

**Investigative Reporting for Broadcast Journalists**  
**RTV 3305, Section 0269**  
**Summer A 2015**

**Class Time:** Monday & Wednesday 9:30 a.m. – 12:15 p.m. (Periods 2-3); and  
Friday 9:30 a.m.-10:45 a.m. (Period 2)

**Class Location:** Weimer G108

**Instructor:** Ginger Blackstone

**E-mail:** [gblackstone@ufl.edu](mailto:gblackstone@ufl.edu)

**Office:** 2041-B

**Office Hours:** Mondays & Wednesdays 12:30 p.m. – 2:30 p.m.

**Course Objective:**

Investigative journalism is the cornerstone of the Fourth Estate, tasked with holding those in power accountable to the people and the public good. In this class, students will explore investigative reporting techniques; practice obtaining and using public information for broadcast news stories; learn how to produce both in-depth investigative stories and use those skills to improve daily news reporting skills; discuss the practice of investigative reporting and its role in society; and produce in-depth news stories for TV. In addition, students will build competencies in personal brand management to leverage their stories for career advancement.

**Goals:**

- Discuss the characteristics that are used to develop a solid investigative news story
- Identify computer assisted reporting resources and be able to utilize resources for newsgathering
- Participate in class discussion as an informed journalist and collegial group member
- Prepare to apply for journalism positions with a resume, resume reel, and online portfolio

**Required Readings:**

Investigative Reporting: From Premise to Publication

Author: Marcy Burstiner

ISBN-13: 978-1890871918

**Materials:**

- You will be provided an SD card for newsgathering. These cards will be issued in class.
- You are expected to be knowledgeable and proficient with the appropriate equipment necessary to execute your projects.

**Assignments:**

→ **Investigative News Stories**

You are required to submit one investigative news story for television over the course of the semester. If you have not taken TV1 and are not currently signed up to take it, let me know and we will talk about options.

Each story MUST include:

1. A news peg! The story must be timely and have news value. What makes it important right now?
2. At least ONE audio or visual element that came from a public record or public access event, i.e., inside a courtroom (be sure the judge allows recordings!), a public meeting, evidence, first appearance, surveillance video, FOIA, 9-1-1 calls, data from your research, etc.
3. Sound from at least THREE people. One of those people should be your human element, an individual directly affected by the story. If your story doesn't have a central character or doesn't directly affect anyone, you'll want to reconsider the idea. Viewer benefit is essential to a good broadcast news story.
4. At least TWO natsound breaks.
5. A reporter standup. We want to see who is telling us this story. It helps to establish trust between you and the viewers.
6. BALANCE – we want to be sure you are representing all sides of the story. Give the accused the opportunity to defend themselves. Be critical but fair. An unfair or biased story will earn you a failing grade no matter how well it is written, shot, or edited. Objectivity is a cornerstone of journalism that will be strictly observed in this class.
7. ATTRIBUTION – where are you getting your information from? Be sure to be clear about your sources. Who said what? Where do these facts come from? This will also help protect you from legal action. (And good investigative reporters get sued a lot.)
8. A YouTube or Vimeo account and the familiarity with how to upload your work.
9. All TV stories must be submitted as complete packages and cannot run more than 3:00. Between 2:00 and 2:30 is ideal.
10. In lieu of a final exam, you will put together the elements necessary to prepare you for the job hunt: a paper resume, cover letter, a resume reel, and an online portfolio.
11. Your work is to be original for this class and this class only. Well executed work may be considered for WUFT-TV *after* it has been submitted for this class.

### ➔ Story Pitches

On scheduled pitch days, students will submit three story ideas in writing. These must be 1 page, typed, double spaced, 12 pt font, 1-inch margins, Times New Roman font. Each pitch must indicate what investigative elements will be used (see number 2 above), who will be interviewed, what visual elements you will use to tell the story, and why you think the story is relevant or timely. This is your opportunity to really sell the story among your peers and get their feedback (and vice versa). You will use these sheets to pitch your story in class. The sheets are graded separately from the executed pkgs. Once your story is selected, you will have three weeks to execute it.

