Multimedia Reporting

JOU 3346L, section 2F11, spring 2018
4:05 to 7:05 p.m., Tuesdays, 2050 Weimer Hall

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Course Summary

This three-credit intermediate journalism course marries traditional local news reporting with the multimedia skills required of reporters today. Multimedia is a broad term. For this class, it simply means using more than one kind of storytelling tool to tell a story: text, images, audio, video, data, etc.

Your primary goal is to learn to identify, pitch, produce and deliver a local news story to an online audience. We will conduct ourselves as if reporting for a news website, while also considering mediums such as podcasting and email newsletters. Given the community-based story opportunities, this course will help prepare you for not only advance journalism courses, but also an internship and or a job.

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Course Objectives

Students in this course will learn and or understand the basics of:

1. Achieving greater clarity, consistency, accuracy and authority in their newswriting and attribution.

2. Identifying and pitching a local news story (government, crime, education, business, courts, etc.).

3. Developing a beat and finding news off it using official and unofficial sources and other means.

4. Gathering information via interviews, public documents, Google, online repositories, etc.

5. Determining which storytelling tool best suits a particular story   and maximizing the opportunity.

6. Developing a "hire me" digital portfolio and sharing one's work to as broad an audience as possible.

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Noteworthy

Each student is responsible for:

1. Reading, understanding and abiding by this syllabus and its contents and directives.

2. Abiding by any announcements or directives the instructor sends to the class via University of Florida email, or our course Canvas or Facebook platforms.

3. Completing all assigned readings as related quizzes and class participation will affect grading.

Required Texts

- "Field Guide to Covering Local News: How to Report on Cops, Courts, Schools, Emergencies and Government," Bayles © 2012.

- "The Associated Press Stylebook and Briefing on Media Law"   apstylebook.com and #apstylechat.

  - access free via https://www.apstylebook.com/smathers-libraries-at-the-university-of-florida

- "Inside Reporting: A Practical Guide to the Craft of Journalism (3rd Ed.)," Tim Harrower © 2013.

- Gainesville Sun and gainesville.com (via UF subscription to Access World News database)

Other Reading

- Journalism websites, including, but not limited to those of national, regional, local, alternative and campus news outlets   newspapers, magazines, television and radio and online-only.

- "Aim for the Heart: Write, Shoot, Report and Produce for TV and Multimedia," Tompkins © 2018.

- "Writing & Reporting for the Media," 11th edition, Bender, Davenport, Drager and Fedler © 2016.

- "Online Journalism Handbook: Skills to Survive and Thrive in the Digital Age," Bradshaw © 2018.

- "Mobile and Social Media Journalism: A Practical Guide," Adornato © 2018.

- Style guides on grammar, spelling, punctuation, special interest, etc., including but not only:

  - "A Style Guide for News Writers & Editors," Bender, Davenport, Drager and Fedler © 2016.

- Other materials provided via email from the instructor and or via the course's space on Canvas.

Students With Disabilities

Reasonable accommodations will be made for students with disabilities and who have registered with the UF Dean of Students Office. This office will provide relative documentation to the student, who must then provide this documentation to the instructor when requesting accommodations.

UF Disability Resource Center: http://www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/

Counseling Center

Personal or health issues such as depression, anxiety, stress, career uncertainty and or relationships can interfere with your ability to function as a student. UF's Counseling and Wellness Center (CWC) offers support for students in need. CWC is located at 3190 Radio Road and open each weekday from 8 to 5.

UF Counseling and Wellness Center: http://www.counseling.ufl.edu/cwc

Resources

The University of Florida offers an abundance of resources that can help students throughout their academic career. Each student is encouraged to make use of these resources, which include but are not limited to the library, tutoring, career resource center, etc.

