

## J310F Reporting Words Summer 2020

June 4-July 9, Monday through Friday, 9:30 a.m.-12:20 p.m. online

**Instructor:** John Savage

**Office hours:** Monday through Friday 12:20-1:20 p.m. and by appointment

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### COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course teaches you how to report and write in the manner of a professional journalist — skills that can also help you communicate effectively in a variety of professional settings. This course contains a substantial writing component.

### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

By the end of the course, J310F students will:

1. Recognize the difference between hard news and news features.
2. Produce newsworthy stories through original reporting and writing.
3. Evaluate the information gathered to choose what's newsy, relevant and important.
4. Write clear, well organized, interesting news stories that adhere to AP style.
5. Adhere to ethical standards of journalism and understand laws pertinent to journalists.
6. Identify and find credible and diverse sources.
7. Verify information from the internet, documents and interviews.
8. Conduct meaningful interviews, including asking smart questions.
9. Analyze and explain data and statistics.
10. Incorporate current and historical events and information into reporting and writing for necessary context.

### HOW TO SUCCEED IN J310

**Read news.** Reading news stories help you learn about reporting and writing. You learn how to structure stories, including which types of leads to use, how to use quotes and AP style.

**Be curious.** Being curious leads to better stories, better reporting and more fun! Ask questions of your instructor, your classmates and your sources. If you don't understand something, seek clarification. If something or someone interests you, pursue more information.

**Fake tenacity and resilience until you feel it.** You will be rejected and ignored by sources. Don't complain. Stay persistent and positive. Your grades may not be what you expected after a lifetime of being told you're a great writer. Hang in there.

**Enlist time management strategies.** You have to think ahead – in one class, you could be pitching a story, turning in a different completed story, and working on a rewrite of yet another story. Don't worry; it's doable. But don't procrastinate.

**Seek assistance.** The **Moody Writing Support Program** is more than a writing aid – the program helps students understand what makes a good story and how to pursue it. The program's robust journalism coaching is an asset for J310F students and designed to help them excel in the course. *That's why you are required to take your stories there for consultation with a writing coach.* (More information on Canvas course page.)

**Your classmates are your colleagues.** Treat them as such. You may compete for assignments, but you are NOT competitors. At least not yet. This is one of your first networking opportunities, and if you're lucky, your J310F classmates will remain in your networking circle for decades to come.

### REQUIRED MATERIAL:

Read, listen and watch the news on various platforms: digital, hard copy newspapers, radio and television. Sign up for news alerts and follow established news media outlets on social media. The following are highly recommended:

- ONLINE subscription to The Associated Press Stylebook, [www.apstylebook.com](http://www.apstylebook.com)
- All information on Canvas as well as class handouts.
- Read major news sources at local, national and international levels.
- As a UT student, you have access to the digital Austin American-Statesman! **Read it every morning.** Log in here: <http://nieonline.com/austin/studentconnect.cfm>  
**User name:** to be announced      **Password:** to be announced

## COURSE ASSESSMENTS

**Core components of this course** are the writing assignments, complemented by lab work and quizzes. Most story assignments are completed outside class, while other elements, including drills and quizzes, are completed in lecture and lab. Assignments may be added or dropped as needed.

## GRADING

Your work is evaluated based on professional standards, including newsworthiness, research and original reporting, story structure, and mechanics (grammar, spelling and punctuation, and AP Style). Grading rubrics will be posted on Canvas. The instructor may use plus and minus grades, following this range:

<b>A</b>	94-100	<b>B+</b>	87-89	<b>C+</b>	77-79	<b>D</b>	60-69
<b>A-</b>	90-93	<b>B</b>	84-86	<b>C</b>	70-76	<b>F</b>	59 and lower
		<b>B-</b>	80-83				

**IMPORTANT: YOU MUST EARN AT LEAST an 80 average** in this course to proceed to upper-division courses.

### Grading Breakdown

- **70%: Story assignments.**
- **10%: Quizzes.** Quizzes will contain questions about AP style, grammar, current events and course content.
- **20%: Attendance.** Attending class is the key to doing well! In the past, missing just one summer class has been very detrimental to students' grades.

## STORY ASSIGNMENTS

During the semester, you will write five stories. The following is a brief description of each.

