

Reviews

The reviews pages are edited by Tor Clark. If you have a book you would like to review or have come across a new book we should know about please get in touch. Also if you have recently had a book published and would like to see it reviewed, please contact Tor on tclark@dmu.ac.uk

Welcome to the reviews section of our new journal, Journalism Education.

Journalism is of course a fascinating subject and every year it seems more and more books are published about it, many of them involving members of the Association for Journalism Education, which of course is great news for us.

Our aim for this section is to feature reviews of books and other artifacts, events and conferences about Journalism which will be of interest to Journalism lecturers and their students. Above all we want this section to be useful and to that end we will feature reviews that might help students with their studies and academics with their research.

But it can't work properly without help from readers, so we would like to appeal to you to get involved, either by recommending or reviewing books about Journalism.

We are starting with a relatively small number of books from an established team of reviewers, all of whom are already connected to this journal. But in future we'd very much like to broaden the involvement out to members and other readers, so if you'd like to get involved please email me at T.clark@dmu.ac.uk.

The editors and I hope you enjoy our first selection.

Tor Clark

Reviews Editor

Journalism and Free Speech, John Steel

Review by Mick Temple

John Steel's new book explores the philosophical and historical development of 'free speech'. Its central argument is that challenges to freedom of speech and press freedom require a re-evaluation of journalism's relationship with these key tenets. Throughout his examination, the spectre of censorship, 'dynamic, fluid, sometimes opaque yet powerful nevertheless' is ever present.

Steel argues that the 'actualisation of press freedom' has to encompass modes of censorship which place pressure 'upon the principled connection between journalism and freedom of speech'. As he also points out, censorship is not a concept we can complacently associate only with other, more repressive countries: free speech is something that has to be continually fought for.

His theoretical examination of the liberal tradition and defence of free speech is well presented, offering

a valuable starting point for those new to the arguments. That said, Steel's observations on the tensions inherent in free speech about 'offending' others (the clash between 'positive' and 'negative' liberty) might have highlighted rather more clearly the problems inherent in John Stuart Mill's idea that freedom of speech should be inhibited when there is a chance of 'harm' arising from airing of that opinion. Such a stricture would justify censorship of some opinions on religion, for example, however carefully worded. Steel's later discussion of the infamous 'Danish cartoons' leans towards Mill's interpretation, seeming to favour the view that the publication of the cartoons was an irresponsible and inflammatory act. For many of us, the principle of freedom of speech must triumph over giving offence.

His historical examination of the 'journalistic impulse' is rightly critical of the gap often existing between the ideal and practice of freedom of expression. Steel highlights the enduring centrality of a free press within liberal democratic theory, noting the 'self-reinforcing' relationship between journalism and democracy. Although he argues that technological innovation potentially puts journalism in a better position to function according to that democratic imperative, he does not ignore the 'dark side' of internet freedom, when even democratic nations frequently misuse internet technology for repressive means. In addition, despite the growth of online sites, homogenisation rather than diversity, especially among local media, seems to be occurring.

Like many before him, Steel observes that journalism is rather too often tied 'to the commercial imperatives of the market to fully provide a genuine public sphere' free from market constraints. As he points out, 'press freedom' should be understood more clearly as 'market freedom', intimately connected to notions of 'capitalist accumulation and enterprise'. As the journalist Hannen Swaffer once memorably noted: 'freedom of the press in Britain is freedom to print such of the proprietor's prejudices as the advertisers don't object to'. For Steel, free market rationality has had a deleterious effect on media plurality and notions of public service.

His chapters detailing the relationship between the public interest and privacy and libel quite rightly notes that recent scandals will impact on press freedom and individual privacy, although quite how remains to be seen. I particularly enjoyed Steel's examination of the 'tyranny of PC', which both the left and right on the political spectrum regard as a threat to freedom of speech. Just as PC has become a 'convenient shorthand' for those on the right who feel their values are under threat, so the concept has become discredited among more radical voices who see the concept as propagating a form of 'atomised politics'.

Steel's conclusion makes rather grim reading – censorship 'just is', a 'constitutive essence' that inhibits the capacity of modern media 'to serve the ideals of democracy'. That said, the author is to be congratulated on producing a book melding theory and empirical examination that will be essential reading for anyone concerned about the preservation and enhancement of both journalistic and individual freedom. All journalism educators should find value in this first rate study.