UF Student Resources: http://ufadvising.ufl.edu/student-resources.aspx

Attendance, Attention, Deadlines, Extra Credit

Attendance and Lateness

Students are to show respect for one another and for the instructor. Those who come to class each session and on time will be rewarded. Each absence will result in a 10-point penalty toward the class participation portion of your grade (see page 8 of this syllabus). Lateness or unwarranted disruptions may likewise result in up to a 5-point penalty, per each occasion. Students absent from or late to lab are responsible for learning about any missed material by consulting another student, or visiting the instructor during office hours. Such matters shall not be handled via email. Which brings us to …

Life Happens

Students have been known to miss class because of temporary illness, oversleeping, travel, hangovers, job interviews, family matters, mental health, etc. Some of these excuses may be legitimate and others not. An absence is an absence   and this instructor's policy is to simply note that the student missed class. Regardless of the reasons for being absent, a student who misses too many classes risks not mastering the coursework. In such a case, he or she may be withdrawn from the course per UF policy.

UF Attendance Policies: https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/attendance.aspx

Mobile Devices

Mobile devices must be out of sight and unused during class   unless the instructor directs them to be used for class purposes. Do not check text messages, social media, email, etc., during class, as this is rude. Give your full and undivided attention to anyone who is speaking in class, including your classmates. Anyone seen checking social media or any other sites unrelated to the immediate topics discussed in class may incur penalties ranging from a warning (first offense) to grade deduction.

Deadlines

Late assignments are not accepted unless an emergency can be documented. This means that an assignment submitted late is graded as a zero. If an illness or a personal emergency prevents you from completing an assignment on time, advance notice and written documentation are required. If advance notice is not possible because of a true emergency, written documentation will be mandated ASAP.

Generally speaking, we will function as if working in a professional workplace. In the real world, you don't show up for work (on time) or don't do your work (on time)   you risk losing your job. In other words, students who don't come to class and or miss deadlines will suffer consequences.

Extra Credit

No work for "extra credit" shall be accepted.

Each student is expected to do the same amount of work (and to improve progressively) and achieve the same outcomes (including getting published). This proves to be fair when considering that students have different circumstances unrelated to class. Those students, for example, who must work three jobs don't have as much time to do extra credit as those who don't have to work. The instructor will not grade according to effort   as it's the outcome that matters. He will, however, be mindful of whether a student's work is trending forward   or backward   when the time comes for midterm or final grades.

Academic Integrity

The College of Journalism and Communications is committed to upholding the university's academic honor code. Academic dishonesty of any kind shall not be tolerated in this course. The university's guidelines provide additional details, which each student is expected to understand. To be certain, academic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to using any work done by another person and submitting it for a class assignment; submitting work done for another class; copying and pasting text written by another person without quotation marks and or without complete attribution, which usually includes a link to the original work; using images produced by someone else without explicit permission by the creator. Attribution is not the same as permission. Most images found online are not free to use.

UF Student Honor Code: https://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/process/student-conduct-honor-code

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Sources, Diversity and Conflicts of Interest

Whenever possible during this course, students shall pursue storytelling that is fair, accurate and complete and based on information gathered from a variety of sources. A greater understanding of the cultural and ethnic differences in our society will enhance the learning experience, and help students develop habits and sensitivities that will be of great value in their workplaces and communities.

This emphasis on diversity of sources shall not focus just on race and ethnicity or sexual orientation, but also age, education, gender, geography, occupation, politics, religion, socioeconomics, etc.

Abide related content "Diversity in News Coverage," pages 88-89 in course textbook by Harrower.

Avoid conflicts of interest at all times. Students in this course shall not be used as sources for your field assignments. The same applies to relatives, roommates, friends (from campus or back home), sorority sisters, fraternity brothers, or members of any other co-curricular or extracurricular organizations to which you belong. Interviewing UF faculty, staff, or employees may be allowed provided they and the student do not have a prior relationship and only with prior approval from the instructor.

Sources must be interviewed either in person or on the phone. Email interviews are discouraged and permitted only with the instructor's permission in advance of the particular interview. Sometimes a source will want you to let him read a story before it's submitted or published. Do not do so. It may be appropriate sometimes, depending on the story, even ideal to call the source back to confirm facts or context, or even to read the person's direct or direct quotes to him or her. Be wary, however, of allowing someone else to determine or undermine your reporting or story approach for nefarious reasons.

