

Multimedia Reporting

JOU 3346L, section 12090 • 2020 Summer C

Lecture: 11 a.m. to 12:15 p.m., Tuesdays, via Zoom • Lab: 2 to 4:45 p.m., Tuesdays, via Zoom

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Course Summary

This three-credit intermediate journalism course marries traditional local news reporting with the multimedia skills required of reporters today. Multimedia is a broad term. For this class, it means each time using more than one kind of storytelling tool to tell a story: text, images, audio, video, data, etc.

We will learn to identify, pitch, produce and deliver a local news story to an audience, both online and on air. We will at all times conduct ourselves as if reporting for a news website and radio station. Given the community-based story opportunities, this course will help prepare you for advanced journalism courses in the College of Journalism and Communications, as well as an internship and or a job before or after graduation.

Course Objectives

Students in this course will learn and or understand the basics of:

1. Achieving greater clarity, consistency, accuracy and authority in their newswriting and attribution.
2. Identifying and pitching a local news story (government, education, business, public safety, etc.).
3. Finding news in the community using official and unofficial sources as well as other means.
4. Gathering facts and information via interviews, public documents, Google, online repositories, etc.
5. Determining which storytelling tool best suits a particular story – and maximizing the opportunity.
6. Developing a “hire me” mindset that includes sharing one’s work as socially and smartly as possible.

Noteworthy

Each student is responsible for:

1. Reading, understanding and abiding by this syllabus and its contents and directives.
2. Abiding by any announcements or directives the instructors send to the class via University of Florida email and or our course e-Learning or Slack platforms.
3. Completing all assigned readings as related quizzes and class participation will affect grading.

Required Texts

- “Field Guide to Covering Local News: How to Report on Cops, Courts, Schools, Emergencies and Government,” Bayles © 2012.
- “The Associated Press Stylebook and Briefing on Media Law” – apstylebook.com and #apstylechat.
 - Access free via <https://www.apstylebook.com/smathers-libraries-at-the-university-of-florida>.
 - Requires connection to [UF's Virtual Private Network \(VPN\)](#).
- “Inside Reporting: A Practical Guide to the Craft of Journalism (3rd Ed.),” Tim Harrower © 2013.
- WUFT.org; Gainesville Sun and gainesville.com (UF subscription to Access World News database)

Other Reading

- Journalism websites, including, but not limited to those of national, regional, local, alternative and campus news outlets – newspapers, magazines, television and radio and online-only.
- “Mobile and Social Media Journalism: A Practical Guide,” Adornato © 2018.
- “Aim for the Heart: Write, Shoot, Report and Produce for TV and Multimedia,” Tompkins © 2018.
- “Writing & Reporting for the Media,” 11th edition, Bender, Davenport, Drager and Fedler © 2016.
- “Online Journalism Handbook: Skills to Survive and Thrive in the Digital Age,” Bradshaw © 2018.
- Style guides on grammar, spelling, punctuation, special interest, etc., including but not only:
 - “A Style Guide for News Writers & Editors,” Bender, Davenport, Drager and Fedler © 2016.
- Other materials provided via email from the instructors and or via our space on Canvas or Slack.

Students With Disabilities

Reasonable accommodations will be made for students with disabilities and who have registered with the UF Dean of Students Office. This office will provide relative documentation to the student, who must then provide this documentation to the instructor when requesting accommodations.

UF Disability Resource Center: <http://www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/>

Counseling Center

Personal or health issues such as depression, anxiety, stress, career uncertainty and or relationships can interfere with your ability to function as a student. UF’s Counseling and Wellness Center (CWC) offers support for students in need. CWC is located at 3190 Radio Road and open each weekday from 8 to 5.

UF Counseling and Wellness Center: <http://www.counseling.ufl.edu/cwc>

Resources

The University of Florida offers an abundance of resources that can help students throughout their academic career. Each student is encouraged to make use of these resources, which include but are not limited to the library, tutoring, career resource center, etc.

UF Student Resources: <http://ufadvising.ufl.edu/student-resources.aspx>

Attendance, Attention, Deadlines, Extra Credit

Attendance and Lateness

Students are to show respect for one another and for the instructors. Those who come to class each session and on time will be rewarded. Each absence will result in a 10-point penalty toward the class participation portion of your grade (see page 9 of this syllabus). Lateness or unwarranted disruptions may likewise result in up to a 5-point penalty, per each occasion.

Please be mindful of maintaining a professional appearance and conduct via our remote lecture meetings. Consider your wardrobe and hygiene just as you would were we all in the same room, and take care with your audio and visual backgrounds.