Journalism and Free Speech by John Steel, published by Routledge: Abingdon, Oxon 256 pages, ISBN 978-0-415-49326-0 RRP: £19.99

Journalism in Britain: a Historical Introduction, Martin Conboy

Review by Tor Clark

There is a growing movement promoting the teaching of the history of Journalism, with Martin Conboy among its most prominent and active advocates. He has already done much to encourage interest in this fascinating and diverse topic and with his new book he firmly cements his commitment and enthusiasm in a text which should be of widespread use across university Journalism, Media, and Communication courses in the UK and beyond.

Whilst Journalism by its nature is about writing in the here and now, all good journalists know that to write a decent story, you have to know the background properly and the best journalists are the ones who understand why something has happened the way it has. The most respected journalists in their own particular areas, from Hugo Young to Michael Parkinson, achieved much of their acclaim because they bothered to research their subject, to 'do their homework'.

And just as this applies to the practice of journalism, so should it to its study. In *Journalism in Britain*, a Historical Introduction, Professor Conboy aims to help students to ‘do their homework’ and to develop a much better understanding of how we came to have the media we have today, an essential starting point to any serious attempt at studying the content or meaning of contemporary journalism.

Touching on diverse but crucial areas such as political coverage, advertising, the economics of the media and local journalism, Conboy offers a themed rather than chronological approach. While this differs to standard works such as Kevin Williams’ ever-popular and accessible *Get Me a Murder a Day*, Curran and Seaton’s classic *Power Without Responsibility* and Mick Temple’s *The British Press*, it might actually be quite helpful to students answering specific essay questions around these themes, who might otherwise have to wade through more chronological works.

Other chapters cover broadcasting, ownership and control, women and journalism, the impact of technology, tabloids and magazines – a worthy sweep across the whole sector.

Conboy is well qualified to take on this role, having an excellent pedigree in this area, including six published works on the language and history of journalism, and working in one of the foremost Journalism departments in the UK, so it is to be expected he should know his stuff and the level of the students at whom he is pitching it.

His decision to cover in depth political journalism and local journalism, is to be applauded. Both are crucial and much overlooked, with only a few notable and noble exceptions, particularly Bob Franklin. Conboy is however slightly negative in his views about political journalism and could have included more positive views from current practitioners on why they covered the news as they do. Political journalists often give interviews about their work, so the other side of the story, as it were, is readily available. This is only a minor criticism and Conboy is by no means alone here. Most journalism textbooks underplay and underuse the voices of journalists in favour of those who would analyse them, which always seems a missed opportunity.

Conboy’s recommendations for further reading with a brief sentence saying what they are good for is to be praised and welcomed on behalf of students, who always appreciate some steering on essential reading, rather than just the production of a reading list.

So, overall this new book is very useful and enjoyable, and is already on all the relevant reading lists at my institution, but there should always be room for improvement and discussion and there were only a couple of areas where I would take issue.

I am not convinced there has been a major demise of serious journalism in newspapers compared with entertainment or celebrity journalism. Year after year my students’ dissertation research results surprise them in showing, contrary to much academic opinion, serious journalism still outweighs celebrity journalism column inch for column inch.

Conboy’s writing style is more accessible than many, but having been a journalist for 25 years, I do always yearn for a simpler and more accessible style in writing about our subject. I’m not arguing for dumbing down, just more clarity and simplicity.

But these are only minor criticisms, and overall Conboy’s book is an excellent addition to the growing ranks of Journalism history texts in an area for which he is a worthy champion and which should really now be being taught on all UK Journalism courses.

Journalism in Britain: a Historical Introduction by Martin Conboy, published by Sage, 2011. 240 pages; ISBN-10: 1847874959 RRP: £22.99.

Broadcasting in the 21st Century: Richard Rudin

Review by Gary Hudson

If a story is worth telling, it’s worth getting excited about. That appears to be the author’s starting point for an all-embracing gallivant around the world of contemporary broadcasting. And his book is none the worse for it.

His claim that it is not the work of a ‘lofty academic’ but of a keen observer (and participant for many years) is borne out by his passion for the subject.

If academics and journalism educators are to drag their lazier students away from Facebook and persuade them to enter the alien environs of a library and pick up a textbook, this might be a good start.

The impact of digital media, the rise of interactivity and so-called citizen journalism, and the role of event television, including the flagship reality talent shows are all covered comprehensively. The impact of broadcast programmes on social relationships and on the national conversation receive equal weight.

