

**In Depth Broadcast/Advanced Investigative Reporting
RTV 3305, Section 1B36 - Spring 2021**

Class Time: Mondays 5:15pm – 9:15pm

Class Location: Weimer 1092

Instructor: Bob Williams

Contact Information:

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Meetings by appointment

Course Objective:

Investigative/Advanced journalism is the cornerstone of the Fourth Estate, tasked with hold in power accountable to the people and the public good. In this class, students will explore advanced reporting techniques; practice obtaining and using public information for broadcast news stories; learn how to produce both in-depth investigative/advanced stories and use those skills to improve daily news reporting skills; discuss the practice of investigative reporting and its role in society; and produce in-depth news stories for TV. In addition, students will build competencies in personal brand management to leverage their stories for career advancement.

Goals:

- Discuss the characteristics used to develop a solid investigative/advanced news story
- Identify credible reporting resources and be able to utilize resources for newsgathering
- Participate in class discussion as an informed journalist and collegial group member
- Prepare to apply for journalism positions with a resume and resume reel

Materials:

- You will be provided an SD card for newsgathering through the equipment manager.
- You are expected to be knowledgeable and proficient with the appropriate equipment necessary to execute your projects. If this is a problem, please alert me right away and we'll set up training. You will also need to sign an equipment access form.

Assignments:

→ Investigative News Stories

You are required to submit two investigative news stories over the course of the semester.

Each story MUST include:

1. A news peg! The story must be timely and have news value. What makes it important right now?
2. At least ONE audio or visual element that coming from a public record or public access event, i.e., inside a courtroom (be sure the judge allows recordings!), a public meeting, data from public (but trustworthy) sources, surveillance video, FOIA, 9-1-1 calls, etc.
3. Sound from at least THREE people. One of those people should be your human storytelling perspective element, an individual directly affected by the story through whom the story is told. If your story doesn't have a central character or doesn't directly affect anyone, you'll want to reconsider the idea. Viewer benefit is essential to a good broadcast news story.
4. Should have at a natsound breaks for TV stories. TV stories should have a reporter standup if possible.
5. BALANCE – we want to be sure you are representing all sides of the story. Give the accused the opportunity to defend themselves. Be critical but fair. An unfair or biased story will earn you a failing grade no matter how well it is written, shot, or edited. Objectivity is a cornerstone of journalism and will be strictly observed in this class.
6. ATTRIBUTION – where are you getting your information from? Be sure to be clear about your sources. Who said what? Where do these facts come from? This will also help protect you from legal action. (And good investigative reporters get sued a lot.)
7. This class will utilize YouTube for project submission. You must have an account and, in order to meet deadlines, the content must be available for me to observe (set your security restrictions carefully!)
8. All TV stories must be submitted as complete packages and cannot run more than 2:40. I challenge you to keep them in the 2:30 range.
9. In lieu of a final exam, you will complete a resume reel project. This is designed to showcase your best work and prepare you for the job market. I encourage you now to go back through your personal archives and chase down any past work you may not have readily available. If you do not have much to showcase, consider covering extra stories for WUFT newscasts.
10. This is a broadcast reporting class and, as such, you are expected to personally report stories and turn in news reports using your likeness and your voice.
11. Well executed stories will be shared with the WUFT news directors for possible broadcast.

➔ **Story Pitches**

On scheduled pitch days, students will submit three story ideas. Each pitch must indicate whether what investigative element will be used (see number 2 above), who will be interviewed, what visual elements you will use to tell the story and why you think the story is relevant or timely. This is your opportunity to really sell the story.

➔ **Deadlines**

Deadlines are paramount in the industry. Missing a deadline can result in dismissal or suspension from your job. With that in mind, all work for this class is due at the beginning of class on the specified date.

For each 24 hours after a homework deadline, a letter grade is subtracted INCLUDING weekends. After ten calendar days, an automatic zero is given for the assignment without exception and cannot be made up.

Late work will not be accepted for any project.

