

COM 396
Citizen Journalism and Deliberation
Fall 2010 Thu 5:30-8:00 E301

Instructor: Seong-Jae (SJ) Min, Ph.D
Email: smin@pace.edu
Phone: 212-346-1867

Office: 41 Park Row, Room 503
Office Hours: T/R 3:00-5:30
or by appointment

COURSE DESCRIPTION AND OBJECTIVES

Students in this course will engage in the participatory "citizen journalism" and group deliberation of important social issues facing their communities. Citizen journalism is a new journalistic movement where the public play an active role in the process of collecting, reporting, analyzing, and disseminating news; deliberation refers to informed citizen discussion of public issues. When citizen journalism and deliberation are combined, it creates a powerful civic engagement tool for ordinary citizens. As a civic engagement practice, students in the class will assume several key roles, including citizen journalist, forum moderator, and discussant. After learning new theoretical developments in journalism and democracy, students will engage in news writing and reporting of controversial, yet vital, issues facing their local communities and school. The stories will be disseminated to the class and the communities through the Internet. Each student will then lead a forum on the issue he or she covered, while other students will join the forum as discussants. Through deliberation, students will analyze civic issues from multiple perspectives and attempt to make informed decisions. It is expected that students will not only develop writing and analytical skills, but also enhance their critical thinking and discussion abilities. Most of all, students will experience deliberative and participatory democracy firsthand: They will study and report important community issues and attempt to deliberate about the nature of the choices they face as citizens.

TEXTBOOKS / COURSE WEBSITE

Course reading packet

This is a compilation of various articles and readings, which will be available from the instructor for free or a small fee. Some other readings may be posted at Pace's blackboard webpage.

Course website

The course will make an extensive use of the class website at, <http://pacejournalism.com>. Beyond displaying basic information about the course, this website will serve as the class's news blog. Each student is expected to post his/her issue reports, and make comments on others' reports. To make a full use of this site, you will need to have an account at <http://wordpress.com>.

Student blog

Blogging is a great tool to exercise citizen journalism and thus students in this class should have their own blog. There are many useful free blogging sites listed at the resources section of this syllabus. However, a Word Press account at <http://wordpress.com> is recommended. You can create your own blog there and link it to the course website (<http://pacejournalism.com>).

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

The course will be conducted in a discussion and active learning format. Students who attend regularly and make contributions to class room discussions will get maximum benefit of the course and perform well. This means students will need to come to the class, stay for the entire period, and be prepared for it by reading the assigned materials in advance. Furthermore, as a part of active learning practice, students are expected to write regular issue reports and discuss the stories with fellow students through online and classroom discussion. Below are the specific requirements for the course:

Issue reports (30%)

In September and October, students will write at least 3 stories on a civic issue of their choice. The stories can be a timely news report, opinion commentary, or combination of both. The issue topic should be approved by the instructor. Students will follow the issue over the semester, analyze it from multiple perspectives, and post stories on the class's news blog.

A good issue should be of civic importance, relevant to the students' communities and school, and multifaceted enough to generate discussion. Sample issues include, race relations, alcohol policies, water conservation, gun control, measures against terrorism, cheating in class, hate speech, campus safety measures, etc.

Issue reports will be evaluated for their relevance to the civic life, timeliness, and analytic and writing quality.

Participation to online discussion (10%)

Students are expected to read their colleagues' issue reports on the news blog and to engage in discussion. You can do so by posting online comments to others' stories on the blog. To satisfy this requirement, students have to post at least one thoughtful comment for one issue reported.

Participation to discussion and deliberation (40%)

The course is a seminar format, which requires lots of classroom discussion. In the first half of the course, you will participate in classroom seminars exploring the nature of journalism and democracy in today's society. In the second half, you will participate in deliberations of the civic issues reported during class to make informed decisions. On both occasions, you will be evaluated on your participation in debate and ability to intelligently discuss the assigned readings. You are expected to come every week and participate fully in the seminar by both asking questions and answering them. While a reasonable quantity of verbal participation is a necessary condition for a positive evaluation, it is not sufficient. The quality of questions and answers will be considered when evaluating student participation, and quality will be judged by how informed the questions are by the assigned readings and quality thinking.

Forum presentation and moderation (20%)

For the deliberations taking place in the second half of the course (in November), each student will preside over the issue he or she reported. The moderator's job is to engage the class in an active discussion. Because of the student's news writing and reporting of the issue assigned, the deliberation moderator is expected to know his or her issues in greater depth than the rest of the class. The deliberation moderator will briefly present the issue at hand and moderate the discussion. The goals of moderation are to maintain a fair and balanced discussion, to provide equal participation

opportunities, and to foster a sense of mutual respect among discussants. The moderators will be evaluated based on how much they meet such goals.

Grading Scheme

There is no exam in this course. Grading will primarily be based on the instructor's qualitative evaluations. Below are some descriptions of the grading criteria.

A / A-	Complete or virtual complete attendance / Very active discussion / 3 or more high quality reports / fair and balanced moderation
B+ / B / B-	Good attendance (may miss 1~2 class) / active discussion / 3 or more quality reports, satisfactory moderation
C+ / C / C-	Fair attendance (may miss up to 3) / some discussion / less than 3 reports / not satisfactory moderation
D+ / D	4 or more missing classes / no meaningful discussion / less than 3, not satisfactory reports / not satisfactory moderation
F	5 or more missing classes / no meaningful discussion / no news reports / no moderation

RESOURCES

Here are some online references that you might find helpful over the course of the term.