The chapter on Reality Television and its various sub-genres is both well-informed and scary to those who have watched this juggernaut take over the airwaves.

Rudin acknowledges the impact of social media on mainstream broadcasting – it is the recurring theme of the book – and brings the same story-telling brio to this work as to his lively blogs, where no issue is unworthy of a rant.

News coverage, pop music and his beloved radio are consuming passions on the author's social media outlets and he has rejoined many of his favourite arguments here, albeit in a more sober fashion.

The text is informed by extensive cooperation from national and local broadcasters and personal interviews with major TV and radio personalities such as Sir Terry Wogan, and key decision makers including editors at BBC and Sky News. The cultural references spanning Kenny Everett to Charlie Brooker and *The Daily Show*, betray the author's sense of humour – and prove a real plus in his analysis of the values of contemporary news coverage.

While the new technologies are at the heart of what makes 21st century broadcasting different from the services that developed in the last century, Rudin doesn't forget his first love – radio. Describing it as 'a friend you always expect to be there', he offers a stout defence of its enduring appeal. This is an important consideration in a book otherwise devoted to changes in the broadcasters' relationship to their audiences.

I have just one serious caveat. The book suffers – as do many from the current crop of academic publishers – from inadequate sub-editing and proof-reading. Readers, particularly those of us from a background in journalism, will not enjoy the misuse of apostrophes, misplaced capital letters and a liberal smattering of grammatical mistakes. They would be annoying in a student essay, and are occasionally infuriating here. This otherwise engaging book has the potential to excite students and its author has been let down by the absence of a similarly enthusiastic editor to check the final product. It is a flawed gem.

Broadcasting on the 21st Century by Richard Rudin, published by Palgrave Macmillan: Basingstoke 244 pages, ISBN: 978-0-230-01318-6 RRP: £18.99

So You Want to be a Political Journalist, edited by Sheila Gunn.

Review by Tor Clark

Politics and Journalism: You can't have one without the other. There are so many books about politics and journalism, media and democracy, memoirs of political journalists, politicians and spin doctors, but books about the craft of political journalism are rare, so this new text is an excellent addition to this vitally important field of study.

The first thing to say is this is not really an academic textbook, and as such you might question its inclusion here, but its value lies in shedding light on this incredibly important area in a range of voices all from around the real coal face. And for that reason it deserves to be on the reading lists of every course seeking to help students understand how political journalism works and what its impact can be.

Sheila Gunn is an excellent choice as editor. As a political journalist who has run a Prime Minister's communications who, apart from Alastair Campbell, can claim to have been more at the heart of what political journalism is, from both sides of the fence?

She has tried to gather up a wide range of diverse articles covering all the angles around her topic and used big, authoritative names to provide their specialist insights.

Make no mistake, this isn't a weighty, worthy tome exploring the deepest nuances of that most important

aspect of UK journalism, but it is perhaps more useful than that because it demystifies the process and it is very useful in doing so.

Gunn has assembled a vast array of talent to illuminate us on every conceivable aspect of this specialist trade, which reads like a who's who of political reporting. Legendary PA Westminster correspondent Chris Moncrieff contributes three chapters and would find himself in familiar company with many of his fellow contributors including Michael White, Peter Riddell, James Landale, Colin Brown, Andrew Pierce and Nicholas Jones.

The text is divided into 32 user-friendly chapters, allowing the reader to read right through or more likely just to dip in to those of most interest, again useful and unintimidating for students. The chapters are grouped into areas covering Westminster and Whitehall, working with politicians, specialist reporting, covering politics beyond Westminster and then a useful chapter on how to get there. The chapter 'Reporting the Town Hall' looking at covering local politics by Richard Osley is particularly welcome, focusing on a much overlooked area of journalism, but one which is fundamental to so many local papers and their communities.

So here's a book which tells readers what it's actually like to do these jobs, but also something which will be useful to students of politics, with Gunn's own chapters on 'Who's who at Westminster' and 'The birth of a Bill' and Moncrieff's on 'Changing the law' of definite benefit to students studying the political process as well as its effects.

The book has a natural symmetry, starting by posing the question of the title, taking in the mechanics and the fascinations of the roles described, as well their impacts, before returning to the question of why a student might want to get there and how that journey might unfold.

The only chapter which didn't seem to sit well was ironically the one written by Adam Holloway MP, which described 'A week in the life of an MP' which unfortunately, though obviously well-intentioned, read more like a justification of how he spent his time to his constituents than anything more useful to a would-be journalist. Perhaps using a politician who didn't need to seek re-election might have produced a more revealing account?

