

**Loyola University Chicago
COMM 362 Journalism Research Methods
Fall 2017**

**Tuesdays and Thursdays 1 – 2:15
School of Communication Room 015**

**Professor Patty Lamberti
School of Communication
51 E. Pearson Street/Suite 223B
Office Phone: (312) 915-6860
Email: plamberti@luc.edu
Office Hours : Tuesdays and Thursdays 2 :30-3 :30**

Course Description

The evolution of information technology has made more information readily available to journalists and the general public.

As a result, the journalist has an increased role as a responsible investigator and interpreter of information. The goal of this class is to teach students the skills necessary to fulfill this role. Some of the issues that guide the development of this course:

- Journalists rely too much on Google when doing research, at the expense of more sophisticated search techniques.
- Journalists rely too much on online research, ignoring the fact that some data are not available online.
- Some of the traditional journalistic skills such as reading a city budget or interpreting census data are at risk of being ignored.
- Journalists need to be able to do database-driven reporting, importing data into databases and finding correlations that could serve as story ideas.

Learning Goals and Outcomes

Students will learn the following:

- How to use and navigate databases
- Basic statistics and mathematical terms
- Spreadsheets/Computer Assisted Reporting
- Obtaining and interpreting government documents (e.g. police reports, city budgets)
- Obtaining, reading and interpreting legal documents
- Interpreting scientific studies and research
- Obtaining, reading and interpreting business documents
- Conducting and interpreting polls
- Filing FOIA requests
- Open meeting laws

Required Materials

All readings for this class are online. Click on the links below. If the links don't work, copy and paste them into your browser.

Grading

As students learn journalistic research skills, they will be asked to demonstrate their acquired knowledge by producing stories about the research they've found.

Assignments:

Online math course: 100 points
 FOIA assignment: 100 points
 City Issue Map: 150 points
 Survey/poll infographic: 200
 Final Project: 250 points
 In-Class Exercises and Quizzes: 100 points
 Participation/Professionalism: 100 points

Grading Criteria for Assignments involving writing

A: Publishable work with no spelling, grammatical, punctuation or AP Style errors and the proper information and sources written in a lively, well-organized manner.
B: Minimal spelling, grammatical, punctuation and/or AP Style errors. Minimal missing information and sources; minimal problems with the lead and organization.
C: Notable number of spelling, grammatical, punctuation and/or AP Style errors. Noticeable missing information and sources; problems with the lead and organization.
D: Significant number of spelling, grammatical, punctuation and/or AP Style errors. Significant missing information and sources; Significant problems with the lead and organization.
F: Misspelling of proper names. Other major spelling, grammatical, punctuation and/or AP Style errors. Almost total lack of information and sources; Severe problems with the lead and organization.

Rewrites

If you receive a grade of C- or below on a writing assignment, you have one week to rewrite the story for an improved grade.

Participation and Professionalism: You are majoring in journalism, so you must learn to speak, pitch ideas and voice your opinion. Not speaking in class will result in a lower participation grade. You can't participate if you're not in class, nor is it professional to blow off class. If you miss class a lot, don't expect full credit for participation/professionalism.

You will also be penalized for disrupting the class. Talking on cell phones, texting, using laptops, interfering with classmates, e-mailing, sleeping, putting your head down, closing your eyes and hoping I don't notice, doing Sudoku, instant messaging, checking Facebook or any other web site and other disruptions (which includes arriving late or

leaving early) will lead to failure of the course. The golden rule? While we are talking, don't touch anything electronic.

Due date policy:

Want to be a journalist? Then learn to deal with deadlines.

The due date policy for this class is very strict.

Projects are due at the beginning of class. You cannot walk into class ten minutes late and submit the assignment. You cannot turn in a project after the deadline.

If you submit a project after the deadline, you will lose one letter grade per day.

That said, life happens. If you are truly sick, or have an emergency on the day a project is due, you must turn in proof of your illness and emergency – which I may verify. Acceptable proof includes a doctor's note, a police report, an obituary, etc. The proof must include a reference to the date and time. Traffic, not hearing your alarm, etc. are not acceptable excuses.

Individual Assignment Grade Scale

A: 100-94
A-: 93-90
B+: 89-88
B: 87-83
B-: 82-80
C+ 79-78
C: 77-73
C-: 72-70
D+: 69-68
D: 67-63
D-: 62-60
F: 59-0

Style and Spelling

It is important that you learn proper newspaper style, so refer often to your Associated Press Stylebook. Spelling and grammar are equally important. Your grade will suffer if your copy contains style and spelling errors.

Academic Dishonesty Policy

Academic dishonesty can take several forms, including, but not limited to cheating, plagiarism, copying another student's work, and submitting false documents. Cheating includes, but is not limited to, such acts as:

- Obtaining, distributing, or communicating examination materials prior to the scheduled examination without the consent of the teacher;
- Providing information to another student during an examination;

- Obtaining information from another student or any other person during an examination;
- Using any material or equipment during an examination without consent of the instructor, or in a manner which is not authorized by the instructor;
- Attempting to change answers after the examination has been submitted;
- Unauthorized collaboration, or the use in whole or part of another student's work, on homework, lab reports, programming assignments, and any other course work which is completed outside of the classroom;
- Falsifying medical or other documents to petition for excused absences or extensions of deadlines; or
- Any other action that, by omission or commission, compromises the integrity of the academic evaluation process.

