

# Nomination of Conrad Fink Regents' Teaching Excellence Awards

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Nov. 21, 2003

John Soloski, Dean  
Grady College of Journalism and Mass Communication  
University of Georgia

Dear John:

A department head does not encounter a finer teacher and colleague than Conrad Fink. Fink earns the admiration of students, faculty and professional journalists with his competence, integrity and professionalism. Since being appointed Professor of Journalism in 1983, Fink has built a teaching, service and research program that serves Grady students and extends deeply into the newspaper industry in Georgia and beyond.

Although his courses are renowned for their intense demands, Fink consistently receives the highest student evaluations. He attracts and disciplines students with his demanding professionalism and leadership. Not incidentally, Fink is a former Marine officer.

One recent student, Kyle Wingfield, was a Foundation Fellow honored by the legislature as UGA's most outstanding student. With Fink's training and contacts, Wingfield went directly upon graduation to the Associated Press in Atlanta where he joined Fink students already prominent in the AP. They will someday help direct the AP, as did Fink. In 2003, newspaper industry donors recognized Fink's contribution by establishing the Conrad Fink Professional-in-Residence program, a program that brings leading newspaper professionals to campus for a week to mentor UGA students.

Fink oversees the Media Management Club, which he designed in 1983, a club with an industry-wide reputation for introducing leading professionals to Grady's best students. At the club's periodic dinner meetings students meet leaders of the newspaper industry--"a wonderful mix of the real world with the academic," says a former Fink student, now a publisher in South Dakota. "These evenings were about everything from how to make good, firm first impressions to how to ask memorable and perceptive questions to how to handle a knife and fork." One visitor, William S. Morris III, chairman and chief executive officer of Morris Communications Corp., says of Fink: "His knack for inspiring young people to be not only top-notch writers and editors but also to be schooled early on about the business side of our industry has been invaluable."

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Fink also negotiates admission of selected students to the American Press Institute, a rite-of-passage training institute for newspaper professionals in Reston, Va. Each year, his Publication Management program sends students to learn how to manage newsrooms, display stories, handle ethical dilemmas, and balance the manager's responsibilities to shareholders and the public. Georgia is the only university to send students to the API. Only Gannett, the largest newspaper group, sends more people to API each year.

Fink designed and leads a highly successful management internship program with Morris Communications. Students in this unique program work in different newspaper departments from advertising and the pressroom to corporate offices. Fink's teaching enticed Gannett to establish a special recruiting arrangement with the Grady College. Each year, Gannett selects 3-4 students from Fink's management program for a post-graduate, two-year executive training program in circulation management.

One of Fink's most successful teaching programs is the Management Seminar for College Student Editors, now in its eighth year. Each year, more than 50 editors-in-chief from the nation's best college newspapers learn during a week at Grady College to manage budgets, time, employees and themselves. Recruiters from major news organizations interview participants. In 2003, recruiters came from the New York Times, the Washington Post and Knight-Ridder newspapers.

Fink extends his teaching influence by writing textbooks--nine to date. These texts are purchased by professionals as well as students. "Editors and publishers everywhere have his books on their shelves," notes the president of one newspaper corporation. Washington Journalism Review called Fink's Strategic Newspaper Management the "best" of its type in print. Major universities adopting Fink's books include Boston University, Syracuse, University of Maryland, Northwestern, Southern Methodist and the University of Oklahoma. (See section on textbooks). Fink also designed and taught a case-study approach to management at the Poynter Institute for Media Studies. A vice president of Knight Ridder Newspapers described Fink's case study of media competition in Gwinnett County as the best newspaper case ever written.

If General Douglas MacArthur's last conscious thoughts were of "the Corps, and the Corps, and the Corps," Conrad Fink's last thoughts will be of "the Students, and the Students, and the Students." Fink is a magnificent teacher, worthy of the Regents' Teaching Excellence Award.

