Note: to print this, replace the "github" part of the url above with "gitprint".

Preliminary course schedule

As of March 29, 2015

Class #1 (April 1): A documents state of mind

Topics: A "documents state of mind" / The value of documents and data / Freedom of information laws

Read before class for discussion:

- The Bell, Calif., small-town corruption: "Is a City manager Worth $800,000?" and "Bell's Money Flowed Uphill"

- Landowners in Southwestern Virginia who were being cheated out of royalties: "The Money Prison"

In class: Introductions / Your life in records / Confirming claims through records.

Class #2 (April 8): Backgrounding on deadline

Topics: Typical records used in backgrounding on deadline / what's online and what isn't / resources for finding records far away / mistaken identity and verification / the special case of court records, esp. in New York.

Read *before* class:

- Seattle Times' coverage of officers shot:

- Hazard in the Heartland, a television report on the explosion outside Midland, Texas. You'll have to look at the IRE version -- WFAA doesn't have an archive.

- Washington Post coverage of the Virginia Tech shootings:

(You should read all of these, but choose one to write me a short memo on the use of records and documents in the stories. Submit the memo **before 11:00pm, Monday, April 6 on Courseworks.**)

In class: Begin your breaking news exercise

1. Guest speaker: Agustin Armendariz, on uncovering connections through Internet metadata
2. Background a person in class online.

Due *Sunday, April 12* by 11:55pm.

1. Read all of the beat stories in for the next class (below). Select one for your reflections.

2. Spend up to one more hour on your backgrounding exercise, and turn in what you found on the assignment in Courseworks.

Class #3 (April 15): Beat reporting

Topics Typical public affairs and specialty beats that the records that go with them / strategies for understanding and preparing for public records on your beat. Beats include: crime/courts; government and politics; business; health care; education

Read *before* class (by Sunday April 12)

- "In the Line of Fire," by CUNY graduate students (IRE finalist 2013), on innocent bystanders.

- "Inside the Hidden World of Thefts...", Washington Post on non-profits.

- "Behind Big Political Gifts, a Mysterious Donor," New York Times

- "Cuomo's Office Hobbled Ethics Inquiries by Moreland Commission", New York Times

Post your comments on one of these stories in the assignment on Courseworks by 11:55pm **Sunday, April 12**.

In class Choose an agency that you might have as a beat, find a public record and begin writing a proper FOI or public records request. We'll work together on this during class.

Due *Sunday, April 19* by 11:55pm. Finish this assignment and submit the public records request.

Class #4 (April 22): Project and enterprise reporting

Topics From idea to records / Strategies in public records requests / Following the paper trail / Getting your arms around a big topic

Read *before* class:

While reading these pieces, keep an eye on the kinds of proof used. What are the advantages and disadvantages of each? We'll discuss, but you don't have to write anything.

- Chapter 13 (XIII) of 10 Days in the Madhouse,_ by Nellie Blye, 1887.

- "At State Run Homes, Abuse and Impunity," by Danny Hakim, The New York Times, March 2011

- "Collapse into Chaos" (link to IRE copy) by Alberto Arce, on Honduran death squads, May 22, 2013. This is an example of how to get records when there are none.

Due Sunday, April 26, 11:55pm:

- Your 500-word profile of a person, building or institution based on public records and secondary research.

Class #5 (Wednesday, April 29):

Tradecraft / mash-ups with data to add an empirical spine / More strategies for records requests.

Read *before* class (tentative):

- Part 1, ["Stream of Wealth Flows..."](#) and 3, [Amid complaints in India...](#) from Towers of Secrecy, on the Time Warner building in New York

In class: (tentative):

- Guest speaker Stephanie Saul on tradecraft
- Getting an empirical spine for investigative reporting
- Review of stories & wrap-up