

MAJOR ASSIGNMENT SHEET
JOUR 2321: Introduction to Journalism
Assistant Professor Jena Heath
Spring 2015

Overview

This document details the three major assignments (Big Stories) and explains how you should approach quizzes and smaller assignments. I do not publish a schedule with my syllabus for the simple reason that JI is a skills-based class. Some classes move slower; some faster. All assignments and deadlines will be posted on Blackboard.

You will take weekly news quizzes on Tuesdays.

You will also take a midterm and final exam. The midterm will cover your reading for the first part of the semester. The final will cover libel and ethics, which we discuss in the second half of the course.

Midterm Exam: Thursday, March 12 in class (in-class review will be Tuesday, March 10)
Final Exam: Tuesday, May 5 11:15 a.m.-1:15 p.m. in class.

I will assign homework in the form of reading and exercises throughout the semester. The purpose of the reading and homework is to help you build the skills you will need to do the three Big Stories well. I will post the homework assignments under Assignments on Blackboard and I will explain them in class. **Please be sure to check Blackboard after each class to be sure you haven't missed an assignment.**

The Big Stories:

As you will see in the Syllabus, the bulk of your final grade for the course – 60 percent – will rest with how well you complete these stories. The purpose of these stories is to give you experience reporting and writing the basic kinds of news you would be assigned to as an intern or entry-level reporter. You will also be introduced to Twitter and Storify as reporting and writing tools. You must pitch these three stories to Hilltop Views. Please see the Syllabus for details.

Reporting

Your first story, reported with Twitter and written using Storify, will be posted on the class blog: <http://sites.stedwards.edu/jennah-jour2321/> You should be tweeting enough for the reader to follow the action/discussion of the event you're covering. Be sure to include great quotes. Miss the deadline and it's zero for the assignment. Download the Twitter app to your phone and create an account. You can create a free Storify account here: <https://storify.com/>

Your second and third stories, also posted on the class blog, must have a minimum of three primary sources, i.e. interviews in person or on the telephone, with three people. Email interviews do not count (I will check with your sources to verify that you've met

for talking on the phone). You must also incorporate online and/or public records research, or both (we will learn how to hyperlink to primary sources). Please note that simply crediting an online source, including a newspaper, magazine or other news outlet's report, without independently verifying the information you find there, will not count.

Big Story 1: This assignment will be assessed on how clearly and frequently you are tweeting, how well you capture great quotes and how easily the reader can follow the events/discussion you are covering. You will post this assignment on the class blog. There is no revision.

Big Stories 2 and 3: You will be graded on your ability to compose a compelling lede, a clear nut graph, logical transitions and strong quotes in your copy. Proper news writing structure and punctuation of quotations and correct use of Associated Press Style will also factor into your final grade, as will depth of reporting and accuracy. **You will lose two points for each AP Style error. You will lose five points for each error of fact. You will lose 10 points for each proper name you get wrong.**

Revisions

You are required to write a one-paragraph budgetline (or pitch) for each of the three Big Stories. These must be posted on the class blog by their respective deadlines and slugged BL 1, BL 2 and BL 3 in the subject line of the blog posts. **Failure to post a budgetline by deadline means a zero for the entire assignment.**

Stories 2 and 3 require revision. For these stories, you must also post a first draft on the class blog by the required deadlines. These should be slugged DRAFT 2 and DRAFT 3 respectively in the subject line of the blog post. **Together, the budgetline and first draft equal 30 percent of your final grade for these assignments. Failure to meet the Pitch and/or First Draft Deadline will mean a zero for the entire assignment.**

As you work toward your final version, make substantive improvements to your copy. Incorporating my editing marks and doing little else will not suffice and will hurt your final grade. Post the final version of Big Stories 2 and 3 by the respective deadlines and slug these revisions FINAL 2 and FINAL 3 in the subject line of the blog post.

Deadlines

I do not accept late work or emailed submissions. Post your work on the class blog by deadline or you will earn a zero for the assignment.

Topics

1. Your first assignment is to cover the Martin Luther King Celebration on campus on Jan. 15 from 6:30-8 p.m. in the Mabey Ballroom of Ragsdale. You will **tweet your coverage during the event using the hashtag #JI and then write a Storify**, using your tweets and those of your classmates. I will be watching for your tweets as the event is in progress. The Storify must be posted on the class blog by Friday, Jan. 16 at 6:30 p.m., slugged as instructed above.

Budgetline deadline: Thursday, Jan. 15 at 11 a.m.

Final Deadline: Friday, Jan. 16 at 6:30 p.m.

2. Your second assignment is **to cover a speaker(s) or meeting on our off campus and write a news story in the inverted pyramid style**. This person can be speaking by herself or on a panel, informally or before a packed auditorium. You will need to do some planning. Check the events listing on the SEU home page, for example, at UT-Austin and in town. Is anyone interesting speaking? Where? When? Any interesting meetings listed? Tell the reader what happened, thinking first and foremost about your lede. What is the news from this address or meeting? Identify the most important, interesting aspects of the event, find a focus and craft your story around it. Quote the speaker and/or meeting participants. Be sure to stay after the event to get reaction and quotes from those in the audience. Be careful with names. Make sure you have full names and correct titles in your story.

Two tips: Research your speaker and the topic before the event so that you have some context when you're listening. After the event, don't wait to start writing. Go home, sit down and begin crafting your story while it's still fresh in your mind.

If you choose a meeting: You may cover a Student Government Association meeting or an Austin City Council meeting or a meeting of any other governmental or quasi-governmental body that interests you. Do some research ahead of time. For instance, get the posted agenda to be sure you're prepared. A tip: Contact Student Life in the first week of the course to find out when and where the Student Government Association is meeting so that you can plan ahead.

Budgetline Due on class blog: Tuesday, Feb. 10

First Draft Due on class blog: Tuesday, Feb. 24

Final Due on class blog: Tuesday, March 3

3. Your third assignment is **to profile** a classmate. You will write a story using an anecdotal or narrative lede and post it on the class blog. I will pair you with a classmate you don't usually sit with. Your job is to interview this person extensively (you will spend time with this person outside of class) and also to interview people she works with, plays with and who know her well and can help us understand her. You will decide on the "take" or theme of your profile. Profiles are not resumes or laundry lists of life events that unfold in chronological order. They give us a real understanding of how someone ticks, what motivates him, what makes him sad, mad and, always, interesting. We will discuss how to report a profile and I will post examples of great profiles on Blackboard.

Budgetline Due on class blog: Tuesday, March 31

First Draft Due: Tuesday, April 14

Final Due: Tuesday, April 28

This schedule is subject to revision. Please check Blackboard for changes.