

Public Issues Writing/Reporting

JOUR 4180-001

Fall 2017

11:20 a.m. to 12:45 a.m. TR

MJ 208

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COURSE REQUIREMENTS

CATALOG DESCRIPTION:

Emphasis placed on deadline writing and critiquing of political and public policy news. Encourages familiarity with the methods and insights of political and social science and develops confidence to use those methods and insights in reporting. Encourages use of social media to cover and explain campaigns and policy.

Additional description:

During the semester students will write and produce content for a multimedia class project that incorporates traditional writing and reporting techniques with contemporary multimedia trends. During the semester, you will work to produce a four to five-episode podcast based on the issue tackled in the course.

PREREQUISITE:

JOUR 3120 & JOUR 3526

REQUIRED MATERIALS:

- Kelley, B.L.M. *Right to Ride: Streetcar Boycotts and African American Citizenship in the Era of Plessy v. Ferguson*. The University of North Carolina Press (Chapel Hill).
- *Associated Press Stylebook*.

REQUIRED PODCASTS:

You'll be required to listen to the following Podcasts during the semester. You will write short reviews of the podcasts. This is to not only give you ideas for the class podcast, but to also to familiarize you with the podcast market, which is popular at the moment.

- WNYC's *Radiolab* (<http://www.radiolab.org>)
- WNYC's *On the Media* (<http://www.wnyc.org/shows/otm/>)
- Pod Save America
- The United States of Anxiety
- NPR's Code Switch

RECOMMENDED RESOURCES:

These sites are great for information or inspiration. We'll talk specifically about some of them in class.

- National Press Photographers Association
(https://contests.nppa.org/monthly_multimedia_contest/winnergalleries.php)
- Hearst Multimedia Journalism Winners
(http://www.hearstfdn.org/hearst_journalism/competitions.php)
- National Public Radio's *All Things Considered*
(<http://www.npr.org/programs/all-things-considered/>)
- New York times
(<https://www.nytimes.com>)
- US Census Bureau
(<https://www.census.gov>)
- US Supreme Court
(<https://www.supremecourt.gov>)
- Pew Research on the Media
(<http://www.journalism.org>)
- Snopes (for fact checking)
(<http://www.snopes.com>)
- Poynter Institute
(<http://www.poynter.org>)
- The Onion
(<http://www.theonion.com>)
- The Journalist's Toolbox
(<http://www.journaliststoolbox.org>)

EQUIPMENT:

The use of a digital single lens reflex (DSLR) camera is required in this course. The Department of Journalism has provided cameras with 30-55mm lenses for students in this course. Cameras are limited to a 24-hour checkout. Students may use their own DSLR cameras with approval from the instructor. Lost, stolen, or broken cameras and equipment will be the financial responsibility of the student; the Department of Journalism will put a financial obligation hold on your registration until the camera/equipment is replaced. **Cameras and equipment must be returned on time. Failure to return a camera on time will result in a one-letter grade deduction from your final grade for each day late.** Students with unreturned/broken cameras will receive a grade of O/F until the financial obligation is met. Cameras can be checked out through the Journalism Office, MJ 300/334.

Other equipment needs:

1. Access to a smartphone and/or digital recording device and microphone(s).
2. Access to a laptop or portable hard drive capable of holding several GB of audio files.
3. Access to a laptop or smartphone for mobile reporting.

CLASSROOM FORMAT:

You will learn many new techniques and skills in this course. Some you will pick up right away. Others will take more work. We will split time in this course between learning public issues writing, reporting, and multimedia skills. Your assignments will reflect that. You will do much of the work outside of the classroom. You must do all assigned readings and multimedia reviews. Otherwise, you will not add much to the class discussion.

Participation is an important consideration in final grades.

ATTENDANCE:

Here's how attendance works: I'm not interested in hearing excuses. You get three free passes during the semester. After you cash in the passes, missed classes are reflected in your final grade. For example, if you miss one additional class, your final grade drops a letter grade. If you miss two more classes, your grade drops again. So if you miss six classes, your final grade drops two letters.

Assignments will require students to use a variety of software and applications (Audacity, Adobe Photoshop, Adobe Premiere Pro., Instagram and Twitter.) to tell news stories through a variety of narrative and visual platforms.

ASSIGNMENTS:

- Public meeting writing assignments
- Social Media assignments
- Reading assignments
- Project assignments
- Final portfolio

ONLINE PORTFOLIO:

Students will create a professional online portfolio as a tool to market themselves on the job market. The details and requirements of the portfolio will be discussed later in the semester.

