

**Advanced/Investigative Reporting for Broadcast
Journalists RTV 3305, Section 0487 – Fall 2021**

Class Time: Mondays 5:15pm – 8:15pm

Class Location: Weimer 1090

Instructor: (Mr. Bob) Williams

Contact Information:

E-mail: robertwilliams@ufl.edu

Phone: (352) 336-9651 home (352) 538-7300 cell

Meetings by appointment

Course Objective:

Investigative 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 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 and radio. 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 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 cover letter/resume and resume reel

Materials:

- You will have access to a SD card for newsgathering. These cards will be issued in accordance with equipment policy procedure and acknowledgement forms.
- You are expected to be knowledgeable and proficient with the appropriate equipment necessary to execute your projects.

Assignments:

→ Investigative News Stories

You are required to submit (2) television advanced/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 from:
 - a. public record or public access event, i.e., inside a courtroom (with courthouse approval)
 - b. public meeting
 - c. data from public (but trustworthy) sources
 - d. surveillance video
 - e. Florida Office of Internal Affairs
 - f. 9-1-1 calls, etc.
3. Sound from at least THREE people including but not limited to:
 - a. one interview with a human element with a storytelling perspective
 - b. an individual directly affected by the story through whom the story is told
 - c. a central character who contributes a valuable perspective.
 - d. corporate or public official with information necessary to the story
 - e. Individual or sector of the population who are impacted or will benefit
4. Should also include natural sound breaks when possible and appropriate
5. Stories should have an appropriate reporter standup. However, it is optional and not required.
6. 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.
7. 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.)
8. This class will utilize YouTube or google docs for project submission. You must have an account which allows the content be available for me to observe (set your security restrictions carefully!) **No PDF** files will be accepted.
9. All TV stories must be submitted as complete packages and **cannot run more than 2:30**. I challenge you to keep them in the 2:00 range. Going more than 2:30 will result in grade penalties.

10. In lieu of a final exam, you will complete a cover letter/resume and 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 readily available. If you do not have much to showcase, consider covering extra stories for WUFT newscasts.
11. 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.
12. Well executed stories will be shared with the WUFT news directors for possible broadcast.

➔ **Story Pitches**

On scheduled pitch days, students will be prepared with at least (3) story ideas to be discussed in class. Final ideas must be sent to me in writing via email. Submissions must include who will be interviewed, what visual elements you will use to tell the story for TV 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 the 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.

In order for me to maintain and meet grading/reporting deadlines, ***late work will not be accepted for any homework or projects.***

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 that does not go according to plan.* Give yourself room to troubleshoot.

➔ **Required Readings**

You will have regular readings from classroom and other materials. We will have (1) test and (1) quiz related to classroom text material.

Attendance & Participation:

- ➔ **All in-person classes are mandatory.**
- ➔ In extenuating circumstances, the instructor may grant an excused absence with at least 24 hours' advanced notice and for an acceptable reason. No absence consideration will be given at all on any classes which include projects/test/quiz days. Illnesses will require a doctor's note. If you tell me you have a death in the family, do not be surprised if I investigate your assertion.
- ➔ Absences will reduce your class participation grade. The same penalty will be applied to late arrivals and early exits. You are expected to remain in class until it is dismissed by the instructor.
- ➔ Assignments are still due on the day assigned to the class.
- ➔ Once again remember attendance is required for:
 - a. All in-person classes
 - b. All test and quiz days
 - c. Project (1) and (2) presentations
- ➔ If there is an in-class graded activity and you miss class, you will not be allowed to make up the activity. You must be present and participate in order to receive credit.
- ➔ You are expected to come to class prepared and actively participate in class discussions. Disruptive behavior or failure to participate in class discussions will negatively affect 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 Resume/Cover
20%	Team Project/Story Pitches/Quiz/Homework
20%	Investigative Story 1
20%	Unit Test
20%	Investigative Story 2
5%	Final Cover Letter/Resume
10%	Resume Reel

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 are at the instructor's discretion. Opportunities include bonus points for projects in addition to earned credit on tests and/or quizzes. However, this is, in no way, guaranteed.

E-Learning:

As much as possible, this course will utilize various 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. Steve Kippert is the contact person. An acknowledgement form and consent agreement must be signed after the first class.

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 need you understand this is very 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 that 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, Fall 2021

The instructor reserves the right to make changes as deemed appropriate/necessary. Any changes will be clearly announced in class.

August 23	Course/Student/Instructor Introductions Syllabus Review Class pitch discussion/Team ideas/Sample projects Documentary: “Nobody Speak” (Hogan vs Gawker) part (1) Cover Letter/Resume Assignment
August 30	Hogan vs Gawker part 2 Chapter 1: Introduction/Overview Chapter 2: Finding the Story Chapter 3: Setting up your Investigation Project ideas (preliminary1) Cover Letter/Resume review
September 06	Labor Day
September 13	Project ideas (final) Project Grid/Critique Sheet Chapter 4: Requesting Public Records Chapter 6: The Interview Process
September 20*	Project update Chapter 14: Pitching Your Story
September 27*	Project Update Chapter 10/11: Writing the Story
October 04	Project (1) Presentations (Bonus Round) College Student Murders Documentary Chapter 8: Documenting the Story
October 11	Pitch Day (2) preliminary Project (1) /Presentations Round 2 Famous Investigations/What went wrong? Chapter 10 Quiz

October 18 Pitch Day (2) final
Edward R. Murrow Assignment
Good Night Good Luck
Chapter 12: Legal & Ethical Considerations

October 25 Project Updates
Personal Brand: Resume Reel Explained
Chapter 9: Finding & Using Data
Unit Test

November 01* Final Cover Letter/Resume/**Critique Sheet**

November 08 Project (2) Presentations (Bonus Round)
Reel Submissions (Friday)
Course Evaluations

November 15 Project (2) Round 2

November 22 Project (2) Reviews

November 29 Project (2) Critiques

December 06 Final Interviews/Reviews

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 University of Florida has made the wearing of masks optional for in-person classes. However students will be expected to check and follow any COVID-19 policy changes issued by the university in response to recent health/safety guidelines and regulations.

- 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.](#)