

## **RTV 3305 – Investigative Reporting**

Fall 2013

Monday, (periods 7) 1:55pm-2:45 pm

Wednesday (periods 8-9) 3:00 pm-4:55pm

Weimer 3024 (M) and 2050 (W)

Instructor:

Kortni Alston

kalston@ufl.edu

Weimer G031

Mobile Phone: (832) 425-8602

Office Hours: Monday immediately after class (2:00pm-3:00pm)  
or available by appointment

### **Course Objective:**

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 and radio.

### **Required Readings**

Investigative Reporting: From Premise to Publication

Author: Marcy Burstiner

**ISBN-13:** 978-1890871918

### **Graded Assignments:**

Three Investigative News Stories:

(You can work in either radio or TV format, but at least TWO stories MUST be TV – unless you have not completed TV1 or are currently enrolled in TV1. In that case, let me know and we will talk about options.)

- Each story MUST include:
  - A news peg! 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 (ie: audio or video from inside courtroom, public meeting, evidence, first appearance ... Mugs, 911 calls, 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. We need to hear from the people your story affects. If it doesn't affect anyone, you'll want to reconsider the idea altogether. Viewer benefit is essential to a good broadcast news story.
  - At least TWO pieces of natural sound (aka NAT pops) for TV stories. At least THREE nat pops for radio stories.
  - At least ONE standup. (This does not apply to radio stories.)
  - BALANCE. Always make sure you are representing both (or more) sides of a story. An unfair or biased story will likely earn you a failing grade -- no matter how well written, well shot or well edited. We are here to be

critical but OBJECTIVE.

- Projects must be submitted on CD or DVD
- They cannot be more than 2:30 each UNLESS you do a "look live" intro AND tag in a TV story. In that case, you can give me 3:00 AND I'll tack on five points for the added effort. (Please note: Anchor intros do not count as look lives.)
- There is NO extra credit for airing stories, but I will recommend the best stories to the news directors.

### Three Pitch Sheets:

On scheduled Pitch Days, students will submit three story ideas in writing (1 page typed for each story, 12 pt font, Times New Roman, 1-inch margins). These pitch sheets will be graded separately from the projects. Detailed instructions will be provided in class.

### **Attendance and Participation:**

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

Students are allowed ONE "freebee" absence and ONE late arrival to class with no explanation. That's it. Any other absences or tardiness will be considered unexcused. Please save your freebees for emergencies.

Each unexcused absence will cost you 10 points off your Participation grade. I will take attendance at the beginning of each class. If you walk in after roll has been called, you will lose 5 points on Participation for unexcused tardiness. You are also expected to stay in class until the end. I will mark you absent if you leave early.

If you use a "freebee" absence, any assignments due that day must be turned in ON TIME or ahead of time during office hours. All late work (excused or unexcused) will result in 10 points off the assignment grade per day that it is late (including weekends), **BUT I will not accept late Pitch Sheets. You must be in class to receive credit for story pitches.**

NOTE: "On time" means no later than the time class starts the day the assignment is due.

Technical difficulties or equipment failure are NOT excuses. In other words, guard your work with your life. Back everything up! I will not grant extensions for carelessness.

A source backing out on a story or failing to meet you for an interview is NOT an excuse either. Make sure you plan ahead and always have a backup plan.

If you become so ill that you cannot come to class or work on an assignment, you must provide an **excuse** note from a doctor – not just a note that says you went to the doctor.

If you miss a quiz with a freebee or excused absence, you must make up the quiz during office hours the next class day or receive a 0 on that quiz. It is your responsibility to remind the

instructor that you missed a quiz and need to make it up.

Perfect attendance (no freebee or tardiness) automatically earns you a 100% in Participation.

Also, you are expected to actively participate in class discussions. Disruptive behavior or failure to participate in class discussions will negatively affect your Participation grade.

We will have a few Newsroom Meetings throughout the semester. Please come to class prepared to talk about your story progress on those days. Performance in these meetings will also be included in your Participation grade.

***Remember: In a newsroom, missing deadline (a.k.a. "slot"), attending a newsroom meeting unprepared or arriving late to an interview is enough to get you fired.***

### **Laptops and Cell Phones:**

Turn off all laptops and cell phones while in class. Please use good old' fashioned pen and paper to take notes.

### **Grades:**

10% for Participation

15% for Pitch Sheet 1

15% for Pitch Sheet 2

15% for Pitch Sheet 3

15% for Investigative Story 1

15% for Investigative Story 2

15% for Investigative Story 3

### **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

F Below 60

The good news: Any final course grades with decimal points will be rounded UP to the next nearest whole number. For example, even a 92.1 will round up to a 93.

### **Plagiarism:**

Don't do it. 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 in your story, please clear it with me ahead of time.

