



Communication + Journalism

JOU 3117 – NEWS REPORTING & WRITING – SPRING 2018 • 3 UNITS

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Class meets: Tues/Thurs 5–7 pm @ AC2 258

Ofc Hrs: Tues/Thurs 4-5 pm @ AC2 129 and by appointment

Class website: <http://edtiordanevans.com>

CATALOG DESCRIPTION

Intensive instruction and practice in the fundamentals of reporting and writing, including interviewing, data gathering, public records research and legal considerations of news gathering.

PURPOSE

This class provides students real world training in journalism via the South Florida News Service. **All students are de-facto members of the press through their association with SFNS.** One only becomes better at the craft of writing and the science of reporting by actually doing it. **As such, you should not tell sources you are only doing “a class assignment,” as I may very well publish it.**

In addition, there will be intensive, in-class workshops designed to get students to write quickly, accurately and grammatically. **These assignments are generally pass/fail, but cannot be made up.** Attendance is essential.

Assignments completed outside of class will be eligible for publication on the SFNS. Such stories will be made available to the wider South Florida media – including the Miami Herald, Sun-Sentinel, Rise Miami and others – for republication on their sites and pages.

OBJECTIVES

Students will learn to generate story ideas, identify and cultivate sources, conduct interviews, organize their articles clearly, and begin to develop a journalistic voice. In addition, extra credit opportunities will be available for those who wish to enhance those stories with video, audio or interactive graphics.

METHOD & COURSE STRUCTURE

JOU 3117 is effectively a newsroom. This means that you are reporters, and I am your editor. Like a professional editor, I will give you direction, push for additional information, help shape stories and assign pieces as necessary. **This also means that deadlines are real.**

Though college can be a (somewhat) benign way to fail, understand I will have no problem severely marking down assignments for factual errors, grammatical sloppiness or late work. **In the world, you'd get fired; here you only get an "F." It still hurts, but it's easier to recover.**

Also, please note that when I say this course is writing-intensive, I mean it. We will have in-class news drills and hands-on tutorials in addition to your assignments. I strongly subscribe to the truism that the more you write, the better you become.

There is a corollary regarding reporting that states, "The harder you work, the luckier you get." **Along those lines, we will be covering actual stories involving actual human beings. You will need to talk to strangers, some of whom may be less than enthused to speak to you.** You will deal with reports, databases and the minutia of civic, county and state government that appear to be written in an alien language. In short, your job is to jump on a train that is already moving. It will not always be pleasant, but if you put in the effort, it will reward you throughout your college career and afterwards.

REQUIRED TEXTS & MATERIALS

You must have access to the **AP Stylebook** at all time, whether in class or outside. You can purchase the bound edition or get the smartphone app. Either are fine. In addition, you strongly encouraged to get a copy of **The Elements of Style by Strunk and White**, which provides an enormous number of good writing tips.

We will also be doing a number of courses via NewsU.org. You will need to sign up for an account. We will be discussing this on the first day of class.

In addition, you must read the online or print edition of the **Miami Herald** and **New York Times daily**. I strongly suggest you subscribe to the Herald and sign up for the Times online (which is free at nytimes.com/passes).

LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of the class, students should have learned:

- Fundamentals of news reporting and interviewing for print and online media
- Necessary skills to report news and write in a journalistic style
- To recognize and respond to ethical principals
- The ability to recognize "angles," or what makes something newsworthy
- The ability to aggregative various sources with style
- The ability to write quickly and accurately

GRADING CRITERIA

Grades are assigned as follows:

“A” (94-100 percent) • “A-” (93-90 percent)

Stories are accurate, clear, comprehensive stories that are well written and require only minor editing.

“B+” (87-89 percent) • “B” (86-83 percent) • “B-” (82-80 percent)

Stories require more than minor editing, and have a few style or minor spelling errors or an error of omission.

“C” (79-75 percent) • “C+” (74-70 percent)

Stories are stories that need considerable editing or rewriting and/or have many minor spelling and style errors.

“D” (60-69 percent)

Stories require excessive rewriting; have numerous minor spelling and style errors, and should not have been submitted.

“F” (59 percent and below)

Stories have at least one proper name misspelled, and/or one factual error. Additionally, stories that use plagiarized materials or fabricate quotes will receive a zero in addition to other CARTA and FIU mandated sanctions.

Please note that CARTA no longer awards grades of C-, D+ or D-.

