

JOU 3015: Principles of Journalism

Spring 2025 – Wednesdays, Periods 8 & 9 (3-4:55 p.m.) in Florida Gym 0230

Instructors: Matt Sheehan, *senior lecturer and managing director*,
Center for Public Interest Communications
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Office Hours: https://calendly.com/sheehan-matt/office_hours

Prof. Sheehan works in Gainesville, Washington, D.C. and other cities as projects require. He will be available to meet Wednesdays prior to class each week starting at 1:45 p.m. and Fridays 10:15-11:30 a.m. ET via [Zoom](#) or in office when in Gainesville. You may also elect to book whenever there is an open mutual time in the link above.

Janet Coats, *managing director of the Consortium on Trust in Media and Technology*
janetcoats@ufl.edu 1200 Weimer Hall, 352-392-0466

Office Hours: 1-3 p.m. on Thursdays and by appointment

Writing Mechanics Module Instructor:

Renee Martin-Kratzer, *adjunct instructor*, reneemk@ufl.edu

Teaching Assistant: Kristine Crane kcrane2015@ufl.edu

Course Description

In this course, students learn about the role and function of journalism in a democratic society, legal and ethical issues in journalism, economic challenges, the changing landscape of the media industry and read examples of some of the most important pieces of American journalism. Students will learn about the major principles of journalistic practice, values of journalists, and be introduced to techniques used by journalists to cover society.

Course Objectives:

- Explain how and why journalism matters today to a self-governing society
- Explain the core principles of journalism and how they differ from the fields that value advocacy
- Describe enterprise and exclusive content worth paying for
- Explain and compare evolving, journalism-adjacent fields and careers

Course text and readings:

Web readings and articles as selected by the instructors will be emailed and updated on the Canvas learning system throughout the semester. There is no required text to purchase for this course. A curated list of readings is available in Canvas in select weeks leading up to the next quiz and in the document below, starting on page 5.

Equipment and Supplies:

Students are expected to own basic digital audio, photo and video equipment as well as a laptop computer with necessary software installed. Specific requirements are posted here: <https://www.jou.ufl.edu/current-academics/equipment/>

Course Communication:

All course correspondence will be sent through Canvas. Make sure you have set up your Canvas preferences to alert you to new activities in your courses to an e-mail you check frequently. If you have questions for your instructors, you may use the Canvas system to e-mail them, or contact us via the addresses above. Your email should include your name, the course number JOU3015 and be as specific as possible with your query. Please try to include both instructors on your communication.

Grading

News Quizzes (<i>drop lowest three</i>)	150 points
Reading Quizzes (<i>drop lowest one</i>)	150 points
Journalism Today Assignment	100 points
Writing Mechanics Module	100 points
Exams	500 points
Total Possible Points	1,000 points

Assignments

News Quizzes: One of the fundamental parts about being a journalist, communicator and citizen is to know the news. Every class, you will be given a short 15-point news quiz based on current events. Of the 13 news quizzes, you can drop the lowest three. ***You must be present in class to take the quiz.*** Questions will be based on major U.S., international, and local news, rather than from any one news source. If you read/consume news from the major news outlets (New York Times, Wall Street Journal, CNN, Washington Post, USA Today, NPR, etc...), as well as local sources (WUFT, Alligator), you will have success on the news quizzes.

Reading Quizzes: Readings will consist of material about journalism, as well as examples of journalism. Each 30-point quiz will be open all day on the Wednesday it is assigned, so you may take it at your convenience. You may use the readings/notes, but not other people. There will be six reading quizzes, and you can drop the lowest score.

Quiz dates: Jan. 22; Feb. 19; March 12; March 26; April 2; April 16

Journalism Today Assignment: You will select one of the available readings to analyze through the principles of the course. Details can be found in Canvas. Late assignments are deducted 10 points for every 24 hours it is late. (due date TBD, but expect later in the term, around April 4.)