Sincerely,

Kent R. Middleton  
Department Head

CONRAD C. FINK

Curriculum Vitae  
Summary

1983 to present:

University of Georgia, appointed (1983) full professor on a teaching/service track and head of media management program for both undergraduate and graduate students, Henry W. Grady College of Journalism and Mass Communication. Granted tenure in 1988.

Appointed (1990) Director, James M. Cox Jr. Institute for Newspaper Management Studies.

Appointed (1995) William S. Morris Professor of Newspaper Strategy and Management.

University Senior Foundation Fellow Emeritus.

Won (2002) Freedom Forum's National Journalism Teacher of the Year Award.

Won (1992) University's Josiah Meigs Award for Excellence in Teaching;  
Grady College's "Superior Teaching" award (1986, 1989, 1991, 1992).

Awarded (2001) Distinguished Faculty Service Award by UGA National Alumni Association.

Teach Newspaper Management and Strategy, Contemporary American Newspapers, Public Affairs Reporting, Media Ethics, Editorial Writing (offering Honors Options.)

Negotiated \$500,000 grant from William S. Morris III for establishment of William S. Morris Chair of Newspaper Strategy and Management. University matched with another \$500,000.

Negotiated (1992) \$150,000 annual open-ended grant from Jim M. Cox Jr. Foundation for establishment of James M. Cox Jr. Institute for Newspaper Management Studies.

Visiting Faculty, Poynter Institute for Media Studies, St. Petersburg, Fla.; 1985-1992.

1982-1983:

Visiting Lecturer (1982), Visiting Professor (1983), Grady College.

Teaching innovations:

Designed/directed (1995-2002) annual weeklong intensive management training program for rising editors in chief from 50-55 universities and colleges nationwide.

Designed/implemented management case study approach used at, among other places, Harvard, The Poynter Institute for Media Studies, St. Petersburg, Fla., for instruction of both media professionals and university teachers of newspaper management.

Designed and taught Media Ethics, a course now added to Grady College curriculum.

Designed and taught Introduction to Print Journalism course, now part of curriculum.

Designed/instituted unique Media Management Internship Program which places University of Georgia undergraduate and graduate students in management training programs at newspapers in Georgia and elsewhere.

Designed/advise Media Management Club which in the newspaper industry has become well known as a forum for top newspaper publishers and editors who visit the campus, and which also takes Georgia students to newspapers.

Negotiated and administer American Press Institute acceptance of Grady College students for professional seminars and training programs. We are the only university/college program ever so accepted.

### Books

STRATEGIC NEWSPAPER MANAGEMENT, published in 1988 jointly by Random House, Inc. (for university market) and by Southern Illinois University Press (for newspaper industry and general public market in United States and Canada); 2nd Ed. published in 1995 by Allyn & Bacon.

MEDIA ETHICS: IN THE NEWSROOM AND BEYOND, (McGraw-Hill, 1988; 2nd Ed. Allyn & Bacon, 1995; Also published in Korean.)

INSIDE THE MEDIA, (Longman, 1990.)

INTRODUCTION TO PROFESSIONAL NEWSWRITING, (Longman, 1992.); 2nd Ed. 1998.

INTRODUCTION TO MAGAZINE WRITING, (Macmillan, 1993.)

WRITING OPINION FOR IMPACT, (Iowa State University Press, 1999; also published in Chinese.)

BOTTOM LINE WRITING: REPORTING THE SENSE OF DOLLARS (Iowa State University Press, 2000.)

SPORTS WRITING: THE LIVELY GAME (Iowa State University Press, 2001.)

EXTRAORDINARY TEACHERS (Andrews McMeel Publishing, 2001), contributing author.

WRITING TO INFORM AND ENGAGE (Westview Press, in press, 2002.)

### Case Study

THE ATLANTA JOURNAL AND CONSTITUTION, published by the Poynter Institute for Media Studies, 1989.

## Service

Active paid consultant in newspaper management and acquisitions for newspapers and media groups in Georgia and other states; expert witness in media trials.

Visiting faculty to Poynter Institute for Media Studies, St. Petersburg, Fla., 1985-1991.

