

Reporting
JOUR 3120-002
Fall 2011
TR 11:20 – 12:45 Meeman 206
Professor: Dr. Carrie Brown-Smith
Office: Meeman 314
Office Hours: Tuesday and Thursday 1-2:30, and by appointment
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COURSE-SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS

CATALOGUE/COURSE DESCRIPTION:

Gathering news using basic journalistic tools and techniques. Writing assignments will take place in lab and field.

PROFESSIONAL VALUES AND COMPETENCIES FOR REPORTING:

- Understand and apply the principles and laws of freedom of speech and press, including the right to dissent, to monitor and criticize power and to assemble and petition for redress and grievances.
- Understand concepts and apply theories in the use and presentation of images and information.
- Demonstrate an understanding of professional ethical principles and work ethically in pursuit of truth, accuracy fairness and diversity.
- Think critically, creatively and independently.
- Write correctly and clearly in forms and styles appropriate for the communications professions, audiences and purposes they serve.
- Critically evaluate their own work and that of others for accuracy, fairness, clarity, appropriate style and grammatical correctness.
- Apply basic numerical and statistical concepts.
- Apply tools and technologies appropriate for the communications professions in which they work.

PREREQUISITE:

JOUR 2121

TEXTBOOKS/MATERIALS REQUIRED:

Journalism Next by Mark Briggs (2009)

Additional readings will be available online or will be distributed to you in class.

You should still have your copy of the **AP Stylebook** from J2121 Media writing, and you will need it for this and all other journalism courses.

While not required, I strongly encourage all students to have a laptop computer and/or a smart phone (iPhone, Pre, Blackberry, Droid, etc.) I realize this is an expensive proposition and I'm extremely respectful of students' finances. However, I fundamentally believe that to be a good journalist in the 21st century and to prepare for your future more generally, you should be a true Web native – reading, playing, connecting, and creating (yes, Facebook counts as “work” in this equation) online all the time. It's how you develop a strong news sense and hone your skills as a producer of content. It also lets

you be a reporter from anywhere you may be. This is much easier to do when you have your own equipment and you don't have to go to the lab all the time. The price for these tools has come down considerably in recent years, and it is a solid investment in your future. Also, most folks probably already have one, but if you don't own a digital camera or if your phone doesn't have a camera on it, that's another thing you might want to at least consider. You don't need a fancy or expensive one.

HOW PROFESSIONAL VALUES AND COMPETENCIES WILL BE MET:

Cognitive Objectives To Be Mastered (Ability To Explain, Analyze, Understand, Think Critically):

- Students will become better informed about local and world events.
- Students will improve grammar, punctuation, word usage and AP style knowledge.
- Students will learn to identify and develop multi-sourced, issue stories.
- Students will become more confident interviewers and more skilled at identifying experts for stories.
- Students will learn to background stories through various forms of research.
- Students will improve their writing skills.
- Students will learn to balance views in a story and to achieve fairness and accuracy.
- Students will learn to use multi-platform reporting tools to gather news, including video, digital photography, social media and blogs.
- Students will learn to monitor developments and cover a beat.

Performance Standards To Be Met (Demonstrable Skills, Abilities, Techniques, Applied Competencies):

- Occasional quiz on current events.
- Students will learn to develop multi-source stories through the writing of individual stories.
- Students will identify and interview experts appropriate for each story.
- Students must learn to gain background through research background interviews and Internet searches.
- Students will critique the writings of other students and will critique all stories weekly with suggestions for improving.
- Students will turn in phone numbers or email addresses of all sources used for accuracy checks by the instructor.
- Students complete assignments that require them to utilize multiple media, including video etc.
- Students will be responsible for monitoring events and issues on their beat and developing stories on the beat.
- Course will culminate in final project involving students publishing content online on a blog.

