

# ***RTV3305: Investigative Reporting***

Spring 2014

Tuesday, Period 4-6 (10:40am-1:40pm)

Weimer Hall – Room 3024

RTV3305.wordpress.com

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## **INSTRUCTOR**

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### **Kevin Hull**

Office: G031, Weimer Hall

Office Hours: Wednesday, 12:00-2:00, Thursday, 9:00am-10:00, other times available by appointment

E-Mail: kevhill@ufl.edu

Twitter: @kevhill45

Webpage: RTV3305.wordpress.com

Phone: I prefer E-mail, as I share my office phone with others

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## **COURSE DESCRIPTION AND OBJECTIVES**

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The course is designed to provide an overview of the principles of investigative reporting as applied to television and radio news. The goal of the class will be to provide basic skills for students wishing to enter a broadcast newsroom. Students will become familiar with finding stories, public record, using the Internet for information, creating a solid piece that could air on television/radio.

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## **PREREQUISITES**

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Students should have completed both RTV2100: Writing for the Electronic Media and RTV3003: Electronic News Writing and Reporting 1. The techniques taught in those classes are crucial to your success in this class.

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## **REQUIRED TEXT**

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Burstiner, Marcy. Investigative Reporting: From Premise to Publication. ISBN: 978-1890871918

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## **OTHER MATERIALS**

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You will be provided a SD/HC card to use when filming video. After the Drop/Add period has been completed, you will receive the card.

While not necessary, I recommend you have a large flash drive or portable hard drive to store your videos.

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## **ATTENDANCE**

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Attendance – including being on time - is very important in this class and will count as part of your grade. Students should make every effort to attend all classes, as missing even one day could put you very far behind. If you are unable to attend class, you are still responsible for the material covered. If you miss a class for a legitimate reason (attending a conference, illness, family emergency), please contact me before class to let me know.

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## CLASSROOM PROCEDURES

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Some simple rules to make the class run smoother

- Please arrive on time – both at the beginning of class and after our break for lunch.
- Please put away your cell-phone.
- Computers/Tablets are not necessary for this class. If you need to take notes, use pencil and paper. Facebook, Email, and Twitter will still be there after class, so please give me your full attention during the period.

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## EQUIPMENT CHECKOUT

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At multiple points during the semester you will have to check out equipment from the Telecom Department. All students in this class **MUST** sign the “Gear Liability Pledge” before they are allowed to check out any equipment.

Key points include:

1. You are liable for full replacement costs for damage from any cause.
2. **Equipment must be returned by 9am on the scheduled day.**  
Any equipment violations will result in 10 points off the student’s project grade per violation.
3. You are responsible for staying through each review of your gear after check-in; if you leave for any reason you are waiving all rights and must accept the equipment room staff’s later judgment about the condition of the gear.

More information on checkout can be found on the full Equipment Policy that you should have reviewed in a previous telecom class. If you need another copy of this policy, please let me know and I will get you one.

All students are responsible for knowing all equipment policies.

You are not to use the equipment for non-class projects, student to student equipment transfers, or sharing of equipment with other classes. Violation of this policy will be subject to the same sanctions as failure to return equipment.

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## GRADED ASSIGNMENTS

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Percentage	Assignment
10	Attendance/Participation
15	Pitch Sheet #1
15	Pitch Sheet #2
15	Pitch Sheet #3
15	Investigative Story #1
15	Investigative Story #2
15	Investigative Story #3
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100	Total

A brief description of each assignment begins on the next page. More detail on each will be given as the assignment gets closer.

### **Attendance (10%)**

Students are expected to be in class and participate on a daily basis. Students will lose points if they have unexcused absences, if they are consistently late to class, or if they are texting/Emailing during class. Perfect attendance – including never being late – will earn you an automatic 100% for Participation.

### **Pitch Sheet (Three worth 15% each)**

On scheduled pitch days, students will submit three story ideas in writing (at least 1 page typed for each story, 12 pt. font, Times New Roman, 1-inch margins). These pitch sheets will be graded separately from the projects. Further information on the pitch sheet will be given in class.

Each pitch sheet must contain:

- A basic outline of the story.
  - What is the issue?
  - Who does this impact?
  - Why is this interesting to the average viewer?
- Who you plan to interview and why you are interviewing them.
  - Doesn't have to be exact, but should have a good idea.
  - Example: "I'm going to interview a resident who lives in the area of the crime spree."
  - Doesn't have to be: "I'm going to interview Bill Johnson who lives at 123 North Street."
- What type of B-roll you can shoot
- What nat sound you anticipate being available
- What your public record/public access piece will be
- Your timeline for completion.

NOTE: The more information you give for each story will be beneficial to both me as the grader and you as the reporter. I should not have to ask any follow-up questions after reading your pitch sheet. Be as detailed as possible.

