

RTV 4684 SPECIAL NEWS PROJECTS
SPRING 2018 SYLLABUS MARK LEEPS (mleeps@wuft.org, 352-294-1504)

Basics

Prerequisite: C or better in RTV3632 Electronic News Producing & Management

Note: you should also have already taken JOU3101 Print/Digital Reporting

Newsroom Shift (TV): One full day per week pre-arranged (9:30am until 6:00pm)

This is a lab-based course, no lectures or projects or quizzes, but there may be group training sessions TBA.

Normally all-day shifts producing 5pm live daily tv newscast, other possible requirements for radio or other tv producing.

Instructor's office hours: M-F 1-2p, Weimer 2324

Texts

There is no required text, though buying an **AP Stylebook** will help you in this experience and in this field...help you now and in any pro reporting jobs.

Suggested Pro Development Texts:

Shorter, Sharper, Stronger: Writing Broadcast News

by Merv Block

Make it Memorable: Writing and Packaging TV News with Style

by Bob Dotson

Write for the Ear, Shoot for the Eye, Aim for the Heart: A Guide for TV Producers and Reporters

by Al Tompkins

Course

5pm producers normally work one day per week, 9:30am-6:00pm with extra time spent checking pitches or doing day planning or filling coverage reports.

After the academic prep of completing RTV3632 (Producing) and serving as an AP for the 5pm show, this is the 3crhr course for immersive training as a line producer. This course is normally repeated only once, any further work as 5pm tv newscast producer is done as a 1crhr RTV4930. Radio assignments vary.

Background

The pro stations make UF an extraordinary place to gain practical experience, compared to many other J-schools. Many places create campus news for a campus audience (perhaps a weekly on a totally academic calendar), with a student/campus target audience, "broadcast" only on campus cable.

Your tvnews work will routinely be broadcast to a 10+ county area.

Objective

The objective of regularly producing live tv newscasts is to grow your reliable and marketable skills as a tv newscast producer, and to generate samples for your resume reel. Every day is different content-wise, different story formats and show segments vary in their degree of difficulty to execute, and experience is key to learning how to handle the newscast and how to grow your editorial judgment.

Goals

Develop and demonstrate the following professional skills:

1. Ability to **scour “the world”** for news to consider for your show and your audience (networks, social media, local competitors, pro partners, feeds, press releases, neighborhood news & local events, etc.)...developing news judgment about what to include in your show for your audience and why.
2. Ability to **match various treatments and formats to stories** for editorial and production reasons...and creativity to sometimes revisit unusual treatments or experiment with novel ones
3. Ability to develop and manage a rundown on newsoom computer system like ENPS (a pro platform used by many commercial stations) in terms of planning how the half-hour of television should look and sound minute by minute. **Make sure everything is correctly formatted.**
4. Ability to work on daily-deadline managing all contributors (reporters and editors) and talent (anchors and reporters fronting their material live) to make sure everyone is prepared and in place to attempt to execute your gameplan. During crunchtime and showtime, **you’re the leader.**
5. Ability to serve frontline in the control room where you **manage the show second-to-second, including all timing issues and “navigating”** to avoid trouble and to recover from it when it happens anyway. (This involves real-time communicating with the director and talent, real-time decision-making, executing “backup plans” or generating new ones on the fly, showing leadership to deliver the best you can for your audience given how your show rolls out in real life.)
6. Ability to **analyze how to improve production-wise and how to pass-the-ball editorially.** During critique, don’t focus on anchor talent performance, go over their readiness and focus and communication and understanding...pay attention to the details we need to correct to keep everyone (cast and crew) on the same page next time. Editorially, send a note to the producers and newsmanagers about how far we advanced certain stories and if there’s more they might consider next.

Unexpected Opportunities

Planned shows on days of classes are all that is required, however **you may find extraordinary opportunities by volunteering for other shows or specials** the INC may attempt during the term. There have been Homecoming shows, Hurricane Specials, Sports Specials, Holiday Specials (Veterans Day, Memorial Day, MLK), and special reports for other major news (9/11, Pulse, etc.).

Calendar Notes

The Spring run of WUFT NEWS First at Five is 1/16-4/27

- There are no shows the first week, just some practice exercises on Thursday and Friday afternoons
- **We start on TUE right after the MLK Holiday**
- There are no shows during Spring Break, we'll look for volunteers to get through with an alt-product at 5pm
- Reading Days (4/26,4/27) are volunteer shows, usually the only reporters are those who need to do make-up shifts

Key Points In The Normal 5pm Producing Day

- Before your shift: awareness of the coming news of the day, reporter pitches, requests for live shots
- 9:30am morning editorial meeting & reporter assignments
- Morning NBC-FL conference call
- 2:30pm show production meeting—explaining the draft show to anchors, director, newsmanagers
- 4:00pm all local reporters should be back in copyediting or doing video editing by now
- 4:30pm we should be wrapping up most scripts to their final versions
- 4:40pm anchors should be printing scripts by now
- 4:45pm videos should be turned in (if not, you may need to soon switch to a backup plan for the lead or have an alternative for other large components in your z-block)
- 4:50pm everyone should be getting into place, talent in the studio, reporters where they need to be, and producer in the control room
- 5:00pm show starts
- 5:30pm show ends (this is why we preach 30 minutes of focus)
- 5:35pm gather in studio for show critique (producer & director lead off)
- 5:50pm write up notes on show for other producers and newsmanagers

Grading

- **100% - producing**

You're graded on the skills you prove over the course of the term as a line producer. It is a holistic, all-inclusive, end-of-term assessment. Try to get better each show...in the real world you're only as good as your last show (how it looked to the real world, which is rarely as good as you planned).

