

COMM 332-201
Investigative & Public Affairs Reporting
Loyola University Chicago
Spring 2020
Tuesdays 2:30PM - 3:45PM
Online

Instructor: Katie Drews

Email: kdrews1@luc.edu

(Please allow up to 24 hours for a response & longer on weekends)

Office Hours: Email me to schedule a video conference

Bio: <https://www.luc.edu/soc/adjunctfacultydirectory/katiedrews.shtml>

Course Description

This course introduces students to the tools and techniques of in-depth watchdog reporting. You will learn the practical skills of the investigative journalist both by studying professional investigative work and by doing your own work mining public records, analyzing data and cultivating sources, all while adhering to the highest standards of accuracy and ethics. This class will include online lectures and readings from a textbook, but much of the emphasis will be placed on independent fieldwork, including reporting out a semester-long investigative project.

A note of caution: This is not the type of course in which you can procrastinate and file the final project after pulling an all-nighter. Good investigative reporting takes time and unfolds gradually as pieces of a puzzle are assembled over many weeks of sustained effort. This class requires substantial reporting, research and writing effort each week. Please take this into account when planning out your schedules.

Required Materials

- The Investigative Reporter's Handbook: A Guide to Documents, Databases, and Techniques (5th Edition) by Brant Houston

- [Student Membership](#) to Investigative Reporters & Editors (*For students it's \$25, down from the regular price of \$70. Added bonus, you can renew at the student rate after graduation for up to three years.*)
- Associated Press Stylebook (*Either the book or [an online subscription](#)*)

Not required, but I highly recommend:

- [Evernote Premium](#) (*Students receive a 50 percent discount on the yearly plan*)
- She Said: Breaking the Sexual Harassment Story That Helped Ignite a Movement by Jodi Kantor and Megan Twohey
- Catch and Kill: Lies, Spies, and a Conspiracy to Protect Predators by Ronan Farrow

Assignments & Projects

Assignments will be designed to help you practice and develop the strategies and skills covered in our weekly lectures and readings. In lieu of a final exam, we will have a final project, a news investigation that you will spend the entire semester crafting and through which you can demonstrate all of the skills you have acquired. In addition, we will also have:

Story memos

You will periodically submit comprehensive story memos that detail the progress you've made on your reporting thus far. As well as keeping your editor (me) up to speed, the purpose of the memos is to help you stay focused and organized as you undertake a long-term project. Producing solid memos will also make piecing together your final project much easier.

Student presentations

You will research and dissect a professional investigative piece that has resulted in significant impact. In your presentation, you'll walk us through the investigation and present your analysis of the techniques that were utilized in both the reporting and storytelling.

Grading

Grades will be weighted according to the following scale:

Assignments/Exercises: 25%

Story memos: 25%

Story draft: 15%

Final project: 25%

Participation: 10%

Assignments will be graded on a point system. At the end of the semester, the accumulated points will be converted into a letter grade based on the following scale: A 94-100%; A- 90-93%; B+ 87-89%; B 84-86%; B- 80-83%; C+ 77-79%; C 74-76%; C- 70-73%; D+ 67-69%; D 64-66%; D- 60-63%; F 0-59%

Grading criteria

A: Publishable work with no spelling, grammatical, punctuation or AP Style errors and the proper information and sources written in a lively, well-organized manner.

B: Minimal spelling, grammatical, punctuation and/or AP Style errors. Minimal missing information and sources; minimal problems with the lead and organization.

C: Notable number of spelling, grammatical, punctuation and/or AP Style errors. Noticeable missing information and sources; problems with the lead and organization.

D: Significant number of spelling, grammatical, punctuation and/or AP Style errors. Significant missing information and sources; Significant problems with the lead and organization.

F: Factual errors, including the misspelling of proper names. Other major spelling, grammatical, punctuation and/or AP Style errors. Almost total lack of information and sources; Severe problems with the lead and organization.

Story subjects

For objectivity and in keeping with standard professional practice, avoid doing stories using your own family members, significant others, close friends or roommates as subjects. The best rule of thumb is: Don't build stories around people you are related to or are particularly close to. Likewise, avoid doing stories about groups you belong to. Such stories will receive a grade reduction, unless: 1) it is a unique circumstance, 2) the story is about your connection to the story subject, and 3) the connection is revealed in the story. Please contact me in advance if you have a story idea that would justify first-person involvement, but these should be the exception and not the rule.

Furthermore, you should avoid using material from another journalist or news organization in your work. All work for this class must be original and produced during and for this course.

