

# JOU 4201: News Center Practicum

Fall 2018

*Innovation News Center Labs:* Monday-Friday, periods 3-7 (9:35 a.m. - 2:45 p.m. — day determinate upon course section), Weimer 2300

*Lecture:* Monday, Period 9 (4:05 - 4:55 p.m.) Room: WEIM 1076

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**Course Description** This is a newsroom experience course that produces and edits journalism in the [Innovation News Center](#) (Weimer 2300).

The INC is a professional newsroom for WUFT and WRUF/ESPN's TV, radio stations and websites. These are not campus stations. They are professional news outlets serving 19 counties in North Central Florida. So for this class, think and act like a professional journalist. In other words, treat this like a job or internship. If you do, you will get better clips, you will better prepare yourself for a job and you'll get a better grade. It also prepares you for working in a professional workplace by navigating office politics, communicating your ideas, garnering attention and interacting with management. Even if a job in journalism is not your desired destination, you'll gain valuable work experience to apply toward your chosen profession.

Because this is a real newsroom, your workday will vary. Majority of your time will be spent in the field and in the newsroom producing stories for [wuft.org](http://www.wuft.org), WUFT-FM 89.1 or WUFT-TV.

## Course Intranet

Most details about how to function in the INC – from finding stories to writing headlines — are on the [WUFT News intranet](http://www.wuft.org/newsroom) (<http://www.wuft.org/newsroom>). The username and password are both *newsroom*.

## Required Equipment

In addition to your written stories, you will be producing multimedia including still photographs, video, NPR quality audio, podcasts and more. You will be able to check out HD/SLR cameras with accompanying tripods, audio recorders, studio lights, stands and backdrops as needed for your stories. You are able to use your own gear if you'd prefer, but all multimedia assets must be of comparable professional quality (smartphones are acceptable in many cases when used appropriately).

Adobe Suite including Photoshop and Premiere Pro is available on the computers in the INC.

Suggested textbooks:

- *Inside Reporting*. Harrower, T., 2009. New York, NY: McGraw-Hill. Majority of reporting/editing questions can be answered with this text.
- AP Style Book - Available via Newsroom Intranet (login is newsroom and newsroom)
- Aim for the Heart: Write, Shoot, Report, Produce for TV and Multimedia (3rd Ed.)" © Al Tompkins
- Clark, Roy P. *Writing Tools: 55 Essential; Strategies For Every Writer, 10th Ed.* New York: Hachette Book Group, 2006.

- Kramer, M., Call, W., & Harvard University. (2007). *Telling true stories: A nonfiction writers' guide from the Nieman Foundation at Harvard University*. New York: Plume.
- Strunk, William, and E. B. White. *The elements of style*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1999. ISBN 978-0205309023 (Invaluable reference for writing clean, simple prose. You should carry this with you throughout your career. Keep it close for quick references.)

**Transportation:**

If you don't have a vehicle to get off campus to pursue a story, you should consider Zipcar. Zipcar is a car-sharing program that has several vehicles on campus you can rent by the hour for a price that includes gasoline and insurance. UF students can join Zipcar for \$25 (that's half-price), which includes \$35 in driving credit. Uber is also an option, as is the bus system. Resourceful journalists find better stories. Don't use not having a car as an excuse. WUFT's audience extends far beyond the university and therefore requires reporting away from campus. Go in person for interviews whenever possible. It is difficult to add color and telling details to your story from the newsroom.

**Labs begin August 22, 2018.**

**Lecture begins Monday, August 27, 2018.**

**Assignments and Grading**

Story Assignments (there are five stories, plus the pitches)..75%

Professionalism and Social Media.....25%

*\* Late assignments will result in the loss of one letter grade each day, unless you have prior approval from your editor for extenuating circumstances. Exceptions can be made for evolving stories, not poor time management.*

## Story assignments

### Daily Deadline Stories

Each of you will sign up for two daily deadline stories to be reported during two of your lab shifts throughout this semester. Reporting shifts will be posted in the WUFT Gmail calendar (login available via Newsroom). You will sign up for dates during your first lab.

On the days of your daily deadline story, you need to attend the morning pitch meeting at 9:30 a.m. in the conference room upstairs to update the editors on your pitch ideas, pre-reporting/reporting progress and discuss any questions in connection to this assignment.

This type of story HAS to be submitted no later than the end of your lab shift and **does NOT have to be from your assigned ZIP code**. To speed up the process and get the story submitted by the deadline, you can do some pre-reporting (which is strongly recommended) before your shift.

