

Public Issues Writing/Reporting

JOUR 4180-001 & JOUR 6180-001

Fall 2019

Class Meeting: MW 12:40-2:05 p.m., MJ 212

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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.

Prerequisites

JOUR 3120 & JOUR 3526

Textbooks, Software and Required Materials

- *The Investigative Reporter's Handbook: A Guide to Documents, Databases and Techniques*, by Brant Houston and Investigative Reporters and Editors Inc., fifth edition. (Earlier editions may be substituted.)
- *Dark Money: The Hidden History of the Billionaires Behind the Rise of the Radical Right*, by Jane Mayer.
- *All the President's Men* by Carl Bernstein and Bob Woodward

Classroom format

You will learn investigative and analytical techniques that are essential in covering political campaigns and which are also useful when reporting on government and the development of public policy. This includes instruction in datasets – learning where to find criminal and court records, property, tax, campaign finance documents and other information and how to use those records in news stories. This includes using social media to monitor candidates and public figures. You will do much of the work outside of the classroom. You must do all assigned readings. Otherwise, you will not add much to the class discussion. And that will hurt because participation is a critical component in your grade.

Accessing the course website

1. Go to the University of Memphis eLearn home page: <http://elearn.memphis.edu>
2. Log in using your University of Memphis username and password.
3. In the Term Year course list available to you, click on the link for JRSM 4180 – 001/6180-001 to

enter your course and read the instructions on the welcoming page

Course Requirements

During the first part of the semester you will pick a candidate running for office in the City of Memphis elections. You will report brief weekly updates on this candidate in the form of a written story, video or podcast. You will research and write one in-depth investigative profile on the candidate over the course of four weeks. Over the balance of the remainder of the semester you will research and write an analysis of campaign contributions and spending by candidates. You should have access to a laptop and a smart phone. We have three texts. One, *The Investigative Reporter's Handbook*, is vocational in nature and is a great "keeper" resource book to consult over your career as a journalist. The other two follow in the great Liberal Arts tradition of learning; they will expand your understanding of watchdog journalism and its potential to affect change. They are *All the President's Men*, the greatest story of campaign corruption ever told, and *Dark Money*, a story of the corrosive influence of money in politics. You must do all your readings. We will discuss and critique media coverage of the city election races and politics generally. Be prepared to learn.

Grading

Campaign Finance Analysis Story	35%
Investigative profile	25%
Participation	15%
Candidate Updates	15%
Social Media Posts	10%

A+ = 96.5-100%; A = 92.5-96.4%; A- = 89.5-92.4%
B+ = 86.5-89.4%; B = 82.5-86.4%; B- = 79.5-82.4%
C+ = 76.5-79.4%; C = 72.5-76.4%; C- = 69.5-72.4%
D+ = 66.5-69.4%; D = 59.5-66.4%
F 0-59.4%

Other issues

A critical admonition: Cheating and unethical behavior will not be tolerated. As a journalist, you are entrusted with certain privileges and responsibilities. Your research will require you to collect sensitive information on individuals including dates of birth, home addresses and possibly even social security numbers and more. Any misuse of this information – identity theft, trolling, doxing, etc. – may be grounds for an automatic "F" or more. Be warned. We are here to learn and to serve the public good, not to serve our own interests or to harm others.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Week 1, Aug. 26, 28, Introduction

Course introduction, discussion of theory of investigative reporting. Begin training on local public databases.

Readings: Chapters 1 & 2, *Investigative Reporter's Handbook*

Assignments: Pick a candidate running in the City of Memphis Oct. 3 Municipal Election. You will follow this candidate through the election. (You will name this candidate and a backup candidate in class on Sept. 4)

Week 2, Sept. 2, 4, Documents State of Mind (Labor Day on Monday- no class that day)

Discussion of Chapters 1 & 2, *Investigative Reporter's Handbook*. Name the candidate you will follow. Also, we will continue training on local databases.

Readings: Chapters 3 & 5, *Investigative Reporter's Handbook*

Assignments: 1. Write a brief weekly update on your candidate (Due Sept. 11). 2. Research and write an investigative profile of your candidate (Initial drafts due at the start of class on Monday, Sept. 23. Final paper due Wednesday, Oct. 2)

Week 3, Sept. 9, 11, Following the Paper & People Trails

Weekly candidate update due Wednesday Sept. 11. Discussion of media coverage of the city election races and politics in general. Discussion of Chapters 3 & 5, *Investigative Reporter's Handbook*. Continue training on local databases.

Readings: Introduction & Chapter 1, *Dark Money*

Assignments: Write a brief weekly update on your candidate (Due Sept. 18)

Week 4, Sept. 16, 18, The Influence of Money on Politics

Weekly candidate update due Wednesday Sept. 18. Discussion of media coverage of the city election races and politics in general. Discussion of Introduction & Chapter 1, *Dark Money*. Continue training on local databases.