Technical difficulties or interview cancellations are not license to submit late work. Plan ahead and have a backup plan. *There is always at least one thing which does not go according to plan.* Give yourself room to troubleshoot.

Attendance & Participation:

➔ All in person classes are mandatory

➔ In extenuating circumstances, the instructor may agree to grant an excused absence with at least 24 hours' advanced notice and for a substantially good reason, i.e. major illness including Covid-19 which requires a doctor's note on or before the next class period. If you tell me you have a death in the family, do not be surprised if I investigate your assertion.

➔ Unexcused absences will cost you 10 points from your participation grade (the maximum amount per class). If you walk into class after attendance has been taken, it will cost you 5 points. You are expected to remain in class until it is dismissed by the instructor. Leaving early will result in an unexcused absence.

➔ You are expected to come to class prepared and actively participate in class discussions. Disruptive behavior or failure to participate in class discussions will have a negative impact on your participation grade.

Laptops & Cellphones:

- During lectures and discussions, you are expected to pay attention, contribute to the discussion, and know the material. Do yourself a favor and keep your phones in a bag or pocket to avoid temptation. I promise to give you my undivided attention and, in exchange, I expect the same from you. The use of recording devices in class without prior permission from the instructor is prohibited.

Grades:

- 5% Draft Cover Letter/Resume
- 20% Team Project/Homework/Quiz/Project Pitches
- 20% Investigative Story 1
- 20% Unit Test
- 20% Investigative Story 2
- 5% Final Cover Letter/Resume
- 10% Resume Reel
- Earned Extra Credit
- Final Grade

Grading Scale:

- A 92.5-100
- A- 89.5-92.4
- B+ 86.5-89.4
- B 83.5-86.4
- B- 79.5-83.4
- C+ 76.5-79.4
- C 73.5-76.4
- C- 69.5-73.4
- D+ 66.5-69.4
- D 63.5-66.4
- D- 59.5-63.4
- E 59.4 or below

Extra Credit

Extra credit opportunities to participate in research or other related projects may be offered at the instructor's discretion to boost the homework portion of your grade; although this is, in no way, guaranteed.

E-Learning:

As much as possible, this course will utilize the Canvas online platform for maintaining grades, attendance, and assignments (except video/audio project files that are too large to upload).

Plagiarism:

You are not permitted to recycle any work from another class. All work should be specifically produced for RTV 3305 and produced by you alone. You may recruit another student to help you shoot standups for your TV pkgs, but ALL other elements must be shot by YOU. All scripts are to be written by YOU without exception.

As any assignment in any course in UF, you are not allowed to copy work from another individual in any form. See the UF College of Journalism and Communications' Honor Code for further details: <http://www.jou.ufl.edu/academics/bachelors/journalism/academic-honesty/> Failure to comply with this policy can result in failing this course, as well as further action by the college and/or the UF Dean of Students Office.

The use of video, images, or audio from third-party sources must be approved in advance, must come from sources that WUFT-TV has legal access to use, must not violate copyright laws, must be used in very limited amounts, and must be used only in cases where no other video or graphics will make sense for the story. Failure to comply with this mandate will result in a failing grade on the assignment. Pulling media off of the Internet without prior written consent from the copyright holder is theft of property. This includes social media, YouTube, and Google. In addition to violating course policy, lifting media can get you into serious legal trouble

Equipment Checkout:

There are television production kits assigned to RTV3305. You are allowed a one-day checkout, with the equipment due back by 9:00 a.m. the following morning. On Friday, equipment can be checked out until 9:00 a.m. Monday. Steve Kippert is the contact person.

There is a 24-hour wait to reserve equipment again once you bring it back. For special projects and situations, it may be possible to grant exceptions. Send me an e-mail in enough time that I can contact Steve Kippert on your behalf to try to arrange something. This is not a guarantee that the equipment will be made available.

There are a lot of people using this equipment. Reserve early. Arrange your shoots early. Don't procrastinate. Lack of equipment availability is not an acceptable reason to miss deadlines. Remember that there are two RTV3305 classes using this equipment.

