MEVIT4420 – Grading guidelines

'Objectivity is traditionally assumed to be a central aspect of journalism. But to what extent is this the case beyond a Western perspective and to what extent can a journalist ever be objective? This question requires you to reflect on what journalism is in different political and cultural contexts, the possible bias of our research about journalism (this might include the concepts and theories we use and/or our methods), as well as the practical constraints journalists operate under. This question, in other words, asks you to reflect on the relationship between normative ideals (standards journalists are expected to conform to and which may vary across context) and the practice of journalism in the "real world" (journalists being bodies operating in space and time, navigating often challenging environments and blurred ethical lines). In your analysis refer to the course literature and practical examples. You might want to select specific concepts/theories/arguments and case studies to illustrate your answer.'

The exam question was given to the students on the very first day of the course (26 September) and all sessions of the course were geared towards addressing a dimension and/or questioning what "objectivity" is supposed to be.

As an obligatory assignment students were asked to submit a draft of at least 3 pages of the final term paper. They were given personalized feedback on how to address possible weaknesses in the text and how to develop the paper further.

I ran a presentation ("How to write a term paper") explaining what the expectations were about the final assignment on the first day of the course. After having provided feedback to the drafts of the term paper, I also gave some class-wide feedback ("Draft of term paper – Class feedback") to point out issues I observed across different drafts, to make sure the students would address them. Both presentations were uploaded on Canvas with the other course materials.

During all of these preparations I made very clear, among the rest, the importance of focusing on the initial question and actually answering it, of reading all of the syllabus material in order to have enough material to think with and develop a convincing, systematic argument.

The exam question is formulated so that each student is free to select which theories, concepts and cases from the course s/he would like to use to answer the question. **In the grading more weight is given to independence of thought, originality, the development of critical points, and evidence of reflection.**

Some imprecision and lack of clarity in the language is tolerated (English is a second language for most students), as long as it does not affect the reader's ability to understand the text. When grading borderline papers, I tend to grade in favour of the student, if there is evidence of at least some effort.

GRADING

A
Excellent. It is well-focused on answering the question. It shows firm knowledge of the literature, demonstrates independence of thought and reflection on the issues. The texts presents confidence in using and synthesizing the syllabus to develop one's own argument.

This is well anchored in the literature and illustrated by examples. The analysis is nuanced and sophisticated. Maybe not perfect from a writing perspective. Some sentences can be long and/or unclear.

Distinctive features: independence of thought, depth of content and nuance

B
Very good. Shows reflection and/or a critical or original approach. It includes relevant material and provides an answer (it might not be crystal clear). Perhaps the paper loses the focus of the argument at some points or the relevance of some contents is not made explicit.

Distinctive features: Rich in content and solid, but not as polished as an A

C
Good/fairly good. It tends to focus on the initial question and provides some kind of answer (maybe unclear, incomplete, or indirect). There is some kind of argument and/or at least some sense of direction. The argument might not be convincing or it can be muddled, but there is an attempt. It shows effort, reading, and some critical approach to the material. Fairly good understanding of the reading and the issues discussed.

Distinctive features: Shows knowledge of the literature and demonstrates some critical stance

D
Fair/OK (more than sufficient). It does not provide an answer or this is confused. Relevant material, but not clear what the argument is and where the discussion is going. Not well organized. Unclear, vague sentences. It remains on the surface. It shows nonetheless some work and reading. A D paper tends to reproduce the contents of the sources with little critical distance.

Distinctive features: Relevant points are mentioned but the work remains on the surface, very little or no critical stance (repetition of content from the sources)

E
Barely sufficient. It mentions relevant issues, but there is no real answer to the initial question. There might be a structure and/or sections but the text is fragmented, difficult to follow, with no clear sense of direction. Very little reading and barely sufficient understanding of the course material. Superficial. Perhaps under the required length.

Distinctive features: Worse than D, but still ticking the most basic boxes for a pass

F
Insufficient. Extremely superficial. Extremely little evidence of any reading. Does not meet the minimum requirements/standards for the MA level.

Distinctive feature: Little evidence of any reading at all

Cristina Archetti, course leader
4 January 2023