



AUF

The American
University of Florence

SYLLABUS

J SCHOOL - JOURNALISM, COMMUNICATION, AND PUBLISHING

DEPARTMENT OF JOURNALISM
COURSE TITLE: INTRODUCTION TO JOURNALISM
COURSE CODE: CPJLNN180
3 semester credits

1. DESCRIPTION

This course teaches students the basic writing skills necessary for news reporting. Students will perform several in-class writing assignments based on news leads. Topics will progress from short news items to longer stories with more complex issues and topics. Students will learn to gather facts through skillful interviewing techniques, practiced during role-playing exercises in class. Other topics include how to write under pressure for a deadline, develop and verify sources, and structure news stories to capture and retain the attention of the reader. Some exercises such as interviewing and fact gathering will be carried out in the field. Course projects and activities will contribute with the journalism activities of Blending, the magazine of AUF's campus press Ingorda.

2. OBJECTIVES

Upon successful completion of this course, students will:

- Identify the main characteristics of journalistic writing.
- Become familiar with theories and methods of journalism.
- Understand how to gather objective, ethical, and newsworthy data.
- Enhance their storytelling techniques and develop a journalistic style.

3. REQUIREMENTS

There are no prerequisites for this course.

4. METHOD

This course consists of lectures, class discussions, projects, and site visits within the local community. Mediums for instruction used will include, but are not limited to, interactive and hands-on activities which challenge thought processes, academic texts and studies, videos, slides, guided problem solving, and experiential and/or field learning activities where applicable.

Course projects and activities will contribute with the journalism activities of Blending, the magazine of AUF's campus press Ingorda. The periodical is an officially licensed product of journalism registered with the Italian tribunal system. Its mission is to provide unique perspectives of Florence and Italy beyond standard tourism through articles focusing on the arts, gastronomy, travel, and community. Readership is international, including readers associated with the university network in both Florence and throughout the world.

5. TEXTBOOK – FURTHER READINGS – RESOURCES

TEXTBOOK:

- Zamith, Rodrigo. *The International Journalism Handbook: Concepts, Challenges, and Contexts*. 1st edition, 2022.

Available as an Open Source [here](#).

The textbook is mandatory for successful completion of the course.

Where applicable, additional materials, handouts and/or notes will be provided by the instructor.

FURTHER READINGS

- Diab, Khaled. *What Future for Journalism in the Age of AI?* [Here](#).
- Documentary Central. *Inside The Fentanyl Crisis: Ten Dollar Death Trip*. [Here](#).
- Indeed Editorial Team. *How to Conduct an Interview as a Journalist*. [Here](#).
- *Notable Investigative Journalism Cases Throughout History*. [Here](#).
- Shapiro, Jacob. *Ideology is Dead*. [Here](#).
- Strauss, Valerie. *Why Student Journalism Matters*. [Here](#).
- University of Arizona. *Journalistic Writing*. [Here](#).

LIBRARIES IN FLORENCE

Please consult the posted schedules for official opening times of the university library. Also note that the library is for consultation only and it is not possible to borrow materials. The library is equipped with a scanner and internet access so that you may save or email a digital copy of the pages needed.

Students may also utilize additional libraries and research centers within the local community:

BIBLIOTECA PALAGIO DI PARTE GUELFA

Located in Piazzetta di Parte Guelfa between Piazza della Repubblica and Ponte Vecchio. Please consult the library website for hours of operation:

http://www.biblioteche.comune.fi.it/biblioteca_palagio_di_parte_guelfa/

BIBLIOTECA DELLE OBLATE

Located in via dell'Oriuolo 26. Please consult the library website for hours of operation:

www.bibliotecadelleoblate.it

THE HAROLD ACTON LIBRARY AT THE BRITISH INSTITUTE OF FLORENCE

Located in Lungarno Guicciardini 9. Please consult the library website for hours of operation. This library requires a fee-based student membership. For information: www.britishinstitute.it/en

6. FIELD LEARNING

Please consult your Official Registration for any mandatory field learning dates. Field Learning Activities cited in Official Registrations are an integral part of the course and also include an assignment that counts towards your final grade, details will be provided on the first day of class.

7. COURSE MATERIALS

No additional course materials are necessary.