Unpaid consultant to many Georgia newspapers, particularly in general management/strategy and executive search, and principally through links established between school and newspapers with our new student programs in management.

### Pre-1982:

Park Communications, Ithaca, N.Y., a nationwide newspaper, radio, television conglomerate (1977-1980). Served as member of Board of Directors; Executive Vice President, Park Newspapers, Inc.; Executive Vice President, Park Broadcasting, Inc; member, Management Committee, Park Outdoor Advertising; member, Management Committee, RHP, Inc., a diversified real estate and investment company. Specialty: newspaper acquisitions.

The Associated Press (1957-1977). Vice President, Secretary of Corporation (New York City); foreign correspondent, news executive, 10 years in many parts of world; Executive Director, AP-Dow Jones Economic Report (London headquarters); Chief, Southeast Asian Services (New Delhi); First Vice President, Director, Wide World Photos, Inc. (New York City); Vice President, Press Association, Inc. (New York City); Vice President and Director, AP (Canada) Ltd.; Director and Secretary, New York City News Association; writer, Foreign Desk (New York City); Night City Editor (Chicago).

Bloomington (Ill.) Daily Pantagraph (1956-1957), reporter/photographer.

U.S. Marine Corps (1954-1956), to first lieutenant.

University of Wisconsin, Madison (1951-1954), B.S., Journalism; named School of Journalism Outstanding Graduate.

Northern Michigan University (1950-1951).

### Other:

University of Wisconsin's Distinguished Service Award (1969). Who's Who in America; Who's Who in World.

A Statement About Teaching  
by  
Conrad C. Fink

In support of his nomination for the  
2004 Regents' Teaching Excellence Award

I recall thinking, early in my career as a foreign correspondent, that life could deliver no greater adventure than traveling through the Kyber Pass or dodging through the rice paddies of Southeast Asia.

I moved later to the executive offices of The Associated Press in New York and, as a vice president, helped direct the world's largest news-gathering organization. And that, surely, was the greatest adventure of my 25 years in journalism--indeed of my life.

Then, in 1982, I stepped before my first class at the University of Georgia and quickly discovered I had to redefine "adventure" and, in fact, reorder my life.

I always had wondered about teaching, so why not seek a second career that would employ my professional experience?

Instead, I found a calling.

And now, as I enter my 24<sup>th</sup> year in UGA's Grady College of Journalism and Mass Communication, I know that this, teaching, has been the greatest adventure of all.

For although as a journalist I touched thousands--millions, perhaps, on big stories I covered--my touch was fleeting, the impressions I left soon were washed over by bigger stories that always came rolling along.

In teaching, I found, my touch could be formative, truly meaningful, truly lasting. And isn't that--learning and leaving footprints--what a creative, rewarding life should be all about?

So, yes, this teacher has learned as much as he has taught, and grown in new, unexpected ways, just as he tried to help generations of students learn and grow.

Indeed, I truly meant it when I wrote in one of my books, "This book is dedicated to my students, from whom I have learned much."

Implicit in that statement, of course, is a cooperative tutor-student relationship, a two-way give and take, and not--never!--a cold, standoffish lecture by one of the enlightened fired from a distance at the unenlightened.

Three principal points buttress my approach:

First, my subject matter is free, ethical, responsible journalism, created by a vigorous and financially strong (and, thus, independent) press. So, yes, I am a serious man, and only serious students need apply to share my enthusiasm and the experience of my teaching.

Second, I teach in an important professional college of a major research university, and I deal with adults, not children. I thus have the right--the duty--to demand hard work and manifest willingness to learn.

Third, I have an obligation, therefore, to work very hard to keep my end of the bargain.

And I do work hard, with an open-door policy and, literally, seven-day involvement in classes, one-on-one meetings, term papers, and, yes, the lives--professional and personal--of my students.

There are two dimensions to that involvement: my "macro" effort to create a presence, a studied professionalism of total immersion in journalism, its history, obligations and daily practices. That, figuratively, is a sign on my office door: C'mon in! Let's talk journalism.

