

**JOU 4941: "Fresh Take Florida," Class No. 22808**

Fall semester 2025, University of Florida

Mondays 12:50 p.m. to 1:40 p.m., Weimer 2052

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

Aug. 25 – Week One

Syllabus review

Assignment: Goals

Quiz 1

Sept. 1 – Week Two

UF holiday: No class this week

Story memo No. 1 due Sept. 5

Sept. 8 – Week Three

LobbyTools training

Story memo No. 2 due Sept. 12

Story No. 1 due Sept. 12

Sept. 15 – Week Four

Ideation: Where to find the best story ideas?

Story memo No. 3 due Sept. 19

Sept. 22 – Week Five

How to cover a bill

Story memo No. 4 due Sept. 26

Sept. 29 – Week Six

Developing sources

Also: Lawmaker (or another key source) won't return my calls! What do I do?

Also: Why public records can help protect against recalcitrant sources?

Story No. 2 due Oct. 3

Story memo No. 5 due Oct. 3

Oct. 6 – Week Seven

How to find a job or internship? Tips, tricks

Story memo No. 6 due Oct. 10

Oct. 13 – Week Eight

How to impress at your internship or job (tips on what to do, what not to do)?

Story memo No. 7 due Oct. 17

Oct. 20 – Week Nine

How to negotiate compensation at your job? What's a 401(k), anyway?

Story No. 3 due Oct. 24

Story memo No. 8 due Oct. 24

Oct. 27 – Week 10

Q-and-A with recent UF journalism graduates working in journalism

Story memo No. 9 due Oct. 31

Nov. 3 – Week 11

Q-and-A with hiring editors

Story memo No. 10 due Nov. 7

Nov. 10 – Week 12

How is AI and other emerging technologies being used in professional newsrooms?

Story memo No. 11 due Nov. 14

Story No. 4 due Nov. 14

Nov. 17 – Week 13

Journalism isn't working out for me – what else can I do?

Story memo No. 12 due Nov. 21

Nov. 24 – Week 14

Thanksgiving Break, no class

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

Story No. 5 due Nov. 30

Dec. 1 – Week 15

No class.

Retrospective assignment due, Dec. 3

Description:

Students will work as professional journalists closely with instructors to cover issues of statewide importance, including upcoming general elections, Florida's governor, Legislature, Supreme Court and other aspects of public policy and state government. They will produce in-depth content under their own bylines that is distributed to and published or broadcast by leading news organizations. **There is no final exam. You will be done with this course after UF's last regular day of the semester.**

Practical instructions and guidelines for the class can be viewed here:

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1gcPS9bjLKX3FZNYQisTXOJssWktlnNd-THTB3HJJz7l/edit?usp=sharing>

#### Attendance:

Our class meets weekly on Mondays during the semester. We will discuss upcoming events and coverage plans, so please be prepared. Some weeks, we expect to have occasional guest speakers. If you miss a meeting, you *\*must\** discuss separately with an instructor any stories you propose pursuing or the status of your upcoming stories.

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.

#### Grading:

Students are expected to publish at least five stories during the semester, on their own or with classmates. **All stories must be approved by instructors before they count for credit.** Each story should reflect the depth of reporting – and distinctiveness – that is associated with a major assignment of a capstone course, one that would be appealing for a major news organization outside Gainesville to publish to very large audiences. Each story should generally run 800 to 1,200 words but can run longer. If there are subsequent, follow-up developments on the same subject – such as a court ruling in a case or a bill passing the House or Senate – you are responsible for that coverage. If the follow-up article requires significant amounts of effort or additional reporting or interviews, it *\*may\** count as a second story for the semester, at the instructors' discretion.

At the discretion of instructors, stories that require unusual time or effort may result in additional or even double credit. Each story is worth up to 400 points. Grading rubric for each story is below:

Assignment	Percentage	Points
Originality/distinctiveness	10	40
Collaborating with photo/video	10	40

Reporting depth	40	160
Writing/AP Style	40	160

For all students, a “professionalism” grade of up to 400 points for the semester, or roughly 25 percent of your grade, will be assigned by instructors. This will reflect a student’s ability to demonstrate initiative; meet deadlines; establish priorities; interact professionally with instructors, peers and classmates; deal with unusual reporting challenges and more.

An introductory quiz worth up to 200 points will test your comprehension of our guidelines and operating principles.

A “goals” assignment worth up to 100 points is due early in the semester for students to convey to instructors their ambitions for the semester.

Progress reports worth up to 50 points are due weekly to inform your instructors about successes or challenges in your reporting and writing.

Occasional quizzes about required readings of professionally produced news articles will be worth up to 50 points each.

A “retrospective” assignment is due at the end of the semester and is worth up to 100 points.

#### Grading scale:

A = 90-100

B = 80-89

C = 70-79

D = 60-69

F = 59 or below

#### Grading policies:

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

#### Class requirements:

Most of our class-wide communication, including updates to this syllabus, will take place via Slack and Canvas. **Please install the Slack and Canvas apps on your smart phone and enable notifications**, and please regularly log in using your laptop.

You will be provided instructions for accessing a Fresh Take Florida-branded email account for the semester that you may choose to use. Please use it responsibly.

Early in the semester, you will be provided access and training to the commercial LobbyTools service, billed as Florida’s most powerful research, monitoring, news and analysis service used by state and local governments, lobbyists, corporations, associations, law firms, and news organizations.

Some travel may be necessary during the semester. There is funding to reimburse travel costs that are approved in advance.

Separately, there is funding to pay for public records, if those requests are approved by instructors in advance. We will negotiate aggressively to make sure we are not being overcharged.

#### Textbooks:

There are no required textbooks for this course. We highly recommend “The Associated Press Guide to News Writing: The Resource for Professional Journalists,” by Rene J. Cappon.

#### 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:

Plagiarism and fabulism (ie, inventing journalism sources or details) are unacceptable. You may not turn in work that is not your own. This includes work generated by Chat GPT and other Generative-AI programs, unless specifically approved by your instructors in writing. 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.