Deadlines

Meeting deadlines is a critical part of being a journalist. So is managing multiple assignments at one time. Always be mindful of upcoming deadlines and manage your time accordingly. Remember to allow ample time for getting a hold of sources. Late assignments will drop one letter grade each day they are filed past deadline. If there are truly extenuating circumstances, you must discuss it with me before your deadline.

Participation

You will be expected to display a proper level of professionalism by attending class (our live online sessions) regularly, arriving on time, being prepared for class, paying attention during lectures and participating in discussions. You will be allowed one free absence throughout the semester. Two or more absences and/or frequent tardiness will result in a lower participation grade.

Confidentiality

Some students may be reporting on sensitive topics and/or dealing with apprehensive sources. In order to ensure everyone feels comfortable talking through reporting obstacles and successes, please keep all of our classroom discussions confidential.

School of Communication Statement on Academic Integrity

A basic mission of a university is to search for and to communicate truth as it is honestly perceived. A genuine learning community cannot exist unless this demanding standard is a fundamental tenet of the intellectual life of the community. Students of Loyola University Chicago are expected to know, to respect, and to practice this standard of personal honesty.

Academic dishonesty can take several forms, including, but not limited to cheating, plagiarism, copying another student's work, and submitting false documents. These examples of academic dishonesty apply to both individual and group assignments. Academic cheating is a serious act that violates academic integrity. Cheating includes, but is not limited to, such acts as:

- Obtaining, distributing, or communicating examination materials prior to the scheduled examination without the consent of the teacher;

- Providing information to another student during an examination;
- Obtaining information from another student or any other person during an examination;
- Using any material or equipment during an examination without consent of the instructor, or in a manner which is not authorized by the instructor;
- Attempting to change answers after the examination has been submitted;
- Taking an examination by proxy. Taking or attempting to take an exam for someone else is a violation by both the student enrolled in the course and the proxy.
- Unauthorized collaboration, or the use in whole or part of another student's work, on homework, lab reports, programming assignments, and any other course work which is completed outside of the classroom;
- Falsifying medical or other documents to petition for excused absences or extensions of deadlines; or
- Any other action that, by omission or commission, compromises the integrity of the academic evaluation process.

Plagiarism is a serious violation of the standards of academic honesty. Plagiarism is the appropriation of ideas, language, work, or intellectual property of another, either by intent or by negligence, without sufficient public acknowledgement and appropriate citation that the material is not one's own. It is true that every thought probably has been influenced to some degree by the thoughts and actions of others. Such influences can be thought of as affecting the ways we see things and express all thoughts. Plagiarism, however, involves the taking and use of specific words and ideas of others without proper acknowledgement of the sources, and includes, but is not limited to, the following:

- Submitting as one's own material copied from a published source, such as Internet, print, CD-ROM, audio, video, etc.;
- Submitting as one's own another person's unpublished work or examination material;
- Allowing another or paying another to write or research a paper for one's own benefit; or
- Purchasing, acquiring, and using for course credit a pre-written paper.
- Submitting the same work for credit in two or more classes, even if the classes are taken in different semesters. If a student plans to submit work with similar or overlapping content for credit in two or more classes, the student should consult with all instructors prior to submission of the work to make certain that such submission will not violate this standard.

The above list is in no way intended to be exhaustive. Students should be guided by the principle that it is of utmost importance to give proper recognition to all sources. To do so is both an act of personal, professional courtesy and of intellectual honesty. Any failure to do so,

whether by intent or by neglect, whether by omission or commission, is an act of plagiarism. A more detailed description of this issue can be found at https://www.luc.edu/academics/catalog/undergrad/reg_academicintegrity.shtml .

Plagiarism or any other act of academic dishonesty will result minimally in the instructor's assigning the grade of "F" for the assignment or examination. The instructor may impose a more severe sanction, including a grade of "F" in the course. All instances of academic dishonesty must be reported by the instructor to the Associate and Assistant Deans of the School of Communication. Instructors must provide the appropriate information and documentation when they suspect an instance of academic misconduct has occurred. The instructor must also notify the student of their findings and sanction. The Associate and Assistant Deans of the School of Communication may constitute a hearing board to consider the imposition of sanctions in addition to those imposed by the instructor, including a recommendation of expulsion, depending on the seriousness of the misconduct. In the case of multiple instances of academic dishonesty, the Dean's office may convene a separate hearing board to review these instances.

