

## INVESTIGATIVE REPORTING FOR BROADCAST JOURNALISTS

RTV 3305

3 CREDIT HOURS

FALL 2018

WEIMER 2056

WEDNESDAYS 9:35AM – 12:35PM

**INSTRUCTOR:** MIKE LOIZZO

*mloizzo@ufl.edu*

mobile: 402-405-9903

**OFFICE HOURS:** Immediately following class or by appointment

---

### REQUIRED TEXT:

Investigative Reporting: From Premise to Publication by Mary Burstiner, Holcomb Hathaway/Routledge Publishing, ©2009

ISBN: 9781890871918

ISBN-13: 978-1890871918

### ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

Subscribe to the Local Matters weekly newsletter:

<http://bit.ly/localmattersnewsletter>

Government-in-the-Sunshine Manual:

[www.myfloridalegal.com/sun.nsf/sunmanual](http://www.myfloridalegal.com/sun.nsf/sunmanual)

Investigative Reporters & Editors (IRE) Resource Center:

[www.ire.org/resource-center](http://www.ire.org/resource-center) (you can register for a membership “fee-free”)

### COURSE 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.

---

**COURSE DESCRIPTION:** Principles of investigative reporting as applied to television and radio news.

**PREREQUISITES:** RTV 2100 or MMC 2100 and RTV 3001 and RTV 3303 with minimum grades of C and junior or senior standing in telecommunication with news track.

**PURPOSE OF COURSE:** To improve your reporting skills, in general, and your investigative reporting skills, specifically. To give you an opportunity, through coursework, to learn how to pitch story ideas that require in-depth research, analysis of data, and comprehension of complex ideas. To produce investigative stories for broadcast and web, with additional web resources for viewers/listeners.

**COURSE OBJECTIVES:** 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.

### **COURSE GOALS**

- Discuss the characteristics that are used to develop a solid investigative news story.
- Identify computer assisted 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. If you have not already, create a channel on a user-generated platform (example: YouTube) with your biography, contact information, and news stories/resume reel.

**INSTRUCTIONAL METHODS:** This class will not be lecture-intensive. Instead, as trained communicators, we will discuss readings and topics to share our ideas and learn from one another. In addition, our goal is to work as a team of journalists, helping each other work through story ideas to improve the end product.

---

### **ATTENDANCE POLICY:**

- Students are expected to attend each class – especially days when pitching story ideas and reviewing finished stories.
- 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. Students who experience a family or personal emergency

- (death in the family, unplanned hospitalization, etc.) should contact the Dean of Students Office and request notification letters be sent to their professors.
- 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 the instructor's dismissal.
  - Assignments are still due at the beginning of class following an absence with points deducted for missing a deadline.
  - 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.

**MAKE-UP POLICY:** Deadlines are important in newsrooms, so we will abide by similar standards for class assignments. Any missed deadlines will result in a reduction in points.

---

## **ASSIGNMENTS:**

### **Required Readings**

You will have regular readings from the textbook and possibly other materials. We will discuss these in class.

### **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 for TV and web and what nat sound elements for radio, 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 final broadcast reports.

### **Investigative News Stories**

You are required to submit three (3) 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 is impacted or will benefit – a “human” element/personal story.
4. Should also include natural sound breaks when possible and appropriate
5. Stories should have an appropriate reporter standup for TV reports.
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 – what is the source of your information? 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/viewing privileges carefully!)
9. All TV stories must be submitted as complete packages and cannot run more than 2:30. Closer to 2:00 is better. All radio stories must be under 4:00. Closer to 3:30 is better.
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.

---

### **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 stand-ups for your TV packages, 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 email

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 RTV 3305 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.

---

**UNIVERSITY POLICY ON ACCOMMODATING STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES:** Students requesting accommodation for disabilities must first register with the Dean of Students Office (<http://www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/>). The Dean of Students Office will provide documentation to the student who must then provide this documentation to the instructor when requesting accommodation. You must submit this documentation prior to submitting assignments or taking the quizzes or exams. Accommodations are not retroactive, therefore, students should contact the office as soon as possible in the term for which they are seeking accommodations.

**UNIVERSITY POLICY ON ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT:** Academic honesty and integrity are fundamental values of the University community. You should be sure you understand the UF Student Honor Code at:

<https://sccr.dso.ufl.edu/policies/student-honor-code-student-conduct-code/>.

**NETIQUETTE: COMMUNICATION COURTESY:** All members of the class are expected to follow rules of common courtesy in all email messages, threaded discussions and chats.

<b>GRADES:</b>	<b>GRADING SCALE:</b>
Pitch 1: 5%	A 100-94
Story 1: 20%	A- 93-90
Pitch 2: 5%	B+ 89-87
Story 2: 20%	B 86-83
Pitch 3: 5%	B- 82-80
Story 3: 20%	C+ 79-77
Final project: 15%	C 76-73
Attendance: 5%	C- 72-70
Participation: 5%	D+ 69-67
<b>TOTAL: 100%</b>	D 66-63
	D- 62-60
	E 59-0

## **COURSE SCHEDULE:**

**August 22**                    Course Introduction  
                                      Student & Instructor Introduction  
                                      Syllabus Review  
                                      Chapter 1: Introduction/Overview

---

**August 28 (11:59pm)**    **Withdrawal from All Fall Courses with No Fee Liability**

---

**August 29**                    What constitutes investigative reporting?  
                                      Chapter 2: Finding the Story  
                                      Chapter 14: Pitching Your Story  
                                      Cover Letter Resume assignment

---

**September 5**                Pitch Story 1  
                                      Chapter 3: Setting up your Investigation  
                                      Chapter 4: Requesting Public Records  
                                      Chapter 5: The Game Plan

---

**September 12**              Chapter 6: The Interview Process  
                                      Chapter 9: Finding & Using Data  
                                      Progress report on Story 1

---

**September 14**              **Withdrawal with 25% Refund (W assigned to all Fall courses)**

---

**September 19** Chapter 8: Documenting the Story  
Chapter: 10/11 Shaping & Writing the Story  
Progress report on Story 1

---

**September 26** Story 1 Review, discussion, evaluation

---

**October 3** Pitch Story 2  
Chapter 12: Legal & Ethical Considerations

---

**October 10** Chapter 13: Advanced Reporting Methods  
Progress report on Story 2

---

**October 17** Guest Speaker – details TBA  
Progress report on Story 2

---

**October 24** Story 2 Review, discussion, evaluation

---

**October 31** Pitch Story 3

---

**November 7** Cover letter, resume, reel tape explained  
Progress report on Story 3

---

**November 14** Guest Speaker – details TBA  
Progress report on Story 3

---

**November 19 (11:59pm)**      **Drop Deadline**  
(W assigned to individual course(s). Drops of individual courses  
must be approved by the student's college)  
**Withdrawal Deadline (W assigned to all Fall courses)**

---

**November 21**              **THANKSGIVING BREAK**

---

**November 28**              Progress report on Story 3

---

**December 5**              Story 3 Review, discussion, evaluation

---

**Disclaimer:** This syllabus represents my current plans and objectives. As we go through the semester, those plans may need to change to enhance the class learning opportunity. Such changes, communicated clearly, are not unusual and should be expected.