GRADING:

Participation	50 points
5 reading/multimedia reviews	125 points (25 points each)
Book review	50 points
Background paper on public meeting	25 points
2 Public Meeting Stories	100 points (50 each)
2 Public Meeting Live Tweet	100 points
Instagram Story Package	50 points
Long form project story	100 points
Podcast audio package	100 points
Final podcast	200 points
Online Portfolio	200 points
Total	1,100 points

A = 92%-100%

A- = 90%-91%

B+ = 87%-89%

B = 82%-86%

B- = 80%-81%

C+ = 77%-79%

C = 72%-76%

C- = 70%-71%

D = 65%-69%

F = 0%-64%

Grading Philosophy:

A=Professional quality work that could be use with little or no modification; B=Good to excellent work and exceeds requirement, but would require revision to be used professionally; C=Satisfactory work and adequately meets requirement, but would need significant revision; D=Barely satisfies minimum requirement and below average quality; F=Unsatisfactory work and does not meet minimum requirement. NOTE: Pluses and minuses may be given.

AP STYLE AND GRAMMAR:

All written work in this class should follow the AP Stylebook and accepted rules of grammar and punctuation. If you don't know the style for a particular phrase, look it up or ask your classmates or the instructor.

ERRORS AND PENALTIES:

Edit stories carefully. Your multimedia projects are graded for content minus mechanical errors. Spelling, grammar and style count for each activity. A fact error will result in the reduction of one letter grade for each error. Fact errors include inaccurate information, errors and typos in names, numbers, addresses, dates, quotes, and proper nouns.

Bottom line: REPORTERS MUST SELF-EDIT. Read and re-read, and edit and re-edit your assignments.

FINAL COMMENT:

Sharpening multimedia, reporting, and editing skills is a journey best undertaken as a team, with open hearts, open minds and good humor. You can learn much from your peers as from your instructor. I encourage you to speak frequently and work together on stories/assignments with your classmates. We will critique our own work in class and I will accept rewrites and additional multimedia elements to stories.

If you want to talk about the class, feel free to come and see me. Don't worry if you don't have an appointment. My office door is often open. If my office hours are inconvenient for you, make a special appointment and I will work to accommodate you. I want to help you succeed.

CLASS SCHEDULE*

WEEK 1, Aug 29, 31, Introduction

Course Introduction, student information sheets, discuss public issue, start researching Memphis Area Transit Authority, form teams for semester

WEEK 2, Sept. 5, 7, Researching the Project (Labor Day on Monday)

Research techniques, Sourcing, Project planning, set internal deadlines
Podcast/Reading review 1: Listen to On the Media's five-part series on poverty myths. Links and assignment on eCourseware. (Due Thursday at the beginning of class.)
Reading Assignment: Begin reading Right to Ride

WEEK 3, Sept. 12, 14, Public Transportation & Memphis

Guest speaker from UofM Department of City and Regional Planning, Research public transportation trends & data for Memphis, region, and country
Assignment: Background paper on Memphis Area Transit Authority and public transportation (Due Friday, Sept. 15 at 11:59 p.m.)

WEEK 4, Sept. 19, 21, Social Media Storytelling

Live Tweeting public meetings, Telling stories with Instagram, Writing the meeting story
Podcast/Reading review 2: Listen to four episodes of WNYC's Radio Lab. Links and assignment on eCourseware. (Due Thursday at the beginning of class.)

WEEK 5, Sept. 26, 28 MATA Public Meeting 1

Class Tuesday will be at the MATA Public Meeting at 3:30 p.m. You must be there. So make arrangements as soon as possible. You'll live tweet the meeting, which is due at the close of the meeting, and you'll write a story.
Thursday, debrief on public meeting, write stories.
Live Tweet assignment (Due Tuesday, Sept. 26 at the close of the meeting)
Story 1: MATA story no. 1 due Friday, Sept. 27 at 11:59 p.m.

WEEK 6, Oct. 3, 5 Podcast planning

Discuss podcast episodes, what interviews need to be conducted, delegate podcast positions (hosts, editors, etc . . .)
Project plans: Turn in a project plan for your podcast episode by 11:59 p.m. on Friday, Oct. 5.