**Story 1: Breaking news (10%).** You'll be given a set of facts and quotes and write a short news story. (400-500 words)

**Story 2: Covering a speech or event (10%).** You will watch a video recording of a speech and report on it. You should quote (1) person giving the speech (2) an expert who can discuss the topic being addressed (3) someone personally involved with the topic being discussed. (500-700 words).

**Story 3: Government story (10%).** You will watch a recorded meeting of a Hood County Commissioners' Court meeting. You will write a story focused on one agenda item from the meeting. You should include (1) quotes from three stakeholders (2) quote from an expert on the issue. (500-700 words)

**Story 4: Diversity news feature (20%).** Diversity is woven into the fabric of ethics and good journalism. Story must be focus on an underrepresented group, including people singled out by gender, race, ethnicity, religion, physical, emotional and intellectual abilities. Story must include (1) at least two people affected by the issue (2) statistics (3) expert opinion. (800-1,000 words).

**Story 5: News feature of your choice (20%).** Report and write a news feature of your choice. Story should include at least three sources and include statistics and expert opinion. (800-1,000 words)

## MORE ON YOUR STORY ASSIGNMENTS

Filing Your Stories

- All stories are submitted as Canvas assignments. A Word file (.doc or .docx) is preferred, though .rtf and .pages are accepted. Do NOT submit .pdf file types or Google Docs links. Save your files as LASTNAME\_STORYSLUG.
- All story assignments are for publication and public consumption. DO NOT tell sources that your story is “only” for class and/or cut deals with sources by promising a story won’t be published.
- Put a working headline and byline on every draft and story. Failure to do so is considered a reporting hole (key missing information that diminishes a story) and will cost you points.

### Cover Sheet

Graded story assignments must be accompanied with a cover sheet (template is on Canvas). Failure to include a cover sheet is considered a reporting hole and will cost you points. The cover sheet includes:

- Your name, the story assignment and the date
- Story slug (one- or two-word description used by newsrooms to distinguish stories)
- The “budget line” or a one- or two-sentence description of the story
- A list of names of sources you interviewed (quoted and unquoted), phone numbers and/or e-mail addresses

### Story Cycles

You just don’t write a story and, boom, it’s published. You get story ideas from events and previous publications; you pitch a story to your editor (me) who approves it; you write multiple drafts before getting the story published. We follow those same steps in this class. Depending on the story assignment, you will also complete:

- A *story analysis* of a published story similar to your assignment.
- *Peer reviews* in which you help edit your colleagues’ work.

### CLASSROOM POLICIES

**Attendance:** Attendance is required and will be taken. You get a zero for any work not turned in if you are absent without an official or medical excuse. **Missing class will significantly hurt your grade.**

**Tardiness:** You will lose half of your daily attendance points if you arrive late to either lecture or lab without an official excuse. Class begins promptly at 9:30. **If you miss assignments due to unexcused tardiness, you cannot make up those missed assignments.**

**Late Work:** Deadlines are *critical* in journalism. Don’t miss them. Late stories will be docked at least one letter grade.

### CONFLICT OF INTEREST

Avoid conflicts of interest – in which you have a vested interest in the people, groups, events or organizations that you might cover – and what could be perceived as conflicts of interest. Do not pitch stories that potentially contain a conflict of interest. Potential conflicts of interest include (but are not limited to):

- School of Journalism and Moody College of Communications instructors, professors, administrators, staffers, and undergraduate and graduate students;
- Friends, family members and their friends, roommates, suitemates;
- Sorority/fraternity sisters/brothers;
- Bosses and former bosses, co-workers and former co-workers;

*When in doubt about a potential conflict related to a story, ask as soon as possible.* If it is discovered after a story pitch has been approved that there is a conflict of interest, I will not accept the story and your deadline will NOT be extended. If you turn in an assignment that involves a conflict of interest, *whether or not you do so mindfully*, you will lose significant points on the assignment.

### UNIVERSITY HONOR CODE AND ACADEMIC DISHONESTY

**University of Texas Honor Code:** The core values of The University of Texas at Austin are learning, discovery, freedom, leadership, individual opportunity and responsibility. Each member of the university is expected to uphold these values through integrity, honesty, trust, fairness and respect toward peers and community.

**Policy on Scholastic Dishonesty:** The University defines academic dishonesty as cheating, plagiarism, unauthorized collaboration, falsifying academic records, and any act designed to avoid participating honestly in the learning process.

Scholastic dishonesty also includes, but is not limited to, providing false or misleading information to receive a postponement or an extension on a test, quiz, or other assignment, and submission of essentially the same written assignment for two courses without the prior permission of the instructor. By accepting this syllabus, you have agreed to these guidelines and must adhere to them. Scholastic dishonesty damages both the student's learning experience and readiness for the future demands of a work-career. Students who violate UT rules on scholastic dishonesty are subject to disciplinary penalties, including the possibility of failure in the course and/or dismissal from UT. For details see: [http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/sjs/acint\\_student.php](http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/sjs/acint_student.php).

**Plagiarism and Academic Dishonesty:** In regard to journalism and J310F, academic dishonesty includes:

- Plagiarizing or using another media source's, individual's or your own (in part or in whole) work and representing it as new for this class. If you've done or started the work in another class, you must inform your instructor before pitching the story.
- Pitching or turning in an assignment from a previous class without instructor permission.
- Making up quotes, sources and facts.
- Not interviewing people who appear in your stories.
- Not giving appropriate attribution or citation of a source or background information. In this class, you will learn how to properly attribute information.
- Cheating during a quiz or any assignment, graded or not

**NOTE:** Assignments in this course may be processed by TurnItIn, a tool that compares submitted material to an archived database of published work to check for potential plagiarism. Other methods will also be used to determine if a story is original work. Regardless of the results of any TurnItIn submission, I will make the final determination as to whether a story has been plagiarized.

## GENERAL GUIDELINES AND RESOURCES

The university has numerous resources to aid and support students. Use these to help you succeed in your classes and life.

**Counseling and Mental Health Services:** Taking care of your general well-being is an important step in being a successful student. If stress, test anxiety, racing thoughts, feeling unmotivated or anything else is getting in your way, there are options available for support.

For *immediate* support:

- Visit/Call the Counseling and Mental Health Center (CMHC): M-F 8-5p | SSB, Fifth floor | [512-471-3515](http://cmhc.utexas.edu) | [cmhc.utexas.edu](http://cmhc.utexas.edu)
- CMHC Crisis Line: 24/7 | [512.471.2255](http://512.471.2255) | [cmhc.utexas.edu/24hourcounseling.html](http://cmhc.utexas.edu/24hourcounseling.html)

**CARE Counselor** in the Moody College of Communication is: Abby Simpson, LCSW  
|CMA 4.134 | [512-471-7642](http://512-471-7642) (Please *leave a message* if she is unavailable)

**FREE Services** at CMHC:

- Brief assessments and referral services
- Mental health & wellness articles - [cmhc.utexas.edu/commonconcerns.html](http://cmhc.utexas.edu/commonconcerns.html)
- MindBody Lab - [cmhc.utexas.edu/mindbodylab.html](http://cmhc.utexas.edu/mindbodylab.html)
- Classes, workshops, & groups - [cmhc.utexas.edu/groups.html](http://cmhc.utexas.edu/groups.html)

**The Sanger Learning Center:** Even though we require J310F students utilize the Moody Writing Support Program, students are welcome to take advantage of Sanger Center's classes and workshops, private learning specialist appointments, peer academic coaching and tutoring for more than 70 courses in 15 different subject areas. For more information, visit <http://www.utexas.edu/ugs/slc> or call 512-471-3614 (JES A332).

**Canvas:** This web-based course management system with password-protected access at <http://canvas.utexas.edu/> —is used to distribute course materials, to communicate and collaborate online, to post grades, to submit assignments, and for online quizzes and surveys. ***It is required for this course.*** You can find support in using Canvas at the ITS Help Desk at 475-9400, Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. or with tutorials at: <https://utexas.instructure.com/courses/633028/pages/student-tutorials>

**Using Email for Official Correspondence to Students:** Email is recognized as an official mode of university correspondence; therefore, you are responsible for reading your email for university and course-related information and announcements. You are responsible to keep the university informed about changes to your email address. You should check your email regularly and frequently—to stay current with university-related communications, some of which may be time-critical. You can find UT Austin’s policies and instructions for updating your e-mail address at <http://www.utexas.edu/its/policies/emailnotify.php>.

**Students Needing Accommodations:** Please notify me of any modification/adaptation you may require to accommodate a disability-related need. You will be requested to provide documentation to the Dean of Student's Office in order that the most appropriate accommodations can be determined. Specialized services are available on campus through Services for Students with Disabilities. For more information, contact Services for Students with Disabilities at 471-6259 (voice) or 232-2937 (video phone). Also: <http://www.utexas.edu/diversity/ddce/ssd/>

**Q drop Policy:** The State of Texas has enacted a law that limits the number of course drops for academic reasons to six (6).

**Resources for Learning & Life at UT Austin:** The University of Texas has numerous resources for students to provide support for your learning, including: The UT Learning Center: <http://www.utexas.edu/student/utlc/> Undergraduate Writing Center: <http://uwc.utexas.edu/>

**ITS:** Need help with technology? Call the ITS Help Desk at 475-9400 or go to <http://www.utexas.edu/its/>

**Libraries:** Need help searching for information? <http://www.lib.utexas.edu/>

## IMPORTANT SAFETY INFORMATION

**Behavior Concerns Advice Line (BCAL):** If you have concerns about the safety or behavior of fellow students, TAs or instructors, call BCAL (the Behavior Concerns Advice Line): **512-232-5050**. Your call can be anonymous. If something doesn’t feel right – it probably isn’t. Trust your instincts and share your concerns. This service is provided through a partnership among the Office of the Dean of Students, the Counseling and Mental Health Center (CMHC), the Employee Assistance Program (EAP) and The University of Texas Police Department (UTPD). Again, call 512-232-5050 or visit <http://www.utexas.edu/safety/bcal>.

**Student Emergency Services:** <http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/emergency/>

**Evacuation Information:** The following recommendations regarding emergency evacuation from the Office of Campus Safety and Security, 512-471-5767, <http://www.utexas.edu/safety/>

Occupants of buildings on The UT campus are required to evacuate buildings when an alarm or alert is activated. Alarm activation or announcement requires exiting and assembling outside, unless told otherwise by an official representative.

- Familiarize yourself with all exit doors of each classroom and building you may occupy. Remember that the nearest exit door may not be the one you used when entering the building.
- Students requiring assistance in evacuation shall inform their instructor in writing during the first week of class.
- In the event of an evacuation, follow the instruction of faculty or class instructors. Do not re-enter a building unless given instructions by the following: Austin Fire Department, The University of Texas at Austin Police Department, or Fire Prevention Services office.

Link to information regarding emergency evacuation routes and emergency procedures can be found at: [www.utexas.edu/emergency](http://www.utexas.edu/emergency)

**Sample class schedule:**

9:30-10:30 lectures on Zoom  
 10:30-11:00 newswriting/grammar/AP style exercises in breakout rooms  
 11:00-11:30 Zoom group discussion of exercises  
 11:30-12:20 reporting, writing, writing center appointments

			6/4 Zoom lecture: intro to course, syllabus discussion	6/5 Zoom lecture: What's news?
6/8 Zoom lecture: What's news? II	6/9 Zoom lecture: story structure, leads and nut grafs	6/10 Zoom lecture: story structure, leads and nut grafs II	6/11 Zoom lecture: AP style	6/12 <b>AP style, grammar and current events quiz I</b>  <b>breaking news story due 3 p.m.</b>
6/15 no Zoom lecture, individual story consultations	6/16 Zoom lecture: covering a speech  Watch: Sasha Baron Cohen ADL speech. Read associated handout.	6/17 Zoom lecture: reportorial persistence	6/18 Zoom lecture: covering government, FOIA	6/19 <b>AP style, grammar and current events quiz II</b>  <b>speech story due 3 p.m.</b>
6/22 no Zoom lecture, individual story consultations	6/23 Zoom lecture: covering government, FOIA II  Watch Hood County Commissioners' Court meeting 20:20-29, 38-53. Read associated handout.	6/24 Zoom lecture: news features, generating story ideas, pitching	6/25 Zoom lecture: news features, generating story ideas, pitching. Diversity story pitches	6/26 <b>AP style, grammar and current events quiz III</b>  <b>government story due 3 p.m.</b>
6/29 no Zoom lecture, individual story consultations	6/30 Zoom lecture: finding sources, interviewing, verification	7/1 Zoom lecture: finding sources, interviewing, verification	7/2 Zoom lecture: feature writing tips	7/3 Zoom lecture: TBD  <b>diversity news feature due 3 p.m.</b>
7/6 no Zoom lecture, individual story consultations	7/7 no Zoom lecture, individual story consultations	7/8 Zoom lecture: TBD	7/9 Zoom lecture: TBD	7/10 Zoom lecture: TBD  <b>final news feature due 3 p.m.</b>