Writing Mechanics Module: To prepare for the rigorous writing of the curriculum (and professions), this module is designed to assess basic writing mechanics (grammar, clarity, precision, style). Follow the directions for the module, which will include small assessments and one writing assignment. Questions about this module should be directed toward Prof. Martin-Kratzer at reneemk@ufl.edu.

Unit 1 punctuation quiz **due by 11:55 p.m. Feb. 14**
 Unit 2 grammar quiz **due by 11:55 p.m. Feb. 21**
 Unit 3 writing assignment **due by 11:55 p.m. Feb. 28**

Exams: Exams are based on material from lectures only (not reading, not news). You take the exams IN CLASS, and you may use your notes, but not other sources (other people, AI programs).

Exam dates: Feb. 5; March 5; April 9; April 23

Makeup exams and quizzes are done in accordance with UF policy.

If you have accommodations for extra time on your exam, see the instructors about arrangements.

Grading Policies

This course follows standard UF grading policies. If applicable, grade total is rounded to nearest point. <https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/grades.aspx>

1,000 to 930	A	799 to 760	C+
929 to 900	A-	759 to 730	C
899 to 860	B+	729 to 700	C-
859 to 830	B	699 to 660	D+
829 to 800	B-	660 to 600	D
		Below 599	E

Attendance at all class meetings is strongly suggested. Absences due to illness, serious family emergencies, special curricular requirements, etc., will be handled in accordance with UF policies that can be found at:

<https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/attendance.aspx>

We'll move quickly in class, and there won't be time to zone out. Stay engaged. Keep multitasking to a minimum, or at the least share funny Tik-Toks (we will stop and watch with you). Join the conversation. Participate fully in group and class work.

Course Schedule

Date	Session	Assignments Due
Jan. 15	Introduction and the Role of Journalism in a Democratic Society Journalism does more than keep us informed—journalism enables us as citizens to have our voices heard in the chambers of power and allows us to monitor and moderate the sources of power that shape our lives. In the past few decades this responsibility of the journalist in a free society has been made more vital and more difficult by the revolution in communications technology and the economic organization of journalism it has spawned. —Pew Research Center	
Jan. 22	Forms & Function of Journalism (Journalism	Reading Quiz 1

	<p>Thinking) and The Main Rules of Engagement Journalism does not just include one form. This week will explore the various kinds of journalism—ranging from news stories to investigative pieces to narrative storytelling, all done in a variety of platforms (audio, video, written, etc...). What is the function of each form and how do they relate to audience?</p> <p>What are the main principles that journalists abide by? Accuracy, truth, fairness will be explored as principles and as shown in practice. How have they changed and how has the notion of bias, objectivity and neutrality evolved? News values—how news items are decided and prioritized—will be covered.</p>	
Jan. 29	<p>The Power (& Science) of Storytelling Stories have the ability to connect communities. This week will cover the power of storytelling and its role in helping communities learn, heal and engage with each other. We look at the science of storytelling and the techniques that reporters use to tell effective and engaging stories.</p>	
Feb. 5	<p>Journalism Trust & Credibility Trust of journalism is at all-time low, and the industry is wrestling with how to deal with it. In a democracy, where the journalism is needed for its watchdog, what happens to that role when part of the population does not believe in the product? How did this happen and what is the industry doing to combat it?</p>	Exam 1
Feb. 12	<p>The Role of the Press in Covering Underrepresented Groups Lack of diversity in newsroom has been cited as one of the reasons why underrepresented groups are not covered thoroughly or fairly. What steps have been taken to increase diversity and why is it so important for a free press to cover underrepresented groups?</p>	Punctuation Quiz due Feb. 14
Feb. 19	<p>How Reporters Work: Practices and Tools This week covers all of the tactics and tools that reporters use to gather information and produce stories. We'll look at public records, documents, interviewing practices, as well as other techniques, such as observational reporting. We will also look at the structure of news organizations—from idea to reporter to editor to publication/airing.</p>	Reading Quiz 2 Grammar Quiz due Feb. 21
Feb. 26	<p>The Evolving Arena of Journalism Ethics An overview of the ethics guidelines of the Society of Professional Journalists and how they have evolved. This will also look at difficult ethical dilemmas and teach students how to work through the decision-making process.</p>	Writing Quiz due Feb. 28
March 5	<p>Sports Journalism and Sports Media What does it mean to cover sports in an era where teams own and manage media outlets outright? Where does sports journalism sit in a world of sports content and is there a difference?</p>	Exam 2