If you miss equipment deadlines and lose equipment access, you are responsible for remedying the situation. I will not and cannot override the equipment policies established by the UF Department of Telecommunication/WUFT.

I strongly advise you to respect this is expensive equipment. Do not leave it unattended. Do not leave it in your car. Do not leave it in excessive hot or cold temperatures. Do not expose it to humidity or moisture. Do not expose it to extreme conditions. Do not allow other students or friends access to it for any purpose. Do not leave it in a place where your dog can chew on it. You may be responsible for repair costs.

A hard copy of the WUFT equipment policy will be distributed to the class. ***Any equipment checkout violations will result in 10 points off of the student's project grade for each violation.***

The equipment is the sole property of the University of Florida. You are to use the designated equipment only to generate content for this class. All course content is also the sole property of the university. You do not have the right to sell or distribute it to any other broadcast or media outlet or entity without the express permission of the University of Florida.

Disabilities:

If you have a disability which requires special consideration from the course instructor, you must self-identify with the instructor and register with the UF Dean of Students Office.

Accommodations will be arranged. More information is available from the Disability Resource Center online: <https://www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/>

Course Schedule for RTV3305-Section 1B36, Spring 2021

The instructor reserves the right to make changes to accommodate unforeseen circumstances; however, any changes will be clearly announced in class

***Research/Field Day/No in Person Class**

January 11 Course/Student/Instructor/Introductions
Syllabus Review
Documentary: “Nobody Speak (Hogan vs Gawker) (95 mins.)
Class/Pitch/Discussion
Class Project Teams/Project Ideas Explained
Cover Letter/Resume Assignment

January 18 Martin Luther King Holiday

January 25 What constitutes investigative reporting?
Chapter 1: Introduction/Overview
Documentary: “Nobody Speak (Hogan vs Gawker) Part (2)
Pitch Day 1
Cover Letter Resume Review

February 01* Group Project Presentation
Chapter 2: Finding the Story
Chapter 3: Setting up your Investigation
Pitch Update

February 08 Pitch Day 1 (final)
Chapter 14: Pitching Your Story
Chapter 4: Requesting Public Records
Chapter 6: The Interview Process
College Student Murders

February 15 * Project Updates
Chapter: 8: Documenting the Story

February 22	Bolstering Information & Investigative Might Chapter 7: Analyzing the Big Story Project (1) Presentations Quiz Review
March 01	Project (1) option Chapter 10: Shaping the Story Chapter 11: Writing the Story Quiz
March 08	Pitch Story 2 (Preliminary) Chapter 12: Legal & Ethical Considerations Infamous Investigations: What went wrong? Project (1) final
March 15*	Report reviews Chapter 9: Finding & Using Data (Chapter 8 Review) Story Pitch Final
March 22*	The Legacy of Edward R. Murrow & McCarthyism/Red Scare Showtime: "Good Night and Good Luck" (93 mins.) Essay Assignment Final Cover Letter/Resume/Reel
March 29	Report Updates Unit Test
April 05*	Investigative Story 2 (option) Watch/listen to reports/Self-Critiques
April 12*	Investigative Story 2 (final) Project reviews
April 19*	Reviews/Critiques
April 26*	Wrap-up Interviews

Diversity/COVID-19 Policy Statements:

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.

We will have face-to-face instructional sessions to accomplish the student learning objectives of this course. In response to COVID-19, the following policies and requirements are in place to maintain your learning environment and to enhance the safety of our in-classroom interactions.

- You are required to wear approved face coverings at all times during class 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.
- This course has been assigned a physical classroom with 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 desks or stations.
- Sanitizing supplies are available in the classroom if you wish to wipe down your desks prior to sitting down and at the end of the class.
- Follow your instructor's guidance on how to enter and exit the classroom. Practice physical distancing to the extent possible when entering and exiting the classroom.
- 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.](#)