During the semester you will research, report, and write stories for publication. The final product, the written story, is as important as the process through which we create it, so we will be focusing on honing best journalistic practices. The process, however, is not complete until the story is on the page/screen. This is, fundamentally, a writing course.

You will write a variety of stories on different topics, targeted to a variety of platforms and publications. The *Collegian* will be the destination for many of these stories—its editors will determine which pieces may be published—but we will reach out to other outlets depending on the nature of the story and the degree to which you have polished it.

Our class is a newsroom, you are the reporter/writers. Our aim is to get your great stories in front of eyeballs. You’re building stories, some of which may wind up among your clips, not simply banging out class assignments. I will review and evaluate your pieces with this mindset. Have you captured the basics—who, what, when, where, how, and why? Have you written with intelligence, clarity, to length, and on deadline? All of these factor into your grade.

To do well, you’ll need to spend at least 10 to 14 hours a week on this course, reading, writing, and rewriting. Get in the habit of using your peers in this class as first readers for your drafts. This helps you and it helps me, your editor. It also prepares you to work at a time that journalism is increasingly a collaborative endeavor.

**WORKFLOW**

**Pitching stories**
- You will come up with your own story ideas and then refine them into 100-to-200-word pitches.

This length is not a suggestion; it is a mandatory maximum. Editors at prominent (and even not-so-prominent) outlets get pitch after pitch after pitch. You must keep your pitch short and nail the 5Ws and H to the best of your ability at that moment. The H should describe how you plan to report the story. Investigative Reporters & Editors has a good pitching guide, which I will send as an attachment.
• You are required to produce at least four (4) pitches, one a month, during the semester, and to submit them to an off-campus publication. Even if the off-campus outlet doesn’t take the pitch, you’ll get credit for it—if it’s a solid, credible pitch.

• Always CC me on pitches. This is how you will receive credit for each one.

• Pitches are 20 percent of your grade.

**Reporting articles**

• Be transparent. When you are working on a story, always inform your subject that you are writing a story for publication, in print and/or on the Web. Do not refer to what you’re doing as a class assignment or exercise. You are a reporter writing for the public. Period. If you work for the *Collegian*, you can identify as a *Collegian* reporter. If you are on assignment for another publication, ask your editor if you can identify yourself as a freelance writer for that publication. You need explicit WRITTEN permission from that publication’s editor to do this. If you are not on assignment, you can refer to yourself as a journalism student whose stories will appear in outlets available to the public.

• There are no one-source stories in this class. For each article you must interview at least three (3) people, even if it is a profile of a single person. We aim in this class to conduct face-to-face interviews. Phoners are allowed only when a face-to-face is not possible or unduly burdensome to the subject or the writer. Please inform me *before* you arrange to do a phoner so we can discuss if there are other ways to proceed.

• Friends and roommates may not be sources for stories in this class.

• Even though Virginia is a one-party consent state, you are required for this course to ask permission of each and every interviewee to record them—each person, each time.

**Writing articles**

• You are required to produce at least 4,500 words this semester. Pitches do not count toward this total. Working *Collegian* writers and editors should come speak to me. If you are writing or editing a significant amount of copy, I will lower your word count. One thousand (1,000) words will need to be completed by the end of January. This is to ensure that you space out your production across the semester.

The word count is a *minimum*. Exceeding the word count with high-quality stories can improve your grade. If you surpass the minimum requirement with an excellent story, that story will replace one with a lower grade.

• Writing assignments are 60 percent of your grade. I will grade your stories by the finished draft you email to me, not the published version of the story. This must be a Microsoft Word document attached to an email. I will return stories submitted in other forms unread, which means you will not receive credit until you submit in the correct format.
The draft you send to me must include a complete list of sources with accurate contact information—full name, street address, email address (if they have one), and phone number. This is a requirement. I will return stories submitted without complete information, which means you will not receive credit until you submit in the correct format. As your editor/professor, I may call or email some of your sources. This mirrors real-world newsroom practices. I began my career as a fact checker at the beginning of my career for five years, so it was my job to do precisely that.

Art and graphics
Shoot a photo—preferably, a good photo—for every story. It’s not a given that a publication/outlet will dispatch a photographer to shoot, so make sure to come back with at least one usable image. We will discuss what constitutes a “usable” photo in class.

Schedule and deadlines
This course assumes that you will be producing, pitching, reporting, and writing your stories consistently throughout the semester. Therefore, there is no firm schedule.

There are, however, vital benchmarks that you must make. As spelled out above, you should have at least two pitches done by Spring Break. You must also have at least two stories complete by then as well.

PLAGIARISM
University of Richmond’s Code of Conduct applies fully in this course, as it does in all of your courses. Plagiarism results in a failing grade for that assignment and possibly for the entire course. It may also result in action by the University. If you have questions about what constitutes plagiarism, contact me immediately.

Particular tenets of ethical journalism are not addressed specifically in UR’s Code, so I discuss them here.

— All quotes must come from real people and be accurate. You cannot change a person’s intent by omitting words—and certainly not by adding words. We will discuss situations in which quotes may be shortened with ellipses.

— Lifting text from a press release or website, whether it’s Wikipedia or the New York Times, without putting it inside quotation marks is plagiarism.

As journalists, our most valuable asset is our integrity. If you sacrifice that, you undermine the public trust in our work—and you cease to be a journalist.

— We will not be using unnamed sources in this class unless I approve BEFORE an interview. In other words, you may not grant anyone anonymity without getting my explicit approval. I will give you that approval in writing, in an email. If you do not get that written approval from me.
you may not use that interview in your story. You must also get the explicit approval of a publication’s editor, whether it be the *Collegian*, the *Times-Dispatch*—whatever.

**ATTENDANCE & CLASS PARTICIPATION**
First, attendance is mandatory. Miss three classes, you drop one letter grade. Miss five classes, you fail.

We will brainstorm and discuss potential stories, discuss pitches, and review story drafts. This is “class participation.” Although it represents 20 percent of your grade, this process has outsize importance for working journalists. Listening, analyzing, talking, debating will help you learn and hone your skills.

**GRADING**

- **A**: Story can be published with no or few revisions
- **A-/B+**: Publishable with minor revisions
- **B**: All the essential story elements are there, but needs some revision/reorganization to publish
- **B-/C+**: Some flaws/mistakes but has obvious strengths; needs to be heavily edited to publish
- **C**: Major flaws; needs heavy editing/complete overhaul
- **D**: Critical flaws and errors, including holes in reporting; needs total reworking or re-reporting
- **F**: Not salvageable

*Note: Misspelling a source’s name results in an automatic F. Ethical lapses will also result in a failing grade, on the assignment and possibly in the course.*

**MISCELLANEOUS**
Throughout the course, we will discuss journalism as both craft and career. Please feel free to use me as a resource for both.

The University is unwavering in its commitment to support survivors of sexual assault, to respond promptly to reports of any type of sexual misconduct, and to investigate and adjudicate reports in a manner that is fair and equitable to all parties involved. We understand that sexual violence can undermine a student’s academic success and we encourage students who have experienced some form of sexual misconduct to talk to someone about their experience, so they can get the support they need.

Alleged violations can be reported to the Title IX Office at report.richmond.edu. Reports to law enforcement can be made to University of Richmond Police Department at 804-289-8911. The purpose of reporting to Title IX is to connect students to support resources and accommodations. Students can choose whether or not to file a formal complaint.

Students can receive confidential support from: Center for Awareness, Response & Education (C.A.R.E.) Advocate – 804.801.6251 (call or text) / advocate@richmond.edu; Peer Sexual