

# **Advanced reporting: JOU 3000**

Spring 2024

Buzzard 2442

Tuesday/Thursday, 2-3:40 p.m.

Credits: 3

Final Exam Period: Thursday, May 2, 10:15 a.m.-12:15 p.m.

Instructor: Joe Astrouski

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Office Hours: Tuesday/Thursday/Friday, 11 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

**COURSE DESCRIPTION:** In this course, students will focus on finding and evaluating public records, analyzing data, covering public meetings, and applying sophisticated approaches to presenting news across multiple media platforms.

**Prerequisites:** A grade of “C” or better in JOU 2101, News Reporting and Writing.

## **TEXTS:**

- Reporting for the Media (Fedler, et al.)
- Associated Press Style Book.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES	News Stories	Event Stories	Gov't stories	Exercises	Final
Collect and interpret data in public records for use in news reports across multiple platforms. Style, grammar, spelling, word usage & sentence variety.	x	x	x	x	x
Collect, comprehend, analyze, synthesize and critically incorporate source materials gathered from research, observation and interviews.	x	x	x	x	x
Comprehend and apply mobile journalism strategies to deliver location-based news through social and digital applications for websites, phones, apps, & other emerging media.	x	x	x	x	
Engage with diverse ideas, individuals, groups and cultures to create and present information accurately and fairly across multiple platforms.	x	x	x	x	x
Comprehend legal and ethical issues affecting news media professionals.	x	x	x	x	x
Create news reports that are organized, focused and cohesive, that apply critical thinking and numerical literacy, and that properly implement Associated Press.	x	x	xx		x

## **ACADEMIC INTEGRITY**

Students are expected to maintain principles of academic integrity and conduct as defined in EIU's Code of Conduct – [www.eiu.edu/judicial/studentconductcode.php](http://www.eiu.edu/judicial/studentconductcode.php). Violations will be reported to the Office of Student Standards.

## **ACADEMIC SUCCESS CENTER**

Besides speaking with the instructor, students having difficulty achieving their academic goals are encouraged to contact the Academic Success Center ([www.eiu.edu/~success](http://www.eiu.edu/~success)) for assistance with time management, test taking, note taking, avoiding procrastination, setting goals, and other skills to support academic achievement. The Student Success Center provides individual consultations. Call 217-581-6696, or go to McAfee Gym, Room 2230, to make an appointment.

## **STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES**

If you are a student with a documented disability in need of accommodations to fully participate in this class, please contact the Office of Accessibility and Accommodations (OAA). Accommodations must be approved through OAA. Please stop by McAfee Gym, Room 1272, or call 217-581-6583.

## **DEADLINES:**

Story assignments come with strict deadlines. **Stories that miss deadlines will receive no credit.** However, students who submit stories on time will have the opportunity to edit their stories in pursuit of a better grade.

## **ASSIGNMENTS:**

Enterprise stories: Students will develop, write and report three original news stories: one in February, one in March, and one in April. Each will be due by the end of the month. These should be uploaded to the relevant D2L folders as Microsoft Word Documents. Since the goal is to develop reporting skills, columns, sports game coverage or promotional stories will not count for these stories. Additionally, these stories may not be related to scheduled events. Each story must be at least 600 words in length and must include at least three sources. (100 points each; 300 points total)

Event Stories: Students will cover a scheduled event either on campus or in the broader community. These stories may be assigned by an editor for the *Daily Eastern News* or the *Warbler*. Students may also pitch their own events to cover, but these events should be of interest to a general campus audience. The stories must be submitted to publication editors by deadline and must be submitted in the relevant D2L folder by 11:59 p.m. on the night of the event. Work that misses either deadline will receive no credit. These stories must be at least 600 words. (100 points)

Government Meeting Story: Students will cover a meeting of either the Coles County Board or the EIU Board of Trustees. The Coles County Board meets on the second Tuesday of each month at 7 p.m., and the EIU Board of Trustees meets Friday, April 19. Students who

commute from a long distance may cover the city council or county board meeting in their own community. These stories must be at least 450 words in length and must lead with the most important or interesting information from the meeting. They must be submitted through the appropriate D2L folder within 24 hours of the meeting. (150 points)

