

RTV 4681 (“TV2”) – FALL 2015 SYLLABUS – MARK LEEPS

Basics

Prerequisite: Grade of C or better in RTV4301 (“TV1”)

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

Newsroom: One full day per week pre-arranged (9:20am until 5:50pm)

(makeup shifts: possible ONLY DURING READING DAYS & FINALS WEEK)

Project: 1 required, on your own time

(project re-do option: ONLY DURING FINALS WEEK, in lieu of a final exam)

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

Course

TV2 is *Advanced TV Reporting* at the college level, but in the commercial tvnews world is **basic daily-deadline general assignment reporting**.

In TV2, you will practice the role of an entry-level tv news reporter (usually involving related work for radio/web/social media).

Background

The pro stations make UF an extraordinary place to gain practical experience, compared to many other J-schools. Many places do student/campus news for a student/campus audience (perhaps a weekly on a totally academic calendar), with a student/campus target audience, “broadcast” only on campus cable.

We do something totally different in your “labs” at the INC for UF Media outlets. We serve a much broader audience (generally age 25+, and throughout the pro market area), WUFT-TV broadcasts can be received by more than a half-million homes, and our challenge is to do student work that’s competitive with the other pro options in the market (GTN, WCJB).

Your tvnews 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.

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 first week of class and last through the last day of classes. Each missed shift must be made up or it will lower your grade for this component by one grade level. 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, and your proven ability to think your way around daily obstacles in newsgathering on deadline...you may be required to rework a piece to make it airworthy...you want to see as many as possible through to air and your grade will reflect your quantity and quality of pkg reporting.
- **5% - Story Ideas/Pitches** DO YOUR HOMEWORK on a story idea BEFORE you come in for a morning editorial meeting to pitch that story. You should already know the basics and your proposed angle, already know if anything like this has been done recently in the paper or TV20 or on our air or website, and you must pre-research when would be the best time to gather the key elements you need to make a compelling tv story in one day's work. Whether we use written treatments or a computerized system to track, you will be graded on an end-of-term overall assessment of the quality of pitches you make. They MUST be something new to be newsworthy...and not a rehash of what WUFT or TV20/GTN aired last night or was in the local papers this morning.
- **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% - Sweeps Story** 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. You will have an option to rework or replace to improve this grade **ONLY 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: MWF shifts: 5pm FRI October 16th
TR shifts: 5pm FRI November 20th**

Penalty: -1 grade level for each DAY late

This package should be *the best story 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. Look out for one-stop-shopping; we don't want an event other than as a jumping-off point to meet someone in a setting with action video...features almost always have to “follow them home” to different settings and go out of the way for creative treatments.

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 \$264.00 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 studio gear which supports TV2 work being able to air on WUFT-TV 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 be prepared (with at least one *fully researched and scouted-out* story idea) at **9:30am** for the morning **editorial meeting**
- **You could perform in the newscast**, presenting your story in a newsroom live shot or on-set live shot or a field live shot
- **You are expected to attend the post-show critique** which will normally wrap by 5:50pm but there may at times be additional review work needed (to check scripts or editing timelines or performance) which could take longer
- A **typical WUFT reporter crew workload is 1 pkg** on daily deadline, but we may ask you to pick up an extra vo or vo/sot, and if you come across spot news you should take a few minutes to gather something and call in. You may need to file for the digital platforms from the field...you may need to work with digital and radio before you air on tv...and may need to finish work on those other platforms afterward
- **You may be asked to get more elements before a story can air**; if you are able to devote time to that before your next shift, so much the better, you may also have to work it again the next time in (regardless of whether you would normally shoot or report that week)
- In our shop, **reporters should edit (or at least co-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.
- The tv **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.
- **Never leave your newsroom shift without prior approval** from a NewsManager.
- All work is done for potential broadcast on WUFT-TV, WUFT-FM and publishing on WUFT.ORG and related in-house platforms 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 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** but there may be some opportunity near the end of the term for extra credit shifts
- Editing computers may have their memory cleaned weekly, so **make sure you are saving as you go** and before the end of term 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 the end of the term.** TV2 does not come with automatic access to the editing lab; we generally edit our projects in the newsroom after-hours.