

## JOU 4930 – HEALTH JOURNALISM (Special Studies)

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Instructors: Serena Marshall and Rachel Damiani

Office Hours:

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Serena; Mon/Wed from 4:00-5:00pm

Rachel; Fridays from 4:00-5:00pm

Class Time: Mondays and Wednesdays 5:00-6:15PM

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### **COURSE OVERVIEW & OBJECTIVES**

**Overview:** This 2-credit course provides students with the opportunity to learn how to cover, report, and explain medical and science news. Health stories are one of the most acted on new stories in journalism. Meaning viewers and readers take what they learn from the story and change their behavior based on what they watched or read. Journalism experience is not necessary for the course, but a basic proficiency in writing is necessary.

**Course Description:** The COVID-19 pandemic has proven how instrumental news organizations are at disseminating medical journalism; and the fine line between pandering to fear versus hope. In this course, we'll explore the crossover space between medicine and journalism. Whether you are studying to become a scientist, journalist or simply a consumer of health news, you will learn the basics of translating science and medicine for a general audience, including how to read a medical/scientific research study and then translate its findings clearly. The course will teach you how to work with hospitals or other medical professionals/industries. Medicine is graphic by nature and very personal for the patient, we will help you understand how to share those stories and show them to an audience; as well as, how to take consumer stories (meat industry or energy drinks) and pitch them to news organizations. Prior experience in science and/or journalism is not required.

### **COURSE GOALS**

- By the time this course ends, students should be able to:
- Demonstrate an understanding of newsworthiness and how to navigate the challenges of making an important public health topic “newsworthy” by current standards.
- Report on health stories in an accurate and engaging manner.
- Use journalistic storytelling to cover a medical/health issue in an engaging and accurate way.
- Hone ability to read and understand medical studies.
- Develop a pitch for a media outlet that is designed to generate interest and potential coverage.
- Recognize events that are likely to generate news coverage and develop strategies to take advantage of viral news.
- Understand and put into play health communication theories to improve your reporting and uptake of medical journalism.

### **COURSE FORMAT & STRUCTURE**

This course includes lectures, in-class activities, discussion, weekly news reflection, and a mid-term project that feeds into your final project. You will not have exams. However, you are expected to actively participate each week in class via Zoom. This course is considered a synchronous, online course. You will attend class on Monday and Wednesday evenings from 5:00-6:15pm. We will use multiple

features on Zoom to facilitate engagement, including breakout rooms and the chat room. Participation is key to your success.

### **REQUIRED MATERIALS**

1) Required readings (book chapters, research articles/analysis) will be posted to eLearning as PDFs.

### **Additional Materials:**

1) PowerPoint slides from lectures posted on Canvas and all class handouts.

### **GRADE ASSIGNMENT**

A = 93-100% or 465-500 points

A- = 90-92% or 450-464

B+ = 87-89% or 435-449 points

B = 83-86% or 415-434 points

B- = 80-82 or 400-414 points

C+ = 77-79% or 385-399 points

C = 73-76% or 365-384 points

C- = 70-72 or 350-364 points

D+ = 67-69% or 335-349 points

D = 63-66% or 315-334 points

D- = 300-314 points

Failure = 0-59% or 299 points or below

A = *outstanding* work that is superior and demonstrates an in-depth understanding of the skills and material that far surpasses the minimum expectations of a student in the class.

B = above *average* work that demonstrates an understanding of the skills and material that exceeds the minimum requirements.

C = *average* work which illustrates that the student has met the *minimum requirements* and expectations for a particular assignment.

D = *below average* work in which the student does not meet the minimum expectations for a given assignment.

E = *below average work* in which *little or no effort* seems to have been expended by the student.

### **COURSE ASSIGNMENTS**

|  |       |
|--|-------|
| In-Class Participation/Attendance        | 120   |
| In-Class Exercises                       | 60    |
| Weekly Reading Quizzes (@ 5 points each) | 55    |
| News Analysis (@ 5 points each)          | 45    |
| Mid-term Project (Pitch)                 | 45    |
| Project Draft                            | 75    |
| Final Project                            | 100   |
|  | ----- |
| Total Possible Points                    | 500   |

## **PARTICIPATION**

Your participation grade consists of attending class on-time each session and participating during class discussions, and guest lectures. Your attendance and engagement will be monitored each week. If you need to miss a class, please discuss it with us in advance and we will figure out a way to accommodate your participation. This class is participation-heavy. You will receive 10 points per week for your participation and attendance. Your exact participation point will be determined based on evaluation by your instructors.

