

# JOU 3305: Data Journalism

Spring semester 2019, University of Florida

R | Period 4 - 6 (10:40 AM - 1:40 PM)

Final Exam: Take-home examination due **Thursday, May 2 at 10:40 a.m.**

Instructor

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## OBJECTIVES

This is a hands-on course. You'll learn to use data to illuminate trends and tell stories. You'll get comfortable importing and cleaning data and building your own spreadsheets. Then you'll practice using tools like Microsoft Excel and SQL to analyze information.

The classroom will be part learning lab, part newsroom. Working as group, you'll execute a data-driven news story, with the goal of getting it published. You will have the opportunity to participate in the data collection, analysis, reporting, writing and presentation.

## HOW THIS CLASS WORKS

This class has two main components:

- 1) A data project that the class will produce over the course of the semester
- 2) A series of lectures and hands-on instruction in specific data journalism techniques

## CLASS DATA PROJECT

We will start on the data story at the beginning of the semester. You will all be responsible for collecting data and analyzing it. In addition, you will volunteer for other roles, including reporting, writing and presentation. Your grade will be based on the assignments you take on and how well you execute those tasks.

You will lose points for missing deadline, subpar work or inaccuracy.

Every student will be expected to take on four to eight **journalism tasks** that contribute to the bigger project. Some tasks will be fairly simple — for example, building a spreadsheet or landing a key interview. Those will be worth 50 points on your final grade (or 5 percent). Others may be big

enough to be worth 100 or 150 points (i.e., writing a large portion of a major story). Each task will be assigned or approved by one of the instructors as the semester develops.

You should expect to work on the story outside of class.

## **LECTURES**

The class will also include nine lectures on data journalism, covering Microsoft Excel, Microsoft Access, SQL and writing with data. Those skills courses will be:

Excel 1

Excel 2

Excel 3

Intro to databases

Access / SQL 1

Access / SQL 2

Advanced SQL databases

Stats and Numeracy

Writing with Numbers

We hope to schedule those lectures around the class project, so that you learn each skill as it becomes most useful to you. As such we are not going to release a weekly schedule at this point. But we will announce firm schedules at least two weeks in advance, which will include plans for the subsequent two weeks (much as investigative projects are managed in our newsroom). We may also teach special topics related to advanced data skills as the class project permits.

## **OTHER GRADED WORK**

By Jan. 24, you will select a data journalism story (preferably from a professional publication) on which to write a 500- to 700-word paper. Be sure to address which data sets were used, how the reporter did the analysis, the main findings, and what other reporting went into the article. You can also discuss what you consider the strengths and weaknesses of the story. For full credit, you must interview the reporter on the story. The paper is worth 100 points, or 10 percent of your final grade. This will be due before the start of class on **Jan. 31**.

On March 21, you will receive a data set, which you will be expected to analyze. You will also be expected to write a memo with findings. We will provide some key questions we expect this memo to address. The memo is worth 200 points, or 20 percent of your final grade. It will be due before the start of class on **March 28**.

You will receive a take-home exam during the last class on April 18. You must submit it in before 10:40 a.m. on **May 2**. This exam will be skills-based and will test your ability to perform the specific tasks taught in the data journalism lectures. The exam is worth 200 points, or 20 percent of your final grade.

## **GRADE CALCULATION: 1,000 points total**

Class data project: 400 points  
Data skills final: 200 points  
Take-home data analysis memo: 200 points  
Story analysis assignment: 100 points  
Attendance/participation: 100 points

## **OUR GRADING SCALE**

A = 94-100  
A- = 90-93  
B+ = 87-89  
B = 83-86  
B- = 80-82  
C+ = 75-79  
C = 70-74  
C- = 67-69  
D+ = 63-66  
D = 60-63  
D- = 55-59  
F = 54 or below

## **GRADING POLICIES**

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

## **ATTENDANCE AND RULES OF THE ROAD**

Class attendance is mandatory and critical to understanding the concepts. Students with unexcused absences will lose points available for class participation. Absences approved by the instructors in advance, or those due to extreme circumstances such as illness or emergency, may be forgiven at the discretion of the instructors.

If you miss class, it is your responsibility to obtain material missed through other students. 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>.

Discussions in class may include information about professional stories in progress. Students will be asked at the beginning of the course to agree to keep all class conversations off the record. Students should not Tweet or share information from class on Facebook or other forms of social media.

## **CLASSROOM TECHNOLOGY**

This is a hands-on/distance learning course, meaning you'll spend much of the class on computer. Computers are to be used only for classroom assignments. Use for other reasons, including

unrelated email or messaging, will result in lost points from a student's class participation score. Lost points will be determined by the instructor based on the infraction and whether a student had been previously warned. The same rules apply for cell phones and other electronic devices.

### **ACCOMMODATION OF STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES**

Students with disabilities requesting accommodations should first register with the Disability Resource Center (352-392-8565, [www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/](http://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.

### **ONLINE COURSE EVALUATION**

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 last two or three weeks of the semester, but students will be given specific times when they are open. Summary results of these assessments are available to students at <https://evaluations.ufl.edu/results/>.

### **HONESTY POLICY**

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 (<https://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 or TAs in this class.

### **IMPORTANT CONTACTS**

Contact information for the Counseling and Wellness Center:

<http://www.counseling.ufl.edu/cwc/Default.aspx>, 392-1575; and the University Police Department: 392-1111 or 9-1-1 for emergencies.