

Jour 550 Digital Media/Reporting Syllabus
Fall 2016 M&W 11-12:15 p.m.

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Welcome to this reporting immersion course. Here you'll get instruction and experience to help prepare you for professional practice as an intern or entry level news worker. In this class, you will produce coverage for Kansan.com and the Kansan's print editions. You will develop enterprise coverage, serve one shift per week as a general assignment reporter in the Kansan newsroom and participate in a dynamic class project that uses strategies and techniques for enterprise reporting, digital storytelling, data visualization and audience engagement.

Course Goals:

- Strengthen your newsgathering, writing, storytelling, social media, data visualization and audience-engagement skills.
- Learn how to generate, pitch and develop high quality content ideas that are meaningful to a diverse student body.
- Practice the professional and personal skills required to succeed as a reporter for a news organization. These include ethical decision-making, good communication, collaboration, time management, punctuality, reliability, initiative, persistence and good humor.

Course Deliverables and Expectations:

(Syllabus elements and schedule are subject to change based on professor's determination of class needs.)

This course will require a high level of commitment of your time and focus. In addition to class time, you will be expected to work a 3-hour shift in the Kansan newsroom once a week and average at least another six hours a week developing enterprise stories and

other content. Some weeks you may need to invest more time, some less, depending on what you're working on.

At least twice during the semester I will give you formal feedback on how you're doing in the class based on my own assessment and feedback from the Kansan editors. As in a newsroom, everything you do will not be given a grade but you will be given a clear sense of how we think you're doing along the way and why.

Your grade will be based on my evaluation of the following :

Enterprise Reporting: Approximately 60 percent

-You will be evaluated based on the quality of your work which includes idea generation and pre-reporting for pitching ideas, reporting, writing and developing multi-media and online components. *See notes below for more on quality.

-You will also be judged on quantity. To get at least a "C" in this course, you will be required to produce at least:

- **Three publishable enterprise stories. These should include three issue or trend stories w/visuals/graphics.**
- **One package as part of the class project.**
- **One news or event "story" that is not part of your Kansan shift work but assigned by Kansan editors. The idea may come from you or them.**

Stories should be emailed to me and include visual elements such as photos, graphics, videos, lists, story links, etc. You will be expected to use social media to inform your reporting and promote your stories. I will personally edit most if not all of your enterprise and project content and ask you to fill holes and rewrite before we submit to the Kansan editors who may do further edits. You will be required to provide links to your stories for a midterm and final assessment of your work for this class.

Professionalism and Participation: Approximately 40 percent

-Professionalism including attendance in class and fulfilling your newsroom shifts, completing assignments on deadline, ethical behavior, and people skills in working with colleagues in the newsroom, classmates, sources and the public. **If you miss a shift, you must make it up within 7 days.**

The strength of our class time depends on what we make it. In that spirit, we'll use the time to talk constructively about the work you're doing, want to do and other people's work. Here's how.

On most Mondays, you will pitch your story ideas and/or provide updates on the progress you're making on the stories that are in the works. This story budget meeting is designed to be a discussion of the work you're producing.

On most Wednesdays, we'll discuss a topic in reporting, an assigned reading, homework assignment, current events or hear from a guest speaker.

-Attendance: **You will be allowed a total of ONLY two absences from class. For every additional class you miss, unless it is a documented medical emergency, you will lose half a letter grade on your final grade.** It is NOT OKAY to schedule an interview during class or other established meeting times. Use your absences for illness, deaths and emergencies.

-Kansan shifts: Fulfilling your shift is very important. The Kansan is relying on students in this class to be available to help develop content for the 24/7 news cycle. If you cannot make your shift, notify both Lara and Conner ahead of time. You will be expected to make up any shifts you miss within 7 days. **Each missed shift will cost you half a letter grade on the final grade in the class.** During your shifts, you will be in a general assignment role. That means, you will do whatever the Kansan editors need you to do. This may include standard police checks, working on spot coverage, filling gaps or updating other people's stories; curating info for blogs or developing social media posts. When you are not working on shift assignments, use the time to work on your enterprise stories, just as you would in a professional newsroom.

