

# **Journalism 550**

## **Digital Media**

### **Spring 2016**

11 a.m.-12:30 p.m. M/W  
Stauffer-Flint 105

#### **Professor:**

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Professor

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Office Hours: Tuesday/Thursday 10 a.m.-3 p.m.

Or by appointment

We report the news.  
We inform the public.  
And we tell great stories.

The Journalism 550 reporting class is designed to provide opportunities for you to tell great stories in print, through video and online. You are expected to produce professional-quality stories that can be published or broadcast to an audience beyond the university community.

This is not a class; it's an experience. Your stories can be published in the *University Daily Kansan*, on the UDK Website or on KUJH-TV.

Course objectives are listed below. However, you should set objectives for yourself as well. What do you want to gain from this course and how will you achieve that? Here are a few objectives:

- Understand the role of media in creating public discussion and promoting a multitude of voices in a democracy.
- Develop critical thinking skills in reporting and presenting stories and understand the importance of those skills.
- Improve listening skills in an effort to better extract and tell the story.
- Understand a variety of storytelling methods.
- Improve your writing or video storytelling skills and understand how you can continue to improve.
- Be able to identify good and bad journalism and what makes the difference.
- Understand your role as a journalist doing good journalism in a community.
- Behave as an ethical professional journalist, adhering to the Society of Professional Journalists Code of Ethics.

## **Required text and materials**

- *Associated Press Stylebook and Libel Manual*, any edition from the past three years. Access to the electronic version is acceptable.

If we are inspired to be journalists we must act like journalists. So in journalistic fashion, we will begin each class discussing recent news events. With that in mind, you must be prepared to participate in the discussion. Reading, watching and listening to local, regional and national news is a requirement of this course. You are expected to read the *University Daily Kansan*, *Lawrence Journal-World*, and *The Kansas City Star* each day. You should listen to National Public Radio/Kansas Public Radio, and watch one of the Kansas TV newscasts (WDAF – Fox 4; KCTV – CBS 5; KMBC – ABC 9; KSHB – NBC 41)

There are several good reasons for being informed:

1. Developing story ideas requires a working knowledge of your world. You'll be asked to generate fresh story ideas, and localize national stories.
2. By reading, listening and watching other media you will recognize good and bad journalism.
3. If you are going to cover any topic, you need to be an expert. Other media provide a starting point for becoming an expert.
4. Think of the butterfly effect. The slightest incident initiated by someone far removed from you can alter the course of future events. Example: Cause – Those without health insurance visit the emergency room; Effect – my health insurance rates increase to pay for the ER visit of strangers.
5. You do not live in a vacuum. You cannot insulate yourself from the evil that lurks in dark places. Accept it. Deal with it. Learn from it.

Read the required materials prior to class. Be prepared to discuss readings.

## **Grading**

Your grade will be a performance evaluation of:

- Your reporting and newsgathering skills
- Your development of story ideas and execution of those ideas
- Meeting deadlines
- Working a four (4)-hour newsroom shift each week
- Producing an enterprise story each week
- Your professionalism (attendance, participation in class, completing assignments on deadline, ethical behavior, and people skills in working with colleagues in the newsroom, sources and the public)

## **Materials used to evaluate performance includes:**

**1. Portfolios:** You are required to keep an electronic portfolio of all your work throughout the semester. You should have your own Web page. If not, you will

need to develop one. Your electronic portfolio will lead to internships and jobs. The portfolio should include:

- Short bio. On your website, you should provide a bio page with a picture and some basic information. Keep it professional and informative. This isn't your Facebook page.
- J550 work. This webpage should include all the work produced in this class. Anything published or broadcast should be included, along with headlines and dates of publication/broadcast.
- Other work. This webpage should include other work you would like prospective employers to see. It can be from other classes, internships or other media opportunities. It should be the "Best of..." page. It obviously also should include some work from this class. It would seem reasonable that what you produce here would be among your best work.

**2. Feedback** from subjects and sources of your stories, as well as evaluations by *Kansan* editors and KUJH-TV producers and personnel. Performance, cooperation and meeting deadlines will be included in the evaluations.

**3. Completion of other class assignments as well as attendance and class participation** as recorded by the professor.

Specific Responsibilities:

- A. You will become an expert on a specific issue. Beats will not be assigned, however, it would be best to establish yourself as the "go-to" person on an issue. All areas of coverage will be discussed with the instructor beforehand.
- B. You will produce one (1) enterprise story each week. On Mondays you will pitch your story, it will be vetted and then you can begin reporting. Story proposals will be completed before the end of each class period on Monday. Enterprise stories lead to internships and jobs.
- C. You can expect to do some team reporting during the semester, particularly with larger assignments.
- D. You will work one (1), four (4)-hour newsroom shift each week. During the newsroom shift, you will assist in covering breaking news for the UDK or other assignments as directed by the UDK staff. The shifts can range between 9 a.m.-6 p.m. You may work on your enterprise stories during the newsroom shift but it is secondary to work that is assigned by the UDK editors.
- E. You will cover two (2) live events during the semester that DO NOT occur during your newsroom shift. The live event can include a meeting, speech,

or announcement. UDK editors will provide a list of live events to be covered each week.

Early in the semester, stories will filter through me. From there, stories will be forwarded to the UDK and KUJH-TV, or some other media outlet.

**ACCURACY CHECKS** will be conducted for every enterprise story. An accuracy check allows you to accurately verify information provided by sources. ACs are conducted by professional reporters at nearly every major media outlet in the county. The AC allows:

- Accurately quoting sources
- An opportunity to build source relationships
- Leads to additional stories
- Development of credibility
- Reduction in corrections
- Improved journalism

An accuracy check is just that – a check on accuracy. It is not an opportunity to change quotes or alter what was originally said. After developing your story, you will telephone your source and:

- Read the paragraph before the quote
- Read the quote
- Read the paragraph after the quote

This will be done for every source and every quote in a story. If a quote has been paraphrased, you are to read the paraphrased quote. If a source says, “I don’t like the way that sounds. Can I change it?”

Your response: “Is the quote accurate?”

“Yes, but...”

“Sorry. If the quote is accurate I cannot change it.”

If there are problems with sources during the accuracy check, please direct them to me. I will be happy to discuss the function of accuracy checks with sources.

The use of a **recording device** is strongly recommended. Sources cannot dispute recordings but they can easily dispute your scribbled notes or remembrances. I suggest using a recorder for every interview. If you do not have a recorder, please let me know.

### **Ethics and academic misconduct:**

**As reporters**, you are expected to follow *Kansan* policies and adhere to the Society of Professional Journalists Code of Ethics. For example, you should

- Inform interview sources that you are a *Kansan* media reporter;
- Avoid using family or friends as sources, and avoid writing about issues or entities with which you have a personal connection and thus a conflict of interest;
- Never include in a story the work of others without attribution and credit for their contributions;
- Never fabricate facts, sources or quotes;
- Always clearly attribute the source of information presented in your stories.

Ethics violations will lead to a failing grade in the course. If you have questions, please seek advice from the instructor.

**As students** in the School of Journalism, you are subject to the school's zero tolerance policy for plagiarism and other academic dishonesty. Sanctions can range from a failing grade in this course to expulsion from the School.

### **Final Words**

As children, we learn to read and write in first or second grade. Then we spend the entirety of our lives improving those skills. This course is designed to assist you in that improvement. We will sharpen your reporting and writing skills, skills that can be utilized in whatever profession you choose. The right words at the right time can move mountains. There is no guarantee we will move mountains this semester. Instead, we'll shoot for the moon and hope to land on the roof. Either way, I think you'll enjoy the view.