### **Tapes:**

SD cards will be distributed in class.

### **Equipment Checkout:**

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

There is a 24-hour wait to reserve equipment again after you bring it back. (For example, if you bring back equipment on a Monday and want to reserve it again you have to wait until Tuesday to reserve it.) For special projects and needs, it may be possible to allow additional time if you send me an e-mail in enough time that I can alert our equipment manager, Steve Kippert.

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

**(\*\*\*)Please be advised that the equipment is the property of the University of Florida. The equipment must only be used for this course and all content that is produced (ex: pkg, b-roll, sot, etc.) may not be sold or given to any other broadcast or media outlet without permission. Any story shot for this class with University equipment belongs to the University of Florida College of Journalism and Communications. (\*\*\*)**

### Other notes:

Students with physical or learning disabilities must register with the Dean of Students Office. I will be happy to accommodate any special needs.

### **Tentative Course Calendar:**

#### ***Week 1:***

Tuesday, August 21: Introduction to the course

**Week 2:**

Monday, August 26	What is Investigating Reporting? Characteristics of Investigative Reporting Who is an Investigative Reporter?
Wednesday, August 28	Watch <i>All the President's Men</i> in class (138 min) class Discussion

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**Week 3:**

Monday, September 2	Holiday No Class
Wednesday, September 4	Explanation of Investigative Story 1 and Pitch Sheets Chapter 2: Finding the Story Chapter 3: Setting Up the Investigation Chapter 14: Pitching Your Story

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**Week 4:**

Monday, September 9:	<b>Pitch Sheet 1 Due</b> <b>Pitch Day:</b> Students will pitch their Investigative Story 1 ideas (must have 3) in a Newsroom Meeting format for topic approval.
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**PLEASE NOTE: STUDENTS MUST BE IN CLASS TO RECEIVE A GRADE FOR THIS ASSIGNMENT. DO NOT MISS CLASS ON PITCH DAYS.**

Wednesday, September 11: Pitch Presentations continue

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**Week 5:**

Monday, September 16	Chapter 4: Requesting Public Record
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## Navigating the Net: Crime and Court Records

Wednesday, September 18      Investigative Story Analysis

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### ***Week 6:***

Monday, September 23      Chapter 5: Game Plan

Wednesday, September 25      Chapter 6: The Interview Process  
 Navigating the Net: State and Local Government

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### ***Week 7:***

Monday, September 30      **Investigative Story 1 Due**  
 Story 1 Screening

Wednesday, October 2      Continue Screening

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### ***Week 8:***

Monday, October 7:      Chapter 7: Analyzing the BIG story

Wednesday, October 9:      Chapter 8: Documenting the Story

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### ***Week 9:***

Monday, October 14th:      Chapter 9: Finding and Using Data

Wednesday, October 16<sup>th</sup>      Watch good reporting & Class Discussion

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### ***Week 10:***

Monday, October 21:      **Pitch Sheet 2 Due**  
**Pitch Day:** Students will pitch their Investigative Story 2 ideas  
 (must have 3) in a Newsroom Meeting format for topic approval

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**PLEASE NOTE: STUDENTS MUST BE IN CLASS TO RECEIVE A GRADE FOR THIS ASSIGNMENT. DO NOT MISS CLASS. I WILL NOT ACCEPT LATE WORK.**

Wednesday, October 23: Pitch presentations continued

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***Week 11:***

Monday, October 28: Chapter 10: Shaping the Story

Wednesday, October 30 Chapter 12: Legal and Ethical Consideration  
Navigating the Net: Property, Tax and Corporation Records

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***Week 12:***

Monday, November 4: **Investigative Story 2 Due**  
Story 2 Screening

Wednesday, November 6 Screening continues

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***Week 13:***

Monday, November 11: **HOLIDAY – NO CLASS MEETING**

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***Week 14:***

***Wednesday, November 13<sup>th</sup>*** Pitch Sheet 3 Due

**Pitch Day:** Students will pitch their Investigative Story 2 ideas (must have 3) in a Newsroom Meeting format for topic approval

**PLEASE NOTE: STUDENTS MUST BE IN CLASS TO RECEIVE A GRADE FOR THIS ASSIGNMENT. DO NOT MISS CLASS. I WILL NOT ACCEPT LATE WORK.**

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***Week 15:***

Monday, November 18 RESEARCH DAY NO CLASS

Wednesday, November 20 In Class: One-on-One Coaching on Story Development

**Week 16**

Monday, December 2:

**Investigative Story 3 Due**  
Story 3 Screening

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***Week 16:***

Tuesday, December 4:

Screening continues...  
Debrief of Investigative Reporting  
What's Next? The Power of Your Portfolio  
**Last Day of Class**