March 12	Local and Community News What is the role of community news and how has it changed, as more and more communities have become news deserts? News values—how news items are decided and prioritized—will be covered.	Reading Quiz 3
March 19	SPRING BREAK	
March 26	The First Amendment and Legal Issues An overview of the most important legal issues that reporters need to know, including libel, defamation, copyright, consent on recording, public meetings, etc...	Reading Quiz 4
April 2	Disrupting Models of Journalism We will discuss contemporary influences and forces acting on the journalism industry, conducting journalism and other issues facing journalists. We'll advance journalism thinking beyond the traditional methods and explore what journalism skills can open for future careers.	Reading Quiz 5 <i>(Journalism Today assignment likely due April 4 – watch Canvas for details)</i>
April 9	The Economics of Journalism: Corporations, Entrepreneurs and More How is content funded? How are traditional models failing? What is the role of large media companies vs. startups? What are the economic challenges facing today's media industry and how do they have an effect on the journalism that is being done in communities?	Exam 3
April 16	The Future of Journalism: AI and Beyond Bots writing stories. Algorithms telling you what's important. What does the future of journalism look like, for better or worse?	Reading Quiz 6
April 23	What's Next Wrap class and getting involved in CJC.	Exam 4

If there is a conflict in dates for topics, assignments, exams or quizzes between this document and Canvas, consider Canvas the most up-to-date.

Course Reading Assignments

Reading Quiz	Readings
Reading Quiz 1 – Jan. 22	Elements of Journalism overview - Rosensteil et al. [PDF in Canvas] SPJ Code of Ethics [PDF in Canvas] "Hello, I'm a Journalist. Can we talk?" https://www.nytimes.com/2022/05/19/insider/journalist-interview-reporting.html
Reading Quiz 2 – Feb. 19	'Journalism Thinking' doesn't need a business model. It needs a call to arms https://medium.com/@christopherwink/journalism-thinking-doesn-t-need-a-business-model-it-needs-a-call-to-arms-c764797b5d99 In journalism, 'objective' is a good word with a noble history. But let's consider 'distance from neutrality.' https://www.poynter.org/ethics-trust/2022/journalism-objective-neutral-disinterested-nonpartisan-impartial-independent/ Journalistic Objectivity Evolved the Way It Did for a Reason,

	<p>TIME https://time.com/5443351/journalism-objectivity-history/</p>
<p>Reading Quiz 3 – March 12</p>	<p>Trust in the media has tanked. Are we entering a ‘post-news’ era? https://www.csmonitor.com/USA/Politics/2024/0503/news-media-decline-polarization-distrust</p> <p>Person-Centered Terms Encourage Stigmatized Groups’ Trust in News https://mediaengagement.org/research/person-centered-terms-encourage-stigmatized-groups-trust-in-news/</p> <p>Black Americans’ Experiences With News https://www.pewresearch.org/journalism/2023/09/26/black-americans-experiences-with-news/</p>
<p>Reading Quiz 4 – March 26</p>	<p>Is Local News Failing To Hold Public Officials Accountable? https://localnewsinitiative.northwestern.edu/posts/2023/06/06/medill-local-news-poll/index.html</p> <p>How big a threat does misinformation pose to democracy? https://www.niemanlab.org/2023/11/how-big-a-threat-does-misinformation-pose-to-democracy/</p> <p>How they did it: Washington Post reporters reveal FEMA failures, denial of disaster aid to Black families in the South https://journalistsresource.org/politics-and-government/washington-post-fema-investigation-goldsmith/</p>
<p>Reading Quiz 5 – April 2</p>	<p>A Test of the News https://www.cjr.org/analysis/a-test-of-the-news-wesley-lowery-objectivity.php</p> <p>A new way of looking at trust in media: Do Americans share journalism’s core values? https://americanpressinstitute.org/trust-journalism-values/</p>
<p>Reading Quiz 6 – April 16</p>	<p>Journalism Needs Leaders Who Know How to Run a Business https://niemanreports.org/articles/journalism-needs-leaders-who-know-how-to-run-a-business/</p> <p>How Will Artificial Intelligence Change the News Business? https://nymag.com/intelligencer/2023/08/how-ai-will-change-the-news-business.html</p> <p>As AI use grows, we must articulate ‘the enduring principles that define journalism’ https://www.poynter.org/commentary/2024/artificial-intelligence-principles-journalism/</p>

