

RTV 3305 – Investigative Reporting for Broadcast Journalists

Summer A 2014

Monday and Wednesday Periods 2-3

Friday Period 2

McCarty Hall B (MCCB), Room G108

Instructor

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Office Hours: Monday and Wednesday 1:00-2:30 p.m. Other times by appointment.

Course Objectives

The course provides an overview of the principles of investigative reporting as applied to television and radio news. Students will explore investigative reporting techniques, practice finding and using public records for information, discuss the practice of investigative reporting and its role in American society, and create an investigative story suitable for airing on television or radio.

Readings

Recommended text:

Houston, B., & Investigative Reporters and Editors, Inc. (2009). *The investigative reporter's handbook: A guide to documents, databases, and techniques*. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's.

This text is not required but is an excellent resource that many students add to their personal library.

Students are **required** to frequently monitor the Investigative Reporters and Editors website (IRE.org) for information and resources. Student membership to Investigative Reporters and Editors is \$25 and is recommended but not required.

Other readings provided by your instructor will be assigned during the semester.

Other Materials

You will be provided a SD/HC card to use when taping. After the Drop/Add period has been completed, you will receive the card.

A large flash drive or portable hard drive to store your work is recommended but not required.

Attendance

Class attendance is important. The success of this course depends upon each student's active participation in class discussions. You are expected to make positive contributions to our discussions every class meeting.

If you will miss class, please contact me before class. Excused absences include illness, serious family emergencies, special curricular requirements (e.g., judging trips, field trips, professional conferences), military obligation, severe weather conditions, religious holidays and participation in official university activities such as music performances, athletic competition or debate. Absences from class for court-imposed legal obligations (e.g., jury duty or subpoena) must be excused. Other reasons also may be approved.

Also, please make every effort to arrive on time. In the news business, it is extremely important to be on time and to complete all work by the deadline. The same goes for this class.

Classroom Procedures

Cell phones

As a courtesy to your classmates and instructor, please turn off and store your cell phones during class.

Laptops

Do not use laptops during class unless we are using them as part of a class exercise or project. If you need an accommodation that requires laptop use for note taking, please discuss this with me early in the semester.

Class Review of Work

The work of professional journalists is for public review and consideration. As a broadcast journalism student in this class, your work will be reviewed by your professor and your classmates in class screenings. During these screenings students are expected to be professional at all times and provide constructive feedback.

Communication

Please check your GatorLink email account several times a week for emails from me, the College, and the University of Florida.

Graded Assignments

Investigative Story	40%
Pitch Sheets	30%
Activities	20%
Attendance/Participation	10%

A brief description of each assignment follows. More detail on each will be given in class.

Investigative Story (40 percent)

You must complete one investigative story for this course. You can work in either TV or Radio.

TV stories must include a reporter stand-up. Radio stories must provide a companion multimedia presentation (such as a slideshow or graphics).

All stories must contain:

- A news hook. The story must be timely and have news value
- At least ONE audio or visual element that came from a public record or public access. This includes audio/video from courtroom, public meeting, evidence, first appearance, mug shot, 911 call, surveillance video, etc...
- Sound from at least THREE people. One of those people should be your human element. Every story should have a human element, so we can hear from who your story affects. If it doesn't affect anyone – you should find a different story
- At least TWO pieces of natural sound for TV stories / At least THREE pieces of natural sound for radio stories
- BALANCE. Make sure you are representing both sides of the story. An unbalanced story will likely earn you a failing grade – no matter how well it was shot/edited/written
- Good use of Video/Audio-Poor audio, blue/dark video, poorly framed interviews, bad b-roll, poor edits, and anything else that doesn't look/sound right will lower your grade
- Run time cannot be more than 3:00 – unless you do a “look live” intro and tag for a TV story

Pitch Sheets (30 percent)

You will be required to submit three potential story ideas for the required investigative project. These story pitches will be typed and submitted as well as presented in class. These presentations will take the form of a morning meeting, similar to the editorial meetings held daily in professional newsrooms.

You will be expected to have done some research on these pitches to ensure they are stories that can be completed by the deadline and all stories must have VIEWER BENEFIT.

The pitch sheet for each potential story includes:

- A basic outline of the story
- What is the issue?
- Who does this impact?
- Why is this interesting to the average viewer?
- Who you plan to interview and why you are interviewing them?
- What b-roll you can shoot?
- What nat sound can gather?
- What is your public record?

You must be in class in order to receive credit for story pitches unless there are exceptional reasons for your absence.

Activities (20 percent)

Students will complete and submit one weekly activity relating to topics covered in class. Examples of activities include writing a brief critique of an investigative story we viewed/listened to in class, writing a brief reflection on an assigned reading/lecture/discussion, and submitting a draft of your story script. Due dates and complete descriptions will be provided in class.

Attendance and Participation (10 percent)

Your class participation will be based on your attendance, your punctual arrival to class, and your contributions in each class. You are expected to make well-informed and relevant comments in discussions, ask relevant questions, and be involved in each classmate's presentation. You should make at least one useful comment in each class meeting. In our discussions, you are expected to be professional in your comments and respectful of the views of others. For some class sessions, you will be asked to prepare for discussion. Missing class or attending class but not contributing to the class discussion will have a negative impact on your participation grade.

In a newsroom, missing your deadline, attending a newsroom meeting unprepared or arriving late to an interview is enough to get you fired.

