

## **RTV 3303 Audio News and Reporting Spring 2020**

**Instructor:** Ryan Vasquez

**Section:** 4487

**Room:** 2056 Weimer Hall

**Periods:** Period 4-5 (10:40 AM - 12:35 PM)

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**Office:** Weimer 2325 **Hours:** Tuesday, 1 p.m. to 3 p.m. (and by appointment)

RTV 3303 is designed to offer instruction and training in news gathering, writing, interviewing, and reporting to increase student knowledge base on the subject matter. Special emphasis is placed on improving writing skills, basic news production and equipping students with the skills to be better multimedia journalists. Students receive additional practical experience in the WUFT newsroom where they will have the opportunity to apply the skills learned in the classroom portion of the course. **This is a real-world experience, you will get the opportunity to produce news content that can be heard both locally to serve the community we are obligated to cover and also nationally to an audience interested in how our area fits in a larger news picture.**

### **Course Objectives and Goals**

1. Writing news stories acceptable for on-air and station website use under deadline pressure
2. Ability to record audio in the field or over the phone and to edit that audio for broadcast.
3. Ability to write and report for both short newscast stories (sound stories) and more in-depth stories (wraps, features).
4. An opportunity and expectation that work produced in class and in the newsroom can and will be used on the radio or on WUFT's website.
5. Opportunity to voice your work, live or recorded, on the air.
6. Better news consumption habits
7. Improving ability to find news stories, develop sources and be a better enterprise reporter.

### **Course Eligibility:**

Student must be in the College of Journalism and Communication ---- Student must have received a "C" grade or better in RTV 2100 and RTV 3001, and passed the News Placement Exam. If you haven't met this requirement, please come forward ASAP.

### **Required Equipment:**

For your projects, you will be able to check out digital audio recorders. You will also be issued an SD card, this is yours to keep. The newsroom has recorders for you to use during your shifts (See guidelines for checking out equipment).

### **Recommended Equipment:**

- A cell phone that can record audio, access and use social media, and take photos.
- The app Voice Recorder Lite is an option for Apple Users. Samsung and other android platform users can use their built-in sound recorder. All users can use Smart Recorder Lite.
- There are also phone call recording apps like TapeACall which is \$10.99 and Google Voice which is limited but free.

### **Course Evaluation:**

Students are expected to provide feedback on the quality of instruction in this course. These evaluations are conducted online at <https://evaluations.ufl.edu>. Students will be given specific times when evaluations are open later in the semester. Summary results of these and previous assessments are available to students at <https://evaluations.ufl.edu/results>.

### **Late Work:**

As the news industry is built around time management and down to the second timing, late work will not generally be accepted without penalty unless prior arrangements have been made, and a doctor's note or another letter (preferably from the university or a university-sponsored group) accompanies the work. While the news industry is strict on time, I understand sometimes life happens. If you for any reason feel your work will be late, PLEASE approach me before the due date to work out an acceptable alternative timeline. Unless extenuating circumstances exist, any work presented without prior alternative plans will not be accepted.

### **The Ethical Warning:**

**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 by 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.

### **Academic Misconduct:**

Academic honesty and integrity are fundamental values of the University community. This is even more important if you're planning to tell true stories. You should be sure you understand the Honor Code, found at <http://bit.ly/dontcheatUF>. If you are found to have fabricated or cheated on any part of an assignment, **you will fail this course**. In our field that includes copying and pasting content from other sources into your story, passing off another reporter's work as your own, and making up content. There are far worse consequences for academic misconduct than an F, so make sure you are very acquainted with this policy.

**Accommodation for 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.

**You matter:**

Your well-being is important to the University of Florida. The U Matter, We Care initiative is committed to creating a culture of care on our campus by encouraging members of our community to look out for one another and to reach out for help if a member of our community is in need. If you are in distress, please contact [umatter@ufl.edu](mailto:umatter@ufl.edu) so that its team can reach out. A nighttime and weekend crisis counselor are available by phone at 352-392-1575. The U Matter, We Care Team can help connect students to many helping resources. Please remember that asking for help is a sign of strength. In case of emergency, call 9-1-1.

