

Public Issues Writing/Reporting

JOUR 4180-001/M50 & JOUR 6180-001

Fall 2022

Class Meeting: Tuesdays 5:30-8:30 p.m., MJ 202

Prof. Caroline Bauman

Office Hours: By Appointment.

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COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Catalog description

Emphasis placed on deadline writing and critiquing of political and public policy news. Encourages familiarity with the methods and insights of political and social science and develops confidence to use those methods and insights in reporting. Encourages use of social media to cover and explain campaigns and policy.

Prerequisites

JOUR 3120 or 3629 & JOUR 3526

Textbooks, Software and Required Materials

- ***“The Investigative Reporter’s Handbook: A Guide to Documents, Databases and Techniques,”*** by Brant Houston and Investigative Reporters and Editors Inc., sixth edition.
- ***“Telling True Stories: A Nonfiction Writers’ Guide”*** from the Nieman Foundation at Harvard University, edited by Mark Kramer and Wendy Call.

Accessing the course website

1. Go to the University of Memphis online learning home page: <http://memphis.instructure.com>
2. Log in using your University of Memphis username and password.
3. In the Term Year course list available to you, click on the link for JRSJ 4180 – 001/6180-001 to enter your course and read the instructions on the welcoming page

Course Requirements

You will investigate two policy arenas in Memphis ripe for public issues reporting: housing and education. These won’t be the only topics we focus on this semester, but they will be the focus of your reporting efforts.

You will turn in two stories throughout the semester. Elements for those stories will be required to be turned in more frequently to gauge your progress and will be graded. You will conduct an interview with an investigative journalist active in the field, and turn that into a presentation for the class. Finally, you will receive weekly quizzes related to the reading and/or current news events.

Class format: We’ll meet in person, once a week, with a break halfway through class. Bring whatever you

need to focus well in class (e.g. snacks and meals. If you bring candy, bring enough for your instructor).

Attendance: You get one free excluded absence. After that, your grade will be affected (25 points deducted per absence). Do not come to class if you are sick. Talk to me prior to the class you'll be absent and I'll provide a virtual link. Make every effort to be on time. We will start on time.

Cell phones: Not allowed during class unless part of the lesson. Please put your phone on Do Not Disturb and put it away.

Laptops: We'll meet in a computer lab, so laptops are not required. Feel free to use one if preferred.

Assignments: Unless otherwise stated, assignments and weekly quizzes are due by the beginning of class.

Late assignments will be accepted only up to 24 hours after the due date and time and will be assessed a 10% point penalty. Deadlines are critical in journalism, but life happens. If something is going on, contact me before an assignment is due, and we'll talk.

About your instructor

Caroline Bauman leads engaged journalism at Chalkbeat, a nonprofit news organization dedicated to covering education and equity. She works with Chalkbeat's eight local bureaus — including in Memphis — to bring vital journalism to readers, crowdsource journalism projects, engage via community events and social media, and also leads Chalkbeat source diversity efforts. Prior to her role as community engagement manager at Chalkbeat, she served as Chalkbeat Tennessee's community editor and reported on the state-run Achievement School District. Her investigation into a charter school's falsification of grades led to a district investigation and ultimate vote to shutter the school.

Bauman has a master's degree from the University of Missouri as a Thurgood Marshall Fellow, and you can find her bylines in the Kansas City Star and Financial Times. She was named an Online News Writers Association 2021 MJ Bear fellow. Outside of journalism, Bauman is the president of the Vollintine Evergreen Neighborhood Association and devote to Memphis food and music.

