

JOU 4930

ON THE CLOCK: BREAKING DOWN A MAJOR NEWS STORY IN A MATTER OF SECONDS

Spring 2026

Section 27459

One credit hour

WHEN AND WHERE

Wednesdays, 9:35 AM - 10:25 AM on Zoom

INSTRUCTOR

Camille Respass, producer at NBC News

camillerespass@gmail.com

Office hours: Monday, 9 to 10 a.m., Tuesday, 9 to 10 a.m. Appointments are encouraged.

COURSE COMMUNICATIONS

Please use email and I will respond within 24 hours (and usually, a lot sooner).

COURSE DESCRIPTION

A massive hurricane. A complex peace deal. The Supreme Court's latest rulings. The news happens fast, and when you work in the fast-paced world of TV and streaming news, you have to process the world around you and condense it into a seconds-long script, where every word counts. You will develop the skills to write concise, captivating and accurate scripts about a wide range of topics, from flash floods to funding fights, that'll give you a strong foundation for your next internship or first real-world job in the business.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

Students in this course will:

1. Analyze television news scripts and identify how producers and reporters distill complicated topics into digestible information for viewers.
2. Engage in timed writing drills to understand what it feels like to turn around a news segment for television and streaming news platforms.
3. Write scripts, honing in on precision, structure and voice.
4. Identify visual elements for scripts, keeping in mind that TV is a visual medium.
5. Follow a beat and write updated scripts on the story to get the feel for what it's like to follow a complex, evolving story as it develops over time.
6. Peer edit scripts, providing feedback with professionalism and kindness.
7. Develop a portfolio of writing samples.

PREREQUISITES

Students are required to have at least a junior standing. Beyond that, I hope students come to this course with an eye for detail and excitement for journalism on visual platforms.

REQUIRED READING

You will not need to purchase a textbook for this course. We will rely upon:

- Select course readings I will provide on Canvas
- AP Stylebook via apstylebook.com/smathers-libraries-at-the-university-of-florida

INSTRUCTIONAL METHODS

This course will be dynamic and highly interactive. While some class meetings will be lectures, a majority of our class time will be workshop-style, with students working on timed writing drills, discussing and analyzing scripts aired on a variety of news platforms, and peer-editing colleagues' work. Your participation is encouraged and required.

COURSE POLICIES

ATTENDANCE

Per the [UF attendance policy](#), students are expected to contact the instructor ahead of a planned absence that allows an excused absence from class. Please email me ahead of a planned absence if you would like to get the absence excused. If you do not contact me before the class meeting, the absence will count as unexcused and in-class work missed for unexcused absences earns you no points and may not be made up. In-class work missed during an excused absence must be made up within seven days of the absence. We are only meeting once a week, so time is precious in this course. I respect your time and it is the expectation that you will respect mine as well. Missing more than 10 minutes of a class meeting counts as an unexcused absence. Chronic tardiness will also result in point deduction.

ONLINE ETIQUETTE

My camera will be on for every class meeting, and I ask that yours will be as well. I encourage you to join the Zoom meeting a few minutes before class starts to check your mic and camera. If you need help with technical issues, please visit the [help desk website](#) or call 352-392-4357.

DEVICES

You will need a computer to join Zoom for each class meeting. You will use your laptop to take notes and complete in-class activities. I hope you are in this course because you want to be here and will give our class meetings your undivided attention. Please tuck your phone away and only have course-related materials up on your laptop screen during class.

USE OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

We will dedicate one week of class to learning best practices for the most responsible and efficient journalistic uses A.I. If you choose to use A.I. to answer questions such as, “When is the Florida legislature back in session?”, it is your responsibility to ensure the information given back to you is accurate. Using A.I. to write scripts is not permitted.

EVALUATION

A portion of our final class together will be set aside for you to provide feedback on the course, its instruction and how to improve it in future semesters. I want to hear your honest opinion. Feedback can be offered at <https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu>.

UNIVERSITY POLICIES

HONOR POLICY

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 Conduct Code specifies a number of behaviors that are in violation of this code and possible sanctions. See the [UF Conduct Code website](#) for more information. If you have any questions or concerns, please consult with the instructor in this class.

STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

Students with disabilities who experience learning barriers and want to request accommodations should connect with the [Disability Resource Center](#). Students should share their accommodation letter and discuss their needs with me as early as possible.

COURSE SCHEDULE

- **Week of Jan. 12**
 - In class: Course introduction
 - Assignment:
 - Canvas discussion: Watch and analyze segments
- **Week of Jan. 19**
 - In class: Dissecting major news scripts and refresh on formatting for TV
 - Assignment:
 - Canvas discussion: Analyze NBC News scripts
 - Canvas quiz
- **Week of Jan. 26**
 - In class: Picking a beat and resources for reporting
 - Assignments:
 - Canvas post: Select your beat
 - 60-second script on your beat
- **Week of Feb. 2**
 - In class: Using A.I.
 - Assignment:
 - 45-second script: Update your beat
 - Canvas discussion on A.I.
- **Week of Feb. 9**
 - In class: Concise script writing
 - Assignment:
 - 60-second script: Update your beat
- **Week of Feb. 16**
 - In class: Untangling complicated storylines
 - Assignment:
 - Medical study timed writing exercise
 - Canvas quiz
- **Week of Feb. 23**
 - In class: Timed writing drill
 - Assignment: Court proceeding timed writing exercise
- **Week of March 2**
 - In class: Writing to video with brevity
 - Assignment:
 - Writing to weather video exercise
 - Canvas quiz
- **Week of March 9**
 - In class: Guest speaker
 - Assignment:

- Canvas discussion on takeaways from guest speaker
 - Timed writing drill
- **Week of March 16**
 - Spring break: no class
- **Week of March 23**
 - In class: Trimming down scripts
 - Assignment:
 - Peer-edit scripts
 - Canvas quiz
- **Week of March 30**
 - In class: Guest speaker
 - Assignment:
 - Canvas discussion on takeaways from guest speaker
 - Develop pitches for explainer package
- **Week of April 6**
 - In class: Pitch explainer packages
 - Assignment: Explainer package
- **Week of April 13**
 - In class: Timed writing drill
 - Assignment: Explainer package
- **Week of April 20**
 - In class: Final thoughts and course evaluation
 - Assignment: Explainer package due on April 22

ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING

Assignment	Number	Points (1,000 total)	Details
Attendance	14 class sessions	100	Showing up on time and attending the entirety of each class meeting is required. Five points will be deducted from your first unexcused absence, 10 for your second, 15 for your third, and so on.
Writing exercises	10	300	You will complete a series of writing exercises focusing on how to break down a major news story in a matter of seconds. Some of these exercises will be completed in class, most of them will be completed out of class. Each is worth 30 points.
Canvas discussions	5	150	You will participate in Canvas discussions throughout the semester. Each is worth 30 points.
Quizzes	5	150	You will take short quizzes to demonstrate your learning from class. Each is worth 30 points.
Final project	1	300	You will pitch and write a 90 to 120 second explainer package on a topic of your choosing – honing in on what matters, what to lead a script with, and how to tell audiences what they need to know with voice and brevity.

The grading scale in this class is:

93 - 105 (A)	73 - 76.99 (C)
90 - 92.99 (A-)	70 - 72.99 (C-)
87 - 89.99 (B+)	67 - 69.99 (D+)
83 - 86.99 (B)	60 - 66.99 (D)
80 - 82.99 (B-)	Below 60 (E)
77 - 79.99 (C+)	