

**Journalism 3101**  
**Reporting – Online Program**  
**Fall 2020**

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**HOW TO CONTACT:**

The best way to reach me is through the Canvas email system. During the week, I usually respond to emails within 48 hours. I am also available to meet by video chat or phone. Email me to arrange a time to chat. If Canvas is down, and you need to ask a question, feel free to send your question to my email address.

I encourage you to reach out if you need clarification on assignment instructions, information found within readings/lectures, how your writing will be assessed, or the feedback I provide you. But do not wait until the last minute.

**The Goal**

To learn all facets of basic news gathering and writing with an eye toward readability and to instill habits of accuracy and responsibility in handling news.

**The Work**

The course has 15 modules that cover various aspects of reporting and are designed to improve your reporting and writing abilities, along with your overall journalism knowledge.

**The Modules**

Each module will cover a topic designed to help you become a better reporter and writer. The modules are expected to be completed in sequence.

**The Grade**

Your grade will come from four areas:

**1. Stories:** You are required to report and write eight stories during the semester -- one meeting story, one profile story and six news/explainer/trend stories. These stories cannot be sports game stories, reviews or commentaries. Each story should be at least 600 words and each is worth 100 points. The stories will be graded on their journalistic viability, the reporting and the writing. The breakdown for each story is: viability, 5 points; style/grammar, 15 points; writing, 40 points; reporting: 40 points.

Each story must contain at least five named sources. At the end of each story must be the names and phone numbers/emails of all the people you talked with to complete the story.

The deadline for each story is noted in the course schedule below.

**2. Pitches:** Each week for five weeks, you pitch a story idea to the class discussion board. These story ideas must focus on a local community. Tell us how or where you found the idea, why it's newsworthy and why your audience would want to read it. Additionally, please indicate with a brief comment which of your classmates' pitches you think has the most interesting story potential.

**3. Quizzes:** There are five stylebook quizzes and five topic quizzes – each worth 20 points. You also will be quizzed on website metrics and libel/privacy later in the semester.

**4. Homework:** There will be 15 homework assignments. Each assignment is designed to practice a specific journalism skill. Some of the assignments are timed, and others will be due at the end of the week.

### **Grading Policy**

Your grade will come from the following:

- Stories: 700 points
- Pitches and discussions: 110 points
- Quizzes: 140 points
- Homework: 450 points

**Total: 1,400 points**

### **The Grading Scale**

1,260-1,400 points: A

1,120-1,259 points: B

980-1,258 points: C

840-979 points: D

0-839 points: F

### **The Readings**

#### **Required:**

- "The Associated Press Stylebook."

*The AP Stylebook is published each year in the spring. Each edition includes new terms, changes in previous rules (such as changing from e-mail to email), and new guidelines for social media use. You may purchase the book in paperback or as an interactive e-book. To purchase the interactive e-book, go to:*

*<http://www.apstylebook.com>.*

- A dictionary.

**Each module will have links to short readings that will be included on lecture quizzes.**

## Highly Recommended:

- “Writing Tools. 55 Essential Strategies for Every Writer.” New York, NY: Little Brown and Company. One of the best books you can own.
- A daily news website (such as the Tampa Bay Times, the Gainesville Sun, the Sun-Sentinel, etc.) that will help give you story ideas and make you more familiar with how a news story is structured.
- Digital subscription to The New York Times. As a student at UF, you have access to a free digital subscription to The New York Times. To subscribe, follow these instructions:
  - Go to <https://my.ufl.edu/ps/signon.html>
  - After signing in, select the Navigation Bar in the upper right corner (three stacked horizontal lines)
  - Select “Main Menu”
  - Select “Quick Links”
  - Select “NY Times”
  - Select “Subscribe Now” and follow subscription instructions.
  - Verify email address
  - Access NY Times

## The Penalties

**Deadlines:** Deadlines are a major part of every journalist’s life. Consequently, you better get used to them now. You will be expected to submit all homework and stories by their due date and time. Deadlines are given in Eastern Standard Time.

You will lose points every hour you are late. 25% the first hour. 50% the second hour. 75% the third hour. After four hours, you will receive zero points.

Certain assignments – such as quizzes and extra credit – do not have extended windows.

Late assignments will only be accepted in cases of documented emergencies, family emergencies, and documented technical issues, on a case-by-case basis. You must email me, the instructor, no more than 24 hours after an assignment is due if you wish to make-up an assignment. If you do not contact me within 24 hours of the due date, you will receive a zero on the assignment.

**Errors:** Professional reporters are judged on their copy. You will be too. You will lose points for errors.

**Source lists:** Failure to include a source list with your story will result in a 10-point penalty.

## Plagiarism

Using someone else’s work and presenting it as your own in stealing and lying rolled into one. This includes any press release and information found on the Internet.

**Your work will be consistently checked for plagiarism and you will receive a failing grade if it is found.**

Attribute every piece of information, except known facts, in all of your outside stories.

### **Honor Code**

The University of Florida honor code was voted on and passed by the student body in the fall 1995 semester.

The preamble: In adopting this honor code, the students of the University of Florida recognize that academic honesty and integrity are fundamental values of the university community. Students who enroll at the university commit to holding themselves and their peers to the high standard of honor required by the honor code. Any individual whom becomes aware of a violation of the honor code is bound by honor to take corrective action. A student-run honor court and faculty support are crucial to the success of the honor code. The quality of a University of Florida education is dependent upon the community acceptance and enforcement of the honor code.