WEEK 7, Oct. 10, 12 Podcast training

Audio recording: equipment, audio scripts, natural sound, voice over, hosts transitions;
Podcast tools—set up a sound booth

Podcast/Reading review 3: Listen to four episodes of NPR's Code Switch. Links and assignment on eCourseware. (Due Thursday at the beginning of class.)

Instagram story assignment due Friday, Oct. 13 at 11:59 p.m.

WEEK 8, Oct. 17, 19 Writing workshop (Fall Break)

Writing the long form story, advanced story structures, advanced leads, sourcing, interviewing

Podcast/Reading review 4: Read two stories posted to eCourseware. (Due Thursday at the beginning of class.)

WEEK 9, Oct. 24, 26 MATA Public Meeting 2

Class Tuesday will be at the MATA Public Meeting at 3:30 p.m. You must be there. So make arrangements as soon as possible. You'll live tweet the meeting, which is due at the close of the meeting, and you'll write a story.

Thursday, debrief on public meeting, write stories.

Live Tweet assignment 2 (Due Tuesday, Sept. 26 at the close of the meeting)

Story 2: MATA story no. 2 due Friday, Oct. 27 at 11:59 p.m.

WEEK 10 Oct. 31, Nov. 2 Right to Ride/Long form Week

Discuss book Right to Ride and how it can be used in our reporting on public transportation in Memphis (Tuesday)

Work on long form stories (Thursday). You must be present for work time on Thursday.

Right to Ride book review (Tuesday at the beginning of class.)

Long form project story due Friday, Nov. 2 at 11:59 p.m.

WEEK 11 Nov. 7, 9 Writing workshop

Discuss issues with long form stories work on the revisions, Work on podcast audio package.

Podcast/Reading review 5: Listen to four episodes a podcast of your choice. Provide links to me in your assignment. (Due Thursday at the beginning of class.)

WEEK 12 Nov. 14, 16 Podcast audio package

Work week attendance in mandatory in class both days. You'll work in class to edit your stories, write scripts, ask questions, make phone calls and find tune your projects.

Podcast audio package due Friday, Nov. 16 at 11:59 p.m.

WEEK 13 Nov. 21, 23 Wrapping up/Thanksgiving Week

Work on editing your podcast episode

WEEK 14 Nov. 28, 30 Multimedia week 2

Work week attendance in mandatory in class both days. You'll work in class to edit your episodes, record voice overs.

Final podcast episodes are due Friday, Nov. 30 at 11:59 p.m.

WEEK 15 Dec. 5, Portfolios.

Final portfolio preparation, In-Class Portfolio Presentations (Wednesday), Final edited episodes, stories posted to MemphisMirror.com

Portfolio due Thursday, Dec. 14 at 11:59 p.m.

FIVE PILLARS OF JOUR4180

- *Professionalism*: Students are introduced to the routines and standards of professional journalists and are required to follow them when they cover news events. Students discuss issues such as fairness, balance and ethics.
- *Writing*: Students are required to write four news stories and complete a final in-depth reporting project related to a class-wide project. All students must also submit rewrites to each of the stories.
- *Multimedia*: Students are required to complete three multimedia components that correspond with the writing assignments, and the final project will incorporate a substantial multimedia component that is appropriate in scope and platform to the project they complete.
- *Critical Thinking*: Students are required to pitch and defend their projects based on news reporting standards.
- *Media Literacy*: Students are required to consume and critique news stories/packages produced and disseminated by international, national, state, and local media outlets.

ASSESSMENT

PROFESSIONAL VALUES AND COMPETENCIES FOR JOUR4180:

- 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 gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation and, as appropriate, other forms of diversity in domestic society in relation to mass communications.
- 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
- Apply basic numerical and statistical concepts.
- Apply current tools and technologies appropriate for the communications professions in which they work, and to understand the digital world.

HOW PROFESSIONAL VALUES AND COMPETENCIES WILL BE MET:

Cognitive objectives to be mastered (ability to explain, analyze, understand, think critically):

- Students will recognize and critically analyze the role the press plays as a watchdog of government and other public organizations.
- Students will develop the finer techniques of information gathering including: searching public records, interviewing uncooperative or hostile news sources, sensitivity in reporting on disasters and tragedies and avoiding manipulation by political image makers and other news sources.

- Students will learn the importance of a diversified press corps and diverse news sources.
- Students will develop writing skills that emphasize fairness, balance, clarity and in-depth understanding of complex public topics.
- Students will discuss and analyze various ethical dilemmas in public affairs reporting.
- Students will learn and apply multimedia storytelling techniques appropriate to public issues writing and reporting.
- Students will learn to discern which Internet sources are legitimate for news stories and which are not.