Students with disabilities requesting accommodations should first register with the Disability Resource Center (352-392-8565, 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.

Course Evaluations: Students are expected to provide professional and respectful feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing course evaluations online via GatorEvals. Guidance on how to give feedback in a professional and respectful manner is available at <https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/students/>. Students will be notified when the evaluation period opens and can complete evaluations through the email they receive from GatorEvals, in their Canvas course menu under GatorEvals, or via <https://ufl.bluer.com/ufl/>. Summaries of course evaluation results are available to students at <https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/public-results/>

Academic Integrity

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 Honor Code (<https://sccr.dso.ufl.edu/policies/student-honor-code-student-conduct-code/>) specifies a number of behaviors that are in violation of this code and the possible sanctions. Furthermore, you are obligated to report any condition that facilitates academic misconduct to appropriate personnel. If you have any questions or concerns, please consult with the instructor.

Using an AI-content generator such as ChatGPT or other large language model tool to complete assignment without proper attribution violates academic integrity. By submitting assignments in this class, you pledge to affirm that they are your own work and you attribute use of any tools and sources.

Course Etiquette

All members of the class are expected to follow rules of common courtesy in all email messages, threaded discussions and chats.

In-class recording: Students are allowed to record video or audio of class lectures. However, the purposes for which these recordings may be used are strictly controlled. The only allowable purposes are (1) for personal educational use, (2) in connection with a complaint to the university, or (3) as evidence in, or in preparation for, a criminal or civil proceeding. All other purposes are prohibited. Specifically, students may not publish recorded lectures without the written consent of the instructor.

A “class lecture” is an educational presentation intended to inform or teach enrolled students about a particular subject, including any instructor-led discussions that form part of the presentation, and delivered by any instructor hired or appointed by the University, or by a guest instructor, as part of a University of Florida course. A class lecture does not include lab sessions, student presentations, clinical presentations such as patient history, academic exercises involving solely student participation, assessments (quizzes, tests, exams), field trips, private conversations between students in the class or between a student and the faculty or lecturer during a class session.

Publication without permission of the instructor is prohibited. To “publish” means to share, transmit, circulate, distribute, or provide access to a recording, regardless of format or medium, to another person (or persons), including but not limited to another student within the same class section. Additionally, a recording, or transcript of a recording, is considered published if it is posted on or uploaded to, in whole or in part, any media platform, including but not limited to social media, book, magazine,

newspaper, leaflet, or third party note/tutoring services. A student who publishes a recording without written consent may be subject to a civil cause of action instituted by a person injured by the publication and/or discipline under UF Regulation 4.040 Student Honor Code and Student Conduct Code.

Campus Resources

For issues with technical difficulties for Canvas, please contact the UF Help Desk at:
<http://helpdesk.ufl.edu>
(352) 392-HELP (4357)
Walk-in: HUB 132

Any requests for make-ups due to technical issues must be accompanied by the ticket number received from the Help Desk when the problem was reported to them. The ticket number will document the time and date of the problem. You must e-mail your instructor within 24 hours of the technical difficulty if you wish to request a make-up.