In nearly all cases, multiple sourcing is required and be sources we mean interacting with at least two real human beings, and not simply relying on organizational statements, news releases or websites. This also involves contacting as many people or obtaining as much related documentation as possible. It is wise to interview as many sources as possible, so you have more than you need for your story.

All facts and opinions in your story must be attributed to sources. Anonymous or off-the-record material is not acceptable any more than the use of fictional people. If there's a compelling reason to not use a source's full name in a story, it must be explained to the instructor in advance for approval.

Submitted assignments not abiding these sourcing, diversity and interview mandates shall be penalized.

Course Representation

In dealing with news sources and others in the community for course assignments, you may be asked, "Who are you with?" or "Why are you asking?" or "Who are you writing this for?" Say that you are enrolled in a reporting course at the College of Journalism and Communications at the University of Florida. Do not imply that you work for any media — on campus or otherwise — unless so directed by the instructor. Work for this course potentially may be published by a news organization, but will be public via your course blog and website. You may refer a source's questions and concerns to your instructor.

Class assignments shall not be posted elsewhere on the Internet, or shared with a potential employer as examples of your writing or reporting ability, without prior approval of the instructor. Sharing material that has been substantially edited by an instructor as your own work could be considered dishonest.

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Professional Standards

This course will benefit anyone interested in a career in any communications field because he or she must be able to write clear and concise copy, with care and precision, often on deadline, and that is fair and accurate. One major American daily newspaper defines the skills it expects of its reporters this way:

Writing ability — grammar and spelling; ability to tell a good story well; use of quotes, anecdotes and descriptive detail; use of active voice and strong verbs; ability to write inviting leads that hit the point of the story; ability to write tightly and to organize information in logical, compelling sequence.

Reporting ability — pursuit, digging, enterprise, diligence; able and eager to see and pursue promising angles; able to seek and obtain anecdotes, details and quotations that provide documentation and add liveliness to copy; able to see need for and to get both sides of the story; able to cultivate good sources.

Speed, productivity and efficiency — speed on deadline; speed and efficiency in completing non-deadline assignments; ability and willingness to manage more than one assignment at a time; ability and willingness to make frequent, substantive contributions to the content of the paper.

Accuracy — skill with basic factual information such as names, addresses, dates and figures; ability to identify and make use of the best sources, whether they are documents, references or people.

Work habits — punctuality, reliability, readiness to go beyond the minimum requirements of the job; interest in assuming and ability to assume more than minimum responsibility; ability and willingness to anticipate and fulfill the demands of an assignment without prompting; ability to deal even-handedly with peers and supervisors, to accept constructive criticism and to offer constructive suggestions; interest in all areas of the news operation; knowledge of community, regional, national and international events; regular and thorough reading of the newspaper.

Judgment — commitment to fairness and balance; ability to recognize and assess possible adverse consequences of actions; knowledge of, respect for and observance of the news department's policies.

Potential — likelihood that the reporter is a candidate for a more challenging reporting assignment or a supervisory position; evidence that he or she possesses the characteristics of leadership and supervisory ability expected of supervising editors.

Social Media

Social media is now an essential aspect of efforts — on many storytelling fronts — to gather and present information, report and filter the news, and distribute content across multiple platforms. In this course, we may attempt to use Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat, Medium, LinkedIn and other social media for reporting, and to communicate with one another and people we may never meet. We will also use these tools to better present ourselves and demonstrate our value to potential employers.

Course Evaluations

Students are expected to provide feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing online evaluations at https://evaluations.ufl.edu. Evaluations are typically open during the final weeks of the semester. Students will be given specific dates when they are open. Summary results of these assessments are available to students at https://evaluations.ufl.edu/results.

Associated Press Style

Cannot stress this enough. Helpful hints: capitalization, numerals, dates, decades, years, Roman and Arabic numerals, percent, percentages, a.m., p.m., times, ages, boy, girl, infant, youth, directions and regions, highway designations, composition titles, magazine names, newspaper names, titles, military titles, courtesy titles, legislative titles, religious titles, academic, abbreviations and acronyms, second reference, social media, state, state names, abbreviation of state names with cities, datelines, dateline cities, distances, percents, dimensions, foot, cents, dollars, millions, fractions, addresses, etc.