### **Investigative Story (Three worth 15% each)**

You must complete three investigative stories. Each story is worth the same weight. You can work in either TV or Radio, but at least TWO must be television – unless you have not completed TV1 or are currently enrolled in TV1. See me if this is the case.

Each story must contain:

- A news peg. The story must be timely and have news value
- At least ONE audio or visual element that came from a public record or public access. This includes audio/video from courtroom, public meeting, evidence, first appearance, mug shot, 911 call, surveillance video, etc...
- Sound from at least THREE people. One of those people should be your human element. Every story should have a human element, so we can hear from who your story affects. If it doesn't affect anyone – you should find a different story.
- At least TWO pieces of natural sound for TV stories / At least THREE pieces of natural sound for radio stories.
- At least ONE standup (not for radio, obviously)
- BALANCE. Make sure you are representing both sides of the story. An unbalanced story will likely earn you a failing grade – no matter how well it was shot/edited/written. You must be objective.
- Good use of Video/Audio. Your first job will likely require you to film your own video, so those skills are important. Poor audio, blue/dark video, poorly framed interviews, bad b-roll, poor edits, and anything else that doesn't look/sound right will lower your grade.
- Each story cannot be more than 2:30 – unless you do a "look live" intro and tag for TV. In that case, you can go to 3:00, AND I will tack on 5pts for the extra effort. HOWEVER: Anchor tags do not count. You should be in the field for these look lives – not in the studio.
- Projects should be submitted on a CD or DVD.

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## **GRADING SCALE**

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A	=	100-93
A-	=	92-90
B+	=	89-87
B	=	86-84
B-	=	83-80
C+	=	79-77
C	=	76-74
C-	=	73-70
D+	=	69-67
D	=	66-64
D-	=	62-60
F	=	Below 60

All grades will be rounded up to the nearest whole number. So even a 92.1 will earn you a 93.

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## **MAKE-UP AND LATE ASSIGNMENT POLICY**

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The assignments listed on the syllabus are the assignments due, and there is no make-up work needed.

Each assignment will be due at the beginning of the period. If you arrive late to class that day, your assignment will also be considered late. This is a good skill to learn if you are hoping to enter broadcast news. The show starts at 6:00 whether you are ready or not. If you're not ready, be ready to hear from the news director. Do it consistently, and be ready to look for a new job.

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## **ACADEMIC INTEGRITY**

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University of Florida students must have read and signed the University Honor Code before taking this course. Academic dishonesty is not tolerated, and could result in your failure for the course.

To review the University of Florida Honor Code, visit:

<http://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/process/student-conduct-honor-code/>

Specifically for this class: You may NOT recycle work that you have completed for another class and use it here. All work must be completed by you, specifically for RTV3305. You can recruit a friend to shoot a standup for you – but that should be all they do.

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## **STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES**

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Students requesting classroom accommodation must first register with the Dean of Students Office. The Dean of Students Office will provide documentation to the student who must then provide this documentation to the instructor when requesting accommodation.

Students requesting classroom accommodations should contact the Disability Resource Center (<http://www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/> or 352-392-8565). If approved, the center will give you documentation to allow for these accommodations. Please take care of this as early in the semester as possible.

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## EVALUATIONS

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Students are expected to provide feedback on the quality of instruction in this course based on 10 criteria. These evaluations are conducted online at <https://evaluations.ufl.edu>. Evaluations are typically open during the last two or three weeks of the semester, but students will be given specific times when they are open. Summary results of these assessments are available to students at <https://evaluations.ufl.edu/results>.

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## SCHEDULE

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A tentative class schedule is below. Please note that this is subject to change based on how quickly/slowly we progress through the semester.

If you have any questions or issues about assignments or what we covered in class, please do not wait to bring those to my attention.

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## TENTATIVE SCHEDULE OF TOPICS AND ASSIGNMENTS

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<b>Date</b>	<b>Topic</b>	<b>Assignment Due That Day</b>
January 7	Class Intro / What is Investigative?	
January 14	All the President's Men	
January 21	Beginning Investigative Story #1	Read Chapters 2, 3, 14
January 28	Pitch Sheet discussion	Pitch Sheet #1
February 4	Public Record	
February 11	Game Plan	
February 18	Screening Story #1	Investigative Story #1
February 25	The Big story	
March 4	No Class – Spring Break	
March 11	Pitch Sheet discussion	Pitch Sheet #2
March 18	Legal/Ethical	
March 25	Screening Story #2	Investigative Story #2
April 1	Pitch Sheet discussion	Pitch Sheet #3
April 8	No Class: Individual Meetings	
April 15	Screening Story #3	Investigative Story #3
April 22	What's next? Resume tape/portfolio	