

Computer Assisted Reporting

Journalism 4124/6124-001

Spring 2016

11:30 a.m. to 12:55 p.m. Monday, Wednesday

Meeman 208

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Office hours: 9:30 to 11:30 a.m. Mondays; noon to 2:30 p.m. Fridays

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.

PREREQUISITE:

Jour 3120

COURSE MATERIALS:

The required textbooks for this class are *Computer Assisted Reporting: A Practical Guide* by Brant Houston, fourth edition; *The Associated Press Style Manual* and *First Aid For Writers: The Little Grammar Book* by our own Joe Hayden. You must also read the newspaper every day. Free copies of the *Commercial Appeal*, *USA Today*, *The New York Times* and *The Daily Helmsman* are available at various locations around campus, including Jones Hall, the library and the UC. Finally, we will select two journalism related films to view this semester so you will need to get access to those.

CLASSROOM FORMAT:

Class will be conducted through lecture and discussion and writing assignments done outside of class.

GRADING:

A 93 to 100 percent

A – 90 to 92 percent

B + 87 to 89 percent

B 83 to 86 percent

B – 80 to 82 percent

C + 77 to 79 percent

C 70 to 76 percent

D + 67 to 69 percent

D 60 to 66 percent

F 0 to 59 percent

Writing Assignments

Students will complete 14 writing assignments. The first 11 are worth 20 points. The assignments culminate in a final in-depth writing assignment, which will be worth 20 points for the first draft. 20 points for the second draft and then another 20 for the final version. Any writing assignment determined to have been plagiarized or fabricated will receive a zero. Late assignments will be not be accepted.

1. Data story ideas – Jan. 20
2. Finding databases online – Jan. 27
3. Creating a basic spreadsheet – Feb. 3
4. Numbers story – Feb. 10
5. Re-write numbers story – Feb. 17
6. Using access – Feb. 24
7. Creating a database – March 2
8. Database story – March 16
9. Re-write database story – March 23
10. First draft final project – March 30
11. Second draft final project – April 6
12. Final draft final project – April 13

In-class Exercises

Students will complete an in-class assignment every week. The assignment will focus on the topic discussed during the week, and it is due by the end of the class period. Students cannot make up missed in-class exercises, but there will be opportunities to make up an exercise by attending one of the journalism related events during the semester and posting a few lines about it on the student website. The events that are scheduled so far is the First Amendment Lecture at 6 p.m. March 1; the Freedom of Information Congress on March 28; and the Journalism Awards Banquet on April 22.

1. Plagiarism/fabrication
2. AP Style
3. Spreadsheet
4. Census reporter
5. Sort, filter data
6. Backgrounding a person
7. Headlines
8. State legislator
9. Google map
10. Spreadsheet final story
11. Dirty dozen grammar
12. Pulitzer Prize winner
13. Opinion poll
14. Online site demonstration

Quizzes

There will be 10 news quizzes during the semester. Each quiz is worth 10 points. Quizzes will be given every Monday in class. There are no makeup quizzes, but there is a bonus quiz at the end of the semester for whoever misses one. Some of the quizzes will be on items in the news, about the book *Nicked and Dimed* and at least two will be on journalism related films. There will be an AP Style/Grammar quiz worth 20 points, which can be made up only by talking to the instructor in advance.

Online sites

Students are required to have an online site to showcase the work in the class. Each of the five story assignments is required to be on the site. The site is worth 50 points of the final grade.

Assignments (10 at 20 points each) –	200
Quizzes (10 at 10 points each) -	100
AP Style/grammar quiz -	20
In-class exercises (13 at 5 points each) -	60
In-depth project -	60
Online portfolio site -	50
Total	500

Graduate students/6124:

In addition to the work described above, graduate students are required to write an 8-10 page paper on a topic related to computer assisted reporting and data journalism.

All deadlines must be strictly met in keeping with professional standards. All completed stories must be posted on students' online portfolio sites in order to get the credit for the re-write.

FIVE PILLARS OF JOUR4124

- Professionalism: Students are introduced to professionals in the news business. Also, students analyze news articles produced by professionals. Students also attend news events and are required to behave as professionals.
- Writing: Students are required to write two standard news stories and then complete a final in-depth reporting story. All students must also submit re-writes to each of the stories.
- Multimedia: Students are required to post their news stories on their online portfolio sites and along with the final in-depth reporting story students are required to have some additional multi-media element such as photographs, chart, graph, table or map. The final story must also have at least two posted links on the site.
- Critical thinking: Issues such as fairness, balance and ethics are discussed in the course of complete assignments.
- Media literacy: Students are required to read and keep up to date on news issues, which are monitored by regular news quizzes where students are required to read local media and then discuss issues in the news.

