

The end(s) of journalism

Winter Lectures 2010 at The University of Auckland



A series of six weekly lectures in
the Maidment Theatre, 8 Alfred
Street from 1-2pm.

20 July-24 August

Everyone welcome. Free admission

Further information
www.auckland.ac.nz/winter
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*Pulling the Strings of Power by Jamel Akib.
Postcard in "Cross-media ownership" series
published by the Campaign for Press and
Broadcasting Freedom, London.*

Winter Lectures 2010: The end(s) of journalism

Digital convergence, media proliferation and the fragmentation of news audiences were already beginning to damage serious journalism long before the flight of classified print advertising to the internet and the downsizing and outsourcing of news production. Then global recession hit the news industry, and highly respected newspapers started to fold. Given the central contribution of the media to the quality of democratic deliberation, what are the long-term implications of these developments? Is serious journalism dying? Was it any good in the first place? What other technological possibilities, programming forms and funding alternatives might we consider feasible?

Lecture 1 Tuesday 20 July, 1-2pm

Dr Geoff Kemp, Department of Political Studies, The University of Auckland:
The beginning and ends of journalism

Chair: Professor John Morrow, Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic), The University of Auckland
This lecture returns to the roots of journalism to illuminate its present predicament and prospects. It starts at the beginning, exploring the origins of journalism and the periodical press in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. It reflects on the relationship between practice and theory – the generation of ideas justifying journalism’s role – and between this and broader processes of change in medium and markets. The first points to a legacy of ideas about the ends of journalism; the second points to the difficulties of meeting those ends in imperfect and shifting conditions. The vogue for Jurgen Habermas’s grand theory of the emergence of a democratic public sphere is considered as a setting for this story, along with R.W.T. Martin’s distinction of “free press” and “open press”. The story reaches the nineteenth century with journalism as an articulation of the public – a self-aware body with a critical voice, an institution free more than open, re-imagined as “the press” and the “fourth estate”. The scene then shifts to industrial chaos in the media as the twenty-first century nears, journalism’s bodily integrity broken on the wheel of technological and economic transformation, the parts picked over by tweeters and bloggers, a babel not a public. But the body called journalism can never die, says Michael Schudson, society needs it too much. Is this the story that history tells?

Lecture 2 Tuesday 27 July, 1-2pm

Colin Peacock, *Mediawatch* presenter, Radio New Zealand National: *Watching the watchdogs*

Chair: Dr Brian Edwards, distinguished radio and television broadcaster
Radio New Zealand’s *Mediawatch* is a programme which strives to reflect the views of media professionals and critics, as well as reporting week-by-week on the media from the perspective of readers, viewers and listeners. Broadly speaking, many critics, academics and some journalists feel that standards are falling in journalism and the media in general. Judging by their feedback to the programme, many *Mediawatch* listeners clearly feel the same. They complain that the media seem less thorough and more trivial than in the past; more sensational and tabloid in style; more cynical and less ethical than they used to be. They complain about too much opinion and too few facts – a media striving for impact rather than truth or understanding. Yet hundreds of thousands of New Zealanders still turn to them every day for entertainment and information about the world around them. So are standards falling? If so, which ones – and how far? Is it something to worry about? Is it happening elsewhere in the world too? Should we continue to depend upon the “old” media to give us “all the news that’s fit to print” – and broadcast? Or is that asking too much of an industry in decline, in which journalists are outnumbered by people in PR, communications and promotions – not to mention bloggers?

Lecture 3

Tuesday 3 August, 1-2pm

Dr Sue Abel, Departments of Māori Studies and Film, Television and Media Studies, The University of Auckland: *A question of balance*

Chair: Carol Hirschfeld, Head of Programming, Māori Television

In order to maintain balance in television programmes, the Broadcasting Act 1989 requires television broadcasters “to present significant points of view either in the same programme or in other programmes within the period of current interest”. This lecture examines the extent to which the point of view of Māori is considered a “significant point of view”. This examination is carried out on three levels. The first level is the dearth of stories about the Māori world in “mainstream” news – stories which are presented as an intrinsic part of New Zealand and therefore of interest to all New Zealanders. The second level is the use of Māori as sources. Research shows that even in what might be called “Māori stories”, Pākehā are used as sources at least as often as Māori. At a third level, when Māori do speak as sources, they do not necessarily get the chance to articulate a distinctively indigenous worldview which also includes the relevant history which is important to an understanding of the issue at stake. Finally, the lecture considers the implications of these absences.

