



## The Image of Broadcast

by [Donna Tam](#), staff writer

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The Nob Hill D conference room turned into a darkened movie theater Wednesday complete with a screen, projector and a discussion filled with comedy, drama and romance.

A panel of professors discussed "The Image of the Broadcast Journalist in Movies and Television" in a session sponsored by the Entertainment Studies Interest Group and the Visual Communications Division.

The presentation included a 10-minute montage featuring films from 1937 to today. It included black-and-white movies such as "Mr. Smith Goes to Washington" and "The Day the Earth Stood Still," as well as more recent films such as "Winchell," "RoboCop" and "Wrongly Accused." Among the television clips were snippets from "The Mary Tyler Moore Show," "Murphy Brown" and the cartoons "The Simpsons" and "Family Guy."

Panel moderator Joseph Saltzman of the University of Southern California's Annenberg School for Communication directs the Image of the Journalist in Popular Culture Project.

He said many movies and television shows only feature one minor scene where journalists are portrayed and these scenes offer a one-sided, stereotypical view of journalism.

But all stereotypes come from somewhere, as one audience member pointed out, and Saltzman agreed that broadcast journalists sometimes do perpetuate the image and audiences will believe what they see collectively.

Panelist Howard Good, a professor of journalism from the State University of New York at New Paltz, spoke about the struggle of ethics in journalism that movies often use in portraying war correspondents. His presentation, "Welcome to Sarajevo, Salvador, and Under Fire," discussed these images and how they often raise valuable questions about journalism ethics but rarely answer them.

"It's like a romantic comedy that's unconsummated," he joked, adding that the images often frustrate his students because the ethical issues are unresolved.

Panelist Matthew Ehrlich, a professor of journalism at the University of Illinois, discussed the movie "Good Night, and Good Luck." He said the film industry longs for the nostalgic times of journalism in the 1940s and 1950s, and that the character of Edward

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R. Murrow has become an icon for the type of valiant journalism Hollywood thinks is now in the past.

Richard Ness, an associate professor from the newly established department of broadcasting at Western Illinois University, discussed the portrayal of radio broadcasters from the past to present. He talked about the love / hate relationship between Hollywood and radio journalists and how that infatuation moved toward other media such as television. He predicts Hollywood will start to set its sights on Internet journalism as the industry becomes more visible.

The only obstacle may be casting. Ness said the image of Internet journalists right now are geeks and nerds sitting in front of their computers.

"I don't think a nerd works as a hero," he said, adding that the movie industry may need to find a way to make that character more interesting. "But it will come."

The montage shown at the panel discussion is part of a longer video available through the Image of the Journalist in Popular Culture Web site at [ijpc.org](http://ijpc.org).

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