

Constru(ct)ing the Current: Theorizing Media in a New Millennium

University of Chicago
May 14-15, 2004

Why do the news media consider certain events historically significant, worthy of sustained coverage and commentary, while other happenings generate little or no media interest or attention? What are events, and what makes happenings in the world into events? Beginning with the assumption that news is neither a natural nor self-evident category but the product of institutional practices of selection and representation, this two-day symposium brings scholars together in an effort to collectively understand the social processes through which news, as a general category and set of particular cases, comes into being. Looking across media type and genre, panelists will examine how mass media construct and construe happenings as significant events, trends, and facts about the world. Themes to be addressed include:

- Institutional and extra-institutional forces shaping a journalistic worldview
- Politics of journalistic representation
- Historical rise of news genres
- Political rhetoric and the press
- Event as a sociological category
- Journalism, nationalism, and war
- Public opinion and the creation of consensus
- Formation of local, national, and transnational news audiences
- Politics of crime coverage
- Journalism's role in promoting science and technology
- Technological transformation of news

Conference Schedule:

Friday, May 14:

9:00 am – 9:30 am: Registration

9:30 am – 10:00 am: Opening Remarks

10:15 am – 12:15 pm: The Possible and the Do-Able

Speakers:

Cass Sunstein: University of Chicago, Law School, author of *Republic.com*
Geoffrey Stone: University of Chicago, Law School, author of *The First Amendment*
Carol Stabile: University of Pittsburgh, Department of Communications, author of *Feminism and the Technological Fix*, *Turning the Century: Essays in Media Studies*, and *White Victims, Black Perpetrators: Crime Reporting and Race in US Culture*
Ben Bagdikian*: University of California-Berkeley, School of Journalism
Bob McChesney*: University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, Institute of Communications Research
Bob Darnton*: Princeton University, Department of History

12:00 pm – 1:00 pm: lunch break

1:15 pm – 3:15 pm: Reflections and Refractions: Media on a Global Stage

Speakers:

Mark Pedelty: University of Minnesota, author of *War Stories: The Culture of Foreign Correspondents*
Carrie Rentschler: University of Pittsburgh, Women's Studies Program
Mohammed El-Nawawy*: Stonehill College, Department of Communications
Adel Iskandar*: University of Kentucky, Communications
Hussein Amin*: American University of Cairo, Department of Television and Radio
Keyan Tomaselli*: University of Natal, Department of Communication

3:15 pm - 5:00 pm: Keynote Address

R. E. "Ted" Turner*: Chairman, Turner Foundation, Inc.

6:30 pm – 8:00 pm: Reception

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Saturday, May 15:

10:00am – 12:00pm: Receiving and Judging: Public Opinion/World Opinion

Presenters:

- Michael Dawson:** Harvard University, Department of Political Science, author of *Behind the Mule: Race and Class in African-American Politics*.
- Ruth Wodak*:** University of Vienna
- Robert Entman*:** University of North Carolina, Department of Communication
- Meg McGlaughlin*:** Columbia University

12:00 pm -1:00 pm: Lunch

1:00 pm - 3:00 pm: Modes of Presentation

Presenters:

- Lauren Berlant:** University of Chicago, English Language and Literature, author of *The Queen of America Goes to Washington City: Essays on Sex and Citizenship*.
- Christopher Wilson:** Boston University, Department of English & American Studies, author of *The Labor of Words: Literary Professionalism in the Progressive Era* and *Cop Knowledge: Police Power and Cultural Narrative in Twentieth Century America*.
- Cary Nelson:** University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, Department of English, author of *Revolutionary Memory: Recovering the Poetry of the American Left* and *Disciplinary and Dissent in Cultural Studies*.
- Susan Bordo*:** University of Kentucky

3:15 pm - 5:15 pm: Social Movements: Actors and Audiences

Presenters:

- Paula Treichler:** University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, Institute of Communications Research, author of *How to Have Theory in an Epidemic: Cultural Chronicles of AIDS* and *The Visible Woman: Imaging Technologies, Gender, and Science*.
- Jack Bratich:** Rutgers, Department of Communications, author of *Grassy Knoll-edges: Conspiracy Panics, Culture and Political Rationality*
- Christian Davenport:** University of Maryland, Department of Political Science
- Joseph Dumit*:** Massachusetts Institute of Technology

5:30 pm – 6 pm: Closing Comments

Note: Individuals marked with an * have been or will be invited to participate but have not yet confirmed their attendance at the conference.