On a new Journalism

Knight Citizen News Network, <http://www.kcnn.org/>
Jay Rosen's Public Notebook, <http://jayrosen.posterous.com/>
Poynter Institute, <http://www.poynter.org/>
Center for Future Civic Media, <http://civic.mit.edu/>
Pew Research Center for the People and the Press, <http://people-press.org>
Knight Foundation, <http://www.knightfoundation.org/home/>
Pressthink, <http://journalism.nyu.edu/pubzone/weblogs/pressthink/>

On Dialogue and Deliberation

National Issues Forum, <http://www.nifi.org>
By the people, PBS, <http://www.pbs.org/newshour/btp/>
Everyday Democracy, <http://www.everyday-democracy.org>
Kettering Foundation, <http://www.kettering.org>
AmericaSpeaks, <http://www.americaspeaks.org>
Center for Deliberative Democracy, Stanford University, <http://cdd.stanford.edu>
Public Conversations Project, <http://publicconversations.org/>

Blogging Sites

The class will use a specialized blogging platform. However, below are some recommended blogging tools for general purposes.

For advanced blogging features, try Wordpress.com or Wordpress.org

For easy blogging, try Posterous, Tumblr, or Blogger

CLASS POLICIES

- You are expected to do the assigned readings before class.
- The main format of the course is seminar. As such, active discussion of students is expected throughout the course.
- Plagiarism of any kind on exams, written, or oral assignments will not be tolerated. If you are caught plagiarizing you will be prosecuted through appropriate university channels. No excuses, including ignorance, will be accepted for plagiarism. If you are not certain about what constitutes plagiarism, see the instructor or consult university guidelines.

ACCOMODATIONS FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

The University's commitment to equal educational opportunities for students with disabilities includes providing reasonable accommodations for the needs of students with disabilities. To request an accommodation for a qualifying disability, a student must self-identify and register with the Coordinator of Disability Services for his or her campus. No one, including faculty, is authorized to evaluate the need and arrange for an accommodation except the Coordinator of Disability Services. For further information, please see Information for Students with Disabilities on the University's web site.

CLASS SCHEDULE AND READINGS

Class schedule is subject to change.

Session 1 (Sep. 16) Course Introduction

Introduction to Citizen Journalism and Deliberation

Readings: n/a

Session 2 (Sep. 23) Reconceptualizing Democracy

Read:

- Robert Putnam (2000). *Bowling Alone*, Ch. 2, pp. 31~47
- Nick Longo & Ross Meyer (2006). *College Students and Politics: A Literature Review*, pp. 4~14

Think:

- Has political participation in America decreased over the years? If so, what are the reasons?
- What are the major problems of democracy today?
- What does it mean by democracy? How would you define democracy?

Session 3 (Sep. 30) Journalism at a Crossroad

Read:

- Robert McChesney & John Nichols (2010). *The Death and Life of American Journalism*, Ch. 1, pp. 7~43
- Ron Miller (2005). "Journalism Returns to Its (Grass) Roots" *EContent Magazine*, June 2005
- Chris Hogg (2009). "Is there Credibility in Citizen Journalism?" *Digital Journal*, May 2009

Think:

- What are the major problems of professional journalism today?
- What does it mean by “citizen,” “participatory,” or “grassroots” journalism? What are the core ideas behind this movement?
- What are the pros and cons of citizen journalism? Do you think it is sustainable?

Session 4 (Oct. 7) New Technologies, New Initiatives

Read:

- Dan Gillmor (2006), *We the Media: Grassroots Journalism, by the People, for the People*, Ch. 2, pp. 23~31
- Andrew Sullivan (2008), *Why I Blog* from *The Atlantic Magazine*, November, 2008
- Study citizen journalism websites – (list will be provided by the instructor)

Think:

- What is the role of technology in journalism?
- What are the implications of blogging for journalism?
- What are the examples of new journalism initiatives driven by new technology?

Session 5 (Oct. 14) The Wisdom of the Crowd

Read:

- Cass Sunstein (2006), *Infotopia*, Ch. 5. pp. 147~164
- James Surowiecki (2005), *The Wisdom of Crowds*, Ch. 1
- James Fishkin (2007), *Deliberative Polling: Distilling the Crowd’s Wisdom*

Think:

- Why are such websites as Wikipedia so successful?
- Are people competent? Can the public make better judgments in politics than experts?
- What is “deliberative poll”? How does it work?

Session 6 (Oct. 21) Deliberation and Deliberative Democracy

Read:

- John Gastil (2008) *Political Communication and Deliberation*, Ch. 1, pp.3~10
- National Issues Forums (2003) *Making Choices Together*, pp. 1~24
- John Hibbing & Elizabeth Theiss-Morse, *Stealth Democracy*, Ch. 8, pp. 183~196

Think:

- What is public deliberation? Why is deliberation necessary for democracy?
- What is the difference between deliberation and debate?
- What are the promises and perils of deliberation?

Session 7 (Oct. 28) Practicing Deliberation

Read:

- J. Michael Hogan, Patricia Andrews, James Andrews, & Glen Williams (2008). *Public Speaking and Civic Engagement*, Ch. 18, pp. 479~494
- Study Circle Resource Center (1998). *A Guide for Training Study Circle Facilitators*, pp. 23~31

Think:

- How can we make deliberation work better?
- What are the roles of a moderator/facilitator of a deliberative forum?
- How would you organize and moderate a deliberative forum?

Session 8 (Nov. 4) Issue Deliberation 1

Session 9 (Nov. 11) Issue Deliberation 2

Session 10 (Nov. 18) Issue Deliberation 3

Session 11 (Nov. 25) **Thanksgiving Holiday. No Class**

Session 12 (Dec. 2) Issue Deliberation 4

Session 13 (Dec. 9) Class Summary / Reflection Session