



Book reviews

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Martin Conboy

Journalism studies: The basics

New York: Routledge, 2013. 196 pp. ISBN 9780415587945

Reviewed by: Robert E Gutsche Jr, *Florida International University, USA*

Journalism Studies begins with a brief trajectory from possibly the first study of journalism in the late 1600s, in France, to star scholars such as McLuhan and Hall, to more recent work by news-technophiles – all within in a short number of pages. This welcome, brief journey sets this project in a cultural history of sorts and provides an entrance to study of power and ideology that supplements more traditional, audience-focused (albeit crucial and critical) introductions to media, such as Berger's *Media & Society*. *Journalism Studies* would be a valuable tool in introductory media courses in that it serves as a reminder of past important works and presents avenues for journalism studies in the modern day.

Most noticeably throughout this project, Conboy, a professor of Journalism History at the UK's University of Sheffield, seems to suffer from an almost-nerdy love for journalism, expressing his enthusiasm in far too many sentences struck with explanation points: 'Given all that journalism aims to achieve, you can see that there is a lot to study!' (p. 2), he writes; and, 'The time for Journalism Studies had come of age!' (p. 13). Furthermore, Conboy compiles lists of books that sometimes span pages to augment descriptions of cultural and normative studies of the past 100 years. His history of the field moves back and forth between normative explanations of newswork to scholars' interpretations of journalism through cultural lenses, a reading that on the surface seems schizophrenic: one section nods to Barthes and an assessment of cultural explanations of media while the very next discusses recruitment practices at news outlets to reach some level of parity.

Journalism Studies also addresses changes in the news industry, formal education of newswriters, and academe. It touches on the multidisciplinary and pivotal elements of media studies, including the Birmingham and Frankfurt Schools, Barthes and Marx, and sets a tone for a critical/cultural approach to examining news. Chapters focus on news as an institution, media law, and regulation, each ending with a list of 'future readings' that span decades and disciplines. These are annotated reading lists that may be helpful for educators and students alike.

Perhaps the greatest lapse in this book, however, is its clear Anglo approach to news. Though Conboy does explore globalization and, in that sense, touches upon notions of global journalism, he easily could have culled studies on international work, for

example, from Waisbord's (2000) *Watchdog Journalism in South America: News, Accountability, and Democracy*, Curran and Park's (2000) classic *De-Westernizing Media Studies* (which Conboy cites, but does not examine deeply), or even *Understanding Ethnic Media* (2011), edited by Matsaganis, Katz, and Ball-Rokeach, which is very much about the practices and ideologies of newswork. In this way, Conboy seems to maintain the very western ethnocentrism in *Journalism Studies* that scholars he acknowledges write against. Strictly an analysis of news and scholarship related to the UK and USA, respectively, *Journalism Studies* spends little time on the advancements in journalism studies throughout Latin America or Asia, limiting the book's one-stop study on journalism study history – and its future.

Journalism Studies ends – as any 'good' book on media should these days – with a chapter on technology, stating what we all know: that scholars and practitioners are excited about the flash and twists technology brings to traditional media. The book, however, ends there, leaving the reader wanting a nice roundup at the end, a critical analysis by Conboy himself about his own articulations coming from this journey to and through *Journalism Studies*. Such a 'book end' to mirror the project's front-half would have been welcome, but the reader must remember that this book is, after all, just about the basics.

At some point, the reader may wonder why we need yet another addition to such scholarship, especially as a summary all in one place; however, *Journalism Studies* serves its purpose by marking milestones in journalism studies, and Conboy's enthusiasm about the project becomes more understandable. An addition to Routledge's series of 'basics' on issues that range from *Acting and Buddhism* to *Sociology and World History*, *Journalism Studies* fits quite well. If joined with the *Media Studies* volume published in the series in 2012 – which explicates postmodernism, semiotics, media analysis – the two books would make an interesting combination for discussion and exploration among newcomers to the field. Though Conboy's quick assessment of media/news/communication studies may – to the aged scholar – have an amateur feel, think of *Journalism Studies* as a seminal work on seminal work in our field.

Phillip Seib (ed.)

Al Jazeera English: Global news in a changing world

Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012. 204 pp. ISBN 9780230340213

Reviewed by: Omar Al-Ghazzi, *University of Pennsylvania, USA*

Al Jazeera English: Global News in a Changing World, edited by Philip Seib, is an important book that provides a fresh analytical perspective grounded in a solid overview of the rising news channel. As Al Jazeera expands its audience in the United States, and as it plans to launch new channels in several languages, the book fills a gap in academic literature about the global news network. Thus, it is likely to appeal to a diverse scholarly and media practitioner readership. The volume includes nine chapters that analyze varied facets of Al Jazeera English (AJE) audience and coverage in the United States, Africa, South Asia, and the Middle East.