Readings: Chapters 2-5, *Dark Money*

Assignments: Write a brief weekly update on your candidate (Due Sept. 25)

Week 5, Sept. 23, 25, Free Market Mayhem

Weekly candidate update due Wednesday Sept. 25. Discussion of media coverage of the city election races and politics in general. Discussion of Chapters 2-5, *Dark Money*. Continue training on local databases.

Readings: Chapters 6-10, *Dark Money*

Assignments: Write a brief weekly update on your candidate (Due Oct. 2)

Week 6, Sept. 30, Oct. 2, Citizens United

Weekly candidate update due Wednesday Oct 2. Investigative profiles due at the start of class on Wednesday, Oct. 2. Discussion of media coverage of the city election races and politics in general. Discussion of Chapters 6-10, *Dark Money*. Continue training on local databases.

Readings: Chapters 11-14, *Dark Money*

Assignments: Write a brief weekly update on your candidate (Due Oct. 9)

Week 7, Oct. 7, 9 City Elections

Weekly candidate update due Wednesday Oct 9. Discussion of media coverage of the city election races and politics in general. Discussion of Chapters 11-14, *Dark Money*. Start training on campaign finance reports.

Readings: Chapters 8, pages 144-151 & Chapter 9, pgs 152-161, *Investigative Reporter's Handbook*

Assignments: None. Take a week off.

Week 8, Oct. 14, 16: Understanding Campaign Finance (Fall Break on Monday- no class that day)

Discussion of Chapters 8, pages 144-151 & Chapter 9, pgs 152-161, *Investigative Reporter's Handbook*. Begin training with campaign finance reports. Discuss options for campaign finance analysis story.

Readings: *All the President's Men*, pages 13-44

Assignments: 1. Figure out which option you will pursue for your campaign finance analysis story. 2. Follow post-campaign developments and write a social media post linking to a key news story. (Due at start of class on Oct. 23)

Week 9, Oct. 21, 23: The Break-In

In class on Monday Oct. 21 you will announce your option for your campaign finance analysis story. Social media post due Oct. 23.

Discussion of *All the President's Men*, pages 13-44. Continue training with campaign finance reports.

Readings: *All the President's Men*, pages 45-91

Assignments: 1. Write an in-depth campaign finance story over the course of the next six weeks. (First draft due Nov. 13; final story due Dec. 4 at start of class) 2. Write a second social media post. (Due Oct. 30)

Week 10, Oct. 28, 30: The 302s

Guest speaker. Social media post due Oct. 30. Discussion of *All the President's Men*, pages 45-91

Readings: *All the President's Men*, pages 92-135

Assignments: Write a social media post. (Due Nov. 6)

Week 11, Nov. 4, 6: Digging into Campaign Finance Issues

Social media post due Nov. 6. Discussion of *All the President's Men*, pages 92-135. Working in class on campaign finance story: Analyzing reports, building our spreadsheets and writing

Readings: *All the President's Men*, pages 136-198

Assignments: Write a social media post. (Due Nov. 13)

Week 12, Nov. 11, 13: Dealing with Mistakes

First draft of campaign finance analysis story due on Wednesday, Nov. 13. Working in class on campaign finance story: Analyzing reports, building our spreadsheets and writing. Discussion of *All the President's Men*, pages 136-198

Readings: *All the President's Men*, pages 199-261

Assignments: Write a social media post. (Due Nov. 20)

Week 13, Nov. 18, 20: Dirty Tricks and More

Working in class on campaign finance story: Analyzing reports, building our spreadsheets and writing.

Discussion of *All the President's Men*, pages 199-261

Readings: *All the President's Men*, pages 262-308

Assignments: Write a social media post. (Due Nov. 25)

Week 14, Nov. 25, 27: Down the Stretch (Thanksgiving break on Wednesday- no class that day)

Social media post due Nov. 25. Working in class on campaign finance story: Analyzing reports, building our spreadsheets and writing. Discussion of *All the President's Men*, pages 262-308

Readings: *All the President's Men*, pages 309-336

Assignments: None.

Week 15, Dec. 2, 4: Wrap Up

Working in class on campaign finance story: Analyzing reports, building our spreadsheets and writing.

Campaign finance analysis stories due at start of class on Wednesday, Dec. 4. Discussion of *All the*

President's Men, pages 309-336

Readings: End of term

Assignments: End of term

ASSESSMENT AND OUTCOMES

Five Pillars in JOUR 4180

- *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.
- *Multimedia*: Students are required to complete a multimedia component that corresponds 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.
- *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 six news stories and complete a final in-depth reporting project related to a class-wide project.