**Assignments**

**Project 1:** Wrap with two sound bites, 1:30 in length

**Project 2:** Live tweet from an event or meeting, 1:30 to 2:00 in length

**Project 3:** Feature story with min. of 4 sound bites, 2:30 to 3:00 in length

**Project 4:** In-depth feature from semester source building, min. of 6 bites, 3:30-4:30 in length

**I try to give you as much time as possible to work on a story which is why I have the pitches due when I do. However, I do understand that stories fall through, still for your success please make sure your final pitch is for *at least one week* prior to your project being due. You can email your pitches ahead of time. First one to pitch claims the story.**

**Newsroom Work:**

You are required to work six hours per week during the semester at the station, preferably on one day of the week for every week of the semester through exam week for a total of **14 total shifts, if you take the exam, or 15 shifts without the exam.** This is where your newsroom grade is derived. You are required to work those 14 or 15 shifts even if your shift lands on a holiday, that would have to be made up at a different time in the semester.

**-Rubric**

Your work will be scored on three things: pitching, content, and social media. You will be graded on a progressive rubric. For the first half of the semester (up to Spring Break) you will be graded on the basics of the three previously mentioned items. After Spring Break, the rubric will change to account for your progress in the course where the basics will be expected and mistakes less tolerated. Both rubrics are in your training materials.

**-Training**

Training sessions will be held during the **FIRST** week of the semester at WUFT-FM in the INC. The sessions will be held at 6pm unless otherwise stated. Attendance is mandatory! Newsroom shifts must be covered ---- Go to Forrest, Ryan, or Ethan with questions ---- if you can't work, you will need to get someone to work for you. **More info on makeup shifts is at the end of the syllabus.**

**Final Exam:**

The final will be administered during Finals Week outside of normal class time (date and time to be announced). **You have the option of taking the final or working a final news shift in the newsroom during Finals Week.** As we are in a practical field, I advise you that no test will replace actual work experience. The final will be comprehensive and will consist of 40 fill-in-the blank questions covering skills, practice and general info learned in class and in the newsroom plus two essays written during the exam. The first will be on the role of news in today's society. The second will be on a topic chosen from recent newsworthy events. More info to be given during the semester.

**Source Building:**

We will be working to learn about the community we cover throughout the semester. You will be asked to cover a sub-committee of either the city or county government to keep in touch with throughout the semester. Through a series of exercises and class assignments you will learn how to find sources and build your source list for stories and work a beat. Through these assignments you will also gain knowledge of the community workings and insight as to how to be better enterprise reporters which will serve you well as you move through the curriculum and your career.

**Assignments/Quizzes:**

You will be given a weekly news quiz starting with week 2 of the course. These quizzes are to ensure that you are consuming local, state, national, and world events as a journalist should. Steady consumption of the news will assure your success on these quizzes. Questions will be determined by the instructor and you will be given ten minutes to complete the quizzes. Alternatively, you will have several assignments throughout the semester that will ask you to show application of the skills learned in class. These will replace the quiz for that week and class will know in advance when those instances are in the semester.

**The Breakdown:**

Assignment (How Many)	Percentage
Newsroom Work	30%
Project 1	10%
Project 2	10%
Project 3	15%
Project 4	15%
Source Building (5)	10%
News Quizzes	10%
Final Exam*	10%

**Grading Scale:**

<b>A</b>	<b>94-100</b>
<b>A-</b>	<b>90-93</b>
<b>B+</b>	<b>87-89</b>
<b>B</b>	<b>84-86</b>
<b>B-</b>	<b>80-83</b>
<b>C+</b>	<b>77-79</b>
<b>C</b>	<b>74-77</b>
<b>C-</b>	<b>70-73</b>
<b>D+</b>	<b>67-69</b>
<b>D</b>	<b>64-66</b>
<b>D-</b>	<b>60-63</b>
<b>E</b>	<b>Below 60</b>

**\*The Final Exam counts as 10% of your grade if you take the final. That would make your newsroom grade 20%. If you elect to work your final shift and not take the final then your newsroom grade is 30% of your final grade.**

## **SPRING 2020 COURSE SCHEDULE**

Instructor reserves the right to amend and change lecture and class plan as necessary.