### ➔ Deadlines

Deadlines are paramount in the industry. Missing a deadline can result in dismissal or suspension from your job. With that in mind, all work for this class is due on the specified date at the beginning of class time. For each 24 hours after the deadline, a letter

grade is subtracted INCLUDING weekends. After ten calendar days, an automatic zero is given for the assignment without exception.

Technical difficulties or interview cancellations are not license to submit late work. Plan ahead and have a backup plan.

→ **Required Readings**

You will have regular readings from the textbook and possibly other materials. Most of the chapters will have homework activities that will be incorporated into the class discussion. As of now, no quizzes are scheduled. However, if the discussions make it apparent that the reading materials are not being read, the instructor may implement quizzes.

**Attendance & Participation:**

- Students are allowed ONE “freebie” absence and ONE late arrival without penalty. Additional absences and tardies will be unexcused. It is recommended that you save your freebies for emergencies.
- In extenuating circumstances, the instructor may agree to grant an excused absence with at least 24 hours’ advanced notice and for a substantially good reason, i.e. a conflict absolutely cannot be resolved. The only exception is in the case of illness, which requires a doctor’s note on or before the next class period. If you tell me you have a death in the family, do not be surprised if I investigate your assertion. We move faster in summer classes, so missing a single day makes a difference.
- Unexcused absences will result in a zero for your participation grade (the maximum amount per class). If you walk into class after attendance has been taken, it will cost you half of your participation points. You are expected to remain in class until it is dismissed by the instructor. Leaving early is treated as an unexcused tardy.
- If you use a “freebie” absence, assignments are still due at the beginning of class.
- THE FREEBIE ALLOWANCE DOES NOT APPLY TO PITCH DAY. You must be present in class and participate in the story pitch process in order to receive credit for the assignment. I will not accept late pitch sheets.
- If there is a quiz and you miss class for any reason, you must contact me and set up a time to make up the quiz before the next class period. Failure to do so will result in a zero for that quiz.
- If there is an in-class graded activity and you miss class, you will not be allowed to make up the activity. You must be present and participate in order to receive credit.
- You are expected to come to class prepared and actively participate in class discussions. Disruptive behavior or failure to participate in class discussions will negatively affect your participation grade.

### **Laptops & Cellphones:**

- ➔ During lectures and discussions, you may use laptops or iPads to take notes; however, non-digital devices are strongly recommended (believe me – you will get more out of your notes with fewer temptations and distractions). The use of recording devices in class without prior permission from the instructor is prohibited.
  
- ➔ If I see you on your phone during lectures, or not participating in discussions, your participation grade will suffer. It is strongly recommended that you silence your phone and put it away until class is over or until we're on break. Spare yourself the temptation.

### **Grades:**

10%	Class Participation
25%	Homework from Chapters/Class Activities/Quizzes
15%	Pitch 1
25%	Investigative Story 1
25%	Final Project/Resume Packet

A handout that specifies grading rubrics for projects will be distributed in class at the time the assignment is explained.

### **Grading Scale:**

A	92.5-100
A-	89.5-92.4
B+	86.5-89.4
B	83.5-86.4
B-	79.5-83.4
C+	76.5-79.4
C	73.5-76.4
C-	69.5-73.4
D+	66.5-69.4
D	63.5-66.4
D-	59.5-63.4
E	59.4 or below

### **Plagiarism:**

You are not permitted to recycle any work from another class. All work should be produced solely for RTV 3305 and produced by you alone. You may recruit another student to help you shoot standups for your pkgs, but ALL other elements must be shot by YOU. (Some handout b-roll is acceptable under certain circumstances). All scripts are to be written by YOU without exception. Teamwork is only permitted when it is specified in the assignment instructions.

As any assignment in any course in UF, you are not allowed to copy work from another individual in any form. See the UF College of Journalism and Communications' Honor Code for further details: <http://www.jou.ufl.edu/academics/bachelors/journalism/academic-honesty/> Failure to comply with this policy can result in failing this course, as well as further action by the college and/or the UF Dean of Students Office.