Performance standards to be met (demonstrable skills, abilities, techniques, applied competencies):

- Students will report on public entities including governmental bodies, police, and courts.
- Students will conduct an in-person and online search for public records.
- Students will monitor all types of media during a two-month period and turn in an in-depth analysis of the media's coverage of a topic chosen by the professor at the beginning of the semester.
- Students will be tested on current events.
- Students will demonstrate the ability to meet strict deadlines.
- Students will conclude the semester by using their acquired interview techniques, public records gathering ability, writing skills and multimedia skills to produce an investigative or in-depth news package on a public issue involving at least six news sources. This assignment will count 20 percent of the final grade.

HOW ASSESSMENT OF STUDENT LEARNING WILL BE MET:

Awareness:

- Become aware of public issues through class discussions, journalistic research and current event quizzes of issues affecting news and the industry such as: diversity, multicultural reporting and ethics

Understanding

- Understand the importance of using diverse sources and exercising multicultural reporting techniques
- Understand objective writing and discern which material to include in a story

Application:

- Write four multi-sourced, researched stories regarding issues of public concern that may include coverage of local police, fire, government, courts, or governmental bodies
- Produce multimedia components for each story
- Complete a culminating public issues multimedia project that demonstrates all of the skills learned in this course from research and information gathering to diverse sourcing to multimedia storytelling
- Create an online portal for the class project
- Use various outlets and sources to obtain secondary data and information for their assignments and projects.
- Apply creative and ethical interview techniques

DEPARTMENT POLICIES

PORTFOLIO REQUIREMENT:

All students in the Department of Journalism and Strategic Media are required to develop and maintain an active portfolio of their work. Undergraduate students are to begin the portfolio in JRSM 3900 and contribute to it from every course thereafter. The portfolio should contain samples of the student's work from his/her courses and/or professional experience and should develop as the student builds skills. Portfolios will undergo a final, external review while students are enrolled in the capstone course for their majors.

Students may use any type of web hosting for their portfolios, but it must have an independent and professional URL. The department requires students to use WordPress to build their portfolio sites. Students are encouraged to consider purchasing a URL and hosting if they plan to use the portfolio for a long term, but must keep the portfolio active for six months following graduation from the University of Memphis.

Students should have a professional email address they plan to use throughout their professional life, via a common email service, such as Gmail or Yahoo.

All portfolios must contain the following items:

- Samples of work from courses and/or professional activities. (Example: Broadcasting students must include a video reel)
- A current résumé
- A personal profile
- Contact information/means of contact
- Social media links

Students might wish to include a blog, video reels, photograph galleries, SoundSlides presentations, design PDFs, audio files, and Storify pieces as examples of professional work. The professional work should ultimately be tailored to the career the student seeks after graduation. Thus, each student's portfolio should show a unique blend of work.

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.

MOBILE PHONES AND LAPTOPS:

Some classes require a tablet, laptop or a smartphone. Others do not. Your instructor will set the policy for her/her specific class.

ATTENDANCE:

Class attendance is mandatory in the Department of Journalism and Strategic Media. 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 because of 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 and Strategic Media 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.

Further, as this is a journalism/mass communication class, students are expected to comply with copyright law, and must have sufficient permission to use any copyrighted materials used in creative projects, unless otherwise informed in cases of exercises or reproduction.

"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.

DEADLINES:

Remember there's a reason "DEAD" makes up half the word "deadline." All deadlines are firm. This is journalism and strategic media. If you get into trouble, talk to your instructor. Exceptions will be made for reasonable circumstances if the student notifies the instructor prior to the due date.

AP STYLE AND GRAMMAR:

All written work in this class should follow the AP Stylebook and accepted rules of grammar and punctuation. If you don't know the style for a particular phrase, look it up or ask your classmates or the instructor.

DISABILITY:

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

DIVERSITY:

Students are required to respect the differences of others and treat all persons with respect. Discriminatory, derogatory and threatening language or behavior will not be tolerated. Further, students are expected to consider their work through a diverse mind. Mass communications reach a mass audience, and students should be aware of how those messages are received by a diverse audience.

WEATHER POLICY:

Always check with local media and the University of Memphis website regarding inclement weather. If the university is closed or classes are canceled, this course will not meet. However, students will still be responsible for that day's work.