Writing Assignments

All writing assignments should be turned in:

- On white paper, with 1-inch margins (top, bottom, left, right) and 12-point Times Roman font.

- With the file named as either studentlastname_storyslug.doc or studentlastname_storyslug.docx.

- With your name, slug (provided by the instructor) and date all single-spaced in the top left corner.

- With the text in single-spaced, block format (no indented paragraphs; single spaces between them).

- With quotes almost always as their own paragraphs.

- All field assignments must be submitted or posted by the specified deadline.

- Keep electronic copies of all assignments. Email a copy of each in-class one once completed — along with your notes — to yourself. Don't get caught having to say your only copy is on the lab computer.

- Failure to abide by these expectations will result in grade penalties.

Budget Lines

Budget lines are a staple of any newsroom (see Harrower, pages 18-19). They enable writers and editors to detail what content is proposed or ready to be published — and why the audience should care. Budget lines typically focus on impact, immediacy, proximity, prominence, novelty, conflict, emotions, etc. Therefore, a budget line must be submitted for each lab assignment. Failure to do so on time may result in a minus-10 penalty per assignment. The instructor will provide sample budget lines soon.

Grading (Part I)

The instructor will judge each assignment as an newsroom editor focused on accuracy, craftsmanship, effort and enterprise, not to mention how well the student reporter abides directives, instruction and feedback. Other considerations: relevancy or urgency (front-page news or just a brief); the quality of sourcing; the depth of interviewing; attribution; the power of quotes; story flow (is it logical); adherence to AP style, not to mention grammar, spelling and punctuation; and gumption and ingenuity.

An A indicates superior performance; B, highly competent, above-average work; C, average; D, below average; E, unsatisfactory. Use your time efficiently. You will be rewarded for results, not simply for effort. Steady improvement, however, will earn additional equity.

Final grade calculations: 930-1,000, A; 929-900, A-; 899-870, B+; 869-830, B; 829-800, B-; 799-770, C+; 769-730, C; 729-700, C-; 699-670, D+; 669-630, D; 629-600 D-; 599 and below, E.

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Sample Rubric

LEAD (10 points): For a typical news story, adhering to inverted pyramid instruction. For a profile or news feature, looking for an anecdotal lead   a revealing little story that lures the reader in.

NUT GRAPH (10 points): Summarizes why THIS person, activity, agency, etc., matters NOW, and otherwise helps the reader know why this is a story worth reading. A supporting nut graph may be ideal.

CHRONOLOGY/WHAT LIES AHEAD (10 points): Proper, efficient use   and definitely not overuse of background information; provides context, moves the story forward, and doesn't slow it down?

TRANSITIONS/QUOTATIONS/ATTRIBUTION (20 points): Do they help move the story along, give it life and urgency, give it context; are other voices included; do they match the tone of the story and or publication; is it clear who's saying what, where and when and why?

MECHANICS (20 points): Avoids errors in grammar, spelling, punctuation or AP style; avoids wordiness, prepositional traps and run-on sentences; no form errors or obvious layout concerns (line breaks, errant spacing, widows/orphans) based on class instruction; demonstrates quality proofreading.

STORY (up to 30 points):
- Up to 30 points for notable (nicely focused and organized; exudes confident writing; evidence of abiding by class instruction; leaves the reader wanting more; obvious engagement with the topic).
- Up to 20 points for satisfactory (reasonably focused and or organized; moderate evidence of abiding by class instruction; moderately engaged with the topic; fewer connections between ideas; writing for the professor, not a greater audience or community).
- Up to 10 points for unacceptable (unfocused or disorganized; limited topic engagement; paragraphs or sentences are not connected; no evidence of abiding by class instruction; not interesting).

