

# COURSE SYLLABUS



## REPORTING IN TIMES OF CONFLICT

**Course code: JRN 353**  
**Semester and year: May-June 2021**  
**Day and time: Mondays/Thursdays,**  
**17:00-20:45**

Lecturer: Nenad Pejic  
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Office hours: Before class, anytime by email,  
text, What's App; phone call by arrangement

<b>Semester Credits</b>	3	<b>Language of Instruction</b>	English
<b>ECTS</b>	6	<b>Level</b>	Intermediate
<b>Length</b>	3 weeks	<b>Pre-requisites</b>	None
<b>Contact hours</b>	42 hours	<b>Course type</b>	JC Required, HSC, PS Elective

### 1. Course Description

Take the globe in your hands; mark the armed conflicts that are going on. You will find yourself marking the Middle East (Egypt, Iran), Asia (Afghanistan, Myanmar, Pakistan), Europe (Ukraine, Russia), Africa, (Libya, Sudan, Syria). Then add to that list frozen conflicts such as Moldova, Georgia, the Balkans, North and South Korea, etc. None of these conflicts, wars, could be possible without media support. And, when you see the globe marked with ongoing and frozen conflicts do you wonder why you feel so gloomy - even at a time when humanity has never been this healthy and prosperous? Could it be because news is almost always grim, focusing on confrontation, disaster, antagonism and blame? What is the journalist's task? To promote heroes, hope, pioneers, best practice etc.? Or, to promote conflict and stay behind the state? To follow "national interests"? Humans like reading about disasters, divorces, crime...etc. So we have conflict. If I want to sell my content to the audience I need to give them what they like. If I give them what they like I create gloomy world!

Media live in reality, of course, and their role is crucial. Are we pessimistic despite the fact that more people die today from eating too much than from eating too little; more people die from old age than from infectious diseases?

All the data says media freedom is in decline, and media manipulation is on the rise. Many countries guarantee free speech. United States has it written in the Constitution, however, does that gives a guarantee that you can say or write

anything? Can journalists be innocent when covering a conflict? What rules are there to follow? How does media contribute to a monologue and to a dialogue?

## 2. Student Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of this course students will have a clear understanding of and practical experience in:

- Understanding and using the broad ethical principles, which drive all professional media, particularly journalism in all its forms.
- There are around 400 codes of ethics in the world. Students will become familiar with the key principles of reporting.
- Understanding the importance of storytelling in communication and advertising as well as journalism.
- Understanding the consequence and difference between truth, fact, and opinion - and how and when to use it in reporting.
- Identifying misinformation as practice of forging conflict and crisis, defining methodology for recognizing fake news, recognizing misuse of videos
- Using critical thinking to recognize how social media can amplify the harmful effects of misinformation and distortion.
- Using critical thinking to understand differences between media role in promoting dialogue or monologue.

## 3. Required Reading Material:

### Required Material:

- RTDNA (Radio Television Digital News Association) Code of Ethic, <https://www.rtdna.org/>
- SPJ (Society of Professional Journalists), <https://www.spj.org/ethicscode.asp>
- Reuters Hand Book on Journalism, [http://handbook.reuters.com/index.php?title=Standards\\_and\\_Values](http://handbook.reuters.com/index.php?title=Standards_and_Values)
- BBC editorial guideline, <https://www.bbc.com/editorialguidelines/guidelines>
- Nenad Pejic, Reporting in times of conflict and crisis, we cannot plead innocence, [https://www.academia.edu/44112718/JOURNALISM\\_IN\\_TIME\\_OF\\_CRISIS\\_AND\\_CONFLICT\\_WE\\_CANNOT\\_PLEAD\\_INNOCENCE](https://www.academia.edu/44112718/JOURNALISM_IN_TIME_OF_CRISIS_AND_CONFLICT_WE_CANNOT_PLEAD_INNOCENCE) (available as PDF file as well)

### Recommended Material:

- At each lecture, students will be recommended to read an article related to the respective topic, especially related to the case studies.

