Data Writing/Reporting
JOUR 4124-001
Fall 2018
2:40-4:05 p.m. TR
Meeman 212

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COURSE REQUIREMENTS

COURSE 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 and JOUR 3526

TEXTBOOKS:
Required

- Brant Houston, *Computer Assisted Reporting* 4th edition (2014) ISBN: 0765642190
- NICAR Course Pack link. We will use the course pack all semester. The cost is $20.
- Selected readings posted to eCourseware for each day's class.

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

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 people sources. 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.

All class writing assignments must be accompanied by one of the following multimedia components: Infographic, photograph, photo slideshow, video, audio or podcast.

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 any course is your active participation in it. Your classmates and I expect you to make regular contributions to discussion.

GRADING:

Participation	50 points
Data Set/Story Analyses	50 points (10 points each)
In-class assignments	100 points (10 points each)
Data quizzes	100 points (20 points each)
Story One	100 points
Story Two	150 points
Story Three	200 points
Midterm Exam	150 points
Online portfolio	100 points
Total	**1,000 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: Plusses 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, re-read, and edit. Then re-edit your assignments.

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!

CLASS SCHEDULE

WEEK 1, Aug. 28 & 30, Introduction/Drilling Down on Numbers
Course Introduction, Counting & Quantification,
  Readings:
  * *See eCourseware for readings*
  Assignments:
  * *Multimedia Critique 1: MemphisMirror.com (Wednesday, Aug. 29)*

WEEK 2, Sept. 4 & 6, Data in the Tabular Form: The Fundamentals
Sorting, Summing and Percentage Change
  Assignments:
  * *Exercises 1-5 in NICAR Coursepack*
  Dataset & data story of the week:
  * *Andrew Ryan, et al., "City Payroll Soars after Police and Fire Deals," The Boston Globe, 2015*
  * *City of Boston employee payroll data, 2014*

WEEK 3, Sept. 11 & 13, Challenges with Data: Finding and Cleaning
Google News Training: Search & Data Acquisitions (Tuesday in class). Discuss project pitch format and ideas in class.
Assignments:
- *Pitch Story One*
- *Exercises 6-9 in NICAR Coursepack*

Dataset & data story of the week:
- *Ben Casselman, "Where Police Have Killed Americans In 2015," FiveThirtyEight*
- *Police Killings, FiveThirtyEight/data, GitHub*

WEEK 4, Sept. 18 & 20, Statistics of Inference, Correlation, Probability
Review of infographic apps, finding data, understanding data. Google News Training: Verification & Fact Checking (Wednesday in class)
Assignments:
- *Filtering, Importing, Pivot Table and Rates & Ratios exercises in NICAR Coursepack*

Dataset & data story of the week:
- *Gabriel Dance, Tom Meagher, "Crime in Context," The Marshall Project, 2016*
- *FBI's "Crime in the United States, 2015" report*

WEEK 5, Sept. 25 & 27, Visualization Foundations
Visualization Basics, Data visualization in journalism practice
Assignments:
- *Story One Due Sunday, Sept. 30 at 11:59 p.m.*

Dataset & data story of the week:
- *"Fatal Force" dataset and series, The Washington Post*

WEEK 6, Oct. 2 & 4, Advanced Visualization Techniques
Critique project one multimedia components; Google Trends Training, how to use metrics in the newsroom
Assignments:
- *Story Two Pitch Due*

Dataset & data story of the week:
- *Students should review selections from the New York Times's Graphics department.*

WEEK 7, Oct. 9 & 11 Interpreting Academic Research
Exploring the world of academic research as part of data journalism, Review for Midterm Exam
Dataset & data story of the week:
- "Poisoned Places," NPR and Center for Public Integrity, 2014
- About the Data
- Toxics Release Inventory (TRI) Program, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

WEEK 8, Oct. 16 & 18 Midterm (Fall Break Week)
Assignments:
- *Midterm in Class Thursday*
- *Story Two Due Sunday, Oct. 21 at 11:59 p.m.*

WEEK 9, Oct. 23 & 25 Data and Science
Assignments:
- *Pitch Story Three*

WEEK 10 Oct. 30 & Nov. 1 Health and Medical Data
Look at data journalism on issues of health and medicine.

WEEK 11 Nov. 6 & 8 Economic and Business Data
Look at data journalism on issues of economics and business.

WEEK 12 Nov. 13 & 15 Crime and Public Safety Data
Look at data journalism on issues of crime and public safety.
Assignments:
- *Story Three Due Sunday, Nov. 18 at 11:59 p.m.*

WEEK 13 Nov. 20 & 22, Catch Up Day/Thanksgiving Holiday
Catch up on project work and anything missed during semester.

WEEK 14 Nov. 27 & 29, Portfolio
Assignments:
- Work on Online Portfolio

WEEK 15 Dec. 4 Wrap Up/Final
Any final work that needs to be completed and posted to the website.

FIVE PILLARS OF JOUR4124
- *Professionalism:* Students are introduced to professionals in news, they analyze news articles and attend news events where they 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. Additionally, their final in-depth story must include multimedia elements, including photographs, charts, graphs, tables, maps and hyperlinks.
- *Critical Thinking:* Students discuss strategies, methods and ethics in obtaining and analyzing data.
- *Media Literacy:* Students discuss fairness, balance and ethics as related to their assignments. Students are required to read and keep up-to-date on news issues.

ASSESSMENT
PROFESSIONAL VALUES AND COMPETENCIES FOR JOUR4124
- 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, 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):
- Become familiar with the Internet as a research tool for news stories
- Use information-processing skills to understand the role of government, commercial, institutional and other database sources in writing and researching news stories
- Practice critical thinking to identify information in databases that could be used to generate news stories
- Practice critical thinking through the analysis of stories using 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 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 abilities to use the Internet and other computing tools in combination with traditional news reporting skills by writing and researching a 5-page story. 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' abilities to research and gather material as well as their abilities to write well.

HOW ASSESSMENT OF STUDENT LEARNING WILL BE MET:
Awareness:
- Become aware of the impact data reporting has on investigation, storytelling and media credibility

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:
- Create databases and use them to generate story ideas and newsworthy articles
- Use MS Excel and MS Access to organize and analyze databases
- Run basic statistical analyses on complex organizations and processes
- Make use of computer graphics to augment their work

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/his 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.