Participation includes being prepared to ask questions and interact with our guest lecturers. We are preparing you to be journalists, which will require you to ask tough questions of professionals and experts in their fields-- and expect you to practice your craft during the course. We are bringing in real-world, working professionals in the field, and as such hope to demonstrate for them your interest in hearing and learning about what they do and how they do it. There is no such thing as a 'dumb question.'

## **IN-DEPTH DESCRIPTIONS OF COURSE ASSIGNMENTS**

### **IN-CLASS EXERCISES**

Each week, you will be expected to complete an in-class exercise that relates to your reading and lecture material. We expect you to participate and contribute to the in-class exercises, whether they are done individually or as a group. These are an opportunity to quickly apply what you have learned so far in-class. It is not an opportunity to disappear from the class. For these in-class exercises, you will be graded based upon your active participation and engagement with the material and your peers. These are learning opportunities to apply what you are learning each week; we are not seeking perfection.

### **WEEKLY READING QUIZZES**

The assigned reading is how we prime you for what we will discuss in the following class. These can be news reports, journal articles or book chapters. Your quizzes will evaluate you on what you read and are timed. These are open book/notes. You must submit your quiz in eLearning no later than 4:59pm the day of class prior to that lesson. On days we do not have a Monday class, these quizzes will extend to Wednesdays. Check eLearning and the syllabus schedule below for all deadlines.

### **NEWS ANALYSIS**

Reflection can be a great way to stay abreast of what is happening in the world of health journalism. Each week you will explore and evaluate health headlines with a short journal entry (minimum of 250 words) that will prepare you for the upcoming class. We will let you know at the close of the previous class what we want you to target or explore in the week ahead, and we will post guidance on eLearning. You must post your News Analysis on eLearning no later than noon the day of the class in which we will discuss them.

There are no wrong answers in these discussions. It is an opportunity to think critically, explore different mediums and engage with your peers. You will not receive a grade but points if you complete the requirement. Consider what you have seen in media, PSAs, advertising, etc. that contribute to this issue either positively or negatively. You have 9 reflections to post online (each is worth 5 points).

**\*NO LATE ENTRIES WILL BE ACCEPTED**

**PROJECT (220 points total)**

*Your final project consists of a mid-term (45 points), first draft (75 points), and final (100 points). The contents of the mid-term and final projects are both described below.*

**-Mid-term (Pitch) (45 points)**

Your midterm will consist of two main components. First, you will submit a 'pitch' for a health journalism enterprise project. The pitch should be to a media organization or platform to convince them of the merits of your story or project.

In addition, you will include a 500-word summary of your chosen topic/format for your final project which will touch on the following:

- Your rationale for the topic of choice, and the importance of this topic/newsworthiness;
- Why did you choose this platform or format?
- Two or three examples of how this topic has been covered thus far by the news media or through influential social media accounts (including in their medium);
- A brief description on how your approach to an angle on this topic will be newsworthy (according to the explanation of newsworthiness offered during the live class session);
- Examples of the elements you plan to gather, the people you plan to interview and whatever other content will be needed for your reporting project.

*You will be provided with feedback on your pitch. Please wait until you have received the "green light" from us about your midterm pitch before proceeding on your story.*

**-Final Project Draft #1 (75 points)**

Throughout the semester, you are working towards your final project. The goal of this final project is to help you produce a piece of enterprise health journalism in your chosen field that can be published or broadcast. You can choose your medium, depending on your major and area of expertise. You will have three major deadlines for this project throughout the semester. The first is your mid-project (see above). For this project draft, you will build upon the feedback you received to create your final project (i.e., 1,500-word story, 5-minute enterprise news story *Nightline-esc*, a 3-part 2-minute feature series for *Nightly News*, or 10-minute audio series for radio, etc).

**-Final Project (100 points)**

Incorporate edits as provided by your instructor and make necessary changes, including any additional interviews, content-based changes from your draft version. This version should be broadcast/print/publication worthy.

