

RTV 4302 – FALL 2014 SYLLABUS – INSTRUCTOR: MARK LEEPS

Basics

Prerequisite: Grade of C or better in RTV4301

Grad version: available for Pre-professional Master's Program (PMP)

Class component: Tuesdays & Thursdays 8:30am-9:20am, Weimer 1078

Newsroom component: One full day per week (9:20am-6:20pm) pre-arranged

Project component: 1 required, on your own time

(re-do option requires time during Finals Week, in lieu of final)

Grad version: 2 required, on your own time

Instructor's office hours: M-F 1-2p, Weimer 2324 (within the INC)

Required Text:

Broadcast News Handbook: Writing, Reporting & Producing in a Converging Media World (4th Edition)

by Charlie Tuggle, Forrest Carr, Suzanne Huffman

Highly Recommended Text:

A Reporters Guide to the Art of TV Storytelling (DVD)

by John McQuiston (available at www.johnmcquiston.com)

Suggested Pro Development Texts:

Shorter, Sharper, Stronger: Writing Broadcast News

by Merv Block

Make it Memorable: Writing and Packaging TV News with Style

by Bob Dotson

Write for the Ear, Shoot for the Eye, Aim for the Heart: A Guide for TV Producers and Reporters

by Al Tompkins

The Course

TV2 is *Advanced TV Reporting* at the college level, but **the core work is basic daily-deadline General Assignment Reporting** in the commercial news world.

In TV2, you will practice the role of an entry-level tv news reporter, or to be more precise, **as a tv news reporter/photographer/editor** with MMJ "convergence" (radio/web/social media) duties. The newsroom component is fulfilled as a student worker for WUFT NEWS in the Innovation News Center (INC).

Everyone is expected to conduct themselves professionally and to comply with all US/FL and UF/CJC/DMP/INC workplace rules.

Your work will routinely be broadcast to a 14-county area and can be seen online (www.wuft.tv) by people anywhere. That's your work, *good or bad*, and people will notice either way. If you're a self-starter who fights for winning story elements, your daily shift work will show it. If not, that will also show.

This makes UF an extraordinary place to gain practical experience, compared to many other schools.

Objective

The objective of TV2 is to develop a growing base of skills & knowledge needed to succeed in an **entry-level reporter** position at a commercial television news station, to develop skills & experience you can include on your **resume**, and to create items you can include on your **resume tape** which reflect your reliable work-product skill level. If you score in the top tier on your newsroom shifts, you may be able to further your craft & skills in a future term with an independent study (TV3) in solo daily-deadline reporting. If you score in the top tier on your in-depth project, you maybe be able to further your craft in a future term with an independent study (TV4) in tv features reporting.

Goals

Demonstrate the following **professional skills**:

- story selection & development, treatments & pitches
- writing & storytelling craftsmanship
- mastery of nat sound & photography/editing craftsmanship
- time management & deadlines
- teamwork with radio/web platforms
- gatekeeping/editorial influence and quality control
- dealing with the public & public service.

Demonstrate a **professional work ethic**:

- follow industry standards for ethics & professionalism (FCC compliance)
- follow UF rules (academic honesty, etc)
- follow CJC DMP INC rules (dress code, loading zone, equipment, etc.)
- show respect for others in the classroom (no cellphone/PED/laptop use)
- behave as a pro representative of a business.

Weekly Outline

1. introduction and orientation
2. field gear training & avoiding rookie mistakes
3. story selection, target audiences, viewer benefit
4. writing, storytelling, elemental analysis
5. short formats common to tv news
6. package construction basics
7. package storytelling toolbox
8. advanced package techniques
9. in-depth reporting
10. live reporting, live truck safety
11. producing: as a career & what reporters need to know
12. ethics: deceptive practices & libel, privacy, trespass
13. ethics: RTDNA situational best practices
14. ethics: professional codes
15. resumes, resume tapes, contracts, other practical matters

Grading

- **30% - Newsroom Shift Performance** Shifts begin the second week of class (TUE 9/2) and last through the last day of classes (WED 12/10). Each missed shift must be made up or it will lower your grade for this component by one grade level (for instance, B- work downgrades to C+). This grade component is an *end-of-term assessment* of what skills you've demonstrated on your newsroom shifts—particularly photography, reporting, editing, time management, ability to think your way around daily obstacles in newsgathering.
- **5% - Written Story Treatments** Turn in one—and *only one*—fully developed written story idea every time you work...and come armed with extra ideas in your head. This should be a single paragraph about the idea and what approach you propose. Describe your vision for how it will turn out: your storytelling angle or treatment, *ideas for what you would shoot to visually tell the story* (think “action video” and “money shots”), and the likely sources you would interview—at least in generic terms—but preferably as specific as you can with detailed names/contact info. Make it something new (NOT out of that day's in-market newspapers) and something you've done enough research to know today is the best day to do it to see the most interesting aspect. This grade component is based on the *quantity and quality* of written treatments you turn in on time, plus your research and pitch skills demonstrated in the morning editorial meetings. Turn-in your single-page treatments each morning for grading; *make a copy* if you also need to take the info with you in the field.
- **5% - Classroom Attendance** Attendance is mandatory. *Professional student behavior is expected at all times...meaning portable electronic devices should always be turned off.* Each missed class will lower your grade for this component by up to one grade level.
- **30% - Pop Quizzes** Missing class will also harm your ability to handle the quizzes scattered throughout the term. All will be 10 questions...multiple choice...based on lecture material, handouts, textbook material, and news current events. If you miss one for any reason, it's up to you to take the initiative to make it up within *two weekdays* or get a zero for that quiz.