Second is my “micro” effort, a detailed approach to recognizing each student’s individuality and tailoring my course to personal career goals whenever possible.

My syllabi are detailed, running sometimes to seven or eight pages, and they are contracts, laying out what students will do and, importantly, what I will do during a course.

In one way or another--in writing, in tutorials--each individual’s objectives are negotiated and shaped. I then use detailed records of student performance to evaluate progress, and adjust as needed.

Only rarely--literally, just a few times in my career--have I gotten substantive complaints about grades. That, I think, is because students can see, in my editing and counseling during the semester, that I care about their work and truly grasp its quality.

It all may sound regimented, even harsh. But it isn’t. I have fun in my classes and, I think, so do my students.

They learn, I learn--and together we move at least a bit toward the enlightenment that surely must be the goal of creative minds.

Conrad C. Fink  
University of Georgia  
November 1, 2003

November 25, 2003

John Soloski, Dean  
Grady College of Journalism and Mass Communication  
University of Georgia

Dear Dean Soloski:

Three times each week, I walk apprehensively into Conrad Fink's editorial writing class. I'm nervous because I know Professor Fink will lead off by turning his attention to *The Red & Black*, as he's done for 20 years, to teach his students the art of journalism.

"Bluestein, what's wrong with that lead?" he asks, pointing at the first paragraph of a front-page story on the Georgia football team's latest victory. Fink tells us our readers of a Monday morning paper want to know what's next, how the game affects the team's chances at a conference championship, how the coach is handling questions about recruiting, not who won on Saturday. Newspapers must speak to their readers, Fink says, readers who spend on average only 26 minutes daily reading the newspaper.

What starts as a daily critique of the *Red & Black* and the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution* quickly evolves into a discussion on ethics, principles and motivations behind the stories of the day. His media ethics class, which should be mandatory for all journalism students, taught me a new prism through which to view journalism. Practically every story in the day's newspaper has its own set of ethical standards, whether it be a terror story in the Middle East or a funding story on campus.

Fink's passion for journalism motivates me and other students. Each day, we are inspired by his spirit and drive for the print media. He gets as caught up in local stories as the students do. His door is always open to the students and alumni who visit daily for journalistic tips, career advice or fascinating conversation. "Fink, Inc.," he frequently jokes, "is always open for business." Time and again, his confidence and encouragement echo in his students' lives. We learn to agree with him, "There's no better way to make a living."

Sincerely,

Greg Bluestein  
Editor-in-Chief

# Fink Students

- Associated Press:
  - Erin McClam, reporter, New York
  - Michael Giarrusso, regional news editor for the south, Atlanta
  - Kyle Wingfield, reporter, Montgomery, AL
  - Mark Niese, reporter, Atlanta
  - Lauren Neergaard, health writer, Washington, D.C.
  
- Les Simpson, publisher, Amarillo Globe-News, Amarillo, TX
- Adrian Pratt, president & publisher, Aberdeen American News, Aberdeen, SD
- Andrea Jones, Rick Bady, reporters, Atlanta Journal-Constitution
- Amy Bellew, general manager for Gwinnett County, Cox Newspapers
- Sam Starnes, director of media relations, PR Newswire, New York
- Tommy Tomlinson, columnist, Charlotte Observer.
- Steven Sears, director, special projects, International Securities Exchange, New York
  
- Other students work for:
  - Washington Post
  - Dow Jones News Service
  - Wall Street Journal
  - Papers in
    - Athens
    - Augusta
    - Savannah
    - Jacksonville
    - and elsewhere

# Excerpts from Reviews of Fink Books

## **Strategic Newspaper Management** (Translated into Chinese and Serbo-Croatian)

Newspaper Research Journal:... “clearly and expertly written... This book, long overdue, is must reading for young professionals... it must be included in the required reading of any media management course.”

Journalism Educator:... “should be required reading for the student and aspiring manager”...

Washington Journalism Review... “the best of a recent spate of newspaper books”...

