Computer-Assisted Reporting
JOUR 4124
Spring 2011
TR 9:40-11:05 / Meeman 208
Joe Hayden/
Meeman 304

Office Hours:	MW 3:00-5:00; TR 2:00-5:00
Office Phone:	901-678-4784
Email:	jhayden@memphis.edu

COURSE-SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS

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

PROFESSIONAL VALUES AND COMPETENCIES FOR JOUR4124:
- 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

PREREQUISITE:
JOUR 3120, or permission of instructor

TEXTBOOKS:
Required:
- Brant Houston, *Computer-Assisted Reporting: A Practical Guide* 3rd edition (Bedford/St. Martin's Press, 2004) **ISBN 0-312-41149-9**
- Kathleen Wickham, *Math Tools for Journalists* 2nd edition (Marion Street Press, 2003) **ISBN 0-966-517652**

Recommended:
- Darrell Huff, *How to Lie With Statistics* (New York, Norton: 1954). **ISBN 978-0-393-31072-6**

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 5-7 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:
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.

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

CLASSROOM FORMAT:
This class is composed of lecture and laboratory time alike. It involves regular and intensive computer practice.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

There are frequent quizzes covering your comprehension of the assigned reading. 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 the grade.

Finally, each student will complete a professional investigative project involving Excel or Access. Projects will analyze a set of data and tell a story about the numbers. The finished report should be in the form of either a hard-news or feature article and must be at least 1000 words long (4-5 pages). The topic must be approved in advance by the instructor. You should plan to interview at least five persons for your story. Do 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.

GRADUATE STUDENTS:

This course is offered at both the undergraduate and graduate levels. Enrolled graduate students are required to do work appropriate for their academic level. This might include a term paper on an assigned topic, a class presentation, book review and/or special projects. Graduate students should meet with the professor as soon as possible after the beginning of the term to work out arrangements for graduate-level credit for the course.

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!

GRADING:

Quizzes: 30%
Assignments: 30%
Project: 30%
Attendance/participation: 10%

TENTATIVE TIMETABLE:

Date	Topic/ Assignment	Pages	Additional Info
R – Jan. 13	Introduction. Overview.		
T—Jan. 18	All About I.R.E. Math Tools.	*CAR*, Ch. 1	
R – Jan. 20	Math Tools.	*MTJ*, Chs. 1-2	**Quiz 1**
T – Jan. 25	Math Tools.	*MTJ*, Ch. 3	**Quiz 2**
R – Jan. 27			**Quiz 3** **Math Review** (*MTJ,* Chs. 1-3)
T – Feb. 1			
R – Feb. 3			**Project Proposals Due**
T – Feb. 8	Spreadsheets.	*CAR*, pp. 17-21; Ch. 3	**Quiz 4**
R – Feb. 10			
T – Feb. 15	Spreadsheets.	*CAR*, Ch. 4	**Quiz 5**
R – Feb. 17			
T – Feb. 22	Database Managers.	*CAR*, Ch. 5	**Quiz 6**
R – Feb. 24			
T – Mar. 1	Database Managers.	*CAR*, Ch. 6	**Quiz 7**
R – Mar. 3			
T – Mar. 8 *R – Mar. 10*	**SPRING BREAK**		
T – Mar. 15	Online Resources.	*CAR*, Ch. 2	**Quiz 8**
R – Mar. 17			
T – Mar. 22	Data Hunting.	*CAR*, Ch. 7	**Quiz 9**
R – Mar. 24			
T – Mar. 29	Creating Databases.	*CAR*, Ch. 8	**Quiz 10**
R – Mar. 31			
T – Apr. 5	Cleaning Databases.	*CAR*, Ch. 9	**Quiz 11**
R – Apr. 7			

T – Apr. 12	Writing the CAR Story.	*CAR*, Ch. 10	**Quiz 12**
R – Apr. 14			
T – Apr. 19			
R – Apr. 21	Project Presentations.		**All Projects Due**
T – Apr. 26	Project Presentations.		

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 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 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.