Grading

15 weekly pop quizzes	10 points each = 150 points total
10 elements for stories	40 points each = 400 points total
1 class presentation	100 points each = 100 points total
2 first drafts of stories	75 points each = 150 points total
2 completed stories	100 points each = 200 points total
Total	1,000 points

A+ = 96.5-100%; A = 92.5-96.4%; A- = 89.5-92.4%

B+ = 86.5-89.4%; B = 82.5-86.4%; B- = 79.5-82.4%

C+ = 76.5-79.4%; C = 72.5-76.4%; C- = 69.5-72.4%

D+ = 66.5-69.4%; D = 59.5-66.4%

F 0-59.4%

Other issues

Cheating, plagiarism, and unethical behavior will not be tolerated. Evidence of such behavior may be

grounds for an automatic “F.” As a journalist, you are entrusted with certain privileges and responsibilities. Your research might lead to sensitive information on individuals. Any misuse of this information – identity theft, trolling, doxing, etc. – may be grounds for an automatic “F.” We are here to learn and to serve the public good, not to serve our own interests or to harm others.

I am committed to including and valuing the identities and voices of all students, especially those from historically marginalized and vulnerable groups. I hope we will all hold each other accountable for fostering an inclusive and anti-racist learning environment as we tackle complex questions together.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Week 1, Aug. 23: Introduction to this course and one another

What is investigative journalism?

Who are you and where are you going?

Assignments due Aug. 30:

Read:

- The Investigative Reporter’s Handbook: Chapters 1 & 2
- Telling True Stories: pages 1-16
- Recent stories from The Commercial Appeal

Write:

- Your personal reporter’s mission statement (no more than two paragraphs)
 - [Making Journalism Your Mission](#), Tom Huang

Week 2: Aug 30: Introduction to covering Memphis issues and systems

Issues affecting Memphis and how Memphis works from reporters at The Commercial Appeal

Also, the basics of FOIAs

Assignments due Sept. 6:

Complete:

Identify two local news stories (Commercial Appeal, Daily Memphian, Chalkbeat, MLK50, Action News 5, Fox13, Local 24 or WREG Channel 3) that focus on 1) housing and 2) education.

Answer:

1. Who are the human sources, primary documents, and secondary sources in the article? (10 pts)
 1. What remaining questions do you have about housing, education, or criminal justice/mass incarceration after reading this article?

Read:

- The Investigative Reporter’s Handbook Chapters 3&4; Chapter 23
- Housing stories from MLK50

Week 3, Sept 6: What to know about Memphis housing

Guest speaker: Investigating housing for MLK50, Jacob Steimer

We’ll do over how to find data on housing issues, finding and interviewing sources, and how to report community-centered stories.

Assignments due Sept. 13:

Complete:

1. Pick a specific issue within Memphis housing worthy of further investigation. Find at least three secondary sources that have previously covered the issue in some way. Come up with a key question, and using the storyboard on page 10 of The Investigative Reporter's Handbook, complete your own storyboard for your question. (10 pts)
2. Who are the human sources and what are the primary documents and secondary sources needed to start reporting your article? Make a list of at least 10 potential sources (link to primary documents and secondary sources where possible, or note if you'd need to FOIA for the data. List contact information for any human sources). (10 pts)

Read:

- The Investigative Reporter's Chapters 5&6
- Telling True Stories: pages 24-33
- [Elmore Leonard's rules for writers](#), The Guardian

Week 4, Sept 13: Housing – documents and data

Public documents & FOIAs (continued). Special guest and FOIA expert, Jessica Huseman, editorial director of Votebeat.

Assignments due Sept. 20:

Complete:

1. Using your storyboard/source list from last week, identify data sets you might need for your investigation. Draft a FOIA example. (10 pts)
 1. Write a focus statement of no more than 25 words for your story (reference pages 87-88 in The Investigative Reporter's).
2. Start reporting! Set up at least 3 interviews for your story and begin collecting data. Your first draft is due **Oct. 3 at midnight**.

Read:

- The Investigative Reporter's Chapters 7
- Telling True Stories: pages 47-51
- [How the Cook County Assessor Failed Taxpayers](#), ProPublica & The Chicago Tribune

Week 5, Sept. 20: Ethics in reporting.

Investigative reporting ethics and interviewing with Laura Faith Kebede at the Institute for Public Service Reporting at the University of Memphis. Plus, more on interviewing, outlining, and leads/nut graphs.

