



**Boston University British Programmes  
COM JO 358  
British Journalism, Culture and Society  
Core Class  
Alexander MacLeod**

### **Course Objectives and Overview**

This course offers Journalism students an introduction to the British information milieu they will encounter in their internships, and in pursuit of careers in a field that is increasingly global in scope.

**Element One** of the course will be an intensive study of British media in the context of the political, cultural and social life of the United Kingdom. Attention is paid to the character and state of the newspaper and broadcasting industries. An adequate amount of reading of set texts is required. Issues addressed will include freedom of the press, and ownership patterns of the media industry. There will be emphasis on the extent to which British media reflect and influence the audiences they serve.

As well as assessing how well the British media inform the audience, we shall seek to determine whether British print and electronic journalism enhances the lives of readers and viewers.

Attention will be paid to the European political, economic and social setting within which Britain operates as a nation, as well as to Britain's relationship to the international "information super highway". **For the most part, Element One will be covered in the Wednesday and Thursday sessions, as per timetable.**

**Element Two** of the course will be a close-focus "hands-on" study addressing the question: **Is the Internet a truly new phenomenon or just a novel means of communication?** It will consist of a sustained and detailed examination of the issues thrown up by the Internet and the extent to which it is displacing other forms of news access and global communication.

Element Two will be covered partly in the Wednesday and Thursday sessions, and partly out-of-class time.

### **Required Readings**

Please purchase and read:

A Marr	My Trade
B McNair	News and Journalism in the UK (4 <sup>th</sup> Ed)

### **Additional Reading**

Students will be issued with a reading list consisting of compulsory texts and recommended texts. Nobody can expect to achieve a good result in the course if he/she fails to do necessary reading.

Students will be required to take a lively interest in news developments in the UK.

**PLEASE NOTE:** Reading of British daily and Sunday newspapers is a non-negotiable element of this course, as is regular accessing the Internet. Each week of the course, students will be required to purchase one daily newspaper and one Sunday newspaper, and be prepared to answer questions about them during classes. In addition newspapers will be available on class days, and students are strongly advised to read newspapers available each day in the ground floor foyer area at 43 Harrington Gardens.

**PLEASE NOTE ALSO:** Students will be required to view a range of British television programmes, with some – but not exclusive – emphasis on news and current affairs programmes. They must be prepared, during classes, to answer questions about their viewing.

Failure to read reasonably widely in British newspapers and magazines, to access the Internet on a regular basis, and to view British TV programmes will be a cause for demerits. Any student who does not have access to a working TV set or Internet-accessible computer must report this to me immediately.

Obviously, students must also take full account of how life is led in the UK. To do this effectively, they should try to reach out as much as possible to the wider community in which they are temporarily living and learn as much as possible about lifestyles, living conditions and social distinctions. In other words: **Keep your eyes and ears open!**

You have the distinct privilege of visiting a country different in many respects from your own. Take advantage of that privilege and be on the lookout for comparisons!

### **Assessment Methods and Grading Criteria**

There will be a compulsory final examination. It will consist of questions relating to Elements One and Two.

There will be a compulsory written assignment of 2000 words, on a topic closely related to the compulsory reading. Deadline for the assignment will be about 10 days before the Final Examination.

Particular attention will be paid to class attendance (including punctuality) and participation; roll calls will be routine. A reasonable standard of dress must be maintained at all times. Eating or drinking during class will not be permitted.

In addition to the main essay assignment and the Final Examination mentioned above, students will be required to complete up to two in-class tests.

**Overall marking:** **1/3rd** class participation, including class tests; **1/3rd** major written assignment; **1/3rd** final examination.

Grading is in accordance with the Boston University classification scheme as follows:

<b>Grade</b>	<b>Honour Points</b>	<b>Usual %</b>	<b>Definition</b>
A	4.0	93-100	Excellent
A-	3.7	89-92	
B+	3.3	85-88	
B	3.0	81-84	Good
B-	2.7	77-80	
C+	2.3	73-76	
C	2.0	69-72	Satisfactory
C-	1.7	65-68	
D	1.0	60-64	Low pass
F	0.0	Below 60	Fail

**“Incomplete”** or **I** grades are not permitted to be issued by faculty, because of the obvious difficulty in making up missed work once the student has left the country. All work must be completed on time. The grades reflect the quality of the work.

It is also important to realise that grades below C may not be transferable to non BU students' home institutions. Lecturers and students should use the following criteria for an understanding of what each grade means.

**“Withdrawn”** The Boston University Provost has announced that faculty members may no longer assign grades of "W" (Withdrawn). In supporting this policy, the Registrar's Office will no longer assign W grades on individual students' official Boston University records, even if the grade sheet has a "W" recorded for a student. Alternative grades to "W" are "F" (Failing) or "MG" (Missing Grade).

### **GRADING CRITERIA**

**A** This exceptional grade is assigned only to work that has persistently outstanding quality in both substance and presentation. The student must demonstrate a sustained capacity for independent thought and extensive study, producing rigorous and convincing analyses in well-ordered prose.