School Board Meeting: Students will cover a meeting of the Charleston Community Unit School District board. Students who commute from a long distance may cover a school board meeting in their own community. The board meets at 6:30 p.m. on the third Wednesday of each month at the district Central Office, 410 West Polk Street, in Charleston. Students will write a story at least 450 words in length, leading with the most important or interesting information from the meeting. The story will be due within 24 hours of the end of the meeting. (150 points)

Court Document Story: Students will review court documents during a two-month period set by the instructor. They will select a court case that is most interesting and write at least 400 words for a news article. (100 points)

Final story: Students will cover a story of at least 600 words during the final week of class and will submit it by the Sunday before finals week. (100 points)

Attendance: Attendance is critical to gaining the skills of this class. Moreover, students in this class learn together through collaborative work. As a result, students will be graded on their on-time attendance. (100 points)

**GRADES:**

A: 900-1000

B: 800-899

C: 700-799

D: 600-699

F: 0-599

## TENTATIVE SCHEDULE

### WEEK 1:

- Tuesday: Syllabus and introductions; News Values: “Who cares?”; Advanced Reporting: sources of information.
- Thursday: In-class writing exercise: covering a news conference. Carrying yourself as a journalist: phone calls, emails, in-person introductions, dress, etc.

### Week 2:

- Tuesday: Enterprise Reporting: Finding stories.
- Thursday: Enterprise Reporting: Building a beat. *Assign enterprise stories.*

### Week 3:

- Tuesday: Events coverage: Going beyond summary; Finding the news value. Finding characters. Mining details. *Assign event story.*
- Thursday: Interview technique. On-the-street interview exercise.

### Week 4:

- Tuesday: Introduction to state and local government. Key players, committees, and offices. Units of government.
- Thursday: Covering government meetings: preparation, finding the big story, seeking more information, freedom of access. *Assign board meeting story.*

### Week 5:

- Tuesday: Writing the news story: Incorporating research; comments from experts, affected people, etc.; selling and telling the story.
- Thursday: Interview technique. Field interview exercise.

### Week 6:

- Tuesday: Covering Education: Introduction to the public school system, key players, private schools, sources of information.
- Thursday: Covering schools; school board meetings; *Assign school board meeting story.*

Week 7:

- Tuesday: Covering state legislatures and legislation. "Read the bill."
- Thursday: Covering state agencies.

Week 8:

- Tuesday: Covering courts: Intro to civil and criminal court system. Review sample documents.
- Thursday: Covering courts: Covering a case from start-to-finish.

Week 8:

- Tuesday: Covering court proceedings.
- Covering courts: Appellate and supreme court opinions. Review appellate and supreme court opinions. *Assign court coverage story.*

Week 9:

- Tuesday: Covering Law Enforcement: Introduction to law enforcement at various levels.
- Thursday: Finding information through law enforcement sources.

Week 10:

- Tuesday: Using public documents, FOIA.
- Thursday: Access to public data. Knowing where to look.

Week 11:

- Tuesday/Thursday: No class; Spring Break.

Week 12:

- Tuesday: Covering disasters. What does the audience need to know? Who can provide information? Covering weather.
- Thursday: Covering business and economic development: advertising vs. news; finding key information.

Week 13:

- Tuesday: Using statistics; evaluating sources; skeptical evaluation.
- Thursday: Evaluating interest groups, advocacy organizations as sources of information. Maintaining independence.

Week 14:

- Tuesday: Civil society: Finding stories beyond government. Who are the key players in a community?
- Thursday: Covering religion.

Week 15:

- Tuesday: Covering the arts.
- Thursday: Covering the environment.

Week 16:

- Tuesday: Covering sensitive topics, trauma. Minimizing harm. *Final assignment due Sunday.*
- Thursday: Closing thoughts; good habits for good reporting.