*The use of video, images, or audio from third-party sources must be approved in advance, must come from sources that WUFT-TV has legal access to use, must not violate copyright laws, must be used in very limited amounts, and must be used only in cases where no other video or graphics will make sense for the story. Failure to comply with this mandate will result in a failing grade on the assignment. Pulling media off of the Internet without prior written consent from the copyright holder is theft of property. This includes social media, YouTube, and Google. In addition to violating course policy, lifting media can get you into serious legal trouble.*

### **Equipment Checkout:**

There are television production kits assigned to RTV 3305. You are allowed a one-day checkout, with the equipment due back by 9:00 a.m. the following morning. On Friday, equipment can be checked out until 9:00 a.m. Monday. Steve Kippert is the contact person.

There is a 24-hour wait to reserve equipment again once you bring it back. For special projects and situations, it may be possible to grant exceptions. Send me an e-mail in enough time that I can contact Steve Kippert on your behalf to try to arrange something. This is not a guarantee that the equipment will be made available.

There are a lot of people using this equipment. Reserve early. Arrange your shoots early. Don't procrastinate. Lack of equipment availability is not an acceptable reason to miss deadlines.

I strongly advise you to respect that this is expensive equipment. Do not leave it unattended. Do not leave it in your car. Do not leave it in excessive hot or cold temperatures. Do not expose it to humidity or moisture (and remember, this is Florida). Do not expose the equipment to extreme conditions. Do not allow other students or friends access to it for any purpose. Do not leave it in a place where it can be stolen or your dog can chew on it.

A hard copy of the WUFT equipment policy will be distributed to the class. ***Any equipment checkout violations will result in 10 points off of the student's project grade for each violation.***

***The equipment is the sole property of the University of Florida. You are to use the designated equipment only to generate content for this class. All course content is also the sole property of the university. You do not have the right to sell or distribute it to any other broadcast or media outlet or entity without the express permission of the University of Florida.***

### **Disabilities:**

If you have a disability that requires special consideration from the course instructor, you must self-identify with the instructor and register with the UF Dean of Students Office.

Accommodations will be arranged. More information is available from the Disability Resource Center online: <https://www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/>

## RTV3305—Summer A 2015 Course Schedule

*\* The instructor reserves the right to make revisions as learning objectives and classroom interactions/timing demands dictate*

<b>May 11 - Monday</b>	Course Introduction, Syllabus Review “All the President’s Men” (138 minutes) Drop/Add
<b>May 13 - Wednesday</b>	What constitutes investigative reporting? Chapter 1: Introduction/Overview Chapter 2: Finding the Story Turning the Daily Headline into Something Bigger
<b>May 15 - Friday</b>	Pitch Day Protocols & Investigative Story Assignments Chapter 14: Pitching Your Story
<b>May 18 - Monday</b>	Pitch Day 1 Chapter 3: Setting up your Investigation
<b>May 20 - Wednesday</b>	Digging for Data Chapter 4: Requesting Public Records Chapter 5: The Game Plan Award-winning Investigative Work
<b>May 22 - Friday</b>	<b>No Class</b> (Instructor at a Conference)
<b>May 25 - Monday</b>	<b>No Class</b> (Dismissed for Memorial Day)
<b>May 27 - Wednesday</b>	The Nuts and Bolts Chapter 6: The Interview Process Chapter 7: Analyzing the Big Story
<b>May 29 - Friday</b>	Bolstering Information & Investigative Might Chapter 8: Documenting the Story

**June 1 - Monday** From Numbers to Stories  
Chapter 9: Finding & Using Data  
Personal Brand Management: Resumes, Cover Letters, Portfolios  
Resume Reel Roulette

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**June 3 - Wednesday** Telling the Story  
Chapter 10: Shaping the Story  
Chapter 11: Writing the Story

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**June 5 - Friday** Famous Investigative Lawsuits: What went wrong?  
Chapter 12: Legal & Ethical Considerations

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**June 8 - Monday** Investigative Story 1 Due  
Watch/listen to reports

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**June 10 - Wednesday** Chapter 13: Advanced Methods Overview  
Chasing Additional Records, Pushing Through Roadblocks

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**June 12 - Friday** The Legacy of Edward R. Murrow: Part 1  
Draft Resumes & Cover Letters Due

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**June 15 - Monday** The Legacy of Edward R. Murrow: Part 2  
Showtime: "Good Night and Good Luck" (93 mins.)

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**June 17 - Wednesday** Covering 9/11

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**June 19 - Friday** Last Day of Class  
Resume, Cover Letter, Resume Reels & Portfolios Due

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