The student has the right to appeal the decision of the hearing board to the Dean of SOC. If the student is not a member of the SOC, the dean of the college in which the student is enrolled shall be part of the process. Students have the right to appeal the decision of any hearing board and the deans of the two schools will review the appeal together. Their decision is final in all cases except expulsion. The sanction of expulsion for academic dishonesty may be imposed only by the Provost upon recommendation of the dean or deans.

Students have a right to appeal any finding of academic dishonesty against them. The procedure for such an appeal can be found at: http://www.luc.edu/academics/catalog/undergrad/reg_academicgrievance.shtml .

The School of Communication maintains a permanent record of all instances of academic dishonesty. The information in that record is confidential. However, students may be asked to sign a waiver which releases that student's record of dishonesty as a part of the student's application to a graduate or professional school, to a potential employer, to a bar association, or to similar organizations.

Accommodations

Any student with a learning disability that needs special accommodation during exams or class periods should provide documentation from Services for Students with Disabilities confidentially to me. If you require assignment accommodations, please contact me early in the semester so that arrangements can be made with the Student Accessibility Center (<https://www.luc.edu/sac/>). I will accommodate your needs in the best way possible, given the constraints of course content and processes. It is your responsibility to plan in advance in order to meet your own needs and assignment due dates.

Online Recordings

In this class software will be used to record live class discussions. As a student in this class, your participation in live class discussions will be recorded. These recordings will be made available only to students enrolled in the class, to assist those who cannot attend the live session or to serve as a resource for those who would like to review content that was presented. All recordings will become unavailable to students in the class when the Sakai course is unpublished (i.e. shortly after the course ends, per the Sakai administrative schedule). Students who prefer to participate via audio only will be allowed to disable their video camera so only audio will be captured. Please discuss this option with your instructor.

The use of all video recordings will be in keeping with the University Privacy Statement shown below:

Privacy Statement

Assuring privacy among faculty and students engaged in online and face-to-face instructional activities helps promote open and robust conversations and mitigates concerns that comments made within the context of the class will be shared beyond the classroom. As such, recordings of instructional activities occurring in online or face-to-face classes may be used solely for internal class purposes by the faculty member and students registered for the course, and only during the period in which the course is offered. Students will be informed of such recordings by a statement in the syllabus for the course in which they will be recorded. Instructors who wish to make subsequent use of recordings that include student activity may do so only with informed written consent of the students involved or if all student activity is removed from the recording. Recordings including student activity that have been initiated by the instructor may be retained by the instructor only for individual use.

Schedule

Investigative reporting is full of unexpected twists and turns. As such, this schedule may change. Remember we will be meeting online via Zoom every Tuesday at 2:30 PM CT.

Major deadlines are outlined below. Additional work may be assigned. Although it's not explicitly spelled out as homework, you will need to be doggedly reporting throughout the semester to complete your final project.

Week One - *January 14*

Course overview and expectations; Finding story ideas

HOMEWORK: Read Chapters 1-3; Story pitches

Week Two - *January 21*

Gathering documents; FOIA

Story pitches due

HOMEWORK: Read Chapter 4; FOIA request

Week Three - *January 28*

Using databases

HOMEWORK: Read Chapter 5; Data analysis

Week Four - *February 4*

Human sources

Reporting memo due

HOMEWORK: No readings; Discussion forum

Week Five - *February 11*

One-on-one conference calls

HOMEWORK: Read Chapter 6

Week Six - *February 18*

Writing a compelling investigation

HOMEWORK: Read Chapter 7

Week Seven - *February 25*

Ethics of Investigative Reporting; Bullet-proofing

Story draft due

HOMEWORK: Read Chapters 8 & 9; Discussion forum

SPRING BREAK (No class March 2-6)

Week Eight - March 10

Government (Executive & Legislative); OMA; Student presentations
HOMEWORK: Read Chapters 10 & 11; Campaign finance report

Week Nine - March 17

Police & Courts; Student presentations
HOMEWORK: Read Chapter 20; Court search

Week Ten - March 24

Property taxes & real estate records; Student presentations
Reporting memo due
HOMEWORK: No readings; Property report

Week Eleven - March 31

One-on-one conference calls
HOMEWORK: Read Chapter 12

Week Twelve - April 7

Education; Student presentations
Reporting memo due
HOMEWORK: Read Chapter 13 & 14; ISBE report

Week Thirteen - April 14

Businesses & Nonprofits; Student presentations
HOMEWORK: No readings; 990 report

Week Fourteen - April 21

Wrap-up final projects

Final Examination

Final project due