Assignments due Sept. 27:

Complete:

1. Submit a draft lead for your story (reference page 89 in The Investigative Reporter's). (10 pts)
 1. Submit a draft nut graph for your story.
 2. Submit any FOIAs for your story, if applicable.
2. Continue reporting. **Your first draft is due Oct 3 at midnight**.

Read:

- The Investigative Reporter's Chapters 8
- Telling True Stories: pages 89-91; 109-121

Week 6, Sept. 27: Putting the story together

Guest speaker and story troubleshooting

How I did the story: David Waters and Marc Perrusquia, the Institute for Public Service Reporting at the

University of Memphis.

Assignment due Oct. 3 at midnight:

Complete:

- First draft of your housing story (75 pts). Must include:
 - 5+ sources that are a range of human sources, primary documents, and secondary sources.
 - 2+ references to data.
 - Be 800-1000 words in length.
 - Impeccable AP style, spelling, and grammar.

Week 7, Oct. 4: Peer review stories, guest speaker

Introduction to education in Memphis with Sami West, Chalkbeat.

Peer reviews of housing stories. How to fact check.

Assignments due Oct 18:

1. Based on instructor and peer feedback, write the second and final draft of your housing story (100 pts).
 1. In the margins, insert your fact checks or “cqs.” (reference page 104-105 in The Investigative Reporter’s).
2. Pick a specific issue within Memphis education worthy of further investigation. Find at least three secondary sources that have previously covered the issue in some way. Come up with a key question, and using the storyboard on page 10 of The Investigative Reporter’s Handbook, complete your own storyboard for your question. (10 pts)
 1. Who are the human sources and what are the primary documents and secondary sources needed to start reporting your article? Make a list of at least 10 potential sources (link to primary documents and secondary sources where possible, or note if you’d need to FOIA for the data. List contact information for any human sources).

Read:

- The Investigative Reporter’s Chapters 13
- Telling True Stories: pages 145-154
- Chalkbeat story examples

Week 8, Oct. 11: No class --- fall break

Week 9, Oct. 18: Education and data

Guest speaker: Data team at Chalkbeat. Plus, basic data visualization.

Assignments due Oct 25:

Complete:

1. Using your storyboard/source list from last week, identify data sets you might need for your investigation. Draft a FOIA example. (10 pts)
2. Write a focus statement of no more than 25 words for your story (reference pages 87-88 in The Investigative Reporter’s). (10 pts)
3. Start reporting! Set up at least 3 interviews for your story and begin collecting data. Your first draft is due **Nov. 7 at midnight**.

Read:

- Story example for next week
- Telling True Stories: pages 172-182; 189-193

Week 10, Oct. 25: Education, interviewing, and social media

Interviewing techniques and social media sourcing. Plus, story troubleshooting.
How I did the story with Samantha Smylie, Chalkbeat Chicago

Assignments due Nov 1:

Complete:

- Submit a draft lead for your story (reference page 89 in The Investigative Reporter's). (10 pts)
- Submit a draft nut graph for your story. (10 pts)
- Submit any FOIAs for your story, if applicable.
- Continue reporting. Your first draft is **due Nov. 7 at midnight**.
- Identify and contact an investigative reporter for your interview. You'll turn this interview into a presentation for the class. **Your presentation is due Nov. 22.**

Read:

- The Investigative Reporter's Chapters 16-17
- Telling True Stories: pages 198-208

Week 11, Nov. 1: Investigating social justice and poverty

Plus, more on engaged journalism.

Assignments due Nov 7, midnight:

Complete:

- First draft of your education story (75 pts). Must include:
 - 5+ sources that are a range of human sources, primary documents, and secondary sources.
 - 2+ references to data.
 - Be 800-1000 words in length.
 - Impeccable AP style, spelling, and grammar.
- Don't forget to set up an interview with your investigative journalist. You'll turn in a summary of your interview on Nov. 15. You'll turn this interview into a presentation for the class. Your presentation is due Nov. 22.

Read:

- The Investigative Reporter's Chapters 11-12

Week 12, Nov. 8: Investigating the judicial system and police

Assignments due Nov 15:

Complete:

- Interview an investigative reporter and turn in a summary of your interview on Nov. 15. You'll turn this interview into a presentation for the class. Your presentation is due Nov. 22.

Read:

- The Investigative Reporter's Chapters 19-20

Week 13, Nov 15: Investigating nonprofits and healthcare

Plus, peer reviews of education stories.

Assignment due Nov 22:

Read:

- Telling True Stories: pages 239-243; 246-251

Complete:

- Class presentations from interviews with investigative journalists (100 pts).

Assignment due Dec. 6:

- Based on instructor and peer feedback, write the second and final draft of your education story.

Your final story is due Dec. 6.

- In the margins, insert your fact checks or “cqs.” (reference page 104-105 in The Investigative Reporter’s).

Week 14, Nov 22: Sharing out – investigative journalist interviews

Class presentations based on interviews with investigative reporters.

Assignment due Nov 29:

Read:

- Current events in Commercial Appeal, Daily Memphian, Chalkbeat, MLK50, Action News 5, Fox13, Local 24 or WREG Channel 3.

Assignment due Dec. 6:

- Based on instructor and peer feedback, write the second and final draft of your education story.

Your final story is due Dec. 6. (100 pts)

- In the margins, insert your fact checks or “cqs.” (reference page 104-105 in The Investigative Reporter’s).

Week 15, Nov 29: How to continue your reporting and get a job in journalism

Final story due by Dec 6 at midnight

ASSESSMENT AND OUTCOMES

Professional Values and Competencies in JOUR 4180

- Apply the principles and laws of freedom of speech and press, both in a global context and in the United States.
- Demonstrate an understanding of the multicultural history and role of professionals and institutions in shaping communications.
- Demonstrate culturally proficient communication that empowers those traditionally disenfranchised in society, especially as grounded in race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation and ability, domestically and globally, across communication and media contexts.
- Present images and information effectively and creatively, using appropriate tools and technologies.
- Write correctly and clearly in forms and styles appropriate for the communications professions, audiences and purposes they serve.
- Demonstrate an understanding of professional ethical principles and work ethically in pursuit of truth, accuracy, fairness and diversity.
- Apply critical thinking skills in conducting research and evaluating information by methods appropriate to the communications professions in which they work.

- Effectively and correctly apply basic numerical and statistical concepts.
- Critically evaluate their own work and that of others for accuracy and fairness, clarity, appropriate style and grammatical correctness.
- Apply current tools and technologies appropriate for the communications professions in which they work.

How professional values and competencies will be met

Cognitive objectives to be mastered (ability to explain, analyze, understand, think critically)

- Students will recognize and critically analyze the role the press plays as a watchdog of government and other public organizations.
- Students will develop the finer techniques of information gathering including: searching public records, interviewing uncooperative or hostile news sources, sensitivity in reporting on disasters and tragedies and avoiding manipulation by political image makers and other news sources.
- Students will learn the importance of a diversified press corps and diverse news sources.
- Students will develop writing skills that emphasize fairness, balance, clarity and in-depth understanding of complex public topics.
- Students will discuss and analyze various ethical dilemmas in public affairs reporting.
- Students will learn and apply multimedia storytelling techniques appropriate to public issues writing and reporting.
- Students will learn to discern which Internet sources are legitimate for news stories and which are not.

Performance standards to be met (demonstrable skills, abilities, techniques, applied competencies)

- Students will report on public entities including governmental bodies, police, and courts.
- Students will conduct an in-person and online search for public records.
- Students will monitor all types of media during a two-month period and turn in an in-depth analysis of the media's coverage of a topic chosen by the professor at the beginning of the semester.
- Students will be tested on current events.
- Students will demonstrate the ability to meet strict deadlines.
- Students will conclude the semester by using their acquired interview techniques, public records gathering ability, writing skills and multimedia skills to produce an investigative or in-depth news package on a public issue involving at least six news sources. This assignment will count 20 percent of the final grade.

How assessment of student learning will be met

Awareness

- Become aware of public issues through class discussions, journalistic research and current event quizzes of issues affecting news and the industry such as: diversity, multicultural reporting and ethics.

Understanding

- Understand the importance of using diverse sources and exercising multicultural reporting techniques
- Understand objective writing and discern which material to include in a story

Application

- Write four multi-sourced, researched stories regarding issues of public concern that may include coverage of local police, fire, government, courts, or governmental bodies.
- Produce multimedia components for each story.
- Complete a culminating public issues multimedia project that demonstrates all of the skills learned in this course from research and information gathering to diverse sourcing to multimedia storytelling.
- Create an online portal for the class project.
- Use various outlets and sources to obtain secondary data and information for their assignments and projects.
- Apply creative and ethical interview techniques.

JOURNALISM AND STRATEGIC MEDIA POLICIES

Portfolio requirement

All students in the Department of Journalism and Strategic Media are required to develop and maintain an active portfolio of their work. Undergraduate students are to begin the portfolio in JRSM 3900 and graduate students are to begin in JRSM 7002. Students are to contribute to it in every skills course thereafter. The portfolio should contain samples of the student's work from courses and/or professional experiences and should develop as the student builds skills. Portfolios will undergo a final, external review while students are enrolled in their capstone courses.

Students may use any type of web hosting for their portfolios, but it must have an independent and professional URL. Students may use any content management system, but students are encouraged to use WordPress, Wix or SquareSpace. Students are encouraged to consider purchasing a URL and hosting if they plan to use the portfolio for a long term, but they must keep the portfolio active for six months following graduation from the University of Memphis.

Students should have a professional email address they plan to use throughout their professional lives, via a common email service, such as Gmail.

All portfolios must contain the following items:

- Samples of work from courses and/or professional activities. (Example: Broadcasting students must include a video reel)
- A current résumé
- A personal profile
- Contact information/means of contact
- Social media links

Students might wish to include a blog, video reels, photograph galleries, SoundSlides presentations, design PDFs, audio files and writing pieces as examples of professional work. The professional work should ultimately be tailored to the career the student seeks after graduation. Thus, each student's portfolio should show a unique blend of work.

Email

Students must have their UofM email accounts activated. Students using another provider, such as

Google, are required to have all UofM email forwarded to that account. Students should go to the <http://iam.memphis.edu> website to implement forwarding of UofM email. Students are required to check their email daily. They are responsible for complying with any email sent to by professors or others in the University.

Electronic devices

Some classes require a tablet, laptop or a smartphone. Others do not. Instructors will set the policy for their specific classes.

Attendance

Class attendance is mandatory in Journalism and Strategic Media. Students may be assigned a failing grade for the semester for nonattendance or habitual late arrival. No late work will be accepted without prior arrangements with the class professor. Students may not be permitted to make up any missing work unless it is for an absence because of illness or other catastrophic emergency, such as a death in the family that can be documented (e.g. with a doctor's note or a copy of the newspaper obituary). Journalism and Strategic Media is a professional program, and students are expected to understand and comply with deadlines. Students who have some problem making it to class on time should make arrangements to correct the problem or consider taking another class. Students should consider this class as a "job" in the educational process and be on time just as they would elsewhere.

Course repetition

Majors and minors who fail to earn the minimum passing grade ("C-") in a class required by their program of study in Journalism and Strategic Media more than three times will be dropped from the program.

Students may not use or submit work from a previous course, even if it is the same course being repeated, to fulfill requirements for assignments in another course. If students wish to substantially rework the original submission, or to work with the same general idea, that may be permissible upon discussion with and written approval from the professor of the current course. All written work will be checked for policy adherence via TurnItIn.com. All creative work will be checked for policy adherence by the professor and judged against previous submissions. The only exception to this policy is the student's online portfolio and its attendant pieces (for example, the résumé and logo).

Academic integrity

In addition to University-wide policies stated in the Code of Student Rights and Responsibilities, the Department of Journalism and Strategic Media considers making up quotes from sources, turning in substantially the same assignment for credit in two different courses or students receiving any assistance from others for work assigned to be done on their own, as acts of cheating punishable to the degree determined appropriate by the course instructor and department chair. Punishment may include grade reductions or seeking dismissal of the student from the University.

Further, as this is a journalism and strategic media class, students are expected to comply with copyright law and must have sufficient permission to use any copyrighted materials used in creative projects, unless otherwise informed in cases of exercises or reproduction.

Your written work may be submitted to Turnitin.com, or a similar electronic detection method, for rating originality of your ideas. Also to evaluate proper use and assignment of sources. As part of this process, you may require to submit electronic as well as hard copies of your work. Other instructions to follow

may also be given. By taking this course, you agree that all assignments may undergo this review process. The assignment may be included as a source document in Turnitin.com's restricted access database. It is solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism in such documents. Assignments not submitted according to the instructor's procedures may be penalized or may not be accepted at all. (*Office of Legal Counsel, October 11, 2018*)

Online SETEs

Students are urged to complete the SETEs evaluation of this course. Once the instructor has posted grades, student can immediately see that grade, provided they have completed a the SETE for that class. To access evaluation forms, students should log in to MyMemphis using their UUIDs and email passwords; click on the gray "Student" tab; complete an evaluation for each course listed and hit the "Submit" button at the bottom of the form. Completing the SETE will only take a few minutes. Faculty take the evaluations very seriously and use them to improve courses and instructional quality. Student feedback is essential and is appreciated.

Deadlines

All deadlines are firm. This is journalism and strategic media. Students needing an extension on an assignment must receive approval from the instructor. Exceptions will be made for reasonable circumstances if the student notifies the instructor prior to the due date.

AP Style and grammar

All written work in this class must follow the AP Stylebook and accepted rules of grammar and punctuation. Students are responsible for learning these rules and checking their work for errors.

Disability and accommodations

Students who need an accommodation based on the impact of a disability should contact the Office for Disability Resources for Students at 901-678-2880 in 110 Wilder Tower Hall to coordinate reasonable accommodations for students with documented disabilities.

Diversity and inclusivity

Students are required to respect the differences of others and treat all persons with respect. Discriminatory, derogatory and threatening language or behavior will not be tolerated. Further, students are expected to consider their work through a diverse mind. Media reach a mass audience, and students should be aware of how those messages are received by a diverse audience.

Weather policy

Always check with local media and the University of Memphis website regarding inclement weather. If the University is closed or classes are canceled, this course will not meet. However, students will still be responsible for that day's work.

Student support

Students who are experiencing personal or academic challenges including, but not limited to food or housing issues, family needs, or other stressors, should visit the Office of Student Accountability, Outreach & Support page to learn about resources that can help: <https://www.memphis.edu/saos/sos/crisis-resources.php>. Any student who faces personal challenges including, but not limited to securing their food or housing and believes this may affect their performance in the course is urged to contact the Office of Student Accountability, Outreach & Support (901-678-2187) located in the University Center, Suite 359 for assistance. Students may also talk with course instructors about the challenges they are experiencing. Instructors may be able to assist in connecting with campus or community support.

COVID-19 protocols

If a student tests positive for COVID-19, they need to notify the Dean of Students Office at deanofstudents@memphis.edu and notify the University of their result. Faculty are expected to be accommodating with extra time for assignments; however, decisions will vary on a case-by-case basis according to the severity of the student's illness. To prevent the spread of COVID-19, students are encouraged to wear masks indoors, wash hands frequently and wipe down their workstations with sanitizing wipes before and after class.