



JOU4930: COVERING SPRING TRAINING

SPRING 2025

Thursday | Period 5 (11:45 AM –12:35 PM) | 2052 Weimer Hall

Professor Ryan Hunt

Office Hours: Tues. & Thurs, 10am-12pm OR [by appointment](#). Weimer Hall #3040D
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COURSE DESCRIPTION

There's nothing like covering Spring Training. This class will take you to cover the Cactus League in Arizona, where 15 big-league teams hold camp within a 25-mile radius in the greater Phoenix area. That will give you the opportunity to create various types of content – highlighted by stories with great significance to a UF audience – in a more accessible environment. The trip will provide an immersive experience that combines on-site live-event coverage, in-depth feature storytelling, social-media content creation as well as networking opportunities with UF alums in the field.

COURSE GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

- To replicate the functions of a real sports newsroom, from ideation to execution.
- To collaborate with peers – both managers and content creators – to raise the bar on coverage.
- To create multiple types of professional-quality content in a live, on-location environment.
- To network with professionals across the sports media landscape, especially baseball.
- To get a better understanding of the industry and the evolution of consumption habits.

READING

- [CJC Sports Style Guide](#): I put this together not just to replicate The Associated Press Stylebook, a guide most professional organizations use, but also to incorporate local elements or other style questions you may run across that are NOT included in the book. Bookmark this. Use it. Learn it.
- Select pieces of excellent pieces of baseball journalism – written and video.
- Daily national and local sports coverage. Stay on top of the news, especially when it comes to Major League Baseball, UF alums in professional baseball and even the Florida baseball and softball teams.

CLASS SCHEDULE

Each week before the trip, the class will meet to discuss story ideas and trip logistics, plus we will have frequent guests from across baseball media. Each class will start with a budget meeting that replicates one you would see in a professional newsroom. *Always bring charged laptops to class.*

The class will travel to Phoenix during Spring Break. Each student must arrive by mid-afternoon on Saturday, March 15. We will depart the following Saturday, March 22.

After the trip, the class will meet to review the trip and discuss the execution of the final project. Final schedule TBD.

ASSIGNMENT BREAKDOWN

Note: Assignment specifics and due dates will be visible in Canvas. Exact assignments subject to change. Certain assignments may have variable due dates for each student.

BEFORE THE TRIP

- ***Initial Ideas List (25 points):*** Each student will provide an initial list of 10 ideas they would like to chase during the trip, in various mediums. Note: Some students' ideas may overlap, yet only one student will pursue each idea. This list is just to get people started.

- **Budget Pitches Participation: (25 points)** Collaboration is the key to building on solid ideas. Each class, bring your best ideas to discuss potential stories/videos/social media. Each budget meeting may have a specific topic. (ex. Baseball trends)
- **Baseball AP Style Quiz (30 points):** Know your AP Style, especially when it comes to baseball. There will be a short quiz to delve into specific baseball-related style.
- **Baseball Content Analysis (120 points: 6 @ 20 points each):** We will explore great pieces of baseball journalism and storytelling, both written and video. Students will analyze longform stories, on-deadline work and /or mini-documentaries by some of the best baseball journalists.
- **MLB Spring Team Preview (50 points):** There are 15 Cactus League teams. Each student will compile a comprehensive preview for one of them prior to the start of Spring Training.
- **Pre-Trip Content Plan (25 points):** One week before the trip, each student will provide a detailed plan of their proposed schedule during the trip, including the on-location coverage ideas as described below. Managers will incorporate numerous students' plans into one cohesive content calendar for the trip.

DURING THE TRIP: ON-LOCATION COVERAGE

Each student will be required to create multiple pieces of content – in various genres – during the trip. Deadlines will vary based off the scope of the idea, but will be communicated prior to the trip as a follow-up to your pre-trip content plan

- **Daily Coverage Piece 1: (75 points)** Each student must pick one category from the following options for live, on-site coverage: short written feature, on-camera stand-up, live game broadcast (if available), mini-video piece for social media (separate from social promotion) or photo gallery. These will be published during the week in Arizona.
- **Daily Coverage Piece 2 (75 points):** See above. However, you may not choose the same category twice. Managers may opt to choose 'Managerial Responsibilities' here in lieu of this.
- **Social Media Promotion (50 points):** Each student will pick set days/times from a pre-set schedule, including trips to visit the Arizona Cardinals and Phoenix Suns, to promote via CJC's platforms, in collaboration with the Social Media Manager.