Other resources are available at <http://www.distance.ufl.edu/getting-help> for:

- Counseling and Wellness resources
- Disability resources
- Resources for handling student concerns and complaints
- Library Help Desk support

Health and Wellness

U Matter, We Care: If you or a friend is in distress, please contact umatter@ufl.edu or 352 392-1575 so that a team member can reach out to the student.

Counseling and Wellness Center: <https://counseling.ufl.edu/>, 392-1575; and the University

Police Department: 392-1111 or 9-1-1 for emergencies.

Sexual Assault Recovery Services: Student Health Care Center, 392-1161.

University Police Department: 392-1111 (or 9-1-1 for emergencies).

<http://www.police.ufl.edu/>

Academic Resources

E-learning technical support, 352-392-4357 (select option 2) or e-mail to Learningsupport@ufl.edu. <https://lss.at.ufl.edu/help.shtml>

Career Connections Center, Reitz Union, 392-1601. Career assistance and counseling. <https://career.ufl.edu/>

Library Support, <http://cms.uflib.ufl.edu/ask>. Various ways to receive assistance with respect to using the libraries or finding resources.

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. Help brainstorming, formatting, and writing papers. <http://writing.ufl.edu/writing-studio/>

Disclaimer: *This syllabus represents our current plans and objectives. As we go through the semester, those plans may need to change to enhance the class learning opportunity. Such changes, communicated clearly, are not unusual and should be expected.*

About the Instructors

Janet Coats

Coats has been at the forefront of the seismic shifts in journalism and information culture over the last 25 years. She's led large multimedia news organizations, done groundbreaking work in civic engagement and reader outreach, and built her own consulting company focused on engagement and sustainability strategies for non-profit and entrepreneurial news organizations. She founded and served as CEO of a consulting firm focused on helping media clients focus on content, engagement strategies and business plans. She's held leadership positions at several news organizations, including the Sarasota Herald Tribune, and was dean of faculty at The Poynter Institute. She's served on the Pulitzer Prize jury five times. She is now the managing director of the UF Consortium on Trust in Media and Technology.

Matt Sheehan

Matt Sheehan is the managing director of the Center for Public Interest Communications and is a senior lecturer of journalism at the University of Florida. He teaches courses on the science of story, audience engagement, media leadership, media product development and integration of emerging technologies in journalistic practices. He is a former assistant news editor at *The Washington Post*, was chief operating officer of a digital media company, taught and served in senior administration at University of Maryland's Philip Merrill College of Journalism and led the integration and digital evolution of five newsrooms serving public and commercial stations (NPR, PBS, ESPN) in Florida as the inaugural director of University of Florida's award-winning Innovation News Center.

Examples of Stellar Work Exploiting the Tools of Digital Journalism

- Gladiator: Aaron Hernandez and Football Inc. (Podcast) Boston Globe Spotlight team <https://apps.bostonglobe.com/spotlight/gladiator/>
- The Facebook Dilemma (longform video) Frontline <https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/frontline/film/facebook-dilemma/>
- Black Hawk Down: An American War Story The Original 1997 Newspaper Series Online <http://inquirer.philly.com/packages/somalia/sitemap.asp>
- 42 On-Air Journalists Talk Working in the Age of Fake News <http://www.papermag.com/fake-news-break-the-internet-2622526678.html>
- Perversion of Justice <https://hrlid.us/2rcqDpB>