**OFFICE HOURS**

We are both available to meet with students regularly. Rachel will be available Fridays between 4:00-5:00pm and Serena will be available for the hour prior to class (4:00-5:15pm). If you would like to set up a different time to meet, please email us to coordinate a time. These appointments will be virtual via Zoom.

**PLAGIARISM**

Plagiarism is never accepted. We do not accept papers that you have written for another class. Your assignments will be checked through the UF TurnIt, which is an “online anti-plagiarism service which compares student submissions to millions of websites and papers submitted for exact matches.”

UF students are bound by The Honor Pledge which states: “We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to hold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honor and integrity by abiding by the Honor Code. On all work submitted for credit by students at the University of Florida, the following pledge is either required or implied: “On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in doing this assignment.” The Conduct Code specifies a number of behaviors that are in violation of this code and the possible sanctions. If you have any questions or concerns, please consult with the instructors of this class.

### **ADDITIONAL RESOURCES**

Below we have compiled resources for you related to health communication jobs. We are happy to answer any questions you may have about pursuing a career in health journalism.

Association of Health Care Journalists

<https://healthjournalism.org/>

Center for Health Journalism

<https://centerforhealthjournalism.org/>

Center for Disease Control (CDC) Gateway to Health Communication & Social Marketing Practice

<http://www.cdc.gov/healthcommunication/index.html>

Health News Review

<https://www.healthnewsreview.org/>

Student Internships

<https://www.cdc.gov/fellowships/short-term/index.html>

National Cancer Institute (NCI), Communication & Informatics Research Branch (HCIRB)

<http://cancercontrol.cancer.gov/brp/hcirb/>

Johns Hopkins: Center for Communications Programs <http://ccp.jhu.edu/>

JHU Career Opportunities <http://ccp.jhu.edu/about-ccp/careers/>

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) – Social Marketing Internships

<http://www.samhsa.gov/about-us/jobs-internships/internships>

USAID – Internships <https://www.usaid.gov/work-usaid/careers/student-internships>

### **ADDITIONAL UNIVERSITY RESOURCES**

#### **Students with Disabilities Statement**

Students with disabilities requesting accommodations should first register with the Disability Resource Center (352-392-8565, [www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/](http://www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/)) by providing appropriate documentation. Once registered, students will receive an accommodation letter which must be presented to the instructor when requesting accommodation. Students with disabilities should follow this procedure as early as possible in the semester.

#### **Health & Safety**

*Health and Wellness U Matter, We Care:* If you or a friend is in distress, please contact [umatter@ufl.edu](mailto:umatter@ufl.edu) or 352 3921575 so that a team member can reach out to the student.

*Counseling and Wellness Center:* <http://www.counseling.ufl.edu/cwc/Default.aspx>, 392-1575; and the

University Police Department: 392-1111 or 9-1-1 for emergencies.  
 Sexual Assault Recovery Services (SARS) Student Health Care Center, 392-1161.  
 University Police Department, 392-1111 (or 9-1-1 for emergencies). <http://www.police.ufl.edu/>

### **Academic**

E-learning tech support: 352-392-4357; [Learningsupport@ufl.edu](mailto:Learningsupport@ufl.edu). <https://lss.at.ufl.edu/help.shtml>  
 Career Resource Center, Reitz Union: 392-1601.  
 Career assistance & counseling: <http://www.crc.ufl.edu/>  
 Library Support: <http://cms.uflib.ufl.edu/ask>.  
 Teaching Center, Broward Hall: 392-2010 or 392-6420.  
 General study skills and tutoring. <http://teachingcenter.ufl.edu/>  
 Writing Studio: 302 Tigert Hall, 846-1138. <http://writing.ufl.edu/writing-studio/>  
 Student Complaints Campus: [https://www.dso.ufl.edu/documents/UF\\_Complaints\\_policy.pdf](https://www.dso.ufl.edu/documents/UF_Complaints_policy.pdf) On-Line  
 Students Complaints: <http://www.distance.ufl.edu/student-complaintprocess>

### **Online 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 last two or three weeks of the semester, but students will be given specific times when they are open. Summary results of these assessments are available to students at <https://evaluations.ufl.edu/results/>.

