

News Center Practicum

JOU 4201, Section 1C10 • 2020 Fall
Lecture: 4:05 p.m. to 4:55 p.m., Mondays, via Zoom
One practicum shift per week in the WUFT newsroom as assigned.

Katie Hyson
Supervising Editor of Digital Content, Innovation News Center (INC)
University of Florida College of Journalism and Communications
Office: 2300 Weimer Hall (WUFT newsroom)
Email: khyson@ufl.edu | Twitter: @katiehyson23
Office Hours: By appointment.

There is no required text for this class.

Course Overview

This three-credit practicum focuses on the essentials of digital production. The lecture times will prepare you for weekly newsroom shifts producing for the digital platform of WUFT News.

Students in this practicum will learn the basics of:

1. What digital production is and what role it plays in modern journalism.
2. How to build and publish content through WordPress.
3. How to leverage social media for journalism.
4. How to edit and produce types of original content expected of digital producers.
5. How to engage the audience and use analytics to improve digital production.
6. How to determine whether something is newsworthy and worth publishing.

Monday Class

Our Monday class time will be used for a mix of short teaching, group discussions, and in-class activities to prepare you for your practicum shifts. These will take place over Zoom, and will often require screen-sharing. I would ask that you have your camera on the entire time — please let me know if you have any extenuating circumstances or concerns about that. I encourage you to use virtual backgrounds if you would like to keep your surroundings private.

Below are the topics you can expect us to cover this semester. This is meant to serve as a rough guide — I may decide to change this as the semester unfolds depending on our needs, interests and challenges as a team.

Week 1: Introduction to 4201

- What does it mean to be a web producer, and how can learning these skills benefit you?

- What can you expect this semester, and what do you need to do to get an A?
- Get to know each other's backgrounds, skills, and journalism interests, how this class can support those individual goals and how we fit together as a team.

Week 2: Wordpress

- Get an introduction of the WUFT.org content management system.
- Learn how to fully construct different types of content in Wordpress and publish or schedule through the WUFT News website.

Week 3: Social Media

- What makes for compelling journalistic content on social media?
- What are the different ways a news organization can use social media to engage an audience?
- Learn some best practices on social media and on each of the platforms we use.
- Learn how to operate Social News Desk and Tweetdeck.

Week 4: Editing

- Learn the process and steps of editing, from raw story draft to publication, and which parts of the process you will be expected to handle this semester.

Week 5: Producing Original Content

- What types of original content can you produce during your shifts this fall?
- How to write and/or edit copy for web to accompany content from our other platforms, including TV and radio.
- How and when to use social to cover events as they're happening.
- How can you use your shifts to build your portfolio?

Week 6: Audience Engagement & Analysis

- How to appropriately respond to direct audience contact by phone, social, etc.
- How and *when* to engage in the comments.
- How to pull analytic reports on Google Analytics and Chartbeat, and how to interpret those reports effectively to shape web production for maximum engagement.

Week 7: Curation & News Judgment

- How we decide if something is worth putting on our digital platform.
 - What makes a story newsworthy?
 - What makes a story relevant for our audience?
- What is Feedly and how can it help our coverage?
- What is The Point and the role of newsletters in digital journalism?

Weeks 8-14: Flexible

- Group discussions on what's working, not working, brainstorming sessions, etc. I may decide to use class sessions to address what I see coming up during the week, common mistakes/struggles, etc.
- We may have some Q & A time with guest speakers, including current digital producers and former members of the WUFT team who now produce for a career.

WUFT Digital Production Shifts

You will be expected to complete one practicum shift in the newsroom per week for the duration of the semester. We will assign these shifts based on your schedules at the beginning of the semester.

This is the minimum. I encourage you to continue working on original content outside of these practicum shifts to get the most out of your practicum experience and to build your portfolio.

I will be your supervisor for these shifts — unless I say otherwise, please do not hit publish on anything until I've approved it. In the event of my absence, you may report to Ethan Magoc for supervision.

