

**JOUR 2321.01: Introduction to Journalism**  
**Spring 2015**  
**Tuesday and Thursday 11 a.m. – 12:15 p.m.**  
**Main 105**

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Office Hours: Tuesday, Thursday 9:30-11:30 a.m. and by appointment

**Course Description**

Journalism 1 introduces students to the requirements, responsibilities and ethics of journalism. Students will learn to identify news stories, report and verify information, write basic news and feature stories and use social media as a reporting and writing tool. Students will examine the role of the media in American society and abroad with an emphasis on the transforming impact of the Internet on newsgathering and dissemination. The goal is for students to begin to learn the tools of the trade and to introduce them to the realities of rapidly changing newsrooms. This course is ideal for budding journalists and for students pursuing public relations and/or marketing studies, political science and a host of other majors. If you're interested in learning to write for a popular audience and understanding our current media environment, you're in the right place.

**Course Objectives**

- Learn how today's multimedia newsrooms work;
- Learn to identify news and develop story ideas;
- Learn to write basic news and feature stories in journalistic style
- Learn the basics of reporting, interviewing and verifying facts;
- Learn Associated Press style;
- Become familiar with the ethics, legalities, and responsibilities of practicing journalism;
- Read, watch, listen to and download news. Make understanding current events a priority.

**Course Overview**

This course offers four main avenues for learning:  
First, we will study the development of print and online media and learn about key figures in American journalism past and present. Students will learn about the central role a free press played in our democracy. They will learn about how the modern newsroom works, with emphasis on the growing use of multimedia resources and the revolutionizing impact of the Internet on reporting, writing and the newsroom's bottom line. We will review the importance of transparency and accuracy, and learn the components needed for a story to be news.

Second, we will learn the nuts and bolts of writing the news and using social media to report. Students will be required to self-edit and to revise their stories.

Third, we will study the craft of reporting and researching. Students will learn the importance of accuracy and techniques for fact-checking and verification.

Finally, students will learn the ethics and legalities central to the responsible practice of journalism.

### **Course Requirements**

Students must complete three major assignments, take two tests and weekly news quizzes. I will also assign homework and in-class deadline exercises designed to help build basic newswriting and reporting skills. The attached assignment sheet details the three major assignments (Big Stories) and explains how other assignments will work. It is part of this syllabus, so please read it carefully.

Students **must** pitch the three Big Stories for publication in Hilltop Views. The goal of every journalist is to be published. Let's start now. If your story is published, you will receive 1 extra point on your overall final grade, for a total of three points if all the stories are published. Email your budgetlines to Editor-in-Chief Jacob Sanchez (jsanchen@stedwards.edu) and cc me. **If you fail to pitch your stories, you will lose three points from your final grade.**

Students will be required to read Hilltop Views each week, along with the Texas Tribune and the Austin American-Statesman. We will discuss how to subscribe to the American-Statesman (digital access) when we meet in class.

I will also assign reading. I cannot emphasize this enough: Do the reading. You cannot do well in JI without reading the news and the assigned reading.

### **You will need...**

The Associated Press Style Book and Libel Manual: The Journalist's Bible, published by Addison Wesley. You may subscribe to the AP Stylebook online if you prefer: <https://www.apstylebook.com/>

Inside Reporting: A Practical Guide to the Craft of Journalism, Third Edition, Tim Harrower.

Hilltop Views ([hilltopviewsonline.com](http://hilltopviewsonline.com) – new issue published each Wednesday).

The Austin American-Statesman

The Texas Tribune

### **Grading**

Big Story 1:	15 percent
Big Story 2:	20 percent
Big Story 3:	25 percent
Midterm Exam:	15 percent
Final Exam:	15 percent

Quizzes, homework, in-class exercises: 10 percent

Please note that the grading rubric is structured in a way that allows for growth and improvement over the course of the semester. I do not accept late work. Failure to meet deadline on any assignment will result in a zero for that assignment. Budgetlines and, for Big Stories 2 and 3, first drafts are mandatory. Together, the budgetlines and first drafts are worth 30 percent of the overall grade for each assignment. **Failure to turn in a first draft by the first draft deadline means a zero for the entire assignment. Please see additional details on the attached Major Assignment Sheet.**

I will grade your assignments using journalistic criteria:

A=90 to 100 points. Outstanding. Copy is publishable with little or no editing.

