SPECIAL TOPICS
COMPUTER-ASSISTED REPORTING
JOU 3950
COURSE SYLLABUS
Fall 2012

PROFESSOR     Joe Gisondi
EMAIL         jgisondi@gmail.com
OFFICE/HOURS  Buzzard Hall, room 2546
              MW 2:30-3:30 p.m.
              W 10-11 a.m.
              R 2:40-3:40 p.m.
              Available other times by appointment
PHONE         581-6003
TEXTS         The Art of Access (David Cuillier and Charles N. Davis)

COURSE DESCRIPTION
To give students the fundamentals of computer-assisted reporting, using public documents in order to gather, organize, evaluate data to write objective reports in accepted journalistic style across several media platforms.

COURSE OBJECTIVES
By the conclusion of JOU 3000, students will:
1. demonstrate advanced news-writing skills, citing public documents to develop news stories;
2. demonstrate advanced news-gathering, research methods and interviewing skills, focusing on where and how to find information through public data and documents;
3. demonstrate the ability to provide background in public affairs reporting, through government statistics and other data;
4. demonstrate an advanced awareness for accuracy and fairness;
5. demonstrate an advanced awareness of legal and ethical issues affecting news-gathering and reporting;
6. demonstrate a sensitivity in coverage of diverse cultures and populations

ACADEMIC HONESTY
Plagiarism is the unpardonable sin of journalism, an act that essentially ends a journalist’s career. There is nothing wrong with using information from another source so long as it is clearly credited within the story. If you take a quote or information from another publication, cite it within the story. An assignment determined to be plagiarized will be given a grade of “0” and the responsible student will receive an “F” for the course. Plus, this student will be referred to the appropriate EIU board for discipline. According to the university’s policy, students who plagiarize are eligible for dismissal from EIU.

STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES
Contact the Office of Disability Services (581-6583) for answers regarding accommodations, auxiliary learning aids and physical accessibility. Diagnostic information regarding the disability must be submitted so the most appropriate accommodations can be arranged. Refer to the Undergraduate Catalog for more information.
ABSENCES & MAKE-UP WORK
Students are expected to be in class on time and remain until the dismissal. Attendance is essential in this class where both the professor and visiting journalists will train students on ways to gather data from public documents. If you miss a class meeting, you will fail to learn the skills necessary to complete your assignment. So, please, make sure you attend each class. Ten points will be deducted from your attendance for each day missed.

ASSIGNMENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Points</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Research Project</td>
<td>300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quizzes/Reports</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exercises</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attendance</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>600</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

DEADLINES – Making deadlines are essential in journalism. In this class, missing deadline will mean the final published project gets delayed both in print and online. There are not excuses for failing to do the assigned task on time. So please start working early and often on your individual tasks as they relate to our final project.

FORMAT – All assignments are required to be typed and double-spaced in 12-point Times New Roman, have one-inch margins on all sides, and be stapled or paper-clipped. In addition, the following information must be included on the top, left corner of the first page – your name, name of class, name of assignments and date. A full letter grade (10%) will be deducted for any assignment that does not follow this format.

RESEARCH PROJECT – Students will gather, organize and evaluate data related to their two assigned topics. Students will also develop visual elements to go along with these stories, such as fact boxes, graphics and photos. Those with more advanced multimedia skills will help develop online elements. For Fall 2012 semester, the final project will be due Nov. 28.

SUBMITTING STORIES – You must use the following format to submit material for the final project:
1. Typed version of final story that is double-spaced.
2. Two-page evaluation of your reporting experience that includes contact information for all sources (names, phone numbers, titles, email addresses). Put your name on the upper left corner of the page. Do not start this on a page that includes the news story. Instead, skip as many lines as needed to begin this on a new page.
3. Place both the news story and the reflection in my journalism department DROP box with the following slugline – Project.yourlastname.

GRADING
A – 90 to 100%
B – 80 to 89.9%
C – 70 to 79.9%
D – 60 to 69.9%
F – below 60%

CLASS REVISIONS
This syllabus may be changed at any time during the semester by announcement of instructor.
Schedule of Assignments

WEEK 1 | OVERVIEW
1. Review syllabus and class requirements
2. Discuss final project, develop deadlines

WEEK 2 | RECORDS THAT MATTER
1. Review Chapter 1 in *The Art of Access*
2. Class assignment – Secret Justice Activity

WEEK 3 | DOCUMENT STATE OF MIND
1. Review Chapter 2 in *The Art of Access*
2. Class assignment – Circle the Prof

WEEK 4 | LEARNING THE LAW
1. Review Chapter 3 in *The Art of Access*
2. Class assignment – FOIA Issue Argument

WEEK 5 | FINDING RECORDS
1. Review Chapter 4 in *The Art of Access*
2. Class assignment – Hit Records

WEEK 6 | REQUESTING RECORDS
1. Review Chapter 5 in *The Art of Access*
2. Class assignment – Create-a-letter

WEEK 7 | OVERCOMING DENIALS
1. Review Chapter 6 in *The Art of Access*
2. Class assignment – FOI log analysis

WEEK 8 | DEALING WITH DATA
1. Review Chapter 7 in *The Art of Access*
2. Class assignment – Database ideas

WEEK 9 | OFFICIALS’ PERSPECTIVES
1. Review Chapter 8 in *The Art of Access*
2. Class assignment – Custodian Chat

WEEK 10 | ETHICS AND WRITING
1. Review Chapter 9 in *The Art of Access*

WEEK 11 | USING SOCIAL MEDIA
1. Review techniques, approaches to compiling data from social media

WEEKS 12-15 | WORK ON PROJECT
1. You will be expected to work on your project each day in class, further researching, gathering data, organizing info and developing stories and visuals for the final project. We will critique these projects the final week of class.