

**JOUR 204, Advanced News Writing & Reporting**  
**MW 10:30 – 11:45 a.m.**  
**Weinstein 418**

**Instructor: Tom Mullen**  
**x6048/804-301-5617**  
**tmullen@richmond.edu**

This course will build on the solid foundation you gained in JOUR 101 and prepare you for success in multimedia journalism and any media-related field. You will master the tools needed to make your contribution to giving people the news they need to make decisions essential to life in a democratic society.

As you already know, writing and reporting news stories is fast-paced, demanding work. This course will teach you how to do this better, in more depth and through a variety of formats. You will expand your abilities to excel as a journalist through social media tools, data analysis, podcasting, essential editing and enterprise reporting. You will learn how to cover a beat, how to develop diverse and inclusive sources, how to produce team reports and how to apply ethics to your reporting and writing. If you apply yourself, your work in this class will be suitable for your portfolio as you apply for internships and jobs.

I will grade your work closely. Annoyingly so. Please let me know if you are not clear about something I have written or said. Communication is essential to success in this course. **Never forget this: Never assume.**

### **BOOKS**

"Writing and Reporting for the Media," by Fred Fedler (12th edition)

"The Premonition," by Michael Lewis

The free online AP Stylebook through the UR library

Some reporter's notebooks and legal pads.

### **ATTENDANCE**

COVID may continue to be an issue this fall, so if you are ill DO NOT COME TO CLASS or try to gut things out. Seek medical care as needed. If possible, let me know in advance if you have to miss a class. I will help you to figure out how to catch up whatever assignments or materials were covered in class. I am reasonable about working with extenuating circumstances, but please communicate with me. Missing class does not mean you can miss a deadline, unless you are dealing with an emergency such as an illness or family crisis. Please keep me informed of such events as best as you can.

## READING

Subscribe to The New York Times and Washington Post online editions, which are free through the UR library. Subscribe to Harvard's Nieman Reports (free). Read The Collegian. Start listening to "The Daily" podcast if you don't already. Start listening to NPR news shows, if you don't already. We will have quizzes based on these news sites. If you miss the quiz, you cannot make it up.

One way to help your reporting and writing is to read good reporting and writing. You should consume good journalism wherever you find it. We will spend time in class discussing and critiquing a wide range of stories. I will frequently distribute good works of daily and non-daily journalism for your review and discussion.

## WRITING

Good writing does not come without practice. You will write something in class almost daily. And then you will rewrite it . . . and rewrite it again. . . and rewrite it again. The same applies to podcasting and other forms of writing for the ear. You will learn to refine your podcasting voice.

You will do a variety of reporting and writing in this course. Do not be discouraged by your early efforts. You will improve, if you apply yourself. **I am available to coach you by e-mail before all of your assignments, unless I tell you otherwise**

## GRADES

I do not give you grades - you earn them. Your work will be graded according to professional standards, with more tolerance at the start of the course and less as we go along. In other words, your progress will be a good part of your final grade. If you are doing C or D work early in the semester, I am looking for A or B work at the end. The grades you get toward the last month or so of the semester are good indicators of your final mark. For example, if you start out getting Ds and Cs and head into the homestretch with consistent Bs, you are likely to get a B.

**Here are some keys to getting a good grade:** paying attention to AP style; writing clearly and accurately; using more than one source in stories; spelling correctly; participating in discussions; coming to class; scoring well on quizzes and tests; showing effort and interest.

**Here are some ways to get an automatic F:** misspelling a proper name; writing stories with major factual errors; using only one source in your stories; not participating in class; earning poor quiz and test grades; showing little effort or interest; missing a deadline; misspelling the following: accommodate, occurred, a lot, receive and its (as a possessive). Remember, It's only when it is. Also, you will lose five to 10 points if you use the following words in your stories: really, great, very and awesome. Do not use those words unless they are part of a direct quotation. You should not need to ask me why, at this point.

## **GRADING KEY**

A -- outstanding work that requires minimal editing before publishing or broadcasting.

B -- above average work that requires minor editing with no major error corrections before publishing or broadcasting.

C -- average work that requires substantial editing and no more than one rewriting effort before publishing or broadcasting

D -- unacceptable work that contains multiple errors and requires extensive editing and rewriting before possible publication or broadcast

F -- see the note above.

### **Other grading information:**

Numerically, this is how I will break down your grades:

A+ = 98-100; A = 92-97; A- = 90-91

B+ = 88-89; B = 82-87; B- = 80-81

C+ = 78-79; C = 72-77; C- = 70-71

D+ = 68-69; D = 62-67; D- = 60-61

F = 59 and below

Pluses and minuses may be added to your grade based on the following: extra effort - or lack thereof; progress - or lack thereof; excellent class participation - or poor participation; completed extra credit work of B or better; tardiness. For example, a student with letter grade of C+ who has shown progress, enterprise, etc., could get boosted to a B-. Conversely, a student with A grades who does not participate in class, shows up late, etc., could wind up with an A-.