Lecture 4

Tuesday 10 August, 1-2pm

Dr Luke Goode, Department of Film, Television and Media Studies, The University of Auckland: *Citizens as gatekeepers*

Chair: Russell Brown (*Media7, Hard News on Public Address, Wide Area News*)

According to leading citizen media commentator and advocate, Dan Gillmor, blogging, citizen journalism and social media platforms have transformed journalism from lecture into conversation. Leaving aside the problematic analogy of news-as-lecture, what kinds of conversation are emerging in online news environments? Can we look past the signal-to-noise ratio and discern the seeds of a more deliberative political culture, given the new forms of engagement with news which include citizens themselves taking on various journalistic and editorial functions? What role can so-called “mainstream media” play in this new environment structured increasingly by software platforms such as Twitter and YouTube and not merely by news channels and brands? This lecture explores the civic (rather than commercial) implications of current trends in the online news environment. It concludes with some reflections on the implications of those trends for the ways in which we understand citizenship today.

Lecture 5

Tuesday 17 August, 1-2pm

Dr Joe Atkinson, Department of Political Studies, The University of Auckland: *Politics as comedy*

Chair: James Griffin (*Outrageous Fortune, Sione’s Wedding, Funny Business, Spin Doctors, bro’Town, Diplomatic Immunity*)

This lecture explores *The Daily Show*, a half-hour mock news programme and hybrid talk show whose website gleefully trumpets its populist inversion of conventional journalism. The show has gained critical acclaim through numerous Emmy, Peabody, and TV Critics Awards. In 2006 its host Jon Stewart was named by the US magazine *Television Week* the fifth most powerful person in television news. The lecture asks whether “fake” news shows like *The Daily Show* and its spin-off *The Colbert Report* are positive or negative for democracy. Are they either a substitute for, or a useful antidote to, conventional television news? The lecture approaches this question by way of Aristotle’s distinction between epideictic, forensic and deliberative forms of rhetoric,

highlighting their strengths and weaknesses in relation to both conventional journalism and civic engagement more generally. It concludes by comparing hybrid journalism with other popular television genres.

Lecture 6 **Tuesday 24 August, 1-2pm**

Gavin Ellis, former Editor-in-Chief of the *New Zealand Herald*, doctoral candidate in Political Studies, The University of Auckland: *Paying the piper*

Chair: Professor Stuart McCutcheon, Vice-Chancellor, The University of Auckland

This lecture – which draws on research undertaken for a doctoral thesis – explores the near-term future of serious journalism from a structural perspective. It examines the different types of organisation that deliver what we might describe as democratically-significant journalism and assesses their ability to do so in the future. We have all grown up in the era of mass media: Major commercial and public service entities have had the ability to disseminate volumes of information to large audiences to create a common understanding of ideas and events. However, technology, audience fragmentation, corporate expansionism and recession have created a “perfect storm” that has undermined the business models of commercial media organisations large and small. Increasingly, they are either unable or unwilling to fund the level of editorial resource needed to sustain the sort of standards-based journalism that meets the democratic needs of society. On the other side of the coin, communities are becoming less inclined to pay for the news. Today’s lecture proposes that alternatives to profit-driven news media companies will be needed and that their structure cannot be left to chance if standards-based journalism is to survive in an environment where not everyone is prepared to pay the piper.

Lord Stern giving Robb Lectures

Lord Stern of Brentford, author of the influential Stern Review on climate change, will deliver the 2010 Sir Douglas Robb Lectures at The University of Auckland.

“Climate change: The economics of risk, growth and inequality” is the theme of his lectures on 8, 9 and 10 September (7pm, Fisher & Paykel Appliances Auditorium, Owen G Glenn Building, 12 Grafton Road).

Further details at www.auckland.ac.nz/robb