B=80 to 90 points. Very good. Copy requires minor editing.

C=70 to 80 points. Adequate. Copy needs heavy revision and additional reporting.

D=60 to 70 points. Marginal. Copy contains factual errors, incomplete reporting, and needs extensive editing.

F=50 to 60 points. Unacceptable. Copy does not meet minimum writing and reporting standards or has been handed in after deadline.

### **Extra Credit**

With the exception of the extra points for publication of any or all of your three Big Stories in Hilltop Views, there is no extra credit in JI.

### **Grade Discussions**

I will not discuss grades via email. During the semester you may come to office hours or, if they are not convenient, schedule an appointment. Before you come for a meeting, be sure to do the following:

- Review the Syllabus and Major Assignment Sheet. Most questions about how assignments are evaluated and how the grading system works can easily be answered by reviewing these documents.
- Consult Blackboard. I grade all assignments in a timely fashion and post your grades throughout the semester. Please consult Blackboard regularly.
- If you want to discuss your final course grade, you will need to first wait two weeks after grades are submitted, obtain your final exam, read it over and then make an appointment with me to talk about your work in the class. (I usually meet to talk after the next term has begun and I usually hold these meetings in the next term's office hours or by appointment, as needed.) If you wish to meet with me after the term is over, after two weeks have passed and after you have read your final exam, you must demonstrate a clear, compelling and concrete reason to think your course grade was inaccurately or unfairly calculated. At the earliest in fall terms this meeting will take place two weeks after grades are submitted (usually the first week of January) and for the spring term one week after grades are turned in (usually the third week of May). If after that meeting I have not altered your

course grade and you are convinced that you have valid grounds for an appeal, you may follow SEU's grade appeal process.

### **Speakers**

Speakers will occasionally come to talk to the class.

Please make sure you are in class when a speaker is scheduled and that you are prepared to ask questions and take detailed notes. You will be required to cover the speakers' talks as news stories. These assignments cannot be made up.

### **Office Conferences**

Please come by if you have questions or concerns. If my office hours are not convenient, please schedule an appointment. You will find that I am very available for outside help. Email is the best way to contact me outside of class.

### **Attendance**

You are allowed three absences all semester. You will lose two points for each class you miss after your three allowed absences. If you have more than six absences, you run the risk of being withdrawn from the class. You have a five-minute grace period. If you arrive more after 9:35 a.m. you will be marked absent.

The most important thing a journalist does is show up. If you want to do well in J1, you must come to class on time and stay for the duration. Come prepared. Read newspapers and the assigned materials and be ready to participate in lively discussions.

Please note that if you miss the in-class writing assignments designed to develop your deadline skills, you cannot make them up and will earn a zero for those assignments. Likewise, quizzes cannot be made up. If you miss a quiz, you earn a zero.

### **Incompletes**

Incompletes will be awarded only if a) the student's work is up to date at the time of the request for an incomplete; b) the student provides thorough documentation of a serious emergency; c) the request is approved by the Dean of the School of Humanities.

### **Special Circumstances**

Student Disability Services coordinates reasonable accommodations for students with documented disabilities (medical, learning or psychological). Any student who feels s/he may need an accommodation based on the impact of a disability should follow the university's accommodation procedure by contacting Student Disability Services at 512-448-8561 or Moody Hall 155).

### **Academic Integrity**

Academic dishonesty includes cheating on exams as well as plagiarizing (presenting another individual's work as your own). The St. Edward's University Student Handbook states that, "a student who is dishonest in any work is to receive a mark

of F for that course.” Students caught committing any act of academic dishonesty in this course will be subject to the full range of penalties as described in the Student Handbook.

**Revisions**

This syllabus is subject to revision. Please check your email and Blackboard regularly for announcements and updates.