### **Making the grade:**

60 percent: Assignments

15 percent: final project

10 percent: quizzes, news tips

15 percent: progress, participation, effort

We will have quizzes on news events, AP style, the texts and other writing-related matters. Some quizzes will be announced in advance.

## **NEWS TIPS**

To get you used to thinking as higher-level journalists, email me two, one-page story memos every **Monday by 5 p.m.** Write these like an editor giving a news tip to a reporter. Include what you think the story is, why it is important, what the angle is and how the information can be obtained. I will turn these in for possible follow-up by The Collegian, The Capital News Service or other outlets. At the discretion of editors, you may be able to pursue these or other tips for possible publication, which I will count for class credit.

## **ASSIGNMENTS**

Assignments are due at the start of class unless I tell you otherwise. **Pay attention to the format that I assign for how to turn in your work. A missed or late assignment is an F unless there is an extenuating circumstance.**

**Note well: a core objective of this course is demonstrating the ability to complete all class exercises on deadline as assigned.**

## **FINAL PROJECT**

The final class project is an independent story that would be suitable for publication or broadcast.

The story must have at least five “live” sources. You must demonstrate background research from some combination of library research, news sites and computer databases. We will discuss all of this in detail in class.

You will need to turn in a one-page description of your story by Feb. 21. I will get that back to you with my comments. The final version of the story is due by final exam day. Your work should be conducted and produced according to professional standards.

## **HONOR CODE**

You are expected to do your own work for this class unless I tell you otherwise. Failure to do so is an offense with potentially devastating consequences. Presenting fictional interviews, quotes, etc., as factual is an honor code violation that will result in failing the course. Plagiarism is grounds for possible university sanction.

## **WHAT IT WILL TAKE**

To be successful in this course, expect to devote an average of 10 to 14 hours each week preparing for class and your participation in class sessions, studying course related materials and completing assignments.

## **NOTE WELL**

We have a no-phones policy in class, and this applies whether we are in-person or remote. Violating this policy gets you removed from class for the day and a zero on any assignments that day.

## **NO RECORDINGS**

One of the hallmarks of a University of Richmond education is small classes where faculty and students engage in robust discussions. The goal is always to encourage students with varied perspectives to be heard respectfully.

In Journalism classes, we frequently discuss and debate latest events and issues in the news which affect all of our own lives in the current moment.

Recognizing all this, professors in Journalism will not be recording our classroom sessions. Students are also prohibited from capturing, copying, sharing, publishing, and/or posting on social media any recordings (audio or audio/video) in whole or in part or captured images of the class during a Zoom session or images of students or faculty in the course. Violations of this policy will be referred to the Westhampton and Richmond College deans with the possibility of sanctions, including suspension or expulsion.

## **TENTATIVE CLASS SCHEDULE**

- Week 1 - Recap, review, basic news stories
- Week 2 - Fedler chapters 5,6, ethics and libel
- Week 3 - Fedler 11, interviewing assignment (**start team assignment 1**)
- Week 4 – Fedler 12, writing features
- Week 5 – Fedler 12, writing features (**team assignment 1 due**)
- Week 6 - Fedler 16, brights, follows, sidebars
- Week 7 - Fedler 15, speeches and meetings
- Week 8 - Fedler 15, speeches and meetings
- Week 9 - Fedler 17, public affairs reporting **team assignment 2 due**
- Week 10 - Fedler 18, investigative reporting
- Week 11 - Fedler 18, investigative work, (**data assignment**)
- Week 12 - Fedler 13, podcasting work,
- Week 13 - **podcast 1 due, data assignment due**
- Week 14 – social and multimedia work, editing
- Week 15 – **podcast 2 due**

## **OFFICE HOURS, ETC.**

I am on campus every day during the work week and most Sunday afternoons, but it is best to send an email a day ahead of time to set up a Zoom meeting. I am available during most reasonable hours and some unreasonable hours. I generally respond quickly to emails, but if I don't respond to yours right away, it's personal and I just don't like you. Or I am awash with other emails from other students and I'll respond as soon as I can. Pick whichever explanation is best for your self-esteem and believe that it is true. **Please communicate** – if you are not clear about something or are concerned about something, get in touch with me right away. If you are shy and don't want to ask questions in front of others, send me an email.

## **THE KICKER**

Remember, I will work with you at every step. On most assignments, I will coach you by e-mail or in person before your work is due. Ask for assistance and you will receive it. Do not wait until the last minute.

I will work with you like an editor on your work before anything is graded. I will work with you like an editor in my grading. I care about good journalism and I want you to do well in this class. If you are eager to help yourself, I am eager to help you.