### Daily Deadline Story Approval

You will consult with your editor and pitch your story idea via the [story pitch form on the newsroom intranet](#). Each story pitch must be submitted no later than **24 hours BEFORE** your shift.

Your story pitch will automatically be uploaded into our [daily story budget Google Doc](#) **AS WELL AS** our Slack #news-stories channel. You will receive feedback from news managers and your editor in the Slack #news-stories channel. You **MUST** monitor these forms and channels. *\*More explanation on Slack during lecture and lab*

Use the feedback to shape your story or pursue another. It is often easier to pitch a story idea in a face-to-face conversation (you still need to submit your pitch). Do not pitch the same story

as another web reporter — first pitch gets the story. ([Double check the pitch sheet via Newsroom Intranet](#)). In some cases you might be assigned to work with TV and/or radio reporters on the same story, for which you will share sources, interviews and work together in the field.

In the case your first pitch is not approved by the news managers/editors during the meeting, it is wise to have at least one, if not two, backup pitches in mind with a list of two to three possible sources.

The ideal INC daily deadline story should ...

- Be between 450-600 words (exceptions may apply for breaking news, enterprise and investigative work)
- Cover the 5 Ws + How and Why
- Be timely (what's the news peg ?)
- Be shareable (would you email this or share on social ?)
- Be balanced and fair
- Be error-free (misspelled names count)
- Have multiple sources (unless it's a Q&A with one person, at least 3 sources should be cited)
- Use AP Style
- Use active verbs and vivid descriptions (show don't tell)
- Avoid jargon or wordiness (make every word matter)

- Have visual elements (image, video, graphic, etc.) A caption is needed for every photo with all people and places identified (every story must have AT LEAST TWO photos)

## Untold Florida Stories

In addition to your daily deadline stories, you will produce two stories for the [Untold Florida: Your neighborhood, your story](#) collective project. Each of these stories must be reported from your assigned ZIP code.

Requirements: Minimum of three sources; 600-800 words, is the product of engaging with the community and audience. This means you are talking to the people who live there to learn about the issues concerning their neighborhoods and businesses.

\*\*Refer to guidelines above for daily deadline story.

### All Stories Must...

**Avoid conflicts of interest.** 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 extra-curricular 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 at times — even ideal — to call the source back to confirm facts or context, or even to read the person’s direct quotes to him or her, but do not agree to allow them to approve the story before publication. Be wary of allowing someone else to determine or undermine your reporting or story approach for nefarious reasons.

**In nearly all cases, multiple sourcing is required.** This means you must talk to **at least** two real human beings and not simply rely on organizational statements, news releases or websites. This also includes contacting as many people and obtaining as much related documentation (public records) as possible.

**Every story** (daily deadline and Untold Florida) **MUST have at least two photos with identifying captions** (no buildings or signs—we report on people). Videos, data visualizations and other multimedia elements are strongly encouraged.

**Multimedia Standards as outlined on the Newsroom Intranet** (url is [wuft.org/newsroom](http://wuft.org/newsroom). Username is newsroom. Password is newsroom):

- Details the criteria for good photos and for audio or video files.
- Offers advice and links for tips on how to take better photos and capture audio/video. See also: <http://training.npr.org/category/visual/>
- Suggests good apps for Android and Apple smartphones.
- All photos **MUST BE** downsized to **2mb** before submitting.
- A photo caption that identifies the people in the picture, their first and last names, age(s), where they are from/currently live,

what is going on in the photo and photographer credit.

- Under normal circumstances, photo captions are written in present tense.

Ex.: Photo Slug — Hurricane Irma (not IMG0935.jpg)

Caption: John Smith, 35, of Gainesville, Florida, cleans up debris in the front yard of his Townsend neighborhood home Thursday, September 13, 2017 after Hurricane Irma ravaged the area. (Jane Doe/WUFT News)

- The name of the person speaking in your audio file or video file.
- You can use the INC sound booths to record audio from a telephone interview. Instructions are on the WUFT News intranet.

## Sample Rubric

**LEAD** (10 points): For a typical news story, adherence to inverted pyramid instruction. For a profile or news feature, look 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.

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

**TRANSITIONS/QUOTATIONS/ATTRIBUTION** (15 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, when and why?

**MECHANICS** (20 points): Avoids errors in grammar, spelling, punctuation or AP style; avoids wordiness and run-on sentences; avoids passive voice and utilizes strong action verbs, not “be” verbs.

