 31- Sept. 2	Ethics and the complexity of doing journalism well *Craig, Chapter 1, continued*
3	Sept. 7-9	**MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 7: LABOR DAY – NO CLASS** Ethics, continued; Concepts for assessing news *Craig, Chapters 1-2*
4	Sept. 14-16	**MONDAY, SEPT. 14: QUIZ #1 (covers Craig Intro, Ch. 1)** Journalism as part of a community *Craig, Chapters 2-5*
5	Sept. 21-23	Journalism and communities, continued *Craig, Chapters 3-5*
6	Sept. 28-30	The relationship between journalists and audiences *Craig, Chapters 3-5, continued* **WEDNESDAY, SEPT. 30: QUIZ #2 (covers Craig Ch. 2-5)**
7	Oct. 5-7	Journalism and institutions *Craig, Chapters 6-7*
8	Oct. 12-14	Pressures and responsibilities *Craig, Chapters 6-7, continued* **WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 14: MIDTERM EXAM**
9	Oct. 19-21	Popular diversions *(Craig, Chapters 8-9)*
10	Oct. 26-28	Reporting on the environment Science: Complexities and controversies *Craig, Chapter 10-11*
11	Nov. 2-4	**MONDAY, NOVEMBER 2: QUIZ #3 (covers Craig Ch. 8-11)** Investigative Reporting *Craig, Chapter 12*
12	Nov. 9-11	**WEDNESDAY, NOV. 11: VETERANS DAY – NO CLASS** Investigative Reporting, continued *Craig, Chapter 12*
13	Nov. 16-18	News from other parts of the world *Craig, Chapters 13-17*
14	Nov. 23-25	**MONDAY, NOV. 23: QUIZ #4 (covers Craig Ch. 12-17)** International news coverage, continued *(Craig, Chapter 17)* **WEDNESDAY, NOV. 25: NO CLASS**
15	Nov. 30- Dec. 2	Applying news assessment skills *(Craig, Chapter 18)* Review for final exam
Final Exam	Dec. 7	10:30-11:45 a.m. in regular classroom.