

MCJ-352 Investigative Journalism (3 credit hours)

Course Description

1. This course will teach students to learn the tools and skills used by investigative journalists. Students will go beyond the tasks of event-oriented daily news coverage and learn to add context to their stories while remaining accurate and credible. Using a course design developed and used at the Investigative Reporters and Writers centre, the course will focus on the use of a “documents state of mind”, effective interviewing skills, and sourcing. Students will work on a semester-long investigative news project alongside lectures and discussions. Through the project, the students will understand background research techniques, story planning and time management, ethical dilemmas, organisation and other important areas of investigative journalism.

Course Objectives and Learning Outcomes

2. After completion of the course, students will be able to:
- a. Plan and execute an investigative news project
 - b. Learn to use documents and freedom of information laws to further reporting
 - c. Learn sourcing and attribution techniques
 - d. Write a longform investigative story

3. Contents

- a. What is an investigative story?
- b. The investigative journalist's mindset
- c. A documents state of mind
- d. Planning an investigative news project
- e. Tiers of sources of information
- f. Backgrounding techniques
- g. Using the Internet as a backgrounding tool
- h. Freedom of Information laws
- i. Interviewing techniques
- j. Source cultivation
- k. Accuracy checking for an investigative story
- l. Ethical dilemmas of investigative reporting
- m. Story organization
- n. Writing for an investigative news project

- o. Use of online tools to present data for an investigative story

Required Readings

1. Houston, B. & IRE (2007). *The Investigative Reporter's Handbook: A Guide to Documents, Databases and Techniques (5th Ed.)*. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's.
2. Wilcox, Nolte (1997). *Public Relations Advertising, Writing & Media Techniques*. 3rd Edition, New York: Longman Publications
3. Newswriting on Deadline Jul 24, 2003 by Tony Rogers
4. CNN Student Bureau Broadcast Journalism by David Keith Cohler (Prentice Hall)
- Introduction to Mass Communication by Stanley Baran (McGraw Hill)
5. Video Field Production and Editing by Campesi and Sherriffs