Plagiarism is a serious violation of the standards of academic honesty. Plagiarism is the appropriation of ideas, language, work, or intellectual property of another, either by intent or by negligence, without sufficient public acknowledgement and appropriate citation that the material is not one's own. It is true that every thought probably has been influenced to some degree by the thoughts and actions of others. Such influences can be thought of as affecting the ways we see things and express all thoughts. Plagiarism, however, involves the taking and use of specific words and ideas of others without proper acknowledgement of the sources, and includes, but is not limited to, the following:

- Submitting as one's own material copied from a published source
- Submitting as one's own another person's unpublished work or examination material;
- Allowing another or paying another to write or research a paper for one's own benefit; or
- Purchasing, acquiring, and using for course credit a pre-written assignment

The above list is in no way intended to be exhaustive. Students should be guided by the principle that it is of utmost importance to give proper recognition to all sources. To do so is both an act of personal, professional courtesy and of intellectual honesty. Any failure to do so, whether by intent or by neglect, whether by omission or commission, is an act of plagiarism. A more detailed description of this issue can be found at <http://luc.edu/english/writing.shtml#source> .

In addition, a student may not submit the same paper or other work for credit in two or more classes. This applies even if the student is enrolled in the classes during different semesters. If a student plans to submit work with similar or overlapping content for credit in two or more classes, the student should consult with all instructors prior to submission of the work to make certain that such submission will not violate this standard.

Plagiarism or any other act of academic dishonesty will result minimally in the instructor's assigning the grade of "F" for the assignment or examination. The instructor may impose a more severe sanction, including a grade of "F" in the course. All instances of academic dishonesty must be reported by the instructor to the appropriate area head and to the office of the Dean of the School of Communication.

A complete description of the School of Communication Academic Integrity Policy can be found at: <http://www.luc.edu/soc/Policy.shtml>

Schedule

Week One

August 28 and 30

Lecture: Research and Math Basics

Week Two

September 5, 7

Lecture: Google Research

Readings due Tuesday:

http://datajournalismhandbook.org/1.0/en/getting_data_0.html

http://datajournalismhandbook.org/1.0/en/understanding_data_0.html

<http://nilesonline.com/stats/>

Week Three

Assignment 1 Due Tuesday (Poynter Math for Journalists: Help with Numbers)

September 12, 14

Lecture: Excel and computer assisted reporting

Reading due Thursday:

<https://schoolofdata.org/2014/05/05/using-excel-to-do-data-journalism/>

Week Four

September 19, 21

Lecture: Filing a FOIA Request

Readings due Tuesday:

<http://www.spj.org/opendoors1.asp>

<https://www.poynter.org/2015/50-states-50-public-records-stories/390275/>

Week Five

September 26, 28

Lecture: Freedom of Information

Readings due Tuesday:

<https://www.cjr.org/analysis/foia-request-how-to-study.php>

<https://www.citizen.org/our-work/litigation/litigation-how-file-foia-request>

Week Six

Assignment 2 Due Tuesday: Your FOIA Request Letter

October 3, 5

Week Seven (No class October 10)

October 12

Lecture: City issues: Budgets

Readings due Thursday:

<http://www.sbccc.edu/journalism/manual/checklist/budget.php>

http://policydialogue.org/publications/backgrounders/budget_writing_tips_for_reporters/en/

Week Eight

October 17, 19

Lecture: City issues: Taxes and Schools

Readings due Tuesday:

<https://journalistsresource.org/tip-sheets/reporting/property-taxes-writing-journalism-tips>

<https://economix.blogs.nytimes.com/2010/04/19/value-added-taxes-a-primer/>

<https://www.usnews.com/education/best-high-schools/articles/how-us-news-calculated-the-rankings>

Week Nine

October 24, 26

Elections: City issue: Crime

Reading due Tuesday:

<https://www.newslab.org/2014/05/19/beat-reporting-crime-and-justice/>

<https://ijnet.org/en/blog/guide-covering-crime-statistics>

Week Ten

October 31 and November 2

Assignment 3 due Tuesday: City issue map**Week Eleven**

November 7, 9

Lecture: Polls and surveys

Readings due Tuesday:

<https://journalistsresource.org/tip-sheets/reporting/polling-fundamentals-journalists><http://www.ncpp.org/?q=node/4>**Week Twelve**

November 14, 16

Lecture: Understanding studies

<https://journalistsresource.org/tip-sheets/research/introduction-studies-academic-research-journalists><https://journalistsresource.org/tip-sheets/research/interpreting-academic-studies-primer-media>**Week Thirteen**

November 21

No class; Thanksgiving break**Week Fourteen****Assignment 4 due: Poll or survey/infographic**

November 28, 30

Lecture: Final project work

Week Fifteen

December 5, 7

Lecture: Final projects due