- **30% - In-depth Project** You are responsible, *on your own time*, for creating 1 enterprise reporting project, an in-depth (“sweeps-style”) report of a non-dated issue of your choice. Grad students must complete a second project. You have an option to rework or replace to improve this grade IF you stay through Finals Week and complete the work in lieu of a final. This story must be *fresh original work*...not a re-working of a daily shift story, not a re-working of a project for another class, not a re-working of reporting you already did for an internship or parttime job. Any use of file, feed or handout video must be pre-approved. The sweeps-style report must have at least 3 sources (and make sure they are not all “insiders” with similar viewpoints—look for at least 1 outsider to add perspective), at least 3 pops of nat sound full (though a feature should really show a mastery of nat sound throughout), at least 1 active/creative standup, personalized storytelling (with a central character when possible), and have an overall length of 2:30 to 3:30. There are a very limited number of project cameras so plan ahead and work ahead because you may face delays:

Deadline: for MON/TUE shift student: 5pm FRI October 24th

Deadline: for WED/THU/FRI students: 5pm FRI November 21st

Penalty: -1 grade level for each DAY late

Grad students must do two features, deadlines TBD

This project should rank among *the best stories you've ever done in terms of craftsmanship*. The grading analysis will follow the ICE TEA formula explained in class, where the Idea times Craftsmanship equals Effectiveness, and Craftsmanship can be thought of as the sum of your Treatment, Elements, and Artistry.

Grading Policies

Requirements for class attendance and make-up exams, assignments, and other work in this course are consistent with university policies that can be found at:

<http://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/attendance.aspx>

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

Grading Scale

The grading scale for TV2 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

Course Fees

This course requires 2 additional fees.

A Materials & Supplies fee of about \$50 covers expendables.

Roughly \$10 covers paper/toner for printer/copier supplies for course handouts and for your access to INC printers and copiers.

Roughly \$40 covers SD memory cards you will be given to use on your project.

An Equipment fee of about \$260.00 covers access to professional field gear kept as an earmarked fleet for TV2 use in G020, plus access to professional edit gear maintained in the INC, plus a share of the costs of countless studio gear which supports TV2 work being able to air on WUFT-TV live newscasts.

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 to shoot your standup 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.

CJC/DMP/INC Policies

It is your responsibility to learn and comply with the INC policies (posted online at wuft.org/newsroom), and these apply to everyone regardless of the platform involved: WUFT-TV, WUFT-FM, wuft.org, WRUF-TV, ESPN850, etc.

Please pay particular attention to the well-established policies involving our newsroom dress code, ethics, computer usage, and field gear usage & liability.

There are specific rules in the Dress Code but the bottom line is **you will not be treated as a professional if you do not look business-like**. Anyone who violates the dress code will be notified at the time of the violation and advised to comply in the future or sent home to change, if necessary, in the judgment of the newsroom staffer. Students who appear on tv or the web will get feedback about clothing, makeup and performance...in order to keep our work products on-par with industry standards.

The G020 Loading Zones Student 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. Because of construction, we may be “borrowing” loading zone space elsewhere. **Follow instructions closely, you are personally responsible for any tickets you get.**

The CJC/DMP/INC Equipment Policy emphasizes that **gear checkout is for official course or INC business only**. The college/stations hold 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 INC 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.

We embrace the RTDNA Code of Ethics and the similar SPJ Code of Ethics, but we also have our own Ethics Policies you should study and follow.

The food & drink policy for the INC is that no eating or drinking is allowed outside the break room, nothing except for drinking (bottled) water...but be careful not to spill onto computers or gear.