All assignments will be edited on a professional basis. Each story will be returned with written comments and explanations of any editing. Our style guide will be “The Associated Press Stylebook and Libel Manual.” Your copy should not contain any errors in spelling, style, grammar and facts. There should not be any omissions, either.

In fact, any misspelled proper noun (even if it’s due to a typographical error) or any inaccuracy will result in a full-grade markdown. A factual error will also result in a full-grade markdown.

Accuracy is the first law of journalism. Professional journalists are expected to get their facts right, to spell and punctuate correctly, and to respect grammar and syntax. **In case of doubt, check your facts, consult the AP Stylebook or a dictionary.** It only takes a minute or two to avoid mistakes.

Typing skills are essential in this course. You must be able to use a computer, type fast, and use Word. When working on a computer, save often, make a back-up copy of your work, and print it out at various stages of the writing process. Always keep a hard copy for yourself. **Claims that “the computer lost it” will not be accepted as an excuse.**

Don't be discouraged if your writing receives low grades at the beginning of the semester. Your grades will improve. Newswriting and reporting is hard work, but the only way to get better is to keep writing, regardless of the difficulties. I am far more concerned with where you are in the final weeks of the course than how you do in the first weeks of the course.

ADDITIONAL POLICIES

Late assignments are not accepted. However, late assignments should still be turned in under the rewrite policy. Any assignment receiving a grade of **70%** or lower may be rewritten and turned in **by the following week**. The highest grade a rewrite can receive is an **80%**.

1. Attendance is required for all classes. However, I realize things do happen. **One emergency is normal; two is suspicious.** I reserve the right to ask for a doctor's note.
2. If you miss a class, please get the notes from another student. **I will not hold separate "catch-up" sessions.** Again, in-class assignments cannot be made-up.
3. In addition to being ethical in developing and writing your stories, it is **important that you consider diversity.** When looking at your work, you should consider who is involved and how it will impact others. Is your work fair and does it represent all stakeholders in a balanced manner?
4. **This is a professional degree program.** As such, students are expected to deal with each other and with their instructors in a collegial manner. That means you should immediately talk to me if you have any **concerns about the course, grading, fellow students,** the length of time it takes to get back graded assignments, etc.
5. For purposes of this class, you are a **bona fide member of the working press.** You should expect to be treated with all of the normal courtesies and privileges afforded to the news media. **In return, you are expected to represent the profession and SFNS in a dignified and appropriate manner.** If you do not take yourself seriously, be advised that no one else will.
6. Stories will not be about **FIU, but the larger world of South Florida.** As such, you cannot use **friends, family members or FIU students, professors or staff** as your sources. Using such sources can create a **conflict of interest** and major trouble for you.

ASSIGNMENTS & GRADING PERCENTAGES

Homework Assignments (Pass/Fail)	15%
News Drills (Pass/Fail)	15%
News Quizzes (lowest score dropped)	10%
(Wo)man on the Street	15%
Event Article	20%
Enterprise Article	25%
TOTAL	100%

ACADEMIC HONESTY

Students at Florida International University are expected to adhere to the highest standards of integrity in every aspect of their lives. Honesty in academic matters is part of this obligation.

Academic integrity is the adherence to those special values regarding life and work in an academic community. Any act or omission by a student that violates this concept of academic integrity shall be defined as academic misconduct and shall be subject to the procedures and penalties set forth herein.

Florida International University is a community dedicated to generating and imparting knowledge through excellent teaching and research, the rigorous and respectful exchange of ideas and community service. All students should respect the right of others to have an equitable opportunity to learn and honestly to demonstrate the quality of their learning. Therefore, all students are expected to adhere to a standard of academic conduct, which demonstrates respect for themselves, their fellow students, and the educational mission of the University.

All students are deemed by the University to understand that if they are found responsible for academic misconduct, they will be subject to the Academic Misconduct procedures and sanctions, as outlined in the Student Handbook.