FACTUAL ERRORS (up to minus 50 points):
- Factual errors are embarrassing and intolerable. They can range from an inaccurate street address or time element (even if the effect on the story is relatively insignificant) to a misspelled name of a person, business, agency or institution (on any reference), to a misquote; or just plain inaccuracy.

Grading (Part II)

Lab Participation (10 percent)

- A key aspect of journalism is knowing that others will see your work, and that in most cases it will be evaluated, first in a newsroom by editors and other colleagues   and, of course, publicly, perhaps forever. Be prepared to offer feedback on each other's work in lab, and sometimes before and after.

- Be prepared to discuss current events and assigned class readings when called upon.

- Each lab absence will result in a 10-point penalty toward this participation grade. Lateness (to lab or otherwise) or unwarranted disruptions may result in up to a five-point penalty per each occasion.

Quizzes (10 percent)

- Expect weekly AP style quizzes to assess learning of the governing course stylebook, matters covered in class readings and or of knowledge of current events and journalism news.

Social Media (10 percent)

- Each student must abide by and contribute to all considerations represented as #loweclass while working to build a following and presence across social media appropriate for a student reporter.

  - This includes producing by 11:59 p.m. each lab day at least one tweet   using the #loweclass hashtag   about something learned, witness or experienced during our time together.

  - This includes tweets, live tweeting or posts weekly related to your beat or as otherwise assigned.

Digital Portfolio (10 percent)

- Each student must develop and or maintain a "hire me" website   otherwise known as a digital portfolio   for this course as a means of presenting his or her work to the world. This website will include, but not be limited to, a home page, an "about me" page, a portrait, a blog and coursework.

Lab Assignments (10 percent)

- Often working under deadline pressure, and with facts and information developing perhaps only a few minutes before, we will apply ourselves to lessons learned in lab. As often as possible, we will look for lectures and news events on or off campus for the class to cover together.

Field Assignments (30 percent)

- Each student will identify, pitch, report, produce and share a multimedia package each week   with prescribed types, lengths and objectives   that aims to determine the level to which he or she has learned the concepts taught in the course to date.

- The instructor will offer details about each week's assignment during the lab session.

Final Assignment (20 percent)

- Each student will identify, pitch, report, produce and share a multimedia package   with prescribed types, lengths and objectives   that amounts to what's commonly called a special report, and aims to determine the level to which he or she has learned the concepts taught in the course to date.

- The instructor will offer more details about this assignment at least two weeks before the deadline.

Missing or Late Work

- Assignments and quizzes not completed or submitted on time shall be penalized significantly.

Course Schedule

This syllabus represents our current plans and objectives. As we go through the semester, these plans may change based on developing news or learning opportunities. Such changes   which shall be communicated in class, via email, Canvas or social media   are unforeseen and should be expected.

Another possible consideration: The unplanned availability of relevant guest speakers   in person or remotely   who would enhance our experience. We would adjust our schedule accordingly.

WEEK ONE: Jan. 9
- Course Introduction and Taking Stock

WEEK TWO: Jan. 16
- Newswriting 101 and Identifying and Pitching a Story

WEEK THREE: Jan. 23
- Introduction to Audio Reporting

WEEK FOUR: Jan. 30
- Introduction to Video Reporting

WEEK FIVE: Feb. 6
- Covering Government and Local News

WEEK SIX: Feb. 13
- Covering Government and Local News (Part II)

WEEK SEVEN: Feb. 20
- Covering Education

WEEK EIGHT: Feb. 27
- Covering Education (Part II)

WEEK NINE: March 6
- No class   spring break

WEEK TEN: March 13
- Covering Business and the Economy

WEEK ELEVEN: March 20
- Covering Business and the Economy (Part II)

WEEK TWELVE: March 27
- Covering Courts and Public Safety

WEEK THIRTEEN: April 3
- Covering Courts and Public Safety (Part II)

WEEK FOURTEEN: April 10
- Reporting From Your Beat

WEEK FIFTEEN: April 17
- Reporting From Your Beat

WEEK SIXTEEN: April 24
- Special Report (Final) Due