TV2 Newsroom Basics

- To start your newsroom shift, be present and prepared (*one* researched and developed story idea written-up, printed-out and ready to turn in) at **9:30am** for the morning **editorial meeting**.
- Your work could air in both our 5pm student opportunity newscast (high rotation of players, all undergrads, lots of training going on) or our 6pm flagship newscast (very low rotation of players, mix of undergrad/grad and potentially pro, almost all with significant in-house experience). You could be asked to stay to front a pkg in the 6pm show, perhaps with a newsroom live or on-set live, or maybe a live or pretaped reporter debrief about what you've witnessed/experienced/learned as a reporter. **Expect to have to stay as late as 6:20pm on any given shift day** (serving the 6pm), even though many times you will be cleared at 5:50pm (after serving the 5pm and attending that post-show critique).
- A **typical WUFT reporter crew workload is 1 pkg and maybe 1 vo/sot** which is less than you'll be expected to do in one shift at a commercial station. If you come across spot news in the field, take 5 minutes to get some b-roll and call the desk (we may want you to file something for social media or to transmit a file from the field); likewise if you see an opportunity for a second vo/sot or a breakout story, talk to the producer and news director. The photographer can take the lead on writing and editing the vo/sot's...*the reporter should be in charge of all pkg's*.
- Again, in our shop, **reporters edit their own pkg's**. This varies in the commercial world: sometimes there is the luxury of letting a skilled photographer/editor finish a piece, sometimes that person has to go out on another news assignment and the reporter finishes, sometimes it's a team effort or it varies. We want reporters to take the lead and take ownership of what goes on air.
- Always **call in** to the assignment desk before returning to the station from the field, especially when you've traveled out of town. WUFT-TV serves a 17-county area; out-of-town news coverage is routine and essential...and you will be expected to assume these costs as part of your normal lab shift duties (we generally work in teams of two and alternate driving when possible) unless you can demonstrate an extreme hardship.
- Deadlines, Deadlines, Deadlines! The **script deadline is 4:30pm and the "tape"/file deadline is 4:45pm**; by this time all video files should be delivered in final form and all related scripts should be in final form. Time management to make this deadline each and every time is part of your grade for the newsroom component.
- **You will have responsibilities each day to serve WUFT NEWS outlets other than strictly WUFT-TV**. Your story elements will have to be converted for radio or web use, and you will be asked to contribute to social media associated with WUFT.ORG (often by tweeting news developments from the field). You may be assigned to work with radio and/or web reporters (you may travel together on a story), to gather

special elements for their use (you might cut a vo for the web or strip audio from your tv recordings for radio to use...perhaps on an earlier deadline), or recruit elements for your stories from their work (radio may have a great phone interview you could excerpt or web may have a confirmed a fact to include or found stats to add depth and perspective to your story). You are expected to go the “extra mile” to coordinate things and work together for the benefit of all our products on all our platforms serving all our audiences.

- **Never leave your newsroom shift without prior approval** from the news director, associate news director or assignment manager. When you finish your assignment, check with the producer and assignment manager to see if you can help in another way, and you should use “spare” time to work on setting up stories for your next shift.
- All work is done for potential broadcast on WUFT-TV, WUFT-FM and WUFT.ORG but you should **make no promises** to the public about if or when certain stories will air.
- We **never** give copies of our taped material (raw, edited, or airchecks) to anyone, but can take requests from the public to post a particular story on our web site. **Do not post any work-product or air clips to YouTube** or otherwise provide free public redistribution of copyright material.
- All the camcorder packages we have are expensive. The cheapest costs about \$3000, the TV2 HVX200 kits cost about \$7,000, we have some kits that cost almost \$20,000. **Treat all gear with care, you are responsible—for any reason other than normal professional handling wear and tear—if it is not returned in similar condition as when you checked it out.** You are required to sign a gear liability acknowledgement at the start of the semester and to sign a daily checkout form for the specific gear you’re taking every time you use college gear.
- **All our equipment is really for newsroom business only.** Treat all items with care, and do not abuse the privilege of using them. Do not download any software onto the station computers.
- To help secure our gear and help keep our workplace secure, **do not let strangers into the newsroom and do not prop the doors open after normal business hours.** Report any unusual activity to managers and report any suspicious activity to managers or police.
- **Keep backups.** The material on all of our workstations gets routinely deleted at the end of each term...and failures could happen at any time. Protect your best work and save it to your portable hard drive.
- In addition to INC NewsManagers, other station staffers may provide feedback at any time. All **criticism from the pro staff is meant to be professional, not personal**...learn to accept it and learn from it. You may also get feedback from special guests.
- We have outside partnerships ongoing with NBC NewsChannel Florida and sometimes others. **Don’t assume material we generate can be shared or posted anywhere; always check with Mark first.**

Important notes about wrapping up the course

- **Newsroom shifts end with the last day of class WED 12/10** but we will allow make-up and extra credit shifts during Reading Days and Finals Week. Any extra credit goes only toward your newsroom shift component grade...not your overall grade...so it doesn't help with a poor quiz average or a poor in-depth score. (We will usually take more than 5 quizzes so we can drop the low one to help a little on your quiz average...and if you stay through Finals Week you get the option—in lieu of a final—to re-shoot and/or re-edit your in-depth to improve that portion of your grade.)
- Editing computers may have their memory cleaned weekly, so **make sure you are saving as you go** and before the end of Finals Week make sure you have a digital copy of *everything* dear to you. Don't depend on being able to find anything later in the editing machines, or in the playback servers, or in the archives of newscasts....you might get lucky, but don't count on it when you can make your own luck by making multiple backups (to a portable hard drive or cloud storage).
- **Students are expected to provide feedback** on the quality of instruction in this course based on 10 criteria. These evaluations are conducted online at <https://evaluations.ufl.edu>. Evaluations are typically open during the last two or three weeks of the semester, but students will be given specific times when they are open. Summary results of these assessments are available to students at <https://evaluations.ufl.edu/results>.
- **Your swipe access to the INC that comes with registration in this class will expire after 12/21/14.** TV2 does not come with automatic access to the editing lab, we generally edit our projects in the newsroom after-hours.