Students absent from or late to lab are responsible for learning about any missed material by consulting another student, or visiting the instructors during office hours. Such matters shall not be handled via email. Which brings us to ...

Life Happens

Students have been known to miss class because of temporary illness, oversleeping, travel, hangovers, job interviews, family matters, mental health, etc. Some of these excuses may be legitimate and others not. An absence is an absence – and your instructors' policy is to simply note that the student missed class. Regardless of the reasons for being absent, a student who misses too many classes risks not mastering the coursework. In such a case, he or she may be withdrawn from the course per UF policy.

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

Mobile Devices

With the recognition that this is an online class and your instructors can do little to enforce this recommendation, please work to limit the use of mobile devices and web browsing during course lecture. Do not check text messages, social media, email, etc., during class, as this is rude. Falling victim to distractions is also certain to make you fall behind. Give your full and undivided attention to anyone who is speaking in class.

Deadlines

Late assignments are not accepted unless an emergency can be documented. This means that an assignment submitted late is graded as a zero. If an illness or a personal emergency prevents you from completing an assignment on time, advance notice and written documentation are required. If advance notice is not possible because of a true emergency, written documentation will be mandated ASAP.

Generally speaking, we will function as if working in a professional workplace. In the real world, when you don't show up for work (on time) or don't do your work (on time) – you risk losing your job. In other words, students who don't come to class and or miss deadlines will suffer consequences.

Extra Credit

No work for "extra credit" shall be accepted.

Each student is expected to do the same amount of work (and to improve progressively) and achieve the same outcomes (including getting published). This proves to be fair when considering that students have different circumstances unrelated to class. Those students, for example, who must work three jobs don't have as much time to do extra credit as those who don't have to work. The instructors will not grade according to effort – as it is the outcome that matters. He will, however, be mindful of whether a student's work is trending forward – or backward – when the time comes for midterm or final grades.

Academic Integrity

The College of Journalism and Communications is committed to upholding the university's academic honor code. Academic dishonesty of any kind shall not be tolerated in this course. The university's guidelines provide additional details, which each student is expected to understand. To be certain, academic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to using any work done by another person and submitting it for a class assignment; submitting work done for another class; copying and pasting text written by another person without quotation marks and or without complete attribution, which usually includes a link to the original work; using images produced by someone else without explicit permission by the creator. Attribution is not the same as permission. Most images found online are not free to use.

UF Student Honor Code: <https://scrcr.dso.ufl.edu/process/student-conduct-code/>

Sources, Diversity and Conflicts of Interest

Whenever possible during this course, students shall pursue storytelling that is fair, accurate and complete – and based on information gathered from a variety of sources. A greater understanding of the cultural and ethnic differences in our society will enhance the learning experience, and help students develop habits and sensitivities that will be of great value in their workplaces and communities. This emphasis on diversity of sources shall not focus just on race and ethnicity or sexual orientation, but also age, education, gender, geography, occupation, politics, religion, socioeconomic status, etc.

Abide related content – “Diversity in News Coverage,” pages 88-89 in the Harrower course textbook.

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 instructors.

Sources must be interviewed either by phone or Zoom call. Email interviews are discouraged and permitted only with an instructor's permission in advance of the particular interview. Sometimes a source will want you to let them read a story before it is 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 to them the person's direct or partial quotes. 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 instructors in advance for approval.

Submitted assignments not abiding these sourcing, diversity and interview mandates shall be penalized.

Course Representation

In dealing with news sources for course assignments, you may be asked, "Who are you with?" You should state that you are a reporter for WUFT News. If pressed, it is acceptable to state that you are enrolled in a reporting course at the University of Florida College of Journalism and Communications. Whenever necessary or prudent, you may refer a source's questions and/or concerns to one of your instructors.

Class assignments should not be posted elsewhere on the internet or shared with a potential employer as examples of your writing or reporting ability without prior instructor approval. Sharing material substantially edited by an instructor as your own work could be considered dishonest. In addition, no student shall use another's story idea developed for class to benefit a separate news organization.

Professional Standards

This course will benefit anyone interested in a career in any communications field, because he or she must be able to write clear and concise copy, with care and precision, often on deadline, and that is fair and accurate. One major American daily newspaper defines the skills it expects of its reporters this way:

Writing ability – grammar and spelling; ability to tell a good story well; use of quotes, anecdotes and descriptive detail; use of active voice and strong verbs; ability to write inviting leads that hit the point of the story; ability to write tightly and to organize information in logical, compelling sequence.

Reporting ability – pursuit, digging, enterprise, diligence; able and eager to see and pursue promising angles; able to seek and obtain anecdotes, details and quotations that provide documentation and add liveliness to copy; able to see need for and to get both sides of the story; able to cultivate good sources.