Publishers’ Auxiliary: “A welcome title, as newspaper management has rarely been considered by an author as competent as Conrad Fink.”

John Morton, leading newspaper analyst, Washington Journalism Review: “a textbook--one that proves a perfect answer to those journalism educators who say they don’t teach management because there is not a suitable book to base a course on.”

## **Media Ethics** (Translated into Korean)

Journalism Educator, “In the crowded world of journalism ethics textbooks, this book stands out in its unblinking look at the corporate realities of journalism today... Not even (a leading ethics text) offers the clear-eyed look into today’s ‘Big Media’ that Fink provides.”

John Morton, Washington Journalism Review: “excellent book.”

## **Sportswriting: The Lively Game**

Midwest Book Review:... “a vividly written, highly recommended, information packed presentation on the realities of sports reporting replete with insight that only a veteran sports journalist could provide. The ‘reader friendly’ text is enhanced with chapter summaries, recommended reading lists, exercises, glossary and index.”

## **Bottom Line Writing**

American Society of Business Publications Editors, “the book is a valuable, how-to lesson for experienced writers and editors, who want to review what they think they already know, and even for young assistant editors on business magazine staffs.”

## **Inside the Media**

J. Douglas Donehue, vice president, Charleston News and Courier and professor at the College of Charleston: “I can tell you unequivocally that it is the best textbook I have ever used in more than 18 years of teaching journalism and mass media courses at Charleston Southern University and the College of Charleston.”

# Teaching Evaluations of Professor Fink

(5-point scale with 5 the highest score)

**Score based on the question: In general, the instructor was an effective teacher.**

<i>Courses Taught</i>	<i>Fink's Scores</i>	<i>College Mean</i>
<u>Spring 2003</u>		
Contemporary American Newspapers (JOUR 5670)	5.00	4.30
Sports Reporting (JOUR 5990)	4.55	
<u>Fall 2002</u>		
Journalism Ethics (JOUR 5410)	4.94	4.32
Editorial Writing (JOUR 5530)	4.93	
Newspaper Management (JOUR 5640)	4.83	
<u>Spring 2002</u>		
Public Affairs Reporting (JOUR 5300)	4.67	4.34
Contemporary American Newspapers JOUR 5670	4.75	
<u>Fall 2001</u>		
Journalism Ethics (JOUR 5410)	4.26	4.33
Editorial Writing (JOUR 5530)	4.14	
Newspaper Management (JOUR 5640)	4.44	

# Students' Comments

Fink is the Buddha of newspaper journalism.

I suggest a Fink class for everyone in journalism.

Fink is a genuine teacher, tough, but fair. I enjoyed attending class each day.

I really enjoyed having Professor Fink for this class. This was the highlight of my semester.

Fink is an excellent teacher, eager to share his experience with all students.

I was honored to take a class with Professor Fink. He made this semester for me. I have huge respect and admiration for Mr. Fink and his experience.

Nothing beats experience plus the ability to share it!

Fink was the best journalism instructor I've had at UGA. He cared about our learning experience, which made me want to do the work. Out of all my classes, Public Affairs Reporting with him has taught me the most.

Professor Fink is without a doubt the most qualified and most interesting teacher at Grady.

Fink is great! Grady should hope that he never plans on retiring.

Name building after Fink...He's the best!!!

Fink is a great professor who allowed me to take a thorough look at journalism. The questions asked of me and the emphasis placed on examining information compelled me to be a better journalist and a better consumer. I like his candidness and his interest in his students' success.

Fink is by far the best Instructor I've had in J-School, and has changed my views on the newspaper industry in so many ways.

Professor Fink is a professor with genuine concern for his students. The things I have learned in his class I will carry with me throughout my career. Now that we are at the end of the semester, I can honestly say this has been one of my favorite classes at UGA -- even though I've had to work very hard to make it through it.

One of the best professors I've ever had.

This is a fabulous course. Professor Fink displays his great arts of teaching by deploying his journalistic expertise and provoking new ideas in class.