**STORY** (up to 20 points):

- Up to 20 points for notable (nicely focused and organized; exudes confident writing; leaves the reader wanting more; obvious engagement with the topic).
- Up to 10 points for satisfactory (reasonably focused and or organized; moderately engaged with the topic; fewer connections between ideas; writing for the professor, not a greater audience or community).
- Up to 5 points for unacceptable (unfocused or disorganized; limited topic engagement; paragraphs or sentences are not connected; not interesting).

**VISUALS** (up to 15 points)

- Every story must have at least two photos with identifying captions (no buildings or signs—we report on people) and/or videos, data visualizations, GIFs, interactives and other multimedia elements.

**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.

*\* Fact errors can get you fired*

## Story Submission

All stories must be submitted to [wuftnews@gmail.com](mailto:wuftnews@gmail.com) **AND** Canvas with all necessary story assets (photos attached, not embedded), story document (Word or Google doc is fine; story should not be part of email text, but attached), video url (WUFT YouTube —login available via Newsroom), data viz, etc... *DO NOT submit stories via One-Drive, as we cannot open them.*

\* Your story submission must include an [appropriate headline](#), two tweets and a Facebook post.

Your submission to the Gmail is for editing and publishing. Your submission to Canvas is for a grade. Failure to submit to either by the deadline will result in significant point reduction, and in some cases, zero credit. You must submit to receive a grade.

## Story Editing and Publishing

### Grading Scale

The minimum score to pass this course is a C, or 72.5. Scores are rounded to the nearest whole point: 89.4 rounds down to 89 (B+) while 89.5 rounds up to 90 (A-). More details on the university's grading policy can be found in the undergraduate catalog online.

	Percent		Percent		Percent		Percent
		B+	89-87%	C+	79-77%	D+	69-67%

A	100-94%	B	86-83%	C	76-73%	D	66-63%
A-	93-90%	B-	82-80%	C-	72-70%	D-	62-60%

## Attendance

Course requirements for class attendance, make-up exams, assignments and other work are consistent with UF policy. An absence can be accommodated if and only if (a) the absence is covered by UF policy, (b) you call your lab instructor at least 30 minutes before class begins, and (c) you promptly provide written documentation for the absence.

**CAUTION:** This is a professional course. The rules are likely different from those of other courses. You must not only do the work, but you must demonstrate that you can do the work acceptably within a limited time. **Missed deadlines can result in automatic failure of the assignment/project. Stories with conflicts of interest of the reporter shall also result in automatic failure.** Grades on stories can be lowered (e.g. to zero) as the result of students misrepresenting themselves or otherwise being unprofessional while working on story assignments. Do NOT tell sources you are working for the *Alligator* or *Gainesville Sun* or any other publication. Students often find sources are more willing to talk if the students are dressed appropriately and presenting themselves as professional reporters.

*\*We have business cards for you to hand out and credentials you may check out for assignments.*

## Be Professional

When you are pursuing a story for WUFT News, adopt the persona of a professional journalist.

- Be early for interviews or appointments ([On time is late](#)).
- Dress appropriate to the story, which is usually business casual attire.
- Identify yourself as a reporter for WUFT News (You are working as a professional reporter; not a student. You will likely have greater response from your subject(s) if you do not introduce yourself as a student).
- Represent WUFT News to the outside world as would a professional journalist.

**Sources:** One of the best ways to ensure your stories are fair, accurate and complete is to gather information from a variety of sources. In selecting potential sources for your stories, keep in mind that we live in a diverse, multicultural world. You should make every effort to have your stories reflect that. Talk to a variety of people from different backgrounds, educational levels, religions, races and socio-economic statuses to get a complete story. The Gainesville Sun or Alligator are not acceptable sources.

**Do your own reporting and writing.** Plagiarism — including using material from news releases and information gathered from the internet without attribution (**hyperlink whenever possible!**) — will result in serious and harsh consequences. If you have even the smallest doubt or are confused about this or anything else in the course, PLEASE ASK.

**Honor Code** Violation of the [honor code](#) includes plagiarizing material from other sources or fabricating material, as well as other forms of cheating. Violations will result in a failing grade, you will be dismissed from the journalism program and reported to the Honor Court.

**Classroom Needs** Students requesting special classroom needs must first register with the Dean of Students Office, which will provide documentation to the student, who must then provide the documentation to instructor.

**Lastly...**

**Have fun.** You chose journalism likely because you enjoy telling stories, talking to people, experiencing the world, exposing the corrupt and holding public officials accountable. The more you embrace this course and the INC, the more fun you will have and better experience you will gain.

[From the late David Carr:](#) *Don't work on me for a better grade —work on your work and making the work of those around you better. Show industriousness and seriousness and produce surpassing work if you want an exceptional grade.*