

RTV 3305 – Investigative Reporting

Summer A 2013

Mondays and Wednesdays Periods 2-3 (9:30 a.m.-12:15 p.m.) Weimer 1092

Fridays Period 2 (9:30-10:45 a.m.) Weimer 1092

Instructor:

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Office Hours: Mondays and Wednesdays 1:30-3:00 p.m. and by appointment

Course Objective:

Students will explore investigative reporting techniques; practice obtaining and using public information for broadcast news stories; discuss the practice of investigative reporting and its role in American society; learn about Florida's public records and open meetings laws; and produce in-depth news stories for radio and/or TV.

Required Readings:

There is no textbook required for this course.

Course Outline:

This is a hands-on course that will give you practical experience mining for information and putting together broadcast pieces suitable for airing and for your resume tape. The course will combine class discussions and lectures with projects requiring field work and editing. You will be searching the internet and databases, making phone calls, setting up interviews, checking out and using radio and/or television equipment, traveling to locations to shoot interviews and video, editing your work and presenting it to the class. Be prepared for a rigorous and rewarding experience.

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. We all can learn from each other's failures and successes. Please expect this class review as part of the course and understand that it is part of the learning process. As such, class screenings are expected to be constructive, supportive and professional at all times.

Morning Meetings:

You will be required to submit story pitches for each of the two required investigative projects. These story pitches will be typed and turned in to your professor, but also 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 deadlines (who will you interview and are they available, where you will get the necessary documentation, what visuals/b-roll will

you have to work with, etc). All stories must have VIEWER BENEFIT.

Communication:

My email address, office phone number and office location are provided at the top of the syllabus. I will make every attempt to reply to your emails within 48 hours. I will also be sending out emails frequently during the semester. Please make sure you check your email at least once a day and have a current email account.

Graded Assignments:

Two Investigative News Stories:

(You can work in radio and/or TV format)

Each story MUST include:

- 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 (i.e.: audio or video from inside courtroom, public meeting, evidence, first appearance ... Mug shots, 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. 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 or 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.

Maximum story length is 2:30 each unless you do a "look live" intro and tag in TV stories; in that case, a maximum of 3:00. Anchor intros do not count as a look live.

Two Pitch Sheets:

On scheduled pitch days students will submit **two** story ideas in writing. One full, typed page is required for each story pitch. These pitch sheets will be graded separately from the projects. Detailed instructions on what must be included on the pitch sheets will be provided in class.

Attendance and Participation:

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.

Further, 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 responsible for satisfying all academic objectives as defined by the instructor. Absences count from the first class meeting. In general, acceptable reasons for absence from

class 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.

Students are allowed one unexcused absence and one late arrival to class with no explanation. Any other absences or tardiness will be considered unexcused unless you contact me in advance and your absence or tardy can be considered excused.

Each unexcused absence will result in a 10 point reduction from your participation grade. I will take attendance at the beginning of each class. If you arrive after attendance has been taken, you will lose five points from your participation grade for unexcused tardiness. You are also expected to stay in class until the end of class unless you have prior approval.

You must be in class in order to receive credit for story pitches unless there are exceptional reasons for your absence. Any projects turned in late will lose 10 points each late day, including weekends. Turning in a story “on time” means no later than the time class starts the day the assignment is due.

Technical difficulties or equipment failure are NOT excuses for late submission of stories. Back up everything! 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.

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

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.

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.

Laptops and Cell Phones:

As a courtesy to your classmates and instructor, please turn off and store your cell phones during class. You may put your phone on silent or vibrate if you are experiencing a situation that requires you to monitor text messages or phone calls during class, such as a family emergency or a callback on a story set-up. In this case, please let me know before class begins and then step outside the classroom if you receive a call or text. Please 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.

Important Dates:

Pitch 1 Due:	May 20
Memorial Day (No Class):	May 27
Project 1 Due:	June 3
Pitch 2 Due:	June 5
Project 2 Due:	June 21 (last day of class)

Grading:

10% for Participation
 15% for Pitch Sheet 1
 15% for Pitch Sheet 2
 30% for Investigative Story 1
 30% for Investigative Story 2

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>

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.

Equipment Checkout:

Please note there are no editing labs specifically assigned to this class, so you will be responsible for working out access to either television or radio editing facilities. Please keep in mind that other classes meet in the editing labs, too and you are expected to work around that schedule.

If you plan to work in the newsroom, it is **very** important that you check, in advance, to be sure they have space for you to work on your projects and that you are aware of when the facilities are available. They have the right to ask you to vacate a work station, so make sure you back up all your work.

Steve Kippert is the contact person for radio and television equipment checkout. The equipment room is located on the ground floor of Weimer Hall in room G020. You are allowed a one-day checkout, with all equipment due back by 9:00 a.m. the following day. Late returns are subject to sanctions as noted on the gear policy you will receive and sign. On Friday, equipment can be checked out until 9:00 a.m. Monday. ***Don't wait until the last minute to check out gear for projects.***

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 email in enough time that I can alert Mr. 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.***

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.

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.
