Welcome!

Class hours
Thursdays 11 a.m. to 2:40 p.m., Room 659 at 20 Cooper Square
Sept. 5 to Dec. 12, 2019 (No class on Nov. 28, 2019)

Office hours
On-campus office hours: Thursdays, 3-4 p.m., Room 641
We can also videoconference on Zoom, by appointment

Course Description
Covering immigrants and their families involves diving into unstructured raw reality and then, step by step, piecing together the story. The beat you choose will deepen your empathy, curiosity, sources, strategic thinking and knowledge. During the semester, you will write five stories in various styles and post one photo from each story on a class Instagram account. Each story is rewritten once except the final story, which needs two rewrites. The assignments build on each other to prepare you for a writer’s life and advanced reporting.

Learning Objectives
In this course, you will:
- significantly improve your interviewing & communication techniques
- interview subjects, conduct research and evaluate information
- develop sources and fluency in discussing core immigration issues
- demonstrate critical thinking, independence and creativity appropriate to the role of journalism in a democratic society
- work ethically in pursuit of truth, accuracy, fairness and diverse perspectives
- write clear, accurate and engaging prose in an audience-appropriate manner
**Course Structure**

We are here to be our best selves as trustworthy storytellers. During the semester, we will focus on writing about the immigrant experience with insight and an open mind. Our course covers reporting and writing techniques, pitching, rewriting and editing with the goal of building confidence.

We will grow through lectures, discussions, critiques of published articles and videos, in-class exercises, small-group workshopping of student articles, guest speakers and one-on-one instructor-student feedback.

In addition to class attendance and participation, you will need to budget time outside of class to report, write and edit your work, and complete readings.

**Readings**

~ The required text for this course is *Dear America: Notes of an Undocumented Citizen* by Jose Antonio Vargas (2018). The paperback edition ($11.19 on Amazon Prime) is available on Sept. 3, 2019.

~ You also need access to The Associated Press Stylebook or the AP’s app.

~ Readings and links to watch are itemized in the weekly assignments below.

~ Reading NYTimes.com is part of your daily routine.

~ You will also check the daily Google alerts you create for your beat.

**Course Requirements**

There’s so much to learn from the material and from each other. As you read through the course requirements for the classroom and for homework, please remember that you are important to everyone’s experience – we are here to build our own little community that encourages learning and bold experiments in reporting and writing.

**Here are the classroom requirements:**

**Attendance** is mandatory. If you plan to be absent, please let me know before class starts. Missing three classes = automatically failing this course. Instead of asking me what you missed, please catch up by contacting your classmates.
**Tardiness** is unacceptable. Arriving late disrupts our flow and is disrespectful.

**Class participation** helps you grow as a communicator, which is part of being a journalist. There will be lots of discussion and interaction, and quizzes. We look forward to your thoughtful observations and feedback.

**Class break** is your 30-minute lunch. It will usually be around 12:30 p.m. but might vary due to our activities on a particular day. Apart from lunch, please avoid the distraction of wandering in and out during class instruction time.

**Cell phones and laptops** interrupt the learning process. Of course, you are welcome to use them during the break. For extra-credit, you can earn five points towards the class participation component of your final grade by storing your phone in the phone box.

**And, here are the homework requirements:**

**Late assignments** will not be edited or receive in-class feedback. If you have a legitimate reason for an extension, please email me within 48 hours of the assignment deadline to explain the problem and your solution.

**Pitch deadlines** for stories are hard deadlines. Go with what you’ve got.

**Free pass!** You can be late for class or a homework deadline – just once. After that:

- Missed story deadline = five points off for every 24 hours of lateness
- Arrive late = 10 points off attendance for every 10 minutes of lateness

**Grading Policy**

**Final grades** are based on the Institute’s standards for the following:

A (95-100%) and A- (90-94.9%) = consistently exceptional work or remarkable improvement. Your outstanding class participation reflects an ability to talk, listen and assist other students without dominating discussions.

B+ (87-89.9%), B (84-86.9%) and B- (80-83.9%) = satisfactory completion of all classwork and assignments. Submission quality is within range of Institute standards but needs more rewriting and editing. Lack of class participation and unexcused absences are also issues.

C+ (77-79.9%), C (74-76.9%) and C- (70-73.9%) = all classwork and assignments were submitted but require extensive additional reporting and/or rewriting. Lack of class participation and unexcused absences are issues, too.
F (69.9% and below) = incomplete assignments, missed classes, lack of participation, unexcused absences, or ethical breaches (eg, libel, plagiarism).

Breakout for your final grade:

- Attendance = 20%
- Class participation + quizzes = 20%
- Stories + beat worksheet* = 60%
- Total = 100%

*Numerical grading for each draft and rewrite:

- Pitch = 10% out of 100% for first draft
  - Grading based on ability to deliver a concise, fact-filled, three-paragraph summary of your story idea. Needs info from three sources you’ve ALREADY spoken to for preliminary info. Your pitch begins with a nut graf, includes statistics and other reported facts. Most importantly, the pitch shows you have a clear grasp of your topic and a specific angle.

- Writing = 45% out of 100% for drafts and rewrites
  - Grading based on story’s ability to deliver a strong nut graf; clear, concise writing; logically-sequenced paragraphs; transitions between paragraphs; effectively-positioned quotes and facts; AP Style; few or no typos, grammar errors, or sloppy punctuation.

- Reporting = 45% out of 100% for drafts and rewrites
  - Grading based on ability to deliver the 5Ws that cover basic facts about the community and issue; reporting that reflects multiple points of views and quotes that back up the viewpoints. Includes one post on class Instagram account, @nyuimmigrantexperience.
During this semester, we will complete five stories. Each story adds new layers to your skills. Story by story, you will grow in your ability to decode what you’re witnessing so that you can explain what’s going on clearly, concisely and conversationally to readers.

Shorter stories and longer stories teach you different ways to manage info. By the end of the semester, you will cross the bridge to engaging on a level that prepares you for taking advanced reporting – and, for writing effectively or the rest of your life. Together, the five stories are worth 60% of your final grade:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Story</th>
<th>Pitch Due*</th>
<th>1st Draft Due**</th>
<th>Word Count</th>
<th>Rewrites Due**</th>
<th>% of 0%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PLACE</td>
<td>9/19</td>
<td>9