Week #1	01/07	Introduction: Syllabus and welcome to the newsroom, and reporting.
Week #2	01/14	Finding Stories: Introduction to the community you cover and finding the stories within that community. <b>* Source Building:</b> Untold Florida sourcing event
Week #3	01/21	Broadcast Writing: Writing to be successful in your newsroom shifts. <i>Assign Project 1</i>
Week #4	01/28	The Art of the Interview: How to ask for and conduct interviews in person, over the phone, and through other means. <i>Project 1 pitches due</i> <b>* Source Building:</b> Research your assigned committee
Week #5	02/04	Audio Gathering and Editing: How to record air-quality audio and edit it using Adobe Audition. <b>Project 1 Due, Project 2 Assigned</b> <b>* Source Building:</b> Attend a committee meeting in February and follow an issue or item.
Week #6	02/11	Social Media: A tool in your multimedia journalist toolkit. <i>Project 2 pitches due</i>
Week #7	02/18	Beats and Specialization: Understanding beats and specialty reporting in the general context of news.
Week #8	02/25	Writing for Web: How to gather assets and get more out of your radio story <b>Project 2 Due, Project 3 Assigned</b> <b>* Source Building:</b> Attend a committee meeting in March and interview a member.
Week #9	03/03	<b>SPRING BREAK</b>
Week #10	03/10	Covering Elections: An introduction to political reporting and how to navigate being a reporter in these partisan times. <i>Project 3 Pitches Due</i>
Week #11	03/17	Finding Stories Part 2: How to find stories through public records and searchable content on the Internet
Week #12	03/24	Performance: How to get the best out of your voice and improve your stories. <b>Project 3 Story Due, Project 4 Assigned</b>

Week #13	03/31	Storytelling: Crafting interesting narratives in the field of news. <i>Project 4 Pitches Due</i> <b>*Source Building:</b> Complete a beat book for your committee.
Week #14	04/07	Writing for Web 2.0: Telling a multi-platform story including audio, writing and visuals.
Week #15	04/14	Ethics and Opinions: Two important things reporters have but use in very different ways. Project 4 Check-In: Last minute checks and a workshop with peers.
Week #16	04/21	Fin: <b>Project 4 Due.</b> We will present our final stories.

## **Make-Up Shift Policy**

Everyone in Audio News and Reporting is required to work one **six-hour** shift per week. These shifts start in week three of the semester and run through exam week. You have the option of working your last shift or taking a written exam in class.

### **Missing Shifts**

If for some reason you can't make it to your scheduled shift for a particular week you need to let Forrest and Ryan know as soon as possible. Reasons for missing and what you should do are as follows:

*Holidays:* Excused

*Sickness:* You need to have a doctor's note

*School-sanctioned/class-related reasons:* A note from your instructor, coach, or administrator

*Planned events:* Traveling for a wedding, vacation, or football game is not a reason to miss a shift. Neither are Greek-related functions, doctor's appointments, or projects.

*Extreme circumstances:* We understand certain things don't fall under the previous classifications and will deal with those occasions as they arise.

### **Making Up A Missed Shift**

Make-up shifts are for students who have an excused absence. Make ups happen typically outside of the normal shift coverage schedule. Throughout the semester Forrest and Ryan will notify students owing a make-up shift of an event usually at night or on the weekend that we want covered for WUFT. A student will accept that shift and complete it as they would a normal shift including fact sheet, sound story and wrap to satisfy their requirement of making up a shift.

**You cannot make up a shift without approval from Forrest or Ryan. If you try and do a make-up shift on your own without the approval of a news manager it will not count towards what you owe.**

### **A Few Important Notes**

Most of you should know well in advance if you are going to miss a shift for a planned reason like a doctor's appointment or a vacation. Let us know with plenty of time in written advance. These are not excused. Same with needing to miss because "I have a really busy schedule." An option available to you is switching a shift with a classmate. As long as both shifts are covered, and Forrest and Ryan know, that is perfectly fine for satisfying those instances in a semester when life gets in the way of your shift.

**I acknowledge and agree to the policy set forth here on make-up shifts for Audio News and Reporting.**

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_