**A-** Awarded to work that is clearly focused and analytical, and based on wide reading. The student must cover all the principal points of a question and systematically develop a persuasive overall thesis, allowing for one or two venial omissions or inapt expressions.

**B+, B, B-** This range of grades indicates that the student has shown some evidence of original thought and intellectual initiative. The student has cited sources beyond the class materials, and shown a degree of originality in perception and/or approach to the subject. The work will show thoughtful management of material, and a good grasp of the issues. The differences between a B+, a straight B and a B- may reflect poor presentation of the material, or mistakes in punctuation, spelling and grammar.

**C+, C, C-** Work in this grade range is satisfactory, but uninspiring. If the work is simply a recitation of the class materials or discussions, and shows no sign of genuine intellectual engagement with the issues, it cannot deserve a higher grade. Should an essay fail to provide a clear answer to the question as set, or argue a position coherently, the grade will fall within this range. Quality of presentation can lift such work into the upper levels of this grade range. Work

of this quality which is poorly presented, and riddled with errors in grammar, spelling and punctuation, will fall into the lower end of the range. To earn a C grade, the work must demonstrate that the student is familiar with the primary course material, be written well enough to be readily understood, be relevant to the assignment, and, of course, be the student's own work except where properly cited.

**D** A marginal pass can be given where some but not all the elements of the course have been completed satisfactorily.

**F** The failing grade indicates the work is seriously flawed in one or more ways:

- \*Obvious lack of familiarity with the material
- \*So poorly written as to defy understanding
- \*So brief and insubstantial that it fails to properly address the subject
- \*Material presented is not relevant to the assignment
- \*Demonstrates evidence of plagiarism

**Plagiarism is expressly forbidden and, if discovered, will be punished severely. Random checks on this issue will be made. Please read carefully the official BU rules below**

In every case, when assigned written work, students must retain a hard copy of their paper in addition to submitting the paper for marking. If by special arrangement it is agreed that you may e-mail material for marking to me or Academic Affairs, it is mandatory that you retain a hard copy of what is sent.

Boston University's Code of Student Responsibilities states: *All students are responsible for having read the Boston University statement on plagiarism, which is available in the Academic Conduct Code. Students are advised that the penalty against students on a Boston University program for cheating on examinations or for plagiarism may be expulsion from the program or the University or such other penalty as may be recommended by the Committee on Student Academic Conduct, subject to approval by the dean."*

*The value of any grade, credit, honour or degree received by a student presupposes that all work submitted by a student is his or her own. A student who uses or relies upon the work of others or who, except under conditions expressly permitted by the instructor, furnishes assistance to another student, violates the standards of the University. Students must insist upon academic honesty and integrity from their fellow students and must report promptly any case of alleged violation of academic conduct. Failure to do so is a violation of this code.*

Plagiarism can take many forms, including the reproduction of published material without acknowledgement, or representing work done by others as your own. This includes the increasingly common practice of purchasing and downloading work from Internet "paper mills." Students should be extremely careful when submitting work for this course that all work is correctly sourced. Print-outs of web sites that have been used in research may be required by the lecturer in cases of a grade dispute and all web site based reference material should be kept by the student until after the end of the semester.

**DRAFT TIMETABLE:**

Class 1	Course introduction: Why journalism studies? Britain: culture and society
Class 2	Newspapers Galore! Class workshop
Class 3	The Internet: New or just Novel? Class workshop
Class 4	Public Broadcasting in the UK Class test
Class 5	The Internet: Pluses and Minuses
Class 6	British newspapers today Class test
Class 7	Press Complaints Commission: Field Trip
Class 8	Charles, the Crown & Camilla Video session
Class 9	Course Revision

Final Examination (take home) see the exam website for updates.

**Terms and Conditions**

Anyone who for legitimate reasons cannot attend a class or will be late attending must give advance notice of his/her projected absence. This can be done either by advising a senior member of staff, with a request that the information be passed on to me; or by **e-mailing**. **Leaving it to another class member to convey messages will not be acceptable**. Appointments for interviews for internships must not be allowed to clash with attendance at classes. If there appears to be a possibility of a clash, raise the issue with me at the earliest possible moment.

Any student who is unable to attend a class, or to take part in an assignment, because of religious reasons, must give notice of the fact in advance. He/she will be required to make up for time lost.

Guest lecturers will be invited to explore with the class some of the themes mentioned in this statement. Video presentations will be included in class work, **but these will not substitute for regular out-of-class viewing of and listening to British TV and Radio**.

It cannot be stressed too strongly that to make this course effective, all class members must be prepared to adopt a lively, proactive approach throughout. This includes positive and creative participation in class discussions. Shrinking violets will be at a distinct disadvantage!

**NOTE:** In all of the above, the words "compulsory", "mandatory", "required" and "must" mean **exactly what they say**.

Good luck!

ALEXANDER MacLEOD