- ***Wild Card (50 points):*** Students can complete any idea of their choosing – pending manager and instructor approval – in any format. This can be something topical about baseball, something about the local culture of Spring Training in Arizona or something off the beaten path. It may be in any format – written, video or social – though I would encourage you to have variety.

Note: Students will be discouraged from pursuing overlapping story ideas, just like in a traditional newsroom.

AFTER THE TRIP

- ***Gators in the Pros (50 points):*** At any point during the semester, each student must do one short, formatted piece on a former Florida baseball player in any level of pro baseball. While there are numerous ex-Gators training in Arizona, this assignment is not limited to them. You may also try to set up interviews with UF baseball alums not on Cactus League teams.
- ***Trip Wrap (25 points):*** A short essay on what you learned during the trip/semester, your most memorable moments and stories and things you will carry with you into your career.
- ***Final Project (100 points):*** This should be your signature piece from the trip. It can be a medium-sized written feature (1,000 words minimum), a multimedia video (3 minutes minimum) or in another format pre-approved by your instructor. Your project should have an element of timeliness and relevance. There should be more depth and research than daily coverage. While the deadline for this project is at the end of the semester, you are free to complete it during or shortly after the trip.

ADDITIONAL ELEMENTS

- ***Attendance (50 points)*** You are expected to attend class on time. We only meet 13 times a semester. Failure to attend class will put you at the bottom of the pecking order when it comes to credential requests in Arizona, plus there will be 20 points deducted for each unexcused absence.
- ***Professionalism (50 points).*** This class will be collaborative. Managers and content creators are expected to work together on project ideas and timelines. Points can also be deducted at the instructor's discretion for chronic lateness, being disengaged in class and/or failure to

participate in class discussions. For managers, this will also account for leadership working with the content creators.

GRADING

You will be graded on an 800-point scale. Grades may be rounded up at the instructor's discretion.

A: 94-100% (752-800 total points)

A-: 90-93.9% (720-751)

B+: 87-89.9% (696-719)

B: 83-86.9% (664-695)

B-: 80-82.9% (640-663)

C+: 77-79.9% (616-639)

C: 73-76.9% (584-615)

C-: 70-72.9% (560-583)

D+: 67-69.9% (536-559)

D: 60-66.9% (480-535)

E: 59.9% and below (Under 479)

Students will be graded in accordance with policies for [assigning grade points as articulated here](#).

EXTRA CREDIT

There will be select opportunities to earn extra credit during the semester. Details to come in specific classes. Class attendance is required to participate in that extra-credit assignment.

SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

Please submit all assignment elements in Canvas. For bigger projects, you may also be asked to share a Google doc with me at ryanhunt@ufl.edu.

A NOTE ABOUT AI

Does AI belong in journalism? In this class, it does not. You are here to learn, improve and get more reps, so my No. 1 expectation for you is to simply do your own work. Don't take the easy way out.

In the real world, [you would be fired](#) ([or be forced to resign](#)) if you turned in a piece of work to your editors with your name on it that was written or had significant elements [generated by AI](#). Major

companies [have been embarrassed](#) by using AI and [passing it off as human](#) work. And [jobs have been eliminated](#) across the industry.

In this class, I will randomly pick certain stories over the course of the semester and run them through [multiple AI checkers](#). If assignments are flagged as generated by AI by each detector (over a percentage determined by your instructor), the assignment will not be accepted. You may receive a 0 for assignment plus a half-letter grade deduction from your final grade.

Using AI is akin to plagiarism. And that is one of the biggest sins in journalism. Do your own work.

