

AU Professor to Speak on China, Bulgaria at International Media Conference

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Alfred, NY -- Few Americans know that although the Cold War is over, journalists in Bulgaria can still lose their jobs or even be jailed for criticizing a government official. Robyn Goodman, assistant professor of communications at Alfred University, plans to tell this little-known story at the International Media 2000 Conference at Ohio University in Athens March 9-11, where she will present two research papers to an audience of journalists and journalism educators. "I'm excited to have had two papers accepted," she said. One paper is "Bulgaria's Post-Cold War Media: The Rocky Road to Freedom." The other is "Prestige Press Coverage of the China May 4 Movement." For the Bulgaria project, she got help from a researcher in the former Soviet satellite. "I collected recent articles from the Bulgarian press, radio, TV, and film, and analyzed how independent they actually are, compared to their dream of independence," said Goodman, who is active in the international division of the group sponsoring the conference, the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication. "When the Cold War ended, journalists were euphoric," she said. "But in recent coverage, I found that Bulgaria's press has a long way to go ... There has been progress, but although the government no longer controls the press, business interests and partisan political interests have taken over. Reporters say the only way to communicate freely is to sneak downtown and spray-paint words on a wall." The China paper links the May 4 Movement, a 1917-21 upheaval by students and workers, to the Tiananman Square protests of spring 1989, which ended in the June 4 massacre. People said in 1989, "We still don't have the freedoms our forebears fought for 70 years ago." In her paper, Goodman says American journalists didn't cover Tiananman Square adequately because they didn't understand what was happening. "They covered the spring of 1989 as if it were an isolated event, not a continuation of the struggle of 1917-21," she said.