8. COURSE FEES

Course fees cover course-related field learning activities, visits, and support the instructor's teaching methodologies. Book costs are not included in the course fee. The exact amount will be communicated by the instructor on the first day of class.

9. EVALUATION – GRADING SYSTEM

10% Attendance

20% Participation & Assignments (including Blending)

20% Midterm Exam or Special Project (if applicable)

30% Final Project

30% Final Exam

A = 93-100 %, A- = 90-92%, B+= 87-89%, B = 83-86%, B-=80-82%, C+ = 77-79%, C=73-76%, C- =70-72%, D = 60-69%, F= 0-59%, W = Official Withdrawal, W/F = Failure to withdraw by the designated date.

10. ATTENDANCE – PARTICIPATION

Academic integrity and mutual respect between instructor and student are central to the academic policy and reflected in the attendance regulations. Student presence is mandatory and counts toward the final grade.

Absences are based on academic hours: 1 absence equals 3 lecture hours.

Two absences: 6 lecture hours, attendance and participation grade will be impacted.

Three absences: 9 lecture hours, the final grade may be lowered by one letter grade.

Four absences: 12 lecture hours, constitutes automatic failure of the course regardless of when absences are incurred.

Please note:

- The above hours refer to lecture hours. Please note that the contact / credit hour policy in the academic catalog includes additional distribution ratios according to delivery category. Ex: 1 absence equals 6 FL/SL/Lab hours or 9 EL hours.
- Hours may be distributed in different formats according to the academic course schedules.

LATE ARRIVAL AND EARLY DEPARTURE

Arriving late or departing early from class is not acceptable. Two late arrivals or early departures or a combination will result in an unexcused absence. Travel is not an exceptional circumstance.

TRAVEL (OR DELAYS DUE TO TRAVEL) IS NEVER AN EXCUSE FOR ABSENCE FROM CLASS.

It is the student's responsibility to know how many absences are incurred. If in doubt, speak with your instructor!

Participation: Satisfactory participation will be the result of contributing to class discussions by putting forth insightful and constructive questions, comments and observations. Overall effort, cooperation during group work, proper care of work space and tools, responsible behavior, and completion of assignments will be assessed. All of the above criteria also apply to Field Learning and site visits.

11. EXAMS – PAPERS – PROJECTS

The **Midterm Exam** accounts for 20% and the **Final Exam** accounts for 30% of the final grade. These comprise short-answer and essay questions.

The **Final Project** accounts for 20% of the final grade. Students will write a journalistic 2-pages paper concerning a newsworthy local event or scenario. Students will have to gather raw data, analyze them, and narrate them with accuracy and an overall appealing style. The Final Project will be presented to the class at the end of the course.

12. LESSONS

Lesson 1	
Meet	In class
Lecture	Journalism as a Complex, Contested, and Changing Concept.
Objectives	Become familiar with the pillars of journalism. Identify the meaning of news and newsworthiness. Understand how journalism is a multi-faceted and contested notion, which is not

	monolithic. Identify how journalism is attached to values of public service, objectivity, independence, immediacy, and ethics.
In-Class Activity	Critical analysis of historical and contemporary news.
Readings/ Assignments	Read: Zamith, Ch. 1-2

Lesson 2	
Meet	In class
Lecture	Social Actors and Audiences of Journalism. Pillars of Journalistic Writing.
Objectives	Recognize the main social actors within the journalistic world. Identify how technology plays a role in journalism. Recognize how journalistic audiences are shifting from being understood as passive recipients of media to active participants in media production and distribution. Identify the main styles and techniques of journalistic writing. Gain knowledge of the inverted pyramid structure.
In-Class Activity	Writing exercise on a relevant case-study using the inverted pyramid structure.
Readings/ Assignments	Read: Zamith, Ch. 3-6 Read: <i>Journalistic Writing</i> .

Lesson 3	
Meet	In class
Lecture	Theories of Journalism.
Objectives	Gain knowledge about the main theories of journalism, such as media-dependency, framing, agenda setting, and priming. Understand the effects media coverage and depiction have on societies.
In-Class Activity	Critique of a written piece.
Readings/ Assignments	Read: Zamith, Ch. 7-10 Assignment: Compose a piece on a local newsworthy event utilizing the inverted pyramid structure.