Speed, productivity and efficiency – speed on deadline; speed and efficiency in completing non-deadline assignments; ability and willingness to manage more than one assignment at a time; ability and willingness to make frequent, substantive contributions to the content of the paper.

Accuracy – skill with basic factual information such as names, addresses, dates and figures; ability to identify and make use of the best sources, whether they are documents, references or people.

Work habits – punctuality, reliability, readiness to go beyond the minimum requirements of the job; interest in assuming and ability to assume more than minimum responsibility; ability and willingness to anticipate and fulfill the demands of an assignment without prompting; ability to deal even-handedly with peers and supervisors, to accept constructive criticism and to offer constructive suggestions; interest in all areas of the news operation; knowledge of community, regional, national and international events; regular and thorough reading of the newspaper.

Judgment – commitment to fairness and balance; ability to recognize and assess possible adverse consequences of actions; knowledge of, respect for and observance of the news department's policies.

Potential – likelihood that the reporter is a candidate for a more challenging reporting assignment or a supervisory position; evidence that he or she possesses the characteristics of leadership and supervisory ability expected of supervising editors.

Social Media

Social media is now an essential aspect of efforts – on many storytelling fronts – to gather and present information, to report and filter the news, and/or to distribute content across multiple news platforms. In this course, we will use Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat, Medium, LinkedIn and/or other social media for reporting, and to communicate with one another and people we may never meet. We will also use these tools to better present ourselves and demonstrate our value to potential employers.

Course Evaluations

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 final weeks of the semester. Students will be given specific dates when they are open. Summary results of these assessments are available to students at <https://evaluations.ufl.edu/results>.

Associated Press Style

Cannot stress this enough. Helpful hints: capitalization, numerals, dates, decades, years, Roman and Arabic numerals, percent, percentages, a.m., p.m., times, ages, boy, girl, infant, youth, directions and regions, highway designations, composition titles, magazine names, newspaper names, titles, military titles, courtesy titles, legislative titles, religious titles, academic, abbreviations and acronyms, second reference, social media, state, state names, abbreviation of state names with cities, datelines, dateline cities, distances, percents, dimensions, foot, cents, dollars, millions, fractions, addresses, etc.

Field Assignments

All writing assignments should be turned in:

- With 1-inch margins (top, bottom, left, right) and 12-point Times Roman font.
- With the file named as either lastname_storyslug.doc or lastname_storyslug.docx.
- With your name, slug and date, all single-spaced in the top left corner.
- With the text in single-spaced, block format (single spaces between them; no indented paragraphs).
- With quotes typically as their own paragraphs.
- All field assignments must be submitted or posted by the specified deadline.
- Keep electronic copies of all assignments. Email a copy of each in-class one once completed – along with your notes – to yourself.
- Failure to abide by these expectations shall result in grade penalties.

Budget Lines or Story Pitches

Budget lines are a staple of any newsroom (see Harrower, pages 18-19). They enable writers and editors to detail what content is proposed or publishable – and why, most importantly, the audience should care. Budget lines typically focus on impact, immediacy, proximity, prominence, characters, novelty, conflict, emotions, etc. Therefore, a budget line must be submitted for each field assignment via the form at <https://bitly/3346Lpitch>. Not doing so on time and as instructed may result in a grade penalty.

WUFT News

This course is aligned significantly with WUFT and its aligned digital and broadcast platforms. 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.

Most details about how to function for WUFT – from finding stories to writing headlines — are on its intranet (<http://www.wuft.org/newsroom>). The username is **newsroom** and password is **INCnewsr00m2019!**

There is no required equipment or software for this course, though a credible smartphone is ideal. You are expected to recall how to use what's taught in the college's Sight, Sound and Motion course.

Slack

All JOU 3446L students shall pitch story ideas via <http://bit.ly/3346Lpitch> **no later than the night before each lab session.** Do not pitch your story directly into Slack. All pitches will automatically load into a [global story budget](#) and be viewable via the class Slack channel. Feedback for your idea will come from one or both of your lab instructors via Slack. Failure to monitor this channel will be costly to your success in this course.

Story Submission

- All text stories and associated story assets (photographs, video or audio files, data visualizations, etc.) considered ready for publishing shall be submitted to your instructors, who will then process it according to WUFT mandates and traditional editing circumstances.
- Your submission shall include a headline, multimedia assets and suggested social media sharing strategies.

Always remember: All field assignments will be submitted twice, first in Canvas, as well as via Slack. Your submission to Canvas is for your grade. Failure to submit to that platform by the deadline could result in, at best, a point reduction, and if not at all, zero credit.