HOW ASSESSMENT OF STUDENT LEARNING WILL BE MET FOR REPORTING:

- Students will be urged to interview sources to fulfill the watchdog role as part of covering a beat.
- Students will learn about databases they can use for statistics for stories and will complete an assignment using these databases to find specific facts and information.
- Students will post stories along with photographs and graphics online.
- Students will learn about the importance of verification, attribution and accuracy in all completed projects.
- Students will come up with their own story ideas to cover a beat.
- Students will complete numerous written assignments that will be published. They will

be asked to learn the basics of audience analysis and online metrics.

- Students will complete numerous assignments requiring writing. They will submit drafts and make changes based on instructor feedback. They will present final projects to the class.
- Students will produce blogs covering a beat and utilizing video cameras, digital cameras, online blog sites, social media and other technologies vital to today's journalism.

CLASSROOM FORMAT: Lecture, discussion, lab

GRADING:

Assignments: 50 percent

Beat Updates/Quizzes/Short Assignments: 30 percent

Project: 20 percent

****ATTENDANCE POLICY:** I take attendance very seriously. Everybody gets one (1) free pass, no questions asked, because life happens. When you use up your freebie, you **MUST** notify me **BEFORE** the beginning of class if you will not be in class. You can call me, text me, email me, IM me, or Tweet me. It's actually not hard to do. I'd suggest you program my number into your phone. You should only be missing class if you have a genuine personal emergency. **Each unexcused absence will result in TWO PERCENTAGE POINTS being deducted from your final grade in the class.** Think of going to class like having a job. Be responsible.**

What I Expect from you:

- 1. Deadlines, Deadlines, Deadlines:** Folks, I'm generally a pretty laid-back instructor. But this is a class in journalism, and that means that if we are going to do this "real world" style, deadlines are king. That is how this business works, and missing deadline is something you would get into serious trouble for in a real newsroom. An assignment that is due by noon will be considered late if it is submitted at 12:01 p.m., for example. **If an assignment is turned in late, your grade will be dropped by one letter. Assignments turned in more than 24 hours late will receive a zero.** Use Google Calendar or an old-fashioned daily planner to help you keep track of deadlines. Plan ahead. Anticipate problems such as a computer crash by backing up your work. Consider using the UM drive or Dropbox to store copies of your work where you can access them from any computer without relying on an easy-to-lose jump drive. Even an excused absence does not give you a free pass as far as assignments are concerned. If you **MUST** miss a deadline due to circumstances beyond your control, notify the instructor **AHEAD** of deadline.
- 2. Turning in assignments:** All assignments must be turned in to the instructor via email unless otherwise noted. **Please use descriptive subject lines when you send email and put your name in the file name of the document e.g. "Carrie Profile Assignment.doc" I GET A LOT OF EMAIL and the subject line will ensure that it is easy for me to locate your work.**
- 3. Above all else, it is critical that stories you write be 100 percent accurate.** Double-check all facts and the spelling of names and places before turning in a story. Be prepared at all times to submit at least the name, title and phone number/email of any source whose information you used in your stories, as well as any documents you used. Periodically, I may perform a fact-checking exercise to discuss quotes with sources. Inaccuracies in stories will result in a substantial grade reduction or a zero.
- 4. Grammar/Spelling/AP Style Matter:** Duh, right? Proofread every story before turning it in.
- 5. Not being a jerk in class:** You are expected at least pretend to be polite in class, e.g. not checking your email and Facebook or reading the Helmsman while the professor and/or your fellow students are talking.
- 6. Readings should be completed BEFORE class.**

8. Check your email regularly, as I use it often to communicate with the class. I will also establish a class Facebook group we can all post questions and links to. You do NOT have to be friends with me or your classmates to participate in this group.

9. Digital and social media are part of reporting today. Things like Twitter and YouTube are critical reporting tools in our age. The basic skills of reporting haven't changed, but the ways in which you do your work and present to others have. You will be required to maintain accounts on sites like this for class purposes and use new technologies like video cameras. Embrace it. It is FUN. It will be difficult for you to get a job if you have no experience using these tools and if you aren't flexible and open to trying new things.

WHAT YOU CAN EXPECT FROM ME (Yes, this works both ways...we are in this together):

1. I am more than happy to meet with you to answer questions, discuss problems, and troubleshoot technical issues. I am available lots of times besides office hours to work with you. Just make like a good reporter and ask. I enjoy meeting with students. I'm also available at lots of times through all kinds of technologies from the good old phone to IM.