WUFT is a professional newsroom. You will be working on the digital platform of your local NPR station. Treat it with the professionalism and seriousness that you would an internship. Your work there matters and will reach a real audience. Depending on how well you use your time this semester, it can greatly help your portfolio and resume.

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 **INCnewsroom2019!** (the O's in newsroom are zeros)

Grading

65% [monthly logs](#)

- This is the main way I will assess and grade your work this semester. I will look for how well you used your time in the newsroom (when things were slow, did you look for stories to cover, ways to engage our audience, new ideas to try, etc.), for growth in your web producing from month to month, but primarily for thoughtfulness about what worked and didn't work and what you and we as a digital team can do better. Because of this, it's in your interest to be as thorough as possible. Show me everything you've put into this practicum.

- Logs are due at 11:59 p.m. on the last day of the month (see Canvas). I will deduct a letter grade for each day the log is late. Please communicate ahead of time if anything will prevent you from turning it in on time. It will help you immensely if you keep track of log-worthy items during your shifts as you go, so you don't have to remember and hunt everything down at the end of the month.

35% professionalism

- Were you on time and present for all your classes and practicum shifts, and did you stay for the duration? If something prevented you from that, did you communicate with as much advanced notice as you could? Did you engage during class and participate in any conversations or class activities? If you were present in the newsroom or representing WUFT over Zoom, did you dress professionally? If you missed a practicum shift, did you reschedule with me or arrange to swap with another student? Did you take initiative during your shifts to use your time well, were you engaged and active? Did you respond in a timely manner to all communications via Slack, Canvas, and email? Overall, did you conduct yourself with an attitude, work ethic and communication style befitting a professional experience?

Information on UF's current grading policies for assigning grade points can be found [here](#).

The official university policy on attendance can be found [here](#).

COVID-19 Precautions

Conducting your practicum shifts in the newsroom will be most conducive for learning, supervision, and getting the most out of this practicum.

For your shifts in the newsroom, please note the following:

- You are required to wear approved face coverings at all times during your shift and within buildings. Following and enforcing these policies and requirements are all of our responsibility. Failure to do so will lead to a report to the Office of Student Conduct and Conflict Resolution.
- The newsroom has enough capacity to maintain physical distancing (6 feet between individuals) requirements. Please utilize designated seats and maintain appropriate spacing between students. Please do not move chairs, desks or stations.
- Sanitizing supplies are available in the newsroom to wipe down your desks prior to sitting down and at the end of the class.
- Practice physical distancing to the extent possible when entering and exiting the newsroom.
- If you are experiencing COVID-19 symptoms ([Click here for guidance from the CDC on symptoms of coronavirus](#)), please use the UF Health screening system and follow the instructions on whether you are able to attend class. [Click here for UF Health guidance on what to do if you have been exposed to or are experiencing COVID-19 symptoms](#).

If you do not wish to be physically present in the newsroom for your shifts due to concern about COVID-19, please let me know and we can discuss remote alternatives.

Diversity and Inclusion

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.

You will do your best work as a journalist when you feel comfortable bringing your whole self to the table. Please let me know what I can do to make sure you feel respected and welcomed in this space.

- If you have a name and/or set of pronouns that differ from those that appear in your official records, please let me know.
- If you feel like your performance in the class is being impacted by your experiences outside of class, please don't hesitate to come and talk with me. I want to be a resource for you.
- If you prefer to speak with someone outside of the course, Joanna Hernandez, CJC director of inclusion and diversity, is an excellent resource. You can email her at jhernandez@jou.ufl.edu.
- If something was said in class (by anyone) that made you feel uncomfortable, please talk to me about it.

I am committed to creating an inclusive environment in which all students are respected and valued. I will not tolerate disrespectful language or behavior on the basis of age, ability, color/ethnicity/race, gender identity/expression, marital/parental status, military/veteran's status, national origin, political affiliation, religious/spiritual beliefs, sex, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status or other visible or non-visible differences.

Especially as a team of community storytellers, our differences will be one of our greatest strengths. I look forward to discovering those differences together and learning from each other.

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>

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://sccr.dso.ufl.edu/process/student-conduct-code/>

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>.