## 4. Teaching methodology

Lectures, discussions and presentations are crucial. Having in mind the pandemic and high probability that the course will be online the students' participation will be challenging. Each class will start with a summary of the previous class, followed by new cases students recognized based on their own research or recommended articles

to read. The case studies will be regular. In addition, the students will be solving ethical dilemmas in reporting.

Students will, occasionally, be divided in groups and asked to make a presentation on the topic addressed. They will be given examples from the media or have the freedom to choose their own topic.

For the midterm, students will write an essay (2000 words maximum) and will be given reporting dilemmas.

The final exam will address the key issues that were discussed. The students will be asked to write up a case study (4500 words maximum), have a quiz and task in solving reporting dilemmas.

## 5. Course schedule

Date	Class Agenda
<b>Day 1 May 31</b>	An introduction to the course, aim, structure, and the participation expected from students. Why is this so important? What the role journalism/media play and what are the consequences? Do journalists have a greater duty beyond objectivity; What drives news – facts or interests? Journalist – can they be more than a reporter; Journalism cannot plead innocence. Basic principles of reporting during conflicts, not necessarily only wars. When do irrelevant facts become main facts?
<b>Day 2 June 1</b>	Ethics in journalism. Is worldwide authority needed? What if there is no worldwide authority? What about regional or local authorities? Triangle between the news, context and culture. When do differences in reporting occur in this triangle? How the lack of ethics contributes to the conflict? Politicizing immigration.  Case study: Immigration, media and Brexit
<b>Day 3 June 2</b>	No conflict starts from nowhere. Is a conflict possible without media? Politicizing pandemic. How to survive crises before the conflict? What principles to follow and guidelines to know? Why does “royal plural” in journalism forge the conflict? How can live interviews be misused?
<b>Day 4 June 3</b>	Business interests and conflict. What methods media use when generating conflict? Misuse of religion. How emotions have been used to generate conflict? Your only chance is your audience. Trust, media, conflict and consequences. Building stereotypes as a conflict tool.  Case study: Astra Zeneca vaccine case
<b>Day 5 June 7</b>	How to get ready for the conflict? The role of map, expertise, specialists. Facts vs. judging the facts, who reports and who guesses which is which? What expressions to use and which are unacceptable? Humiliating others is more a system than coincidence. Communicate rather in written than spoken form.
<b>Day 6 June 8</b>	What is the meaning of the term in basic journalistic principles to have “two independent sources” for the story and why? Online war; Spinning as a practice; From objective reporting to engaging journalism. What is fairness doctrine and why was it was discontinued? Midterm review.  Case study: Five biggest failures of Social media in 2020
<b>Day 7 June 11</b>	<b>Mid-term in-class</b>

<b>Day 8 June 14</b>	<p>Journalist's loyalties: torn between competing allegiances; Perception about the war can prevent the war or force leaders to make peace. Patriotism does not require obedience and obedience is not patriotism. The term of "patriotic journalism." Credibility is more important than victory. (Examples from US, Serbia, Middle East, Ukraine).</p> <p>Case study: Media and communicating with audience in UK</p>
<b>Day 9 June 15</b>	<p>Stereotypes are there to be broken and adjectives are to be avoided. Can you be professional on 95% of issues? Why the remaining 10% is most important; dehumanization of the enemy is crafted intentionally. What does this mean psychologically? Do not outline details. Who is in charge of balancing the story: reporter or headquarters? Being embedded – risk or exclusivity? Is there a limit for media freedom/reporting during the conflict? (Examples from Israel, Iran, Azerbaijan, Bosnia, Russia).</p> <p>Case study: Six women of Asia origin killed in Atlanta, US</p>
<b>Day 10 June 16</b>	<p>Populism, journalism and conflict; when can a journalist be one sided? How to be neutral? Other side is my side. What if a lie saves lives? Do not generalize the crime is always individual. Be prepared to pay the price for professionalism. Data and misuse of data; Trap in using "reliable" source; art of leaking; headlines moved from fact to teasing; spinning as regular practice.</p>
<b>Day 11 June 17</b>	<p>fake news is an industry, not a coincidence; how does the world fight fake news? Social media – from the kingdom of freedom to the kingdom of slavery. Reliable sources can be a trap. Journalist yes, investigator no. Chose the right story, do not stay at the surface. Responding to labeling is a mistake. Misusing a journalist's work cannot be stopped. Trust – easy to lose, difficult to gain.</p> <p>Case study: Coverage of Covid-19 pandemic</p>
<b>Day 12 June 18</b>	<p>Final exam in class</p>