Grading (Part I)

The instructors will judge each assignment as a newsroom editor focused on accuracy, craftsmanship, effort and enterprise, not to mention how well the student reporter abides course directives, instruction and feedback. Other considerations: relevancy or urgency (front-page news or just a brief); the quality of sourcing; the depth of interviewing; attribution; the power of quotes; story flow (is it logical); adherence to AP style, not to mention grammar, spelling and punctuation; and gumption and ingenuity.

An A indicates superior performance; B, highly competent, above-average work; C, average; D, below average; E, unsatisfactory. Use and manage your time efficiently. You will be rewarded for results, not simply for effort. Steady improvement, however, will earn additional equity.

Final grade calculations: 930-1,000, A; 929-900, A-; 899-870, B+; 869-830, B; 829-800, B-; 799-770, C+; 769-730, C; 729-700, C-; 699-670, D+; 669-630, D; 629-600 D-; 599 and below, E.

Field Assignments

Here is the rubric for the field assignments each student is expected to submit during the semester:

TEXT (60 points)

- Lead: Generally looking for an anecdotal lead – a revealing little story that lures the reader in.
- Nut graph: Why does this person, activity, agency, etc., matter now?; it should otherwise help the reader know why this is a story worth reading. A supporting nut graph may be ideal.
- Chronology/What lies ahead: Efficient use – and definitely not overuse – of background information. Provides context. Moves the story forward. Doesn't slow it down.
- Transitions: Do they help move the story along, give it life and urgency and context?
- Quotations/Attribution: Is it clear who's saying what, where and when and why?
- Prescription: Does the story fall within the expected length given the assignment?

SOURCING (10 points)

- Is everyone who should be included? Do they in total provide sufficient depth (information and insight), context (broadening understanding) and reliability? Are there enough sources to lessen the chance for bias and inaccuracy? Is demographic diversity factored?

MECHANICS (10 points)

- Avoids errors in grammar, spelling, punctuation or AP style, not to mention wordiness and undue repetition or redundancies, prepositional traps and run-on sentences; no form errors or obvious layout concerns based on class instruction; demonstrates quality proofreading.

IMAGE(S) (10 points)

- Is/are the image(s) taken by the reporter or did the reporter obtain permission for their publication? Do they demonstrate basic competencies such as exposure, focus and composition (framing, rule of thirds)? Are they cropped 3x2 or 16x9 horizontally and ordered in such a way to represent an obvious story with a variety of shots (tight, wide, super tight, medium, point of view, etc.)? Are the captions sufficient in length and abiding grammar, spelling, punctuation, AP style and course instruction?

HEADLINE (10 points)

- In addition to abiding mechanics (see above) and course instruction (especially new industry norms), does it sufficiently reflect the story's news value? Is it likely to help attract an audience to the story?

Rubrics for the multimedia and social media assignments that each student shall complete during the semester – all designed to help develop one's journalistic toolbox – are available separately via Canvas. Tease: For the audio or video assignments, can we readily discern who did what? Does the story convey emotion, motion, a central character, tension, intimacy, shock and awe? Does it aim for the heart? For the data visualization, does it reflect a creative or alternative way in which the audience can access additional and compelling information? As for social media, how well are you engaging your audience, mining it for story ideas and sources, and sharing your published work as broadly as possible?

Factual Errors

- 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.
- If a student realizes and corrects a fact error before it is edited, there shall not be a penalty.
- If an editor finds one or more fact errors, there will be a five-point penalty (possibly for each one).
- If a source/reader reveals a fact error, a 10-point penalty shall occur – and likely for each one.

Grading (Part II)

Class Participation (10 percent)

- Be prepared to offer feedback on each other's story ideas, progress and outcomes during lab.
- In addition to extending lessons introduced during lecture, our lab sessions will focus on working collectively to help each other identify, pitch and develop the best story packages possible.

Quizzes (20 percent)

- Expect weekly quizzes related to assigned readings, lecture discussions and or current events.
- Expect weekly quizzes to assess learning of The Associated Press Stylebook and what's at #apstyle.

Source Development (5 percent)

- Each student shall demonstrate a capacity to develop and cultivate a diverse array of sources that reveals a willingness to interact with multiple human beings per story – and getting the deets.
- Each student shall submit a written summary about one's sourcing this semester (as per on page 4).

Social and Sharing (5 percent)

- Each student shall demonstrate a capacity to build a journalistic brand through the type of information he or she shares using social media and how he or she interacts with the public.
- Each student shall conduct a social media audit reflecting one's readiness for potential employers.

