

Journalism 3101

Reporting

Instructor: Tim Drachlis

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Office hours: Virtual office hours on Canvas every Friday from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. Eastern time using the conference tool. Feel free to reach out anytime to my campus email.

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 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 anything concerning sports, 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, and those sources need to cover the various sides and angles of the story. 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. The stories must be local in nature and not be about national,

regional or international events. Rewrites of stories that appeared elsewhere will result in a 0. In addition, you may not interview friends or relatives for any story. The inclusion of friends or relatives will result in a 0. Please read the Outside Stories explanation in Module 1 for more information.

Pitches/Discussions: 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 give one reporting suggestion for one of your classmates' pitches. Once we get started reporting and writing these outside stories, there will be two more discussions – one on reporting challenges and one on writing challenges.

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

Homework: There will be 14 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: 150 points

Quizzes: 120 points

Homework: 420 points

Total: 1,390 points

The grading scale

1,251-1,390 points: A

1,112-1,250 points: B

973-1,111 points: C

834-972 points: D

0-833 points: F

The readings

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

Recommended: *Inside Reporting*, 3rd 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 20-point penalty.

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

The plagiarism, fabrication and artificial intelligence

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. If it is discovered that something in an outside story has been fabricated, that will result in a story grade of 0. In addition, you may not turn in work that is not your own, including work generated by Chat GPT and other AI programs.

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.

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 ledes

Jan. 12-25

Topics: Course introduction, news judgment, story ideas, lede writing, style

Discussion: Introduce yourself, Pitch #1

Homework: Exercise #1, Audience research memo, due Jan. 18 (50 points); Exercise #2, lede writing, due Jan. 25, (35 points)

Module 2/Reporting

Jan. 26-Feb. 1

Topics: Reporting plans, the well-reported story

Quiz: Style (A-D)

Discussion: Pitch #2

Homework: Exercise #3, lede writing (20 points)

Module 3/Story writing I

Feb. 2-8

Topics: Story structure

Discussion: Pitch #3

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

Module 4/Story writing II

Feb. 9-15

Topics: Quotes, attribution, other story writing tips

Quiz: Style (E-H)

Discussion: Pitch #4

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

Module 5/Interviewing

Feb. 16-22

Topics: Interviewing, hourglass stories

Discussion: Pitch #5

Homework: Exercise #6, record an interview, due March 1 (20 points); Exercise #7, hourglass story writing (40 points)

Module 6/Research**Feb. 23-March 1****Topics:** Research**Discussion:** Reporting challenges**Quiz:** Style (I-M)**Homework:** Exercise #8, research (15 points); Story #2**Module 7/Meetings****March 2-8****Topics:** Meetings, speeches and press conferences**Discussion:** Writing challenges**Homework:** Exercise #9, speeches (40 points)**Module 8/Delayed ledes****March 9-15****Topics:** Delayed ledes**Quiz:** Style (N-R)**Homework:** Exercise #10, delayed ledes (30 points); Story #3**Module 9/Feature stories****March 23-29****Topics:** Feature stories**Homework:** Exercise #11, WSJ story (40 points); Story #4**Module 10/Revising****March 30-April 12****Topics:** Revision methods, good writing**Quiz:** Style (S-Z)**Homework:** Exercise #12, revising, due April 5, (30 points); Exercise #13, editing (20 points), due April 12; Story #5, due April 12**Module 11/Clarity****April 13-19****Topics:** Sentence clarity

Homework: Exercise #14, clarity (20 points); Story #6; Extra credit language assignment, due Nov. 23

Module 12/Ethics, Libel and Privacy

April 20-24

Topics: Ethics, libel and privacy

Quiz: Libel and privacy

Homework: Ethics extra credit assignment, due April 22; Story #7, due April 22; extra credit story, due April 24