If you have **any** degree of uncertainty, please ask.

ACADEMIC DISHONESTY/HONOR CODE

Additionally, academic dishonesty of any kind will not be tolerated in this course. Violations of the honor code include plagiarizing material from other sources, fabricating material or using any work done by another person for a class assignment. See the Department of Journalism website, as well as UF guidelines, for specific outline of honor code violations.

UF Student Honor Code: <https://sccr.dso.ufl.edu/process/student-conduct-code/>

Any violations of this code will be reported to the Dean of Students. Failure to comply with this commitment will result in disciplinary action compliant with the UF Student Honor Code Procedures.

DEADLINES AND DEDUCTIONS

Journalism is a deadline business. This course is designed to mirror the expected behavior of a professional newsroom. They're called deadlines for a reason.

Failure to meet assignment deadlines will result in a 10-point deduction in the first 24-hour period it's late. Late assignments beyond 24 hours may not be accepted, and could be graded as a zero, unless an emergency can be documented. If an illness or a personal emergency prevents you from completing an assignment, advance notice and written documentation will be required. If advance notice is not possible because of a true emergency, written documentation will be required ASAP.

Fact errors – misspelled names, incorrect stats, wrong titles, inaccurate information – will result in a significant deduction at instructor's discretion, depending on the scope of the error(s) and assignment. ***At a minimum, any fact error is at least a 15-point deduction.***

Check the names in your story. Then double check them.

PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT

This is a workshop-style class in which we will all contribute ideas and engage in discussion. For the sake of other students, please don't be a distraction in class. Professional courtesy is expected. No checking your phone in class. If you need to use your phone, please leave the room to do so.

CLASSROOM NEEDS

Students requesting special classroom needs must first register with the Dean of Students Office, which will provide documentation to the student, who must then provide the documentation to the instructor.

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, 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 this link](#). Summaries of course evaluation results are [available to students here](#).

STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

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 that must be presented to the instructor when requesting accommodation. Students with disabilities should follow this process as early as possible in the semester.

COURSE EVALUATIONS

Students are expected to provide feedback on the quality of instruction in this course based on a minimum of 10 criteria. These evaluations are conducted online at [GatorEvals](#). Evaluations are typically open during the final weeks of the semester, but announcements will be made giving specific

times they are available. Summary results of these evaluations are available to students at the evaluations website URL above.

U MATTER, WE CARE

Your well-being is important to the University of Florida. The U Matter, We Care initiative is committed to creating a culture of care on our campus by encouraging members of our community to look out for one another and to reach out for help if a member of our community is in need. If you or a friend is in distress, please contact umatter@ufl.edu so that the U Matter, We Care Team can reach out to the student in distress. A nighttime and weekend crisis counselor is available by phone at 352-392-1575. The U Matter, We Care Team can help connect students to the many other helping resources available including, but not limited to, Victim Advocates, Housing staff, and the Counseling and Wellness Center. Please remember that asking for help is a sign of strength. In case of emergency, call 9-1-1.

THE INSTRUCTOR

Ryan Hunt is a Sports Lecturer at the University of Florida. A 1997 graduate of UF's College of Journalism and Communications, Ryan spent 25 years at *Sports Illustrated*, including the last four as its co-Editor-in-Chief. Ryan managed SI's editorial staff, leading a team of experienced reporters and editors and overseeing the digital strategy – from daily content planning to major event coverage to franchise development..

At SI, Ryan started as an entry-level Associate Producer in Atlanta before climbing the ranks – Homepage Editor, News Director, Associate Managing Editor to Executive Editor – to become one of only 11 people to hold the top editorial title at the brand. Hunt won a Sports Emmy in 2017 for Outstanding Digital Innovation for his involvement on the SI/Life VR 'Capturing Everest' project, the first ever bottom-to-top climb of Mount Everest captured in virtual reality.

He grew up in the Tampa-St. Petersburg area and was the sports editor of the *The Independent Florida Alligator* during his time at UF. Nearly 30 years ago, I was in the same position as you are today.