

## **RTV 3305 (Investigative Reporting)**

### **SPRING 2013 SYLLABUS – INSTRUCTOR: MARK LEEPS**

#### **Basics**

Class: M/W/F 8:30am-9:20am, Weimer 1090

Lab: select classes & open lab time, DMP-INF lab

Field Work: component newsgathering assignments (factfinding,radio,tv)

Project Work: one 2-4min complete story on your own time

Project Work: enhanced & reworked story on your own time

#### **Required Text:**

*none*

#### **Course Objective**

This course provides both a study approach and a practice approach to investigative reporting. We will study many examples, learning many of the tools of the trade, then we will practice the design and story pitch, perform a series of newsgathering assignments to gather components, and ultimately produce a full report. Along the way we will explore legal and ethical concerns, practice gathering facts from public records, practice a multiple-source approach to pursuing the truth, learn about techniques to provide both confrontation and fairness/balance, and practice compelling storytelling.

#### **Course Outline**

1. introduction and orientation
2. field gear training
3. story selection and investigative design (sources & methods)
4. fact-finding through public records
5. truth-seeking through multiple sources
6. confrontation/reveal interviews
7. fairness and balance in compelling storytelling

#### **Grading**

- **10% - Class Attendance** Attendance is mandatory. *Professional student behavior is expected at all times...meaning portable electronic devices should always be turned off.* Any class absences must be excused in advance; each unexcused absence lowers your grade 3 points on a scale of 100.

- **20% - Story Treatment & Pitch** You will prepare at least one investigative story treatment to turn in (due by February 1<sup>st</sup>), and pitch the story idea to the class. If not approved by the instructor, you will have to prepare and pitch another one. Grade is for the written treatment on the idea which gets approved.
- **20% - Investigative Components** You will develop newsgathering components based on your approved story treatment and class discussions....which represents your “I-team” feedback. These must include both elements of factfinding from public records and elements of truth-seeking from radio/tv/phone/notebook interviews. Info/clips illustrative of each class of element will be due by March 1<sup>st</sup>.
- **20% - Final Report** You will compile elements into a balanced and compelling complete report. The deadline is March 29<sup>th</sup>. It must include at least one fact from public records and must include at least three sources (interview bites...or a quote from an interview if protecting that source’s identity). Make it as fair and complete as possible...this represents your work as an I-team reporter and is weighted accordingly.
- **30% - Revised Report** After grading, you must add at least one unique new element to the piece and rework the story to make it stronger and address concerns noted. Your final submission is due by April 26<sup>th</sup>. Keeping it fair, make it as compelling as possible...this represents your work as an I-team editor/producer and is weighted accordingly.

### **Grading Scale**

The grading scale is as follows:

A	95-100
A-	92-94
B+	89-91
B	86-88
B-	83-85
C+	80-82
C	77-79
C-	74-76
D+	71-73
D	60-70
D-	50-59
E	0-49

For more information about minus grades and UF grading policies, visit this website: <http://www.registrar.ufl.edu/catalog/policies/regulationgrades.html>

**Policy Matters: UF Honor Code, Accommodations For Students With Disabilities, WUFT-TV Dress Code, WUFT News Loading Zone Policy, Dept. of Telecommunication and WUFT-TV Student Gear Policy, Computer Policy**

**Academic Honesty: Team vs. Solo Work**

Your lab work is a shared responsibility, but I expect reporters to take the lead on writing and editing their own packages. Quizzes, tests, story ideas, story analysis papers, and any other written material handed in must be your own work with no help from others and no consultation with others. Your in-depth projects should be all your own work (your idea, your shooting, your writing, your editing) *except* you can recruit someone else to shoot your standup (only) for you.

**UF Honor Code**

The University of Florida Honor Code was voted on and passed by the Student Body in the Fall 1995 Semester. The Honor Code reads as follows:

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. 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 pledge 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, 392-1261.

**Accommodations For Students With Disabilities**

Students requesting classroom accommodation must first **register with the Dean of Students Office**. The Dean of Students will provide documentation to the student who must then provide this documentation to the instructor when requesting accommodation.

## UF/CJC/DMP/INF Policies

You will use G020-based field gear for this course as well as a DMP-INF-based editing lab, and must comply with all relevant UF (University of Florida), CJC (College of Journalism & Communications), DMP (Division of Multimedia Properties), and INF (Integrated News Facility) policies.

The CJC Loading Zone Policy emphasizes that any access to the Weimer Service Drive is only for stopping to load/unload heavy/bulky gear and stops are limited to 10 minutes. **Follow instructions closely, you are personally responsible for any tickets you get.**

The CJC Student Gear Policy emphasizes that **gear checkout is for official course or DMP business only**. The college holds the rights to all work-product and published/broadcast material generated, and it may not be redistributed or repurposed in any form without permission of college/station officials. Don't post anything we generate to YouTube or other non-wuft websites without checking.

The Computer Policy emphasizes that **all the computers in the INF are for official station business (including select courses) only**. Many are reserved for people in specific roles at certain times of day. Make sure you work in an area appropriate to your role/course, that you log-in as instructed and save & log-out everytime you walk away.

The food & drink policy for the DMP-INF is that **no eating or drinking is allowed outside the break room**, and there should never be food or drink in the DMP-INF-based lab. The security policy is that you must keep your swipe card with you at all times and **swipe in after normal business hours** (M-F 6a-6p), never prop doors open, and limit activities to course/station official business.