Field Assignments (50 percent)

- Each student will identify, pitch, report and produce six news reporting assignments during the course – according to prescribed types, lengths, objectives, etc. – that aim to determine the level of proficiency to which one has learned the concepts taught in the course to date.
- At least one field assignment – but no more than two – will be done as a “daily deadline.” A second one would require a significant multimedia effort, that is, with a strong audio and or video outcome.
- The other assignments should reflect two weeks of reporting and will be due every other Friday.
- Each student is urged to do a range of stories, ideally one each involving government, public safety, courts, health, the environment, education, business, economic development, technology, etc.

Multimedia Components (10 percent)

- Each student shall submit a minimum of three multimedia reporting components as per course instruction. Each of these submissions will accompany a related field assignment.
- These components shall include 1) a NPR-style audio “wrap,” 2) a source-narrated audio or video story, 3) a data visualization (interactive timeline or map, bar/pie chart, etc), and or 4) a reporter-narrated broadcast-style video standup.
- Each field assignment does not have to have all types of multimedia, though, stories that have multiple components will be rewarded greatly. However, by the end of the semester each student must have submitted a multimedia component from each of the four groups listed above.

Missing or Late Work

- Assignments, mandates, quizzes, etc., not completed or submitted on time and as instructed shall be penalized significantly. Again, in the real world, you don't do your work – and on time – you risk losing your job (see page 3). In this class, you shall be rewarded with a grade of zero.

Course Schedule

This schedule represents the plans and objectives as situated at Week 1. The plans may change based on developing news or learning opportunities. Such changes shall be communicated as soon as possible.

WEEK ONE: May 11

- Introductions; course mission and goals; reviewing a case study about community and journalism.
- Each student is urged to schedule an initial meeting with an instructor to discuss personal goals.

WEEK TWO: May 18

- Multimedia bootcamp.
- Quizzes: Harrower Reading; Harrower (Digital Journalism) — both due May 19 at 11 a.m.

WEEK THREE: May 25

- Covering local, county and state government – and learning about what matters to your neighbors.
- Developing a “hire me” mindset that includes sharing one’s work as socially and smartly as possible.
- Quizzes: Bayles, Part I; AP Style: Addresses, Dates, Numbers and Time — both due May 26 at 11 a.m.
- **FIRST FIELD ASSIGNMENT**, due by Friday, May 22 at 6 p.m.

WEEK FOUR: June 1

- Covering education and schools
- Quizzes: AP Style: Capitalization; AP Style: Spelling — both due June 2 at 11 a.m.

WEEK FIVE: June 8

- Covering public safety and public health – stories involving people with badges and who save lives.
- Quizzes: AP Style: 2018 and 2019 Changes; Adornato Ch. 3 on Social Media Brand — due June 9 at 11 a.m.
- **SECOND FIELD ASSIGNMENT**, due by Friday, June 12 at 6 p.m.

WEEK SIX: June 15

- Covering business and economic development
- Quizzes: Government, politics and meetings; AP Style: Hyphens — both due June 16 at 11 a.m.
- (Optional) final revisions on first and second field assignments due Friday, June 19 at 6 p.m.

WEEK SEVEN: June 22

- No class – summer break

WEEK EIGHT: June 29

- Individual conferences
- Quizzes: AP Style: Customs and Holidays; AP Style: Geography and Weather — both due June 30 at 11 a.m.

WEEK NINE: July 6

- Individual conferences
- Quizzes: Covering Accidents and Disasters — due July 7 at 11 a.m.
- **THIRD FIELD ASSIGNMENT**, due by Friday, July 10 at 6 p.m.

WEEK TEN: July 13

- Individual conferences
- Quizzes: Covering Crime; Math for Journalists — both due July 14 at 11 a.m.

WEEK ELEVEN: July 20

- Individual conferences
- Quizzes: Covering Courts — due July 21 at 11 a.m.
- **FOURTH FIELD ASSIGNMENT**, due by Friday, July 24 at 6 p.m..

WEEK TWELVE: July 27

- Quizzes: AP Style: A to Z; Covering Education — both due July 28 at 11 a.m.
- (Optional) final revisions on third and fourth field assignments due by July 31 at 6 p.m.

WEEK THIRTEEN: Aug. 3

- Final Quiz: AP Style and Grammar, Spelling and Punctuation – during Aug. 4 lab session.
- No final exam.

From Harrower, page 158: *"Most likely print won't go extinct. But it will become increasingly difficult to compete against the impact and immediacy of digital media that combine text, photos, audio, video, animated graphics ... Why simply shovel long, text stories online when you can enhance them with multimedia? If you want high readership, you'll need to deliver the news in dramatically different ways."*