Grading Policies

Requirements for class attendance and make-up exams, assignments, and other work in this course are consistent with university policies that can be found at:

<https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/attendance.aspx>

and <http://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/grades.aspx>

Grading Scale

The grading scale for TV2 is as follows:

A	95-100
A-	92-94
B+	89-91
B	86-88
B-	83-85
C+	80-82
C	77-79
C-	74-76
D+	71-73
D	60-70
D-	50-59
E	0-49

UF Honor Code

UF students are bound by The Honor Pledge which states “We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to hold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honor and integrity by abiding by the Honor Code.” On all work submitted for credit by students at the University of Florida, the following pledge is either required or implied: “On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in doing this assignment.” The Honor Code (<http://www.dso.ufl.edu.sccr/process/student-conduct-honor-code/>) specifies a number of behaviors that are in violation of this code and the possible sanctions. Furthermore, you are obligated to report any condition that facilitates academic misconduct to appropriate personnel. If you have any questions or concerns, please consult with the instructor in this class.

Accommodations

Students with disabilities requesting accommodations should first **register with the Disability Resource Center** (352-392-8565, www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/) by providing appropriate documentation. Once registered, students will receive an accommodation letter which must be presented to the instructor when requesting accommodation. Students with disabilities should follow this procedure as early as possible in the semester.

TV3 students typically handle 20-30 pounds of gear in all sorts of weather conditions; students with physical limitations or ongoing medical conditions should seek accommodation from the instructor as needed.

Campus Resources

Please be aware of UF’s Health & Wellness resources for students:

U Matter, We Care: if you or a friend is in distress, please contact umatter@ufl.edu or 352-392-1575 so that a team member can reach out to the student

Counseling & Wellness Center: <http://www.counseling.ufl.edu/cwc/Default.aspx>
352-392-1575

First Responders: University Police Department 352-392-1111 or 911 for emergencies <http://www.police.ufl.edu/> & SARS (Sexual Assault Recovery Services) at the Student Health Care Center 352-392-1161

CJC/DMP/INC Policies

It is your responsibility to learn and comply with all INC policies.

There are specific rules in the Dress Code but the bottom line is **you will not be treated as a professional if you do not look business-like**. Anyone who violates the dress code will be notified at the time of the violation and advised to comply in the future or sent home to change, if necessary, in the judgment of the newsroom staffer. Students who appear on tv or the web will get feedback about clothing, makeup and performance...in order to keep our work products on-par with industry standards.

The G020 Loading Zone Student Policy emphasizes that any access to the Weimer Service Drive is only for stopping to load/unload heavy/bulky gear and stops are limited to 10 minutes. **Follow instructions closely, you are personally responsible for any tickets you get.**

The CJC/DMP/INC Equipment Policy emphasizes that **gear checkout is for official course or INC business only**. The college/stations hold the rights to all work-product and published/broadcast material generated, and it may not be redistributed or repurposed in any form without permission of college/station officials. Don't post anything we generate to YouTube or other non-wuoft websites without checking.

The Computer Policy emphasizes that **all the computers in the INC are for official station business (including select courses) only**. Many are reserved for people in specific roles at certain times of day. Make sure you work in an area appropriate to your role/course, that you log-in as instructed and save & log-out everytime you walk away.

We embrace the **RTDNA Code of Ethics** and the similar SPJ Code of Ethics, but we also have our own Ethics Policies you should study and follow.

The **food & drink policy** for the INC is that no eating or drinking is allowed outside the break room, nothing except for drinking bottled water...but be careful not to spill onto computers or gear.

Course Notes

- **Never leave your newsroom shift without prior approval** from a NewsManager.
- All work is done for potential broadcast on WUFT-TV, WUFT-FM and publishing on WUFT.ORG and related in-house platforms but you should **make no promises** to the public about if or when certain stories will air.
- We **never** give copies of our taped material (raw, edited, or airchecks) to anyone, but can take requests from the public to post a particular story on our web site.
- To help secure our gear and help keep our workplace secure, **do not let strangers into the newsroom and do not prop the doors open after normal business hours**. Report any unusual activity to managers and report any suspicious activity to managers or police.
- **Keep backups**. The material on all of our workstations gets routinely deleted at the end of each term...and failures could happen at any time. Protect your best work and save it to your portable hard drive.
- In addition to INC NewsManagers, other station staffers may provide feedback at any time. All **criticism from the pro staff is meant to be professional, not personal**...learn to accept it and learn from it. You may also get feedback from special guests.
- We have outside partnerships ongoing with NBC NewsChannel Florida, CNN, and sometimes others. **Don't assume material we generate can be shared or posted anywhere; always check with Mark first**.
- **Your swipe access to the INC that comes with registration in this class will expire after the end of the term.**