## Course Requirements and Assessment (with estimated workloads)

Assignment	Workload (average)	Weight in Final Grade	Evaluated Course Specific Learning Outcomes	Evaluated Institutional Learning Outcomes*
Attendance	15	10%		
Class participation	15	15%	Ability to discuss outlined tricky situations in reporting in a way that displays understanding of the key issues	1,2
Presentations	30	20%	Display knowledge of situations in the media analyzed in class. Identify key characteristics and issues of a single topic related to the reporting in the time of conflict	1,2,3
Midterm essay	40	25%	Demonstrating the capacity to analyze a chosen topic from all needed angles	1,2,3
Final exam/essay	50	30%	Displaying knowledge of basic rules in reporting in the time of	1,2,3

			conflict and crisis, as well as the capacity to compare different journalistic behaviors in similar situations	
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>150</b>	<b>100%</b>		

\*1 = Critical Thinking; 2 = Effective Communication; 3 = Effective and Responsible Action

## Detailed description of the assignments

### Assignment 1: Presentations, quizzes, readings

This should be an overview of the chosen topic or media report(s). You will be asked to present the right and wrongdoings of the selected content, express professional dilemmas related to the chosen content and provide justification for the call you will need to make. You might also be asked to present a report on the same issue as your selected content and make a comparison. This will be done in groups. You will be asked to do quizzes as well.

#### Assessment breakdown

Assessed area	Percentage
Mastery of the topic presentation	40%
Mastery of understanding the topic	40%
Quizzes	20%

### Assignment 2: Midterm essay

This should consist of: an assessment of media ethics in a given content in essay form; you will also be given reporting dilemmas and will be asked to make decision and justify it;

#### Assessment breakdown

Assessed area	Percentage
Understanding media ethics of a chosen topic	30%
Mastery of making comparison, going deep with the analyses, understanding consequences	40%
Understanding rules in advertising and communications related to media ethics	30%

### Assignment 3: Final exam

You will be asked to display knowledge of the topic, connect it with topic given in essay form, provide context of the issue, compare it with other examples and outline the consequences of this media behavior. In addition you will be given media dilemma and quiz to solve.

<b>Assessed area</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Understanding the concept of media ethics	20%
Displaying consequences of disrespecting ethic codes	30%
Understandings of media ethics in communication and advertising	30%
Displaying clear conclusions	20%

## **General Requirements and School Policies**

### General requirements

All coursework is governed by AAU's academic rules. Students are expected to be familiar with the academic rules available in the Codex and Student Handbook and to maintain the highest standards of honesty and academic integrity in their work.

### Electronic communication and submission

The university and instructors shall only use students' university email address for communication. It is strongly recommended that any email communication between students and instructors take place in NEO LMS.

Each e-mail sent to an instructor that is about a new topic (meaning not a reply to an original email) shall have a new and clearly stated subject and shall have the course code in the subject, for example: "COM101-1 Mid-term Exam. Question".

All electronic submissions are carried out through NEO LMS. No substantial pieces of writing (especially take home exams and essays) can be submitted outside of NEO LMS.

### Attendance

Attendance is required. Students who are absent 35 percent of classes will be failed (or administratively withdrawn from the course if most absences are excused).

Students might also be marked absent if they miss a significant part of a class (by arriving late or leaving early) as specified in the syllabus.

### Absence excuse and make-up options

Should a student be absent from classes for relevant reasons (illness, serious family matters), s/he must submit to the Assistant Dean an Absence Excuse Form supplemented with documents providing reasons for the absence. The form and documents must be submitted within one week of the absence. If possible, it is recommended the instructor be informed of the absence in advance. Should a student be absent during the add/drop period due to a change in registration this will be an excused absence if s/he submits an Absence Excuse Form along with the finalized add/drop form.

Assignments missed due to unexcused absences cannot be made up which may result in a decreased or failing grade as specified in the syllabus.