-Keeping up with the news: I expect each of you to read on a regular basis the web and print editions of the University Daily Kansan and the Lawrence Journal-World. I would also encourage you to read the New York Times, web or print. You should make frequent use of the AP Stylebook, the Kansan Policy Guide and a dictionary.

Ethics and academic misconduct:

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

--Inform interview sources that you are a student reporter working on a story for The Kansan.

--Avoid using as sources family, friends or close acquaintances 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. Provide links to source material or added-value information for your audience.

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. Ethics violations can lead to your being barred from reporting for the Kansan and other media partners.

A Final Word: You CAN Do This!

You are in this class to learn, and hone your skills as a reporter. If you listen, work hard, and learn from your mistakes, you will do well. You will be amazed at how much easier complex stories are to research and write at the end of the semester compared with how difficult they may have seemed at the beginning. Your professor begins the semester with great admiration for your willingness to work hard in a course known to be difficult, and brave enough to share your work as fledgling reporters with thousands of readers. As far as I'm concerned, you are all beginning the semester as A students.

This is what you need to do to keep that grade or earn another grade.

A Level Work: This reporter's work is exceptional in every way. The reporter:

- Routinely offers creative and newsworthy story ideas for the Kansan.com audience based on solid news judgment and pre-reporting.
- Consistently turns in stories or other content that area ready to be published; minimal editing is needed.
- Turns in stories with effective leads, multiple sources and good organization and with few or no style or grammar errors.
- Meets deadlines consistently.
- Is a good time manager and can juggle multiple assignments.
- Demonstrates the ability to gather and use appropriate descriptive details in stories.
- Works well with editors, photographers and designers and learns from others.
- Uses social media in a highly effective way to report and distribute work.

B-Level Work: This reporter's work is generally publishable and even above average, but needs improvement in some areas. The reporter:

- Generally offers interesting and newsworthy story ideas for the UDK audience based on solid news judgment and pre-reporting. Ideas from his or her beat may need a sharpened focus.
- Generally turns in publishable stories and other content that may need some editing, but seldom have holes big enough to cause major editing delays.
- Turns in stories with acceptable if not always creative leads, adequate sourcing and organization, and minimal style and grammar errors.
- Usually meets deadlines.
- Usually is a good time manager and able to both complete assignments while putting in time on the next story.
- Attempts to gather and use descriptive details in stories.
- Usually works well with editors, photographers and designers and is willing to learn.
- Usually uses social media to report and distribute work.

C-Level Work: This reporter's work contains some of the elements needed for publishable stories, but may need major revisions. The reporter:

- Seldom comes up with creative story ideas.
- May need prompting to get stories done; once turned in, stories often need additional reporting and rewriting.

- Turns in stories that are sometimes confusing; have inappropriate leads, style and grammar errors, and minimal sources.
- Misses some deadlines and can offer excuses rather than copy at deadline.
- Has difficulty managing time and juggling multiple stories and the depth project.
- Gathers quotes from sources but neglects using the observational skills needed to gather descriptive details that can help readers see and hear what the story is about
- Experiences difficulty working with others in the newsroom.
- Occasional use of social media

D-Level Work: This reporter's work is below average for journalism students, and is frequently not publishable without major work by others. The reporter:

- Does not mine the beat for stories, but rather covers only those stories that are directly assigned by the professor.
- Generally needs prompting to get stories done.
- Turns in stories that often cannot be published because of weak or missing content, ineffective leads, poor organization and many style and grammar errors.
- Consistently misses deadlines.
- Can't manage time and multiple story demands.
- When gathering information, ignores everything except the words coming out of a source's mouth.
- Has difficulty dealing with sources and working with colleagues in the newsroom.
- Rarely uses social media in reporting/distribution

F-Level Work: The reporter is often absent from class and seldom completes stories. When stories are handed in, often after deadline, they are not publishable in most respects (See D-Level Work Above) and may contain serious errors in fact, plagiarism, fabrication, libel and misspelled names.

Remember, you are all starting with an A. It is your task to keep that grade.