2. I work very hard to stay current with what is going on with journalism and I will try to help you stay up to date too so that you can become the best journalist you can be.

3. If you work hard in this class, I will do everything in my power to help you succeed, not only in terms of your final grade, which matters only a little, but in terms of your future. I'm available to help you with things like editing your resume and portfolio and talk about your strategy for getting the job or the internship you want.

4. I often make changes to the syllabus based on breaking news, events, and sudden midnight brainstorm. However, I will keep you up to date on deadlines using multiple mechanisms. For example, I will email you after each class with a quick recap about what is due.

Course Schedule - Tentative

Week One (August 30 & Sept. 1)

Tuesday:

Introduction to the course, go over syllabus

What is a beat? You'll be covering a beat of your choice this semester.

Fill out survey

Reading

"Advice for journalism students now," by Mindy McAdams.

<http://mindymcadams.com/tojou/2009/advice-for-journalism-students-now/comment-page-1/#comment-13933>

"Here's 40 reasons to still study journalism" from Social Butterfly.

<http://www.fly4change.com/http://www.fly4change/dear-may-2009-graduate-heres-40-reasons-to-still-study-journalism/791>

"Five Questions to Help You Discover Your Blogging Niche" by Kenna Griffin

http://www.profkrg.com/?p=769&utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=feed&utm_campaign=Feed%3A+profkrg%2FHBVC+%28The+KRG%29&utm_content=Brizzly

Assignments:

Start thinking about a beat you might want to cover. It is VERY IMPORTANT to choose wisely, so put some serious thought into this. Choose a subject you are interested in and passionate about, personally and/or professionally. This could be anything from MMA to the Memphis hip hop scene to local fashion to the aviation industry to a specific neighborhood to campus organizations. Consider your post-

graduation goals, but be sure you genuinely care about the subject. Narrow your beat as much as possible. The more specific you are, the easier it will be for you to grow a loyal audience for your blog.

Thursday

Brief review of writing and reporting stuff you probably forgot over the summer.

Reporting Using Twitter

Read: Briggs, Introduction and Chapter 4

What not to do (applies to both Facebook and Twitter): “The 12 most annoying types of Facebookers” by Brandon Griggs: <http://www.cnn.com/2009/TECH/08/20/annoying.facebook.updaters/index.html>

Assignment:

Sign up for Twitter and send your Twitter name to Dr. Brown.

Introduce yourself to the class via Twitter. Before class on Thursday:

1. Tweet one photo of yourself, something important to you or something that expresses who you are. Use class hashtag.
2. One introducing yourself Tweet (what is your story? What interests you?) Use class hashtag.
3. One @reply to somebody else in our class. Use class hashtag.
4. Find some journalists, national and local, you might be interested in following. Start observing how they use Twitter. See Dr. Brown’s (@brizzyc) Twitter lists for some ideas.
5. Get in the habit of spending a few minutes on Twitter each day. Listening to what others have to say is just as important as talking. We will talk more about how reporters use Twitter later. For now, just try to get a feel for it.

Class hashtag will be #J3120

Note: See Mashable’s Twitter Guidebook if you are new to Twitter or have problems using it. <http://mashable.com/guidebook/twitter/> (bookmark this for later reference) or ask the instructor for help!

Week 2 (September 6 & 8):

Tuesday:

Twitter and reporting continued – some more advanced tips

How to use Storify

Read:

@Statesman – A case study in using Twitter on breaking news by Steve Buttry

<http://stevebuttry.wordpress.com/2010/02/23/statesman-a-case-study-in-using-twitter-on-breaking-news/>

Tips on Tweeting Live http://maryhamilton.co.uk/2011/03/tips-on-tweeting-live/?utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=twitter&utm_campaign=Feed%3A+modernjournalist%2Flinks%2Fnathangibbs+%28Links+%28via+%40nathangibbs%29%29&utm_content=Brizzly+Metamedia
Death Outside a DC Nightclub: TBC Uses Storify to Create a Breaking News Narrative
<http://niemanstoryboard.us/2010/10/18/death-outside-a-dc-nightclub-tbd-uses-storify-to-create-a-breaking-news-narrative/>

Assignment: Choose your beat. Answer the following four questions in a Word document and send to me no later than next Tuesday.