- SEVEN DAYS OF HEROIN: THIS IS WHAT AN EPIDEMIC LOOKS LIKE The Enquirer sent more than 60 reporters, photographers and videographers into their communities to chronicle an ordinary week in this extraordinary time. <http://bit.ly/2FDv6vk>
 - Pulitzer Citation: <https://www.pulitzer.org/winners/staff-cincinnati-enquirer>
- Nuclear Negligence <https://awards.journalists.org/entries/nuclear-negligence/>
- Dangerous Deliveries: Is Texas Doing Enough to Stop Moms From Dying? <https://awards.journalists.org/entries/texas-tribune-dangerous-deliveries/>
- Lost Mothers: An estimated 700 to 900 women in the U.S. died from pregnancy-related causes in 2016. We have identified 134 of them so far. <https://awards.journalists.org/entries/lost-mothers/>
- She Says <https://awards.journalists.org/entries/she-says/>
- Gerda <https://films.radiowest.org/featured-series/gerda>
- Hacking Democracy <https://awards.journalists.org/entries/hacking-democracy/>
- The Deported <https://awards.journalists.org/entries/the-deported-life-beyond-the-border/>
- All Work. No play. <https://awards.journalists.org/entries/all-work-no-pay/>
- Bundyville: A new series and podcast from Longreads, in partnership with [Oregon Public Broadcasting](http://www.oregonpublicbroadcasting.org/). <http://bit.ly/2TxR2et>
- The Marshall Project's WE ARE WITNESSES: The American criminal justice system consists of 2.2 million people behind bars, plus tens of millions of family members, corrections and police officers, parolees, victims of crime, judges, prosecutors and defenders. In We Are Witnesses, we hear their stories. <https://www.themarshallproject.org/witnesses>
- Rattled: Oregon's Concussion Discussion <http://www.invw.org/series/rattledinoregon/>
- WASTED MEDICINE: Squandered Health Care Dollars <https://www.propublica.org/series/wasted-medicine>
 - About: Marshall Allen Unearths Waste in Health Care <https://www.theopennotebook.com/2018/02/13/marshall-allen-unearths-waste-in-health-care/>

- Can the Ivory-Billed Woodpecker Be Found in Cuba? A birder, ornithologist, writer, and photographer set off on an extreme adventure through the muck and memories of eastern Cuba. <https://www.audubon.org/magazine/may-june-2016/can-ivory-billed-woodpecker-be-found-cuba>
- “In rural Missouri, response to sexual assault is uneven and uncertain” by Anna Brett and Tessa Weinberg, The Columbia Missourian. <http://bit.ly/2LbM5nU>
- “How Texas lets Atmos Energy off the hook” by Holly Hacker and Cary Aspinwall, The Dallas Morning News. <http://bit.ly/2L8Tt38>
- “Fight Club: Dark secrets of Florida’s juvenile justice system,” an investigation by The Miami Herald. <https://hrlld.us/2L8Uecu>
- “How South Carolina’s ‘minimally adequate’ education system fails too many students” by Paul Bowers, Glenn Smith, Seanna Adcox, Jennifer Berry Hawes and Thad Moore, The Post and Courier of Charleston, S.C. <http://bit.ly/2LcBjNT>
- “Side Effects: An ongoing investigation on the rising costs of prescription drugs” by The Columbus Dispatch. <http://bit.ly/2LcMrdQ>
- “Influence & Injustice: An investigation into the power of prosecutors” by Josh Salman, Andrew Pantazi and Michael Braga, The Sarasota Herald-Tribune. <http://bit.ly/2LcDEbD>
- “The search for Jackie Wallace” by Ted Jackson of The Times-Picayune of New Orleans (the story of a football legend who disappeared). <http://bit.ly/2Lb0twp>
- “‘My World Was Burning’: The North Bay fires and what went wrong” by Sukey Lewis, Marisa Lagos and Lisa Pickoff-White of the public radio station KQED in Northern California. <http://bit.ly/2LeAnJe>
- “Meet the Glasscos: Lesbian foster parents in the Bible Belt” by Katherine Webb-Hehn, Scalawag Magazine. <http://bit.ly/2LcMAxU>
- “Targeted: A family and the quest to stop the next school shooter” by Bethany Barnes, The Oregonian. <http://bit.ly/2L9CrSA>
- Nirvana’s “Nevermind”: The 1991 album that gave rise to a rock genre and captured the spirit of a new generation. <http://bit.ly/2AfhLDD>

- The Force Report: Five years. 72,607 documents. Every local police department in N.J. We built the most comprehensive statewide database of police use of force in the U.S. <http://force.nj.com/>