

# Data Journalism

JRSM 7124-001, M50

Wed., 5:30-8:30 p.m., MJ 202

Spring 2020

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## COURSE REQUIREMENTS

### Catalog description

Advanced use of computer technology and investigative techniques to access, analyze and develop database information in combination with traditional news reporting.

### Prerequisites

Graduate status.

Students should already be familiar with basic methods of newswriting and reporting.

### Textbooks, Software and Required Materials

#### Required

- Brant Houston, *Computer Assisted Reporting* 4th edition (2014) ISBN: 0765642190

#### Recommended

- Darrell Huff, *How to Lie With Statistics* (New York, Norton: 1954). ISBN 978-0-393-31072-6
- Kathleen Wickham, *Math Tools for Journalists* 2nd edition (Marion Street Press, 2003) ISBN 0-966-517652

### Classroom format

The class will consist of both lecture and laboratory time to be determined by the instructor.

### 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 7124 – 001/M50 to enter your course and read the instructions on the welcoming page

### Course Requirements

This is an advanced reporting course. In it you will augment the skills you already have in order to produce richer story ideas and to gather and analyze information efficiently. You will learn to use spreadsheets and database management software. You will also become familiar with the latest online newsgathering sources and techniques. As you will soon discover, these cool tools supplement—they

don't substitute for—old-fashioned reporting, common sense, and the ability to ask good questions of real people.

Students will complete three stories analyzing data and telling a story about the numbers. Each should be at least 750 words long, in the form of either a hard-news or feature article, with at least three relevant sources. (Extra credit will be awarded for data sets you create yourself. And these sets don't have to be large, just yours—exclusive, in other words.) The topic must be approved in advance by the instructor. Include a source list, complete with contact info., at the end of your article. Students who get their articles published (or accepted for publication) in an approved venue during the semester will receive extra credit.

In addition, you will work on graded and ungraded lab assignments, which are designed to help you understand concepts and to give you lots of practice applying them. These exercises are crucial for you to learn, and they're a big part of what we'll do in class. Of course, one of the most important aspects of a graduate course is your active participation in

### Research Colloquium

Graduate students must attend and write a one-page reflection paper about at least one Research Colloquium sponsored by the Department. Attendance and papers will count for at least 2% of your course final grade. Those who cannot attend will receive instructions about remote viewing from your instructor. Students enrolled in more than one course may write multiple reflections of one research presentation as long as the topic is customized to the individual class

### Grading

**3 Stories:** 60%

**Assignments:** 20% (includes Research Colloquium)

**Attendance/participation:** 20%

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%

### HYBRID CLASSROOM FORMAT

- Blue Jeans is a web-based video conferencing platform. Students in the M50 section will receive an invitation to join Blue Jeans from your instructor. This hybrid class, with students on campus and also online synchronously, operates in a seminar format.
- Online students must have a stable Internet connection, speakers and a microphone (or a headset with a built-in mic). Headsets can be purchased for approximately \$20. Students will need to be able to have video turned on for the entire class. Online students will not be permitted to attend class using a cellphone.
- Class time will primarily be spent in discussion of theories, issues, and applications. To that end, on campus and online students must complete the assigned readings and be prepared to discuss the night's topic. Please note that failure to attend class or to actively take part — even if all your assignments are turned in on time and done acceptably — will significantly affect your final

grade.

## Other issues

### NUMBERS ARE YOUR FRIENDS

Making sense of large and sometimes complex data sets requires the ability to crunch numbers. Fortunately, through the miracle of computing science, you don't have to crunch them yourself. Computer software does it for you. But understanding a few basic principles of high school math will aid you in doing such work and can also help you avoid obvious mistakes. So, put your phobias about math aside. Numbers don't bite!

### PROFESSIONALISM

In journalism, your name is everything. Whether you work for a Fortune 500 media company, freelance, or just blog, you're only as good as your reputation. How reliable are you? How professional are you? Start good habits now. I expect you to come to class on-time and regularly, to turn in assignments when they're due, to work hard and with enthusiasm, to be involved in class discussion and activities.

### PROTECT YOUR WORK

Computers are great timesavers but sometimes fail, crash, or otherwise go haywire. Use common sense, and back up your work. Keep copies of your assignments on disks or thumb drives, and double that insurance by also saving a version on UMDrive. Always work from a copy!

## COURSE SCHEDULE

### *Week 1, Jan. 22:*

All About Data. I.R.E.

Readings: Houston, Ch. 1

### *Week 2, Jan. 29:*

Math tools

Online resources

Readings: Houston, Ch. 10

### *Week 3, Feb. 5:*

Math tools

Readings: Houston, Ch. 2

### *Week 4, Feb. 12:*

Spreadsheets

Readings: Houston, Ch. 3

### *Week 5, Feb. 19:*

Spreadsheets

Readings: Houston, Ch. 4

**Story 1** due

*Week 6, Feb. 26:*

Spreadsheets

*Week 7, March 4:*

Spreadsheets

*Week 8, March 11: SPRING BREAK*

*Week 9, March 18:*

Database managers

Readings: Houston, Ch. 5

**Story 2** due

*Week 10, March 25:*

Database managers

Readings: Houston, Ch. 6

*Week 11, April 1:*

Database managers

*Week 12, April 8:*

Database managers

Readings: Houston, Ch. 7

*Week 13, April 15:*

Creating databases

Readings: Houston, Ch. 8

**Story 3** due

*Week 14, April 22:*

Cleaning databases

Readings: Houston, Ch. 9

*Week 15, April 29:*

Wrap-Up

## 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.