1. Description of your beat. What kinds of things will you report on?
2. Example of one story idea on this beat.

3. Who is your audience? Who might be interested in reading stories on this subject? Be specific, don't just say: "People." What things do they want or need that you can give them.
4. How will you distinguish yourself from other possible sources of information on this topic?

Thursday:

Discuss beat reporting. How do reporters cover a beat? How do they develop sources? How do they know what is going on?

Read:

"Turn the Beat Around" by Diana Suggs: http://www.poynter.org/content/content_view.asp?id=85367

Assignment: Email me with three (3) things you learned from this week's readings by Tuesday at classtime. This can be very brief, in the form of bullet points or similar.

Week 3 (September 13 & 15):

Tuesday & Thursday

Hyperlocal reporting, MicroMemphis, covering an event, and Cooper Young Festival discussion

Read: Briggs Chapter 5

"Debates, Facts, and Live Tweeting" by Amy Gahrn

<http://www.poynter.org/column.asp?id=31&aid=151937>

Check out what your friends have been doing on MicroMemphis! <http://www.micromemphis.com/>

Assignment: Event coverage for Cooper Young Festival. Details TBA.

****Please print out a copy of your beat assignment in which you decided what beat you would cover and answered the four questions, and bring it to class on Tuesday. We will be discussing the beats in class.****

Week 4 (September 20 & 22):

Tuesday:

Cooper Young Debrief

Setting up/using a blog to cover your beat/beatblogging

Present your beats to the class and get feedback from them.

Read: Briggs Chapter 1 and 2

"Why beatblog?" by Patrick Thorton, Beatblogging.org <http://beatblogging.org/2009/04/25/bcni-philly-why-beatblog-and-why-news-should-be-social/>

Assignment Due Thursday:

1. Set up your blog in Wordpress. Choose theme.
2. Write "about" and "about me" pages.
3. Blogroll with at least three links
4. Twitter widget

Thursday

Presenting your beats to the class, continued.

Intro to Google Reader and Google Alerts for covering a beat.

Assignment due Tuesday

1. Set up Google Reader with 5-10 RSS feeds related to your beat
2. Blog analysis. Discuss three of the best blogs you are following on Google Reader that are related to your beat. What do they do well? What techniques to they use to engage the audience? What kinds of stories do they write? Where do you think they get story ideas? Answer these questions in a Word document and send to instructor.
3. Set up a Google Alert for your beat.

Week 5 (September 27 & 29):

Tuesday & Thursday:

Interviewing

Reading: Handout

Katie Couric Talks about interviewing <http://www.poynter.org/latest-news/top-stories/100421/couric-people-want-coverage-that-has-a-pov/>

“The Power of Listening” by Chip Scanlan, Poynter Online.

<http://www.poynter.org/column.asp?id=52&aid=39887>

Assignment: First beat update due Thursday, September 29, in a Word document to instructor. Also include your list of the top five NON-WEB sources of information on your beat.

Find at least 10 people whose Tweets relate to your beat and create a list for them.

Due next Tuesday, October 4: Interview with newsmaker on your beat. Interviewee must be approved by professor in advance. You must also make arrangements to record the interview somehow, using either department Flip cameras, department audio recorders, or your own device. Many phones allow you to record interviews, for example, or perhaps you have access to a tape recorder. You will turn in a FULL TRANSCRIPT of this interview.

Week 6 (October 4 & 6):

Tuesday

How reporters use photos in their beat

Basics of shooting news photos.

Reading: Briggs Chapter 6

Learn to shoot decent photos, by Mindy McAdams, <http://mindymcadams.com/tojou/2009/rgmp-7-learn-how-to-shoot-decent-photos/>

Assignment: Shooting photos on your beat and uploading to Flickr. Details TBA. You must get approval from Dr. Brown about where/when you plan to shoot photos for this assignment. Photos must include captions.

