

**JOU 3110: Applied Fact Finding, Class No. 13030**

Fall semester 2025, University of Florida  
Mondays 3p-6p, FLG 0270

Weekly schedule (subject to adjustments, which I will announce):

Aug. 25 – Week One

Syllabus review & Intro to fact finding (case study)

Quiz No. 1 due by 11:59 p.m. Sunday

Assignment: Introduce yourself

No Packback writing prompts due this week

Sept. 1 – Week Two

UF holiday: No class this week

No homework this week

Sept. 8 – Week Three

Covering law enforcement, Part I

Quiz No. 2 due by 11:59 p.m. Sunday

Homework assignment No. 1 due before 11:59 p.m. Sunday

Packback writing prompt No. 1 due before 11:59 p.m. Sunday

Sept. 15 – Week Four

Covering law enforcement, Part 2

Quiz No. 3 due by 11:59 p.m. Sunday

Packback writing prompt No. 1 due before 11:59 p.m. Sunday

Sept. 22 – Week Five

Covering local & state courts

Quiz No. 4 due by 11:59 p.m. Sunday

Packback writing prompt No. 2 due before 11:59 p.m. Sunday

Sept. 29 – Week Six

Covering federal courts

Quiz No. 5 due by 11:59 p.m. Sunday

Packback writing prompt No. 3 due before 11:59 p.m. Sunday

Homework assignment No. 2 due before 11:59 p.m. Sunday

Oct. 6 – Week Seven

Covering jails & prisons

Guest speaker Baltimore Banner reporter Ben Conarck

<https://www.thebaltimorebanner.com/author/ben-conarck/>

Quiz No. 6 due by 11:59 p.m. Sunday

Packback writing prompt No. 4 due before 11:59 p.m. Sunday

Oct. 13 – Week Eight

Investigating everyday people

Quiz No. 7 due by 11:59 p.m. Sunday

Homework assignment No. 3 due before 11:59 p.m. Sunday

Packback writing prompt No. 5 due before 11:59 p.m. Sunday

Oct. 20 – Week Nine

Investigating public figures

Quiz No. 8 due by 11:59 p.m. Sunday

Packback writing prompt No. 6 due before 11:59 p.m. Sunday

Oct. 27 – Week 10

Public records laws, Part I

Quiz No. 9 due by 11:59 p.m. Sunday

Packback writing prompt No. 7 due before 11:59 p.m. Sunday

Nov. 3 – Week 11

Public records laws, Part II

Quiz No. 10 due by 11:59 p.m. Sunday

Packback writing prompt No. 8 due before 11:59 p.m. Sunday

Homework assignment No. 4 due before 11:59 p.m. Sunday

Nov. 10 – Week 12

Investigating businesses & charities

Quiz No. 11 due by 11:59 p.m. Wednesday

Packback writing prompt No. 9 due before 11:59 p.m. Wednesday

Comprehensive test due by 11:59 p.m. Sunday

Nov. 17 – Week 13

Investigating campaign finance

Quiz No. 12 due by 11:59 p.m. Sunday

Homework assignment No. 5 due before 11:59 p.m. Sunday

Packback writing prompt No. 10 due before 11:59 p.m. Sunday

Comprehensive test due Dec. 3

Nov. 24 – Week 14

Thanksgiving Break, no class

Extra-credit opportunity for submitting course evaluations (+50 points)

Dec. 1 – Week 15

No class.

Course description:

Students will learn sleuthing methods to gather and analyze public records and publicly accessible records. They will learn to understand the importance of records for uncovering information about public figures including politicians, athletes, celebrities and other newsworthy people, organizations and businesses, and for identifying prospective information sources and verifying what people say about themselves. They will discover what kinds of records are generally available in Florida and beyond, and learn strategies for finding and obtaining them for free or reduced costs. They will gain practical experience finding records and using them to generate lines of inquiry. Although designed for journalists, the course will be useful for anyone who needs better, faster access to reliable information. Your grade will be based on your homework, participation in a weekly online discussion platform and graded quizzes. **There is no final exam.**

Attendance:

Students can learn the material only by attending the classes and listening carefully to lectures. You also are responsible for arranging to complete any missed quizzes, assignments or other graded work within one week of your return to class. Requirements for class attendance and make-up exams, assignments, and other work in this course are consistent with university policies that can be found at <https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/attendance.aspx>

Student hours:

Drop-in student hours will be 10a to 2p Thursdays. You can also connect with me during that time using this link, if you let me know this is your preference and when you want to connect:

<https://ufl.zoom.us/j/98148141718?pwd=azcLaEzPD5KkM3qap6PVL6elkGPaZB.1>

\*Please\* make an appointment in advance, whenever possible, to avoid the real-world or virtual waiting room. I am also generally available by appointment on other days. My email is [tbridis@ufl.edu](mailto:tbridis@ufl.edu). I generally respond within 24 hours to emails during weekdays or within 48 hours during weekends.

#### Homework:

The instructor will make occasional assignments related to lectures and course work that students will submit in Canvas.

#### Grading:

Weekly quizzes will be based on the lecture material only and will be a combination of multiple choice and true/false questions. Each quiz is worth 100 points. There are five assignments, worth 50 points each. A participation grade worth up to 250 points will be awarded for weekly postings to the online Packback platform (see "Textbooks"). A comprehensive test worth 400 points will be administered late in the semester as part of a college assessment. There may be occasional, optional extra-credit assignments.

Grading	Points
12 quizzes @ 100 each	1,200
6 assignments @ 100 each	250
Participation posts	300
Comprehensive test	400

#### Grading scale:

A = 90-100  
B = 80-99  
C = 70-79  
D = 60-69  
E = 59 or below

NOTE: The journalism school requires a minimum grade of a C in this course. If you end the semester with fewer than 70 percent, you may have to retake it.

#### Class requirements:

Most of our class-wide communication, including updates to this syllabus, will arrive via Canvas. **Please install the Canvas app on your smart phone and enable notifications**, and please regularly log in using your laptop. Please keep in touch with me or your teaching assistants regularly if you have any questions.

#### Grading policies:

<https://catalog.ufl.edu/UGRD/academic-regulations/grades-grading-policies/>

#### Accommodating students with disabilities:

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.

#### Textbooks:

Students will be required to purchase a \$39 semester access to Packback, an online discussion and participation platform. On Packback, students will ask complex questions and interact with classmates about how our studies relate to the real world. As it relates to this specific course, my goals for using Packback are to ensure students comprehend material from lectures and assignments and discuss more broadly techniques and implications about information-gathering.

#### Course evaluation:

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. Summary results of these assessments are available to students at <https://evaluations.ufl.edu/results/>.

#### Honesty policy:

You may not turn in work that is not your own, including work generated by Chat GPT and other AI programs. Additionally, it is a violation of UF policy and my copyright to share without authorization any course materials I have produced for this class, including quizzes. This includes informal sharing through social networks or uploading such course materials to a variety of online services that purport to serve as academic assistance sites.

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/process/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.

Contact information for the Counseling and Wellness Center:

<http://www.counseling.ufl.edu/cwc/Default.aspx>, 352-392-1575; and the University Police Department: 392-1111 or 911 for emergencies.