The Honor Code: We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to hold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honesty and integrity. On all work submitted for credit by students at the University of Florida, the following pledges is either required or implied: "On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in doing this assignment."

*For more information about academic honesty, contact, Student Judicial Affairs, P202 Peabody Hall, 391-1261.*

### **Disabilities**

Students requesting classroom accommodation must register with the Dean of Students Office. The dean will provide documentation to the student who must provide documentation to the instructor when requesting accommodation.

### **Diversity**

The University of Florida's College of Journalism and Communications Department of Journalism embraces a commitment toward an intellectual community enriched and enhanced by diversity along a number of dimensions, including race, ethnicity and national origins, gender and gender identity, sexuality, class and religion. We expect each of our journalism courses to help foster an understanding of the diversity of peoples and cultures and of the significance and impact of mass communications in a global society.

Reporters report the stories of a community and the individuals who live there. Their aim is to engage many and wide audiences with their work.

Exposure to different views and experiences make us better journalists. They expand our perspectives, increase the number of our sources, and prompt different ideas or angles for stories.

As a journalist in the field and as a student in this class, you will encounter ideas and thoughts you do not share. This is to be expected.

These differences should serve as a strength that we should embrace as we discuss relevant story ideas, topics, developing contacts or possibly even storytelling techniques. You should expect and welcome this wide exposure to different views.

People you cover and write about, your classmates, and your instructor deserve respect for their views, perspectives and experiences.

Everyone also deserves common courtesy. Please let me know what I can do to make you feel respected and welcomed.

### **Covid/Pandemic Notes**

- Lectures in this class have been prerecorded.
- Reporting for your seven outside stories should be done by phone, video chat or email. No in-person coverage of events or in-person interviews will be allowed as long as the pandemic continues.
- Should there be any virtual gatherings, please keep your camera off and do not use a profile image if you do not consent to your name and image being seen by others in the class. However, you will be asked to identify yourself and be aware that others may join at any time.
- As in all courses, unauthorized recording and unauthorized sharing of recording materials is prohibited.

## **THE MODULES**

### **Start Here/Module 1 on News Judgment**

**Aug. 31-Sept. 6**

**Topics:** Course introduction, news judgment, story ideas

**Discussion:** Introduce yourself

**Homework:** Exercise #1, Audience research memo (due Sept. 11) (50 points)

### **Module 2/Lede writing**

**Sept. 7-13**

**Topics:** Lede writing, style

**Discussion:** Pitch #1

**Homework:** Exercise #2, lede writing (35 points)

### **Module 3/Reporting**

**Sept. 14-20**

**Topics:** Reporting plans, the well-reported story

**Quiz:** Style (A-D)

**Discussion:** Pitch #2

**Homework:** Exercise #3, lede writing (20 points)

**Module 4/Story writing I**

**Sept. 21-27**

**Topics:** Story structure

**Discussion:** Pitch #3

**Homework:** Exercise #4, story writing (30 points); Story #1 due Sept. 27

**Module 5/Story writing II**

**Sept. 28-Oct. 4**

**Topics:** Quotes, attribution, other story writing tips

**Quiz:** Style (E-H)

**Discussion:** Pitch #4

**Homework:** Exercise #5, story writing (30 points); Story #2 due Oct. 4

**Module 6/Interviewing**

**Oct. 5-11**

**Topics:** Interviewing, hourglass stories

**Discussion:** Pitch #5

**Homework:** Exercise #6, record an interview, due Oct. 16 (20 points); Exercise #7, hourglass story writing (40 points)

**Module 7/Research**

**Oct. 12-18**

**Topics:** Research

**Quiz:** Style (I-M)

**Homework:** Story #3 due Oct. 16; Exercise #8, research (20 points)

**Module 8/Journalism on the web**

**Oct. 19-25**

**Topics:** The 24-hour news cycle, breaking news, journalism on the web

**Quiz:** Using analytics

**Homework:** Exercise #9, breaking news (25 points)

**Module 9/Meetings**

**Oct. 26-Nov. 1**

**Topics:** Meetings, speeches and press conferences

**Quiz:** Style (N-R)

**Homework:** Story #4 due Oct. 31; Exercise #10, speeches (40 points)

**Module 10/Delayed ledes**

**Nov. 2-8**

**Topics:** Delayed ledes

**Homework:** Exercise #11, delayed ledes (30 points)

**Module 11/Feature stories**

**Nov. 9-15**

**Topics:** Delayed ledes, feature stories

**Quiz:** Style (S-Z)

**Homework:** Story #5 due Nov. 13; Exercise #12, WSJ story (40 points)

**Module 12/Revising**

**Nov. 16-22**

**Topics:** Revision methods, good writing

**Homework:** Exercise #13, revising (30 points)

**Module 13/Ethics**

**Nov. 23-24**

**Topics:** Ethics

**Quiz:** Story #6 due Nov. 24; extra credit ethics assignment

**Module 14/Clarity**

**Nov. 30-Dec. 6**

**Topics:** Editing, sentence clarity

**Homework:** Story #14, editing (timed) (20 points); Exercise #15, clarity (20 points)

**Module 15/Libel and privacy**

**Dec. 7-9**

**Discussion:** Libel/privacy

**Quiz:** Libel and privacy

**Homework:** Story #7 due Dec. 9; extra credit story due Dec. 11

**Disclaimer**

This syllabus represents my current plans and objectives. Please review it carefully the first week of the term.

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.