Thursday

No class. Work on shooting photos on your beat

Beat update due

Week 7 (October 11 & 13)

Tuesday & Thursday

Coming up with good story ideas and know the news when you see it

Read:

Briggs Chapter 3

“Getting Started with Story Ideas by Candace Perkins Bowen, Center for Scholastic Journalism Blog: <http://csjblog.org/?p=209>

“Idea Generators: Creativity Tools for Journalists.” By Chip Scanlan.

<http://www.poynter.org/column.asp?id=52&aid=17432>

Assignment TBA

Week 8 (October 20)

Tuesday:

No class. Fall Break ☺

Thursday

Guest speaker or News University Class. Professor will be out of town.

Assignment: TBA

Week 9: (October 25 & 27)

Reporting with video

Reading:

Briggs Chapter 8

“Learn to shoot video” by Mindy McAdams

<http://mindymcadams.com/tojou/2009/rgmp-12-learn-to-shoot-video/>

Assignment:

Video related to your beat, **due Tuesday October 11**

Beat update due Thursday (posted to blog this time, email link to instructor). Include one thing you learned from the reading on interviewing and one from readings on video.

Week 10: (November 1 & 3)

Tuesday

Halloween Special (TBA)

Assignment:

Uploading best photo(s) to blog, Twitter

Thursday

Start planning final project

Beat update due

Week 11: (November 8 & 10)

Tuesday & Thursday

Data-driven journalism, Finding information in databases

Guest speaker

Read: Briggs Chapter 9

Assignment: Handout

Week 12: (November 15 & 17)

Tuesday & Thursday

Audio reporting/podcasting

Reading: Briggs Chapter 7

Assignment: Audio/Podcast Assignment

Week 13: (November 22)

Tuesday

Making important stories interesting

Read: Briggs Chapter 11

Elements of Journalism Chapter 8: Engagement and Relevance (will be distributed.)

Using Context to Make Important Stories Interesting <http://www.concernedjournalists.org/using-context-make-stories-interesting>

Thursday: No class (Thanksgiving)

Week 14: (November 29 & December 1)

Tuesday: Getting it right – Verification tools and techniques

Accuracy Checklists

Read: “Developing methods of verification” by Tom Rosenstiel and Bill Kovach, Committee of Concerned Journalists

<http://www.concernedjournalists.org/developing-methods-verification>

“Circles of Corroboration”

<http://www.concernedjournalists.org/circles-corroboration>

“Reviewing Quotes with Sources”

<http://www.concernedjournalists.org/reviewing-quotes-sources>

Examples of accuracy checklists:

Detroit Free Press: <http://www.concernedjournalists.org/accuracy-checklist-detroit-free-press>

SPJ: <http://www.concernedjournalists.org/accuracy-checklist-society-professional-journalists>

Assignment TBA

Thursday: Verification and bias continued

“The lost meaning of objectivity” Committee of Concerned Journalists

<http://www.concernedjournalists.org/lost-meaning-objectivity>

Week 15: (December 6)

Last class

DEPARTMENT POLICIES

EMAIL:

You must have your UM email account activated. If you are using another provider such as Google, you are required to have your UM email forwarded to that account. Go to the <http://iam.memphis.edu> website to implement forwarding of UM email. You are required to check your email daily. You are responsible for complying with any email sent to you by your professor or the University.

CELLPHONES:

You must turn them off during class.

ATTENDANCE:

Class attendance is mandatory in the Department of Journalism. You may be assigned a failing grade for the semester for nonattendance, or habitual late arrival. No late work will be accepted without prior arrangements, which are acceptable to your professor. Students may not be permitted to make up any missing work unless it is for an absence due to illness or other catastrophic emergency such as a death in the family that can be documented (e.g. with a doctor’s note or a copy of the newspaper obituary). This is a professional program for journalists who are expected to understand and comply with deadlines. If you have some problem making it to class on time make arrangements to fix the problem or consider taking another class. You should consider this class your “job” in the educational process and be on time just as you would elsewhere.