Important Dates:

Memorial Day (No Class):	May 26
Pitch Sheets Due:	May 28
Final Version of Investigative Project Due:	June 18
Last Day of Classes:	June 20

Course Grading Scale:

A	93-100
A-	90-92
B+	87-89
B	84-86
B-	80-83
C+	77-79
C	74-76
C-	70-73
D+	67-69
D	64-66
D-	60-63
E	Below 60

UF grades and grading policies:

<https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/grades.aspx#wwfgrades>

Penalty for Late Work

Assignments are due at the beginning of class unless otherwise noted. If you arrive late to class that day, your assignment will also be considered late. Due dates/times on weekly activities will be provided in advance. **Points will be deducted for late work.**

Equipment Use

Several times during the semester you will have to check out equipment from the Telecom Department to work on your stories. All students in this class **MUST** sign the "Gear Liability Pledge" before they are allowed to check out any equipment.

Key points include:

1. You are liable for full replacement costs for damage from any cause.

2. **Equipment must be returned by 9am on the scheduled day.**

Any equipment violations will result in 10 points off the student's project grade per violation.

3. You are responsible for staying through each review of your gear after check-in; if you leave for any reason you are waiving all rights and must accept the equipment room staff's later judgment about the condition of the gear.

More information on checkout can be found on the full Equipment Policy. I will provide you with a copy of the policy.

All students are responsible for knowing all equipment policies.

You are **not** permitted to use the equipment for non-class projects, student to student equipment transfers, or sharing of equipment with other classes. Violation of this policy will be subject to the same sanctions as failure to return equipment.

Religious Holidays

The Florida Board of Education and state law govern university policy regarding observance of religious holidays. The following guidelines apply:

Students, upon prior notification to their instructors, shall be excused from class or other scheduled academic activity to observe a religious holy day of their faith.

Students shall be permitted a reasonable amount of time to make up the material or activities covered in their absence.

Students shall not be penalized due to absence from class or other scheduled academic activity because of religious observances.

If a faculty member is informed of or is aware that a significant number of students are likely to be absent from class because of a religious observance, the faculty member should not schedule a major exam or other academic event at that time.

A student who is to be excused from class for a religious observance is not required to provide a second party certification of the reason for the absence. Furthermore, a student who believes that he or she has been unreasonably denied an education benefit due to religious beliefs or practices may seek redress through the student grievance procedure.

Plagiarism

ALWAYS cite. You may not “recycle” any work from another class in this class. In other words, all work submitted should be produced by YOU specifically for RTV 3305. See the College’s Honor Code for details. (<http://www.jou.ufl.edu/academic/jou/honesty/>) You may recruit someone to help you shoot a standup for your projects, but all other video in your packages must be shot by you. Stock video is discouraged. If you plan to use any file video in your story, please clear it with me ahead of time.

Academic Honesty

In 1995 the UF student body enacted a new honor code and voluntarily committed itself to the highest standards of honesty and integrity. When students enroll at the university, they commit themselves to the standard drafted and enacted by students.

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 who becomes aware of a violation of the honor code is bound by honor to take corrective action. The quality of a University of Florida education is dependent upon 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, the following pledge is either required or implied: "On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in doing this assignment." The university requires all members of its community to be honest in all endeavors. A fundamental principle is that the whole process of learning and pursuit of knowledge is diminished by cheating, plagiarism and other acts of academic dishonesty. In addition, every dishonest act in the academic environment affects other students adversely, from the skewing of the grading curve to giving unfair advantage for honors or for professional or graduate school admission. Therefore, the university will take severe action against dishonest students. Similarly, measures will be taken against faculty, staff and administrators who practice dishonest or demeaning behavior.

Student Responsibility:

Students should report any condition that facilitates dishonesty to the instructor, department chair, college dean or Student Honor Court.

Violation of the Student Honor Code will result in an automatic “E” grade for the assignment and may result in an “E” grade for the course.

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

Students requesting classroom accommodation must first register with the Dean of Students Office. The Dean of Students Office will provide documentation to the student who must then provide this documentation to the instructor when requesting accommodation. Students requesting accommodations are encouraged to do so early in the semester.

Course Evaluation

UF reminds you that you are expected to provide feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing an online evaluation at <https://evaluations.ufl.edu>

University Counseling and Mental Health Services

The college years can sometimes be stressful. The University of Florida's Counseling Center is a resource for students to talk about issues with trained counselors. The services are confidential and free to currently enrolled UF students. You can find out more about services or make an appointment by calling 352-392-1575.

Tentative Schedule

A tentative class schedule is below. The schedule is subject to change based on how we progress through the semester.

Please contact me if you have any questions or concerns about assignments.

May 12	Class introduction-What is investigative reporting?
May 14	Watch <i>All the President's Men</i>
May 16	Discuss <i>All the President's Men</i> /importance of investigative reporting
May 19	Beginning the investigative story
May 21	Working on the investigative story
May 23	Review of Pitch Sheet requirements
May 26	No Class-Memorial Day
May 28	Pitch day
	Due: Story pitches
May 30	Data mining/public records
June 2	Data mining/public records
June 4	Interviewing/Verification
June 6	Legal/Ethical issues
June 9	No Class-Research/Field work for stories
June 11	Writing your story
June 13	Issues in broadcast presentation
	Due: Draft of story script (Counts as weekly activity)
June 16	Individual meetings
June 18	Class screening of stories
	Due: Final version of story for screening
June 20	Last day of classes-Your career in news