But that is a small niggle. Overall this was both interesting and useful and fills a distinct gap in the literature for students who hopefully might one day succeed some of the illustrious authors many of this book's chapters.

So You Want to be a Political Journalist by Sheila Gunn, published by Bite-back: London, 2011. 304 pages, ISBN 9781849540858 RRP: £14.99

International Journalism: Kevin Williams.

Journalism Across Cultures: Levi Obijiofor and Folker Hanusch

Review by Chris Frost

International journalism in the UK has for too long meant the provision of UK journalism for foreign students. This imperialistic approach may well have its place because, despite the horrors being exposed at the Leveson Inquiry, we have a lot to offer the world in terms of our journalism. But several courses have now appeared that put a wider interpretation on the meaning and delivery of international journalism, making it a subject more fitting for UK students in UK universities.

Until recently, the number of books aimed at this group of students was limited. There are good chapters on aspects of foreign news gathering in a number of books, but nothing aimed exclusively at those whose journalism has an international focus. Things now seem to be changing, with the publication of several books aimed at scholars of international journalism.

Foreign reporting has long been seen as the pinnacle of the profession; a sort of Premier League to which reporters aspire and only the very best attain, with its hints of exotic locations, limitless expense accounts and exciting stories far from the madding newsdesk.

Yet in a world where Twitter and Facebook are fast becoming the transmission method of choice this celebration of the anointed may well be over. Foreign news budgets have been cut, with correspondents laid off in favour of “unverified” YouTube videos filed by telephone and tweets from the front line.

So how will this change the international journalism of the future? Williams possesses no crystal ball but he does have a sound analytical brain and plenty of solid research. His opening chapters give a clear and detailed explanation of the way international journalism works. This covers everything the student, novice or experienced, needs to understand how the news is brought from foreign lands. There are also detailed discussions about the meaning and purpose of foreign news as well as explanations of why foreign news is becoming less important in domestic media.

The international news agencies are also carefully outlined, allowing the reader to develop a full understanding of the nature of foreign news, how it is gathered and how we receive it.

The book then goes on to examine the changing nature of foreign news in a time of YouTube and Twitter. The danger of accepting news from these sources without the support of “our man in” is measured against the extra information such up-to-the-minute reports can give; the reality brought to news bulletins by clips from the front line of this battle or that riot.

He also examines the levels of control and change that these new technologies introduce as mainstream media struggle to avoid being scooped on a regular basis by everyday technologies available to millions.

This is a book that admirably combines conciseness with a detailed examination of the issues. It is an ideal introduction for students to the complexities of foreign news in all its manifestations, giving a solid narrative to those for whom this is their first brush with the idea of international journalism.

The second book from Levi Obijiofor and Folker Hanusch sits well alongside the Williams offering. Although this also takes the world as its backdrop - this time instead of international journalism, the world of the foreign correspondent - it is journalism in its national manifestations that takes centre stage.

It’s an interesting idea for a book and one that works well. Its novelty lies not when it is talking about the journalism; here it goes over well-trodden ground. No surprises here as it describes journalism, journalism education and the culture of journalism. What makes this book interesting and different is that it compares these approaches across cultures, picking out what is different as well as underlining what is constant.

The opening chapter, for instance, discusses evolving press theories and media models. It re-examines and critiques the classic four theories of the press, analysing the press particularly from a non-western viewpoint to identify some of the flaws (or potential flaws) in a body of theory drawn largely from an elitist and hegemonic western, capitalist perspective.

Other chapters carries out the same job on other vital areas of media, looking at the topic from a variety of cultural approaches to give a much broader approach than is usual from books that tend to be dominated by US, UK or European media theory. For instance, there are chapters on journalism practice examining journalism decision making, values and role perceptions. Gender in journalism and the position of women both as reporters and as the subject of news are examined in another chapter, whilst a third looks at reporting peace and conflict and the part that different journalistic cultures play in the drive for war or peace.

The book is well written and finishes each chapter with some useful seminar questions. It is rich in theory and good scholarship but easily avoids the dense obfuscation of academics nervous their work could not stand up to detailed criticism or who lack the skill to properly communicate their often ill-formed ideas. There may be complex ideas identified here going to the heart of journalism and being compared across cultures, but the authors make it as easy as possible to absorb and comprehend these crucial theories.