Professional Values and Competencies in JOUR 4180

- 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
- 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 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 35 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 six 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

JOURNALISM AND STRATEGIC MEDIA 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 graduate students are to begin in JRSM 7002. Students are to contribute to it in every skills course thereafter. The portfolio should contain samples of the student's work from courses and/or professional experiences and should develop as the student builds skills. Portfolios will undergo a final, external review while students are enrolled in their capstone courses.

Students may use any type of web hosting for their portfolios, but it must have an independent and professional URL. Students may use any content management system, but students are encouraged to use WordPress, Wix or SquareSpace. Students are encouraged to consider purchasing a URL and hosting if they plan to use the portfolio for a long term, but they 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 lives, via a common email service, such as Gmail.

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 writing 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

Students must have their UofM email accounts activated. Students using another provider, such as Google, are required to have all UofM email forwarded to that account. Students should go to the <http://iam.memphis.edu> website to implement forwarding of UofM email. Students are required to check their email daily. They are responsible for complying with any email sent to by professors or others in the University.

Electronic devices

Some classes require a tablet, laptop or a smartphone. Others do not. Instructors will set the policy for their specific classes.

Attendance

Class attendance is mandatory in Journalism and Strategic Media. Students may be assigned a failing grade for the semester for nonattendance or habitual late arrival. No late work will be accepted without prior arrangements with the class 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). Journalism and Strategic Media is a professional program, and students are expected to understand and comply with deadlines. Students who have some problem making it to class on time should make arrangements to correct the problem or consider taking another class. Students should consider this class as a "job" in the educational process and be on time just as they would elsewhere.

Course repetition

Majors and minors who fail to earn the minimum passing grade ("C-") in a class required by their program of study in Journalism and Strategic Media more than three times will be dropped from the program.

Students may not use or submit work from a previous course, even if it is the same course being repeated, to fulfill requirements for assignments in another course. If students wish to substantially rework the original submission, or to work with the same general idea, that may be permissible upon discussion with and written approval from the professor of the current course. All written work will be checked for policy adherence via TurnItIn.com. All creative work will be checked for policy adherence by the professor, and judged against previous submissions. The only exception to this policy is the student's online portfolio and its attendant pieces (for example, the résumé and logo).

Academic integrity

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 students receiving any assistance from others for work assigned to be done on their own, as acts of cheating punishable to the degree determined appropriate by the course instructor and department chair. Punishment may include grade reductions or seeking dismissal of the student from the University.

Further, as this is a journalism and strategic media 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 rating

originality of your ideas. Also to evaluate proper use and assignment of sources. As part of this process, you may require to submit electronic as well as hard copies of your work. Other instructions to follow may also be given. By taking this course, you agree that all assignments may undergo this review process. The assignment may be included as a source document in Turnitin.com's restricted access database. It is solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism in such documents. Assignments not submitted according to the instructor's procedures may be penalized or may not be accepted at all. (*Office of Legal Counsel, October 11, 2018*)

Online SETEs

Students are urged to complete the SETEs evaluation of this course. Once the instructor has posted grades, student can immediately see that grade, provided they have completed a the SETE for that class. To access evaluation forms, students should log in to MyMemphis using their UUIDs and email passwords; click on the gray "Student" tab; complete an evaluation for each course listed and hit the "Submit" button at the bottom of the form. Completing the SETE will only take a few minutes. Faculty take the evaluations very seriously and use them to improve courses and instructional quality. Student feedback is essential and is appreciated.

Deadlines

All deadlines are firm. This is journalism and strategic media. Students needing an extension on an assignment must receive approval from the 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 must follow the AP Stylebook and accepted rules of grammar and punctuation. Students are responsible for learning these rules and checking their work for errors.

Disability and accommodations

Students who need an accommodation based on the impact of a disability should contact the Office for Disability Resources for Students at 901-678-2880 in 110 Wilder Tower Hall to coordinate reasonable accommodations for students with documented disabilities.

Diversity and inclusivity

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. Media 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.

Student support

Student who are experiencing personal or academic challenges including, but not limited to food or housing issues, family needs, or other stressors, should visit the Office of Student Accountability, Outreach & Support page to learn about resources that can

help: <https://www.memphis.edu/saos/sos/crisis-resources.php>. Any student who faces personal challenges including, but not limited to securing their food or housing and believes this may affect their performance in the course is urged to contact the Office of Student Accountability, Outreach & Support (901-678-2187) located in the University Center, Suite 359 for assistance. Students may also talk with course instructors about the challenges they are experiencing. Instructors may be able to assist in connecting with campus or community support.