

# Journalism 3101

## Reporting

**Instructor:** Tim Drachlis

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**Office hours:** Virtual office hours on Canvas every Tuesday from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. Eastern time using the conference tool. Feel free to reach out anytime to my campus email. In addition, I will reach out to each of you to set up an individual writing conference about halfway through the semester.

### **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:

**Stories:** You are required to report and write seven stories during the semester -- one meeting story, one profile story and five 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. In addition, you can submit an extra story by the end of the semester that would replace any existing story grade.

Each story must contain at least five named sources that you interviewed. 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. Rewrites of stories that appeared elsewhere do not count.

and should not be submitted. In addition, you may not interview friends or relatives for any story.

**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. Ideally, these pitches will lead to five of the outside stories that you will submit for the class, but they do not have to. In each pitch, 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.

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

**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: *AP Stylebook*, latest edition; a dictionary; each module will have links to short readings to aid in your understanding of the concepts to be learned.

Recommended: *Inside Reporting*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition, Harrower; *When Words Collide*, Kessler-McDonald; 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.

## **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. Failure to submit the assignment on time, unless with the instructor's permission, will result in the automatic subtraction of points.

**Errors:** Professional reporters are judged on how clean their copy is. So you will be, too. Every grammar, word usage, style, punctuation or capitalization error will result in a 1-point deduction. A factual error on an outside story costs you 50 points.

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

**Length:** A story that is less than 600 words long will result in a 10-point penalty.

## **The plagiarism**

Using someone else's work and presenting it as your own in stealing and lying rolled into one. This includes any press release, news reports from existing media outlets 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.

## **The 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 tell the stories of a community and all individuals who make up a given community. We serve, help and inform everyone. In order to best carry out these ideals, we must exhibit respect, inclusiveness and an understanding for all people. These expectations during field work will also be carried into this classroom. Our differences will serve as a strength that we embrace as we discuss relevant story ideas, developing contacts within a community or even storytelling techniques. Exposure to different perspectives, values, ideals and experiences will make us all better, more compassionate and understanding journalists. We all learn best and maximize our outcomes when we feel comfortable. Please let me know what I can do to make sure you feel respected and welcomed in this space.

### **Office hours**

All of the lectures in this class have been prerecorded. I will host online virtual office hours where anyone can join. These hours will not be recorded

or shared. Anyone who joins the office hours consents to their name and image being seen by others in the class. If you are unwilling to consent to have your profile or video image seen, be sure to keep your camera off and do not use a profile image. To participate in office hours, students must identify themselves and be aware that others may join at any time. If you want to chat privately, an individual Zoom or Canvas session can be scheduled. As in all courses, unauthorized recording and unauthorized sharing of recorded materials is prohibited.

Reporting for your seven outside stories should be done in person or via phone, video chat or email.

## **THE COURSE SCHEDULE**

### **Module 1/News judgment and ideas**

**Aug. 24-28**

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

**Discussion:** Introduce yourself

**Homework:** Exercise #1, Audience research memo, due Sept. 4 (50 points)

### **Module 2/Ledes**

**Aug. 29-Sept. 4**

**Topics:** Lede writing, style

**Discussion:** Pitch #1

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

### **Module 3/Reporting**

**Sept. 6-11**

**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. 12-18**

**Topics:** Story structure

**Discussion:** Pitch #3

**Homework:** Exercise #4, story writing (30 points)

## **Module 5/Story writing II**

**Sept. 19-25**

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

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

**Discussion:** Pitch #4

**Homework:** Exercise #5, story writing (30 points); Story #1

## **Module 6/Interviewing**

**Sept. 26-Oct. 2**

**Topics:** Interviewing, hourglass stories

**Discussion:** Pitch #5

**Homework:** Exercise #6, record an interview, due Oct. 9 (20 points); Exercise #7, hourglass story writing (40 points)

## **Module 7/Research**

**Oct. 3-9**

**Topics:** Research

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

**Homework:** Exercise #8, research (20 points); Story #2

## **Module 8/Online journalism**

**Oct. 10-16**

**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. 17-23**

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

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

**Homework:** Exercise #10, speeches (40 points); Story #3

**Module 10/Delayed ledes**

**Oct. 24-30**

**Topics:** Delayed ledes

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

**Module 11/Feature stories**

**Oct. 31-Nov. 6**

**Topics:** Feature stories

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

**Homework:** Exercise #12, WSJ story (40 points); Story #4

**Module 12/Revising**

**Nov. 7-13**

**Topics:** Revision methods, good writing

**Homework:** Exercise #13, revising (30 points); Story #5

**Module 13/Ethics**

**Nov. 14-22**

**Topics:** Ethics

**Homework:** Story #6; extra credit ethics assignment

**Module 14/Clarity**

**Nov. 28-Dec. 4**

**Topics:** Editing, sentence clarity

**Homework:** Exercise #14, editing (timed) (20 points); Exercise #15, clarity (20 points); Story #7

**Module 15/Libel and privacy**

**Dec. 5-7**

**Discussion:** Libel/privacy

**Quiz:** Libel and privacy

**Homework:** Extra credit story