So well do they present these key elements of journalism that this book would be worth recommending solely as an introductory text to all journalism students, but it has the added bonus of doing this across an international platform allowing a much broader range of learning to take place. For students of journalism who have a particular interest in international affairs this is a must, but it is worth a place in any good library of journalism.

International Journalism by Kevin Williams. Published by Sage: London (2011) 205 pages, ISBN: 9781412945288, RRP: £21.99

Journalism Across Cultures by Levi Obijiofor and Folker Hanusch. Published by Palgrave Macmillan: London, 2011. 236 pages, ISBN: 970230236103, RRP: £19.99

A classic from the Journalism bookshelf:

Press Gang: How newspapers make profit from propaganda, by Roy Greenslade, first published by Macmillan in 2003.

Review by Tor Clark

As a regular reader of Roy Greenslade's Monday Media Guardian columns before his short-lived defection to the Daily Telegraph in 2005, I had always rather hoped the Guardian might eventually publish a collection of his columns. So, imagine my delight when tucked away at the back of a card shop in Bakewell in Derbyshire during a family holiday I found a hardback copy of Press Gang, of whose existence I had until then been ignorant - and at a knock-down price.

At first glance, based on its strapline 'How newspapers make money from propaganda', I was disappointed to see it appeared to be a critique of UK news media rather than a trenchant and perspicacious analysis of its important issues, which was to my mind the glory of his regular Media Guardian articles. But in a short time I was to come to dismiss that first impression and to cherish and value this superb addition to the growing literature on post-war UK newspapers.

Greenslade tackles the whole topic with enthusiasm, meticulous attention to detail and best of all incredibly useful analysis, which is unlikely ever to be surpassed because of his USP; he was there for most of the history he writes about and he knew many of its leading participants.

Throughout its near 700 pages Greenslade is never slow to acknowledge his role in the story, but he does this to 'declare his interest' rather than to emphasize any kind of contribution he might have made. Indeed his style is generally self-deprecating rather than self-aggrandising, especially when describing his early political affiliations. His later articles to mark the 20th anniversary of the 'Wapping Revolution' maintained this approach, in almost glorying in his own ignorance of the revolution about to occur until he too was let into the well-guarded secret.

His approach, in dealing with each period paper-by-paper and emphasising the personalities involved, helps create an understanding of why any one paper was successful or not during any particular era. He understands and describes the success of the Express in the 50s, the Mirror in the 60s, The Sun in the 80s or The Mail in the 90s equally well, whether he agrees with their worldview or not. He looks at how successful they were in journalistic rather than political or sociological terms, a method most journalists will be happy with, but many academics might not.

An idiosyncratic feature of each section is his pen-pictures of each new national editor as the musical chairs of editorial management revolve, always offering their age and quirky character traits which might help the reader build up a mental impression of the editor involved. This being the eclectic, charismatic and elite club of UK national newspaper editors, the quirks are many, varied, and as Greenslade might have intended, very useful in forming a view

The first section I read - in isolation at the time - and which to me remains the stand-out chapter of the whole book now, is the excellent piece on the The Sun and the 1992 General Election, inevitably titled Was it really The Sun wot won it?

Having reported on a marginal constituency at this most crucial of recent elections, it remains fascinating to me and thankfully on the syllabus of most serious courses covering politics, elections and the media. Greenslade's chapter could provide the last word, not least because one of his footnotes gets right to the heart of the issue with an illuminating reflection from the central character, Neil Kinnock, delivered in a private letter to the author. Despite being a character of obvious strong opinions, in this chapter and throughout Greenslade lets the evidence make the points and so the evaluations and conclusions emerge as natural extrapolations of the evidence of history, rather than forced polemics made to fit into a pre-determined partisan ideology, a criticism to which many works on the media are susceptible.

Overall, as one would hope, this is an immensely readable, insightful and historically rich work, full of authentic detail and perceptive interpretation. Its thoroughness also means that when it is consulted by stu-

dents they produce much better work.

It is simply an excellent read, from cover to cover, leaving the reader informed, educated and satisfied. Now what about that book of columns, Roy...

The next edition's classic from the bookshelf will be Herbert Gans' *Deciding What's News*

If you have a book, TV programme, film or event relating to journalism that you would like to review, or you have come across a new book we should know about, please get in touch. Also, if you have recently had a book published and would like to see it reviewed here, kindly contact Tor Clark at De Montfort University on t.clark@dmu.ac.uk.