ASSESSMENT

PROFESSIONAL VALUES AND COMPETENCIES FOR JOUR 4124:

- think critically, creatively and independently
- conduct research and evaluate information by methods appropriate to the communications professions in which they work
- apply basic numerical and statistical concepts
- apply tools and technologies appropriate for the communications professions in which they work

HOW PROFESSIONAL VALUES AND COMPETENCIES WILL BE MET:

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

- Become familiar with the Internet as a research tool for news stories;
- Utilize information-processing skills to understand the role of government, commercial, institutional and other database sources in writing and researching news stories;
- Practice critical thinking in order to identify information in databases that could be used to generate news stories;
- Practice critical thinking through the analysis of stories utilizing computer-assisted techniques;
- Enhance retention and transfer of information by writing and researching news stories using both computer-assisted journalism techniques and traditional reporting skills;
- Develop an understanding of the legal and ethical guidelines related to computer-assisted journalism and investigative reporting;
- Encourage the continued mastery of AP style, particularly regarding the use of numbers and statistics

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

- Students will complete one or more writing/research projects during the semester to provide the opportunity to synthesize and apply the knowledge and skills gained throughout the semester. All assignments will conform to AP style.
- Students will practice their database skills by researching, analyzing and writing on a topic approved by the instructor.
- Students will demonstrate their ability to use the Internet and other computing tools in combination with traditional news reporting skills by writing and researching a story 5-pages in length. The project will include a database and make use of charts as well as both online and traditional sources.
- Completed stories must demonstrate the students' ability to research and gather material as well as their ability to write well.
- Graduate students will complete an additional assignment as designated by the instructor.

HOW ASSESSMENT OF STUDENT LEARNING WILL BE MET FOR JOUR4124/6124:

Awareness:

- Learn the impact that computer-assisted reporting has on investigation, on storytelling and on media credibility generally.

Understanding:

- Understand basic statistical concepts and their use in media reporting;
- Understand the importance of systematic measurement and the value of databases;
- Learn where to find databases, how to procure them, and how to import and analyze them;
- Learn the logic of software programs dedicated to managing databases;

Application:

- Students create databases and use them to generate story ideas and newsworthy articles;
- Students use MS Excel and MS Access to organize and analyze databases;
- Students run basic statistical analyses on complex organizations and processes;
- Students make use of computer graphics to augment their work.

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 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.

DEPARTMENT POLICIES

PORTFOLIO REQUIREMENT:

All Department of Journalism undergraduate students are required to develop and maintain an active portfolio of their work. Students are to begin the portfolio in JOUR 2121 and contribute to it during every skills course thereafter. The portfolio should contain samples of the student's work from courses and/or professional experience and should develop as the student builds skills. Portfolios will undergo a final review while students are enrolled in the capstone course for their concentrations.

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 <http://iam.memphis.edu> 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 to be used during class or to complete class assignments. Others do not allow them. Your instructor will set the policy for her/her specific 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. Students are permitted three total unexcused absences without penalty. After three absences, the student's final grade will be deducted one letter grade for each absence. After seven unexcused absences, the student will fail the course. Absences for illness and other catastrophic emergencies, such as a death in the family, must be documented (e.g. doctor's note or obituary) to be excused from the total absence count. Students with excessive unexcused absences are encouraged to withdraw from the course prior to the drop deadline.

DEADLINES:

All deadlines are firm. This is journalism and mass communications. Assignments turned in late will NOT be graded. Late work is not accepted unless prior arrangements have been made with the instructor. Students are NOT permitted to make up assignments, quizzes, tests, etc. that occurred during an unexcused absence. Students who will miss class and/or a deadline because of an excused absence are expected to notify the instructor immediately upon knowing the absence will occur; exceptions will be made for reasonable circumstances. Students who are absent during the final exam are not permitted to make up the exam and will earn a grade of 0, which might result in failure of the course.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY:

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, a student receiving any assistance from others for work assigned to be done on his/her own, and violations of copyright law as acts of academic dishonesty punishable to the degree determined appropriate by the course instructor and department chair. Penalties might include grade reductions or 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)

Intellectual property and copyright guidelines

1. Ideas cannot be copyrighted, but the way they are described can.
2. Anything set down in a tangible form, i.e., written, is by law copyrighted.
3. If, in a paraphrase, your work is “substantially similar” to a copyrighted work, you are guilty of copyright infringement.
4. A citation indicates where you got material. However, that portion you do not show as a direct quote must be “substantially original” to you. In other words, you can’t just paste in something from another’s work, put a citation at the bottom and call it your own. You need a full rewrite in your own words and syntax so the unquoted material is “substantially original” to you.

Plagiarism: From UM Student Handbook: The term “plagiarism” includes, but is not limited to, the use, by paraphrase or direct quotation, of the published or unpublished work of another person without full or clear acknowledgement. It also includes the unacknowledged use of materials prepared by another person or agency engaged in the selling of term papers or other academic materials.

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 me privately to discuss your specific needs. Please contact the Office for Disability Services at 901-678-2880 in 110 Wilder Tower 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:

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.

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.