Students whose absence has been excused by the Dean are entitled to make up assignments and exams provided their nature allows for a make-up. Students are responsible for contacting their instructor within one week of the date the absence was excused to arrange for make-up options.

Late work: No late submissions will be accepted – please follow the deadlines.

### Electronic devices

Electronic devices (phones, tablets, laptops...) may be used only for class-related activities (taking notes, looking up related information, etc.). Any other use will result in the student being marked absent and/or being expelled from the class. No electronic devices may be used during tests or exams.

## Eating is not allowed during classes.

### Cheating and disruptive behavior

If a student engages in disruptive or other conduct unsuitable for a classroom environment of an institution of learning, the instructor may require the student to withdraw from the room for the duration of the activity or for the day and shall report the behavior to the Dean.

Students engaging in behavior which is suggestive of cheating (e.g. whispering or passing notes) will, at a minimum, be warned. In the case of continued misbehavior the student will be expelled from the exam and the exam will be marked as failed.

### Plagiarism and Academic Tutoring Center

Plagiarism is "the unauthorized use or close imitation of the language and thoughts of another author and the representation of them as one's own original work." (Random House Unabridged Dictionary, 2nd Edition, Random House, New York, 1993)

Turnitin's White Paper 'The Plagiarism Spectrum' (available at <http://go.turnitin.com/paper/plagiarism-spectrum>) identifies 10 types of plagiarism ordered from most to least severe:

1. CLONE: An act of submitting another's work, word-for-word, as one's own.
2. CTRL-C: A written piece that contains significant portions of text from a single source without alterations.
3. FIND-REPLACE: The act of changing key words and phrases but retaining the essential content of the source in a paper.
4. REMIX: An act of paraphrasing from other sources and making the content fit together seamlessly.
5. RECYCLE: The act of borrowing generously from one's own previous work without citation; To self-plagiarize.
6. HYBRID: The act of combining perfectly cited sources with copied passages—without citation—in one paper.
7. MASHUP: A paper that represents a mix of copied material from several different sources without proper citation.
8. 404 ERROR: A written piece that includes citations to non-existent or inaccurate information about sources
9. AGGREGATOR: The "Aggregator" includes proper citation, but the paper contains almost no original work.
10. RE-TWEET: This paper includes proper citation, but relies too closely on the text's original wording and/or structure.

As the minimum policy the types of plagiarism from 1 through 8 results in the failing grade from the assignment and must be reported to the Dean. The Dean may initiate a disciplinary procedure pursuant to the Academic Codex. Allegations of bought papers and intentional or consistent plagiarism always entail disciplinary hearing and may result in expulsion from AAU.

If unsure about technical aspects of writing, students are encouraged to consult their papers with the tutors of the AAU Academic Tutoring Center. For more information and/or to book a tutor, please contact the ATC at:

<http://atc.simplybook.me/sheduler/manage/event/1/>.

### Students with disabilities

Students with disabilities are asked to contact their instructor as soon as possible to discuss reasonable accommodation.

## Grading Scale

Letter Grade	Percentage*	Description
A	95 - 100	<b>Excellent performance.</b> The student has shown originality and displayed an exceptional grasp of the material and a deep analytical understanding of the subject.
A-	90 - 94	
B+	87 - 89	<b>Good performance.</b> The student has mastered the material, understands the subject well and has shown some originality of thought and/or considerable effort.
B	83 - 86	
B-	80 - 82	
C+	77 - 79	<b>Fair performance.</b> The student has acquired an acceptable understanding of the material and essential subject matter of the course, but has not succeeded in translating this understanding into consistently creative or original work.
C	73 - 76	
C-	70 - 72	
D+	65 - 69	<b>Poor.</b> The student has shown some understanding of the material and subject matter covered during the course. The student's work, however, has not shown enough effort or understanding to allow for a passing grade in School Required Courses. It does qualify as a passing mark for the General College Courses and Electives.
D	60 - 64	
F	0 - 59	<b>Fail.</b> The student has not succeeded in mastering the subject matter covered in the course.

\* Decimals should be rounded to the nearest whole number.

### Prepared by and when:

Nenad Pejic, March 2021

### Approved by and when: