

**Investigative Reporting for Broadcast Journalists**  
**RTV 3305, Section 76H3 - Spring 2017**

**Class Time:** Mondays 6:15pm – 9:15pm

**Class Location:** Weimer 1078

**Instructor:** (Mr. Bob) Williams

**Contact Information:**

**E-mail:** [robertwilliams@ufl.edu](mailto:robertwilliams@ufl.edu)

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**Meetings by appointment**

**Course Objective:**

Investigative journalism is the cornerstone of the Fourth Estate, tasked with hold in power accountable to the people and the public good. In this class, students will explore investigative reporting techniques; practice obtaining and using public information for broadcast news stories; learn how to produce both in-depth investigative stories and use those skills to improve daily news reporting skills; discuss the practice of investigative reporting and its role in society; and produce in-depth news stories for TV and radio. In addition, students will build competencies in personal brand management to leverage their stories for career advancement.

**Goals:**

- Discuss the characteristics that are used to develop a solid investigative news story
- Identify credible reporting resources and be able to utilize resources for newsgathering
- Participate in class discussion as an informed journalist and collegial group member
- Prepare to apply for journalism positions with a cover letter/resume and resume reel

**Required Readings:**

Investigative Reporting: From Premise to Publication

Author: Marcy Burstiner (2009)

ISBN-13: 978-1890871918

Government-in-the-Sunshine Manual

Author: Florida Office of the Attorney General (2015)

Publisher: First Amendment Foundation

## Materials:

- You will have access to a SD card for newsgathering. These cards will be issued in accordance with equipment policy procedure and acknowledgement forms.
- You are expected to be knowledgeable and proficient with the appropriate equipment necessary to execute your projects.

## Assignments:

### ➔ Investigative News Stories

You are required to submit (2) television investigative news stories over the course of the semester.

Each story MUST include:

1. A news peg! The story must be timely and have news value. What makes it important right now?
2. At least ONE audio or visual element from:
  - a. public record or public access event, i.e., inside a courtroom (with courthouse approval)
  - b. public meeting
  - c. data from public (but trustworthy) sources
  - d. surveillance video
  - e. Florida Office of Internal Affairs
  - f. 9-1-1 calls, etc.
3. Sound from at least THREE people including but not limited to:
  - a. one interview with a human element with a storytelling perspective
  - b. an individual directly affected by the story through whom the story is told
  - c. a central character who contributes a valuable perspective.
  - d. corporate or public official with information necessary to the story
  - e. Individual or sector of the population who are impacted or will benefit
4. Should also include natural sound breaks when possible and appropriate
5. Stories should have an appropriate reporter standup. We want to see who is sharing this story with us.
6. BALANCE – we want to be sure you are representing all sides of the story. Give the accused the opportunity to defend themselves. Be critical but fair. An unfair or biased story will earn you a failing grade no matter how well it is written, shot, or edited. Objectivity is a cornerstone of journalism that will be strictly observed in this class.
7. ATTRIBUTION – where are you getting your information from? Be sure to be clear about your sources. Who said what? Where do these facts come from? This will also help protect you from legal action. (And good investigative reporters get sued a lot.)
8. This class will utilize YouTube or google docs for project submission. You must have an account which allows the content be available for me to observe (set your security restrictions carefully!)

9. All TV stories must be submitted as complete packages and cannot run more than 3:30. I challenge you to keep them in the 2:30 range. Going less than 2:00 and more than 3:30 will result in grade penalties.
10. In lieu of a final exam, you will complete a cover letter/resume and reel project. This is designed to showcase your best work and prepare you for the job market. I encourage you now to go back through your personal archives and chase down any past work that you may not have readily available. If you do not have much to showcase, consider covering extra stories for WUFT newscasts.
11. This is a broadcast reporting class and, as such, you are expected to personally report stories and turn in news reports using your likeness and your voice.
12. Well executed stories will be shared with the WUFT news directors for possible broadcast.

### ➔ **Story Pitches**

On scheduled pitch days, students will be prepared with at least (2) story ideas to be discussed in class. Final ideas must be sent to me in writing via email. Submissions must include who will be interviewed, what visual elements you will use to tell the story for TV and why you think the story is relevant or timely. This is your opportunity to really sell the story. The submission is graded separately from the executed pkgs.

### ➔ **Deadlines**

Deadlines are paramount in the industry. Missing a deadline can result in dismissal or suspension from your job. With that in mind, all work for this class is due at the beginning of class on the specified date.

For each 24 hours after the deadline, a letter grade is subtracted **INCLUDING** weekends. After ten calendar days, an automatic zero is given for the assignment without exception and cannot be made up.

In order for me to make mandatory final grading deadlines, ***late work will not be accepted for the final project.***

Technical difficulties or interview cancellations are not license to submit late work. Plan ahead and have a backup plan. *There is always at least one thing that does not go according to plan.* Give yourself room to troubleshoot.

### ➔ **Required Readings**

You will have regular readings from the textbook and possibly other materials. We will have (2) test and/or quizzes related to classroom text material.

**Attendance & Participation:**

- ➔ Students are allowed ONE “freebie” absence and ONE late arrival without penalty. Additional absences and tardies will be unexcused. It is recommended that you save your freebies for emergencies.
- ➔ In extenuating circumstances, the instructor may grant an excused absence with at least 24 hours’ advanced notice and for an acceptable reason. The only exception is in the case of illness, which requires a doctor’s note on or before the next class period. If you tell me you have a death in the family, do not be surprised if I investigate your assertion.
- ➔ Unexcused absences will reduce your class participation grade. The same penalty will be applied to late arrivals and early exits. You are expected to remain in class until it is dismissed by the instructor.
- ➔ Assignments are still due at the beginning of class following an absence.
- ➔ Mandatory attendance is required for:
  - a. All test and quiz days
  - b. Story pitch days
  - c. Project (1) and (2) presentations
- ➔ If there is an in-class graded activity and you miss class, you will not be allowed to make up the activity. You must be present and participate in order to receive credit.
- ➔ You are expected to come to class prepared and actively participate in class discussions. Disruptive behavior or failure to participate in class discussions will negatively affect your participation grade.

**Laptops & Cellphones:**

- ➔ During lectures and discussions, you are expected to pay attention, contribute to the discussion, and know the material. Do yourself a favor and keep your phones in a bag or pocket to avoid temptation. I promise to give you my undivided attention and, in exchange, I expect the same from you. The use of recording devices in class without prior permission from the instructor is prohibited.

**Grades:**

10%	Pitch 1
10%	Pitch 2
20%	In-class participation/Test-Quizzes/Homework/Draft Cover Letter/Resumes
20%	Investigative Story 1
20%	Investigative Story 2
10%	Final Cover Letter/Resume
10%	Resume Reel

**Grading Scale:**

A	92.5-100
A-	89.5-92.4
B+	86.5-89.4
B	83.5-86.4
B-	79.5-83.4
C+	76.5-79.4
C	73.5-76.4
C-	69.5-73.4
D+	66.5-69.4
D	63.5-66.4
D-	59.5-63.4
E	59.4 or below

**Extra Credit**

Extra credit opportunities to participate in research or other related projects may be offered at the instructor's discretion to boost the homework portion of your grade; although this is, in no way, guaranteed.

**E-Learning:**

As much as possible, this course will utilize various online platform for maintaining grades, attendance, and assignments (except video/audio project files that are too large to upload).

**Plagiarism:**

You are not permitted to recycle any work from another class. All work should be specifically produced for RTV 3305 and produced by you alone. You may recruit another student to help you shoot standups for your TV pkgs, but ALL other elements must be shot by YOU. All scripts are to be written by YOU without exception.

As any assignment in any course in UF, you are not allowed to copy work from another individual in any form. See the UF College of Journalism and Communications' Honor Code for further details: <http://www.jou.ufl.edu/academics/bachelors/journalism/academic-honesty/> Failure to comply with this policy can result in failing this course, as well as further action by the college and/or the UF Dean of Students Office.

*The use of video, images, or audio from third-party sources must be approved in advance, must come from sources that WUFT-TV has legal access to use, must not violate copyright laws, must be used in very limited amounts, and must be used only in cases where no other video or graphics will make sense for the story. Failure to comply with this mandate will result in a failing grade on the assignment. Pulling media off of the Internet without prior written consent from the copyright holder is theft of property. This includes social media, YouTube, and Google. In addition to violating course policy, lifting media can get you into serious legal trouble*

**Equipment Checkout:**

There are television production kits assigned to RTV3305. You are allowed a one-day checkout, with the equipment due back by 9:00 a.m. the following morning. On Friday, equipment can be checked out until 9:00 a.m. Monday. Steve Kippert is the contact person.

There is a 24-hour wait to reserve equipment again once you bring it back. For special projects and situations, it may be possible to grant exceptions. Send me an e-mail in enough time that I can contact Steve Kippert on your behalf to try to arrange something. This is not a guarantee that the equipment will be made available.

There are a lot of people using this equipment. Reserve early. Arrange your shoots early. Don't procrastinate. Lack of equipment availability is not an acceptable reason to miss deadlines. Remember that there are two RTV3305 classes using this equipment.

If you miss equipment deadlines and lose equipment access, you are responsible for remedying the situation. I will not and cannot override the equipment policies established by the UF Department of Telecommunication/WUFT.

I strongly advise you to respect that this is expensive equipment. Do not leave it unattended. Do not leave it in your car. Do not leave it in excessive hot or cold temperatures. Do not expose it to humidity or moisture. Do not expose it to extreme conditions. Do not allow other students or

friends access to it for any purpose. Do not leave it in a place where your dog can chew on it. You may be responsible for repair costs.

A hard copy of the WUFT equipment policy will be distributed to the class. ***Any equipment checkout violations will result in 10 points off of the student's project grade for each violation.***

***The equipment is the sole property of the University of Florida. You are to use the designated equipment only to generate content for this class. All course content is also the sole property of the university. You do not have the right to sell or distribute it to any other broadcast or media outlet or entity without the express permission of the University of Florida.***

**Disabilities:**

If you have a disability that requires special consideration from the course instructor, you must self-identify with the instructor and register with the UF Dean of Students Office. Accommodations will be arranged. More information is available from the Disability Resource Center online: <https://www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/>

## Course Schedule for RTV3305-Section 1B36, Spring 2016

*The instructor reserves the right to make changes as deemed appropriate/necessary. Any changes will be clearly announced in class.*

**May 15**                      Course Introduction  
Student & Instructor Introduction  
Syllabus Review  
Documentary: “Watergate: Shadow of History” (117 mins.)  
Class discussion/Group project

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**May 22**                      What constitutes investigative reporting?  
Chapter 1: Introduction/Overview “All the President’s Men” (138 minutes)  
Project ideas/Possible group pairings  
Cover Letter Resume assignment

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**May 29**                      **Memorial Day**

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**June 5**                      Preliminary Resume Review  
Group Project Report  
Chapter 2: Finding the Story  
Chapter 3: Setting up your Investigation

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**June 12**                      Pitch Day (1)  
Chapter 14: Pitching Your Story  
Chapter 4: Requesting Public Records  
\*Mandatory Class\*

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**June 19-23**                      **Summer Break**

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**June 26**                      Chapter 6: The Interview Process  
Ginger Story  
Chapter 8: Documenting the Story  
Chapter: 10/11 Shaping & Writing the Story



**July 03** Project (1) Presentations  
Self -Evaluations

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**July 10** Pitch Day (2)  
Famous Investigations/What went wrong?  
Unit Test  
\*Mandatory Class\*

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**July 17** Chapter 12: Legal & Ethical Considerations  
Good Night Good Luck (Movie)  
Edward R. Murrow Assignment

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**July 24** Personal Brand Management: Resume Reels Explained  
Chapter 9: Finding & Using Data  
Quiz  
Cover Letter/Resume/Reel Submissions  
\*Mandatory Class\*

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**July 31** Final Presentations Project (2)  
Self -Evaluations  
\*Mandatory Class\*

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