### **COURSE STRUCTURE:**

This course is structured so that you have traditional readings and applied activities. We meet virtually each Monday and Wednesday. Each week, you will have readings that address the main topic you will learn in class that week. Before we meet on Monday, you will complete the assigned readings and your weekly quiz. Between Monday's lecture and Wednesday's class, you will complete a "News Analysis" based on the week's lesson to submit to eLearning. This assignment will ask you to apply your knowledge from Monday's lecture and reading. On Wednesday, we will have an in-class activity and/or a guest lecture.

### **TENTATIVE COURSE SCHEDULE**

| <b>DATE</b>         | <b>TOPIC OF FOCUS</b>                | <b>PROJECTS &amp; ASSIGNMENTS DUE</b>                                 |
|---------------------|--------------------------------------|---|
| Monday<br>May 9     | Welcome & Overview/Syllabus          |   |
| Wednesday<br>May 11 | Introduction to<br>Health Journalism | Quiz due May 11th at 4:59PM<br><br>News Analysis Due at NOON May 11th |
| Monday<br>May 16th  | Telling a Story                      | Quiz due May 16th at 4:59PM   |
| Wednesday<br>May 18 | Telling a Story (Part 2)             | News Analysis Due at NOON May 18th                                    |

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|---|---|---|
| Monday<br>May 23rd                            | What's Newsworthy? How to pitch a health story (Part 1) | Quiz due May 23rd at 4:59PM   |
| Wednesday<br>May 25                           | What's Newsworthy? How to pitch a health story (Part 2) | News Analysis Due at NOON May 25th  |
| Monday<br>May 30th<br>NO CLASS                | NO CLASS  |   |
| Wednesday<br>June 1                           | How to Read a Medical Study (Part 1)                    | Quiz due June 1st at 4:59pm<br><b>(NO News Analysis Due)</b><br><br><b>Pitch for FINAL Project Due at 11:59PM<br/>Wednesday, June 1st</b> |
| Monday<br>June 6th                            | How to Read a Medical Study (Part 2)                    | News Analysis Due at NOON June 6th  |
| Wednesday<br>June 8th                         | Health Communication Framing (Part 1)                   | Quiz due June 8th at 4:59PM<br><br><b>FINAL PROJECT PITCH APPROVAL<br/>PROVIDED TO STUDENTS</b>   |
| Monday<br>June 13                             | Health Communication Framing (Part 2)                   | News Analysis Due at NOON June 13th   |
| Wednesday<br>June 15                          | Trust--Telling a story responsibly                      | Quiz due on June 15th at 4:59PM   |
| Monday<br>June 20<br><br>Wednesday<br>June 22 | NO CLASS/SUMMER BREAK                                   |   |
| Monday<br>June 27                             | Breakthrough! How to report a medical study (Part 1)    | Quiz due June 27th at 4:59PM  |
| Wednesday<br>June 29th                        | Breakthrough! How to report a medical study (Part 2)    | News Analysis Due at NOON June 29th   |
| Monday<br>July 4                              | NO CLASS  |   |

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|-------------------------|--|--|
| Wednesday<br>July 6th   | The Science of Science Writing/Producing                 | Quiz due July 6th at 4:59PM<br><br><b>FINAL PROJECT DRAFT 1 Due at 11:59PM<br/>Wednesday, July 6th</b> |
| Monday<br>July 11       | Deadlines--how to report medicine on a deadline (Part 1) | Quiz due July 11th at 4:59PM   |
| Wednesday<br>July 13th  | Deadlines--how to report medicine on a deadline (Part 2) | News Analysis Due at NOON on July 13th<br><br><b>FINAL PROJECT DRAFT 1<br/>GRADED/Feedback</b>         |
| Monday<br>July 18       | Fair vs. Balanced (Part 1)                               | Quiz due July 18th at 4:59PM   |
| Wednesday<br>July 20th  | Fair vs. Balanced (Part 2)                               | News Analysis Due at NOON on July 20th   |
| Monday<br>July 25th     | NO CLASS<br>Project Work Day                             | Quiz due July 25th at 4:59PM   |
| Wednesday<br>July 27th  | Social Media and Health Messaging                        | News Analysis Due at NOON on July 27th   |
| Monday<br>August 1st    | Present Final Projects                                   | <b>Final Project DUE at MIDNIGHT/11:59 PM<br/>(on Sunday, July 31st)</b>                               |
| Wednesday<br>August 3rd | Present Final Projects                                   |  |