Misconduct includes:

Cheating – The unauthorized use of books, notes, aids, electronic sources; or assistance from another person with respect to examinations, course assignments, field service reports, class recitations; or the unauthorized possession of examination papers or course materials, whether originally authorized or not. **This will result in a zero on the piece in question in addition to possible failure in the class.**

Plagiarism – The use and appropriation of another’s work without any indication of the source and the representation of such work as the student’s own. Any student who fails to give credit for ideas, expressions or materials taken from another source, including Internet sources, is responsible for plagiarism. **This will result in a zero on the article in question in addition to possible failure in the class.**

Fabrication – The quoting or use of sources that do not exist, or stating that a reporter attended an event when he or she did not do so. This is one of the biggest crimes in journalism. **This will result in a zero on the article in question in addition to possible failure in the class.**

About your instructor

Dan Evans is an associate professor of journalism at FIU and the news director of the South Florida News Service, which provides student-produced work to professional news outlets and publications in Broward and Miami-Dade counties. Prior to coming to FIU in 2016, Evans oversaw local coverage for numerous communities in Los Angeles County for the Los Angeles Times. The publications he oversaw have received nearly 100 local, state and national awards — including an EPPY from Editor & Publisher — and Evans was personally named journalist of the year by the Los Angeles chapter of SPJ in 2012.

He currently lives in Wynwood, is currently learning Spanish and is more tan than he has ever been. (Yes, I know. But it's true.)

COURSE SCHEDULE: A WEEKLY BREAKDOWN

Important note to students: Be advised that this syllabus is subject to change – and probably will change – based on the progress of the class, news events, and/or guest speaker availability.

Week One (Jan 9/11)

Tu: Introductions • Overall goals • Syllabus and class setup • NewsU signup • In-class: <http://www.newsu.org/courses/news-sense-building-blocks-news>

Homework: Grammar handout

Th: NewsU module recap • Beats • Understanding journalism terms • Grammar homework review • AP Style lesson

Homework: AP Style handout • “Read Process of Writing News,” Chapter One

Week Two (Jan 16/18)

Tu: News Quiz #1 • Chapter One discussion • Review homework • Ethics intro • In-class: <https://www.newsu.org/plagiarism-and-fabrication>

Th: Review SPJ Code of Ethics • Ethics Workshop • Lede lesson • Lede practice

Homework: Lede homework

Week Three (Jan 23/25)

Tu: News Quiz #2 • In-class: <http://www.newsu.org/courses/cleaning-your-copy-grammar-style-more> • Lede homework feedback

Homework: “Read Process of Writing News,” Chapter Three

Th: Chapter Three Discussion • Briefs and in-class exercise • Quoting • Explain assignment

Homework: (Wo)man on the Street assignment

Week Four (Jan 30 and Feb 1)

Tu: News Drill #1

Th: In-field, complete Wo(man) on the Street, due at end of class period.

Week Five (Feb 6/8)

Tu: News Quiz #3 • Review assignment • Review Drill • Review Brief

Th: Story structures • Sourcing • Generating story ideas

Week Six (Feb 13/15)

Tu: News Drill #2

“Read Process of Writing News,” Chapter Nine

Th: Review Drill • Chapter Nine discussion • Covering Speeches • Event assignment details

Homework: Find event to cover in your city that happens in Week Eight

Week Seven (Feb 20/22)

Tu: News Quiz #4 • Pitch competition • Interviewing and sourcing review • In-class: <http://www.newsu.org/courses/interview>

Th: Web aggregation lesson • Web aggregation in-class assignment (Drill #3) • Event story check-in

Week Eight (Feb 27 and March 1)

In-field; no class meetings

Homework: Finish event story draft, due by end of class Thursday • Edits will be returned the following Monday

Week Nine (March 6/8)

In-field; no class meetings

Homework: Final event story due at end of class Thursday

Week 10

SPRING BREAK March 12-16 – No Class

Week 11 (March 20/22)

Tu: Review Event story • Finding enterprise stories • In-class: <https://www.newsu.org/new-ethics>

Th: Math for journalists • Expanding sources

Week 12 (March 27/29)

Tu: News Quiz #5 • Fact Checking • In-class: <http://www.newsu.org/courses/fact-checking>

Th: Finish source expansion assignment and work on enterprise pitch. No class meeting.
Homework: File source expansion assignment. Work on enterprise pitch

Week 13 (April 3/5)

Tu: Pitch competition • Introduction to court reporting • In-class:

<http://www.newsu.org/courses/news-literacy-sourcing-and-verification>

Th: Courthouse field trip

Homework: Finish enterprise story

Week 14 (April 10/12)

In-field; no class meetings

Homework: Finish enterprise story draft, due by end day Thursday

Week 15 (April 17/19)

One-on-one meetings

Homework: Final enterprise story, due at final date/time