CHEATING:

In addition to university-wide policies stated in the Code of Student Rights and Responsibilities, the Department of Journalism considers making up quotes from sources, turning in substantially the same assignment for credit in two different courses, or a student receiving any assistance from others for work assigned to be done on his/her own, as acts of cheating punishable to the degree determined appropriate

by the course instructor and department chair. That may include grade reductions or seeking dismissal of the student from the university.

“Your written work may be submitted to Turnitin.com, or a similar electronic detection method, for an evaluation of the originality of your ideas and proper use and attribution of sources. As part of this process, you may be required to submit electronic as well as hard copies of your written work, or be given other instructions to follow. By taking this course, you agree that all assignments may undergo this review process and that the assignment may be included as a source document in Turnitin.com’s restricted access database solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism in such documents. Any assignment not submitted according to the procedures given by the instructor may be penalized or may not be accepted at all.” (Office of Legal Counsel, October 17, 2005)

ONLINE SETEs:

You are urged to complete the SETEs evaluation of this course. Once your instructor has posted your grade, you can immediately see that grade, provided you completed a teacher evaluation for that class. How to access your evaluation forms: Log in using your UUID and email password; click on the gray “Student” tab; complete an evaluation for each course listed and hit the “Submit” button at the bottom of the form. It will only take a few minutes of your time. We take the evaluations very seriously and use them to improve courses and instructional quality. Your feedback is essential and will be appreciated.

DISABILITY:

Any student who feels s/he may need an accommodation based on the impact of a disability should contact the Office for Disability Services at (901) 678-2880 in 110 Wilder Tower Hall to coordinate reasonable accommodations for students with documented disabilities.

EXIT EXAM FOR ALL JOURNALISM MAJORS:

All Journalism majors are required to take the Journalism Exit Exam their last semester before graduation. Please contact the Journalism office staff anytime during the semester to sign up. You may take the test anytime there are open lab hours during the semester. You will not be certified to graduate until you have completed the test.

PROFESSIONAL VALUES AND COMPETENCIES FOR JOURNALISM PROGRAM:

The Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communication requires that, irrespective of their particular specialization, all graduates should be aware of certain core values and competencies and be to

- understand and apply the principles and laws of freedom of speech and press, for the country in which the institution that invites ACEJMC is located, as well as receive instruction in and understand the range of systems of freedom of expression around the world, including the right to dissent, to monitor and criticize power, and to assemble and petition for redress of grievances;
- demonstrate an understanding of the history and role of professionals and institutions in shaping communications;
- demonstrate an understanding of gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation and, as appropriate, other forms of diversity in domestic society in relation to mass communications.
- demonstrate an understanding of the diversity of peoples and cultures and of the significance and impact of mass communications in a global society.
- understand concepts and apply theories in the use and presentation of images and information;
- demonstrate an understanding of professional ethical principles and work ethically in pursuit of truth, accuracy, fairness and diversity;
- think critically, creatively and independently;
- conduct research and evaluate information by methods appropriate to the communications

- professions in which they work;
- write correctly and clearly in forms and styles appropriate for the communications professions, audiences and purposes they serve;
- critically evaluate their own work and that of others for accuracy and fairness, clarity, appropriate style and grammatical correctness;
- apply basic numerical and statistical concepts;
- apply tools and technologies appropriate for the communications professions in which they work.

ASSESSMENT OF STUDENT LEARNING FOR JOURNALISM PROGRAM:

The Council seeks to promote student learning and encourages experimentation and innovation.

Assessment is a system of evaluation of student learning at the course or unit level (as opposed to grading at the individual level). Three criteria should guide assessment of student learning:

- Awareness: familiarity with specific information, including facts, concepts, theories, laws and regulations, processes and effects.
- Understanding: assimilation and comprehension of information, concepts, theories and ideas.
- Application: competence in relating and applying skills, information, concepts, theories and ideas to the accomplishment of tasks.