Lesson 4	
Meet	In class
Lecture	Culture and Ethics.
Objectives	Identify extrinsic and intrinsic journalistic cultures. Recognize how ethical conduct can be framed in the journalistic world. Identify how the degree of ethical adherence is influenced by a country's values, namely press freedom and autonomy.
In-Class Activity	Ethical analysis of a complex journalistic piece.
Readings/ Assignments	Read: Zamith, Ch. 12-14 Read: <i>Notable Investigative Journalism Cases Throughout History</i> .

Lesson 5	
Meet	In class
Lecture	Writing about Ideologies in Contemporary Society.
Objectives	Gain knowledge about the Hierarchy of Influences Model. Identify how news values represent ideologies within a journalistic culture. Recognize the historical and current meaning of ideology and its impact on journalism.

In-Class Activity	Debate on the nature and nurture of ideologies.
Readings/ Assignments	Read: Zamith, Ch. 16-17 Read: Shapiro, <i>Ideology is Dead</i> .

Lesson 6	
Meet	In class
Lecture	The Concept of Truth and Bias. The Phenomenon of Audience Fragmentation.
Objectives	Identify what truth means in journalism. Understand the role of biases, including framing and source biases. Gain knowledge of audience fragmentation and the paradox of choices.
In-Class Activity	Critique of a written piece.
Readings/ Assignments	Read: Zamith, Ch. 18-19 Assignment: Compose a piece on a complex topic dealing with ethical and ideological issues.

Lesson 7	
Meet	In class
Lecture	MIDTERM EXAM

Lesson 8	
NA	ACADEMIC BREAK

Lesson 9	
Meet	In class
Lecture	Global Journalism and the Strife for Cultural Competence.
Objectives	Identify what is meant by international news coverage, and its interest in superpowers and geopolitical interests. Recognize the meaning of cultural competency in news sourcing and distribution. Recognize the efforts that a global journalist needs to make in order to attain the journalistic values of ethics, objectivity, and cultural competency.
In-Class Activity	Discussion of documentary. Define Final Project.
Readings/ Assignments	Read: Zamith, Ch. 25 Watch and review: <i>Inside the Fentanyl Crisis: Ten Dollar Death Trip</i> .

Lesson 10	
Meet	In class
Lecture	Finding Valuable News Sources. Focus on Interviews.
Objectives	Identify how to gather information. Become familiar with the interview method. Recognize the correlation between news sourcing and power structures.
Visit	Field learning exercise on interviews.
Readings/ Assignments	Read: Zamith, Ch. 29 Read: <i>How to Conduct an Interview as a Journalist</i> .

Lesson 11	
Meet	In class
Lecture	Crowdsourcing Journalism. The Fight Against Misinformation and Disinformation.

Objectives	Gain knowledge about journalistic crowdsourcing and the involvement of non-journalists in detecting, verifying, and sharing news. Understand the complex nature of the term “fake news” and the effects this has in terms of polarization and undermining of trust. Identify the meanings of misinformation and disinformation.
In-Class Activity	Critique of a written piece.
Readings/ Assignments	Read: Zamith, Ch. 33-34 Assignment: Compose a piece related to the field learning activity.

Lesson 12	
Meet	In class
Lecture	The Significance of Student Journalism.
Objectives	Identify the historical significance of student journalism. Recognize the efforts of students of promoting valuable news to challenge power structures. Identify the benefits and the possible downfalls of strengthening student press freedom.
In-Class Activity	Workshop on the realization of the Final Project.
Readings/ Assignments	Read: Strauss, <i>Why Student Journalism Matters</i> .

Lesson 13	
Meet	In class
Lecture	Journalism in the AI Age.
Objectives	Identify how AI impacts journalism. Gain knowledge about the current implementation of AI in producing and distributing news. Be able to assess the role of human creativity in the age of AI.
In-Class Activity	Debate on the future of human creativity.
Readings/ Assignments	Read: Diab, <i>What Future for Journalism in the Age of AI?</i>

Lesson 14	
Meet	In class
Lecture	What the Future of Journalism May Look Like.
Objectives	Understand how journalism may change in the future. Identify the topics that journalism is becoming increasingly interested with. Be able to carefully present a journalistic project to an audience.
In-Class Activity	Presentation of Final Projects.
Readings/ Assignments	Submit Final Project.

Lesson 15	
Meet	In class
Lecture	FINAL EXAM