

Roles overstepped

Greenfield critiques media

by Scott Brokaw
Staff Writer

The Wichita State University Forum Board Lecture Series opened Monday with Jeff Greenfield, author, journalist, television critic and syndicated political columnist. Greenfield spoke on "Terrorism and the Media."

One of the issues Greenfield addressed was whether or not television overplays the coverage of terrorism.

"The answer to me is a resounding yes," Greenfield said. "During a hijacking, we see updates every 15 minutes to tell us that nothing new is happening."

"One of the most devastating blows to the Carter administration during its last year was Walter Cronkite's sign-off when he would say 'That's the way it was, Monday, November 14, the 316th day of the Iranian hostage crisis.' The message he was giving to the public was 'That wimp in the

White House won't do anything about the crisis.'"

"Sometimes the story is overlaid because the government chooses to do so," he said.

Greenfield discussed the common belief that terrorists perform terrorist acts for publicity.

"Terrorism is not a monolithic disease," he said. "It is a clear goal of terrorists to terrorize people. If people cancel a trip to Paris because of terrorism, they have accomplished their goal."

"To believe that restraining coverage will put a halt on terrorism is wrong — there's nothing we can do that will make the world better, safer or more fair."

Greenfield also talked about the problem of propaganda and the distinction between it and fact.

"We as the media convince people that what is being said is the truth," he said. "Do the American people believe what they hear from Khadafi or do we not have the ability to see these people and judge for ourselves?"

"My feeling is that if you don't



Photo by Laura Mathews

Columnist Jeff Greenfield during his lecture on terrorism and the media.

trust the American people enough world in which we live, you don't to expose them to this crazy, insane have much faith in the American

Media reacts to hostages

From 'Media' - page 1

people.”

“It is the job of a journalist to tell the truth,” he said.

“Television exploits the families of hostages by showing their grievances,” Greenfield said. “Families sometimes deliberately talk to the media because they didn’t want the story to disappear.”

“It is the nature of television that personality is more important than data.”

Greenfield then answered questions from the audience.

“When a crisis erupts, you get this media machine in action,” he said in response to a question concerning the number of times the space shuttle explosion was shown. “Television shifts into a different mode — there is a constant audience flow, people coming home every 15 minutes wanting to know what happened, and you can’t expect them not to bring you up to date.”

Staff Writer Mike Strand contributed to this report.