

News Writing and Reporting – JOUR 201-01 and JOUR 201-02
University of Richmond
Department of Journalism
Spring 2013

Section 1: Tuesday and Thursday – 9:00 a.m. to 10:15 a.m.

Section 2: Tuesday and Thursday – 10:30 a.m. to 11:45 a.m.

Weinstein Hall 418

Instructor: Shahan Mufti

Email: smufti@richmond.edu

Office: 425 Weinstein Hall

Office hours: Thursday 3 p.m. to 5 p.m. and Wednesday by appointment

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course will introduce you to the basics of reporting and writing news stories. But that's not all you need to become an effective journalist. You also need to think like a storyteller. In this course you will exercise just this kind of thinking while you hunt for good stories inside and outside your own communities and plan the most effective and interesting ways to tell these stories.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

You should learn the craft of conducting effective interviews, carrying out useful research and writing concise news stories. By the end of the course you should be very comfortable with reporting and writing thoughtful, gripping and accurate news stories on virtually any subject while on a tight deadline.

READINGS

“Reporting for the Media” by Fedler, Bender, Davenport and Drager (tenth edition).
Oxford University Press, New York, 2012.

You will need to get a daily weekday subscription to the print editions of the New York Times *and* the Richmond Times-Dispatch. You are expected to keep up with daily news and local, national and international events using these and other sources, including online news and social media. Please bring the latest copy of the Times and the Times-Dispatch to class each day. I will also periodically post supplemental readings to Blackboard.

ATTENDANCE

You must attend all classes. If you miss a class meeting, your grade will suffer and you will fall behind in the course. If you miss three classes you will lose a whole letter grade on your final semester grade. Be on time. Like any good reporter, I expect you to have a notepad and a few pens handy at all times in class.

ASSIGNMENTS, GRADES, AND DEADLINES

Grade key

Your assignments will receive a letter grade. This is what the letters mean:

A = Publishable as is; meets professional standards.

B = Publishable with minor editing.

C = Needs substantial editing or contains serious errors.

D = Requires extensive rewriting and contained multiple errors.

F = Un-publishable or contains factual errors.

Semester Grade Breakdown

News stories: 60 percent

During the course of the semester you will turn in six 600-word news stories. You should quote no less than three people in each news story. Email me a copy of your assignment as a Microsoft Word document before class and bring a printed copy to class on the dates indicated here:

Story #1: Thursday 1/31

Story #2: Tuesday 2/12

Story #3: Tuesday 2/26

Story #4: Thursday 3/7

Story #5: Tuesday 3/26

Story #6: Tuesday 4/11

Final news story: 20 percent

Your final news story will be between 1,000 and 1,200 words in length. Please email a copy of the story before the beginning of the last day of class on Tuesday 4/25 and bring a printed copy to class.

In-class quizzes: 10 percent

There will be periodic unannounced news quizzes in class. You must always be prepared for them.

Class participation: 10 percent

I will grade you on the frequency and quality of your involvement in class discussions and group activities. It is your responsibility to meet with me at least once before midterms to discuss your class participation.

Note: You are required to meet all deadlines on the syllabus without exception. A late submission may not be read or graded.

Guidelines for copy

Double-space all of your stories. On each page, in the upper left corner, type your name, a one or two word title description (the slug), the date and the word count. This can all be done with the “header” function in Microsoft Word. For example:

Richards — Huguenot bridge – 10/16/12 – 1,005 words

Include page numbers at the bottom of the page.

At the end of each assignment, include a list of all the sources you used or quoted in the news story. This should include full names, phone numbers and email addresses of any source quoted, paraphrased, or cited.

You are expected to follow the Associated Press Stylebook guidelines for all your assignments. I will distribute an abbreviated AP style guide on the first day of class, which you must follow closely.

ACADEMIC HONESTY

Observe the honor code. You need to properly attribute all the sources you use in your stories. All work submitted should be your own and done in preparation for this specific course. For example, you may not hand in a story that you are also preparing for another course. Plagiarism, making up fictional sources and characters, or cheating of any kind will result in an “F” on the assignment and possible university sanction, which may include failing the course. If you have difficulty understanding how to attribute sources or have questions concerning any of the above, contact me immediately.

ACCOMMODATION

Email is always the best way to reach me. If you have an academic commitment that conflicts with my office hours, email me or speak with me to schedule a meeting. I will provide you with my phone number on first day of class to use in case of emergency.

Students with disabilities who have been formally granted accommodations by a University of Richmond Disability Advisor must show their “Disability Accommodation Notice” to me within the first week of the academic term. The student and I will agree upon an accommodation in advance for each scheduled major assignment. You must meet with me at least one week before any deadline to discuss your accommodation.

PROPOSED SCHEDULE

Week 1 (1/15 and 1/17)	Introduction to basics of news writing Read Fedler, Chapter 1, 2, 3
Week 2 (1/22 and 1/24)	Ledes Read Fedler, Chapter 8, 9 Pitch first story on 1/22
Week 3 (1/29 and 1/31)	Anatomy of a news story Read Fedler, Chapters 10 Pitch second story on 1/31
Week 4 (2/5 and 2/7)	Interviewing and using quotes Read Fedler, Chapters 11, 12
Week 5 (2/12 and 2/14)	Other sources and research tools Read Fedler, Chapter 15, 18,19 Pitch third story on 2/14
Week 6 (2/19 and 2/21)	Conference travel/ Guest speaker
Week 7 (2/26 and 2/28)	Editing and language Read Fedler, Chapter 4 Pitch fourth story on 2/28
Week 8 (3/5 and 3/7)	Follow-up and the life span of a news story Read Fedler, Chapter 5, 16
Week 9	Spring Break
Week 10 (3/19 and 3/21)	Feature writing Read Fedler, Chapter 17 Pitch fifth story on 3/19
Week 11 (3/26 and 3/28)	Media law Read Fedler, Chapters 6
Week 12 (4/2 and 4/4)	Ethics of news reporting and writing Read Fedler, Chapter 7 Pitch sixth story 4/2
Week 13 (4/9 and 4/11)	Radio and Television Read Chapters, 13, 14
Week 14 (4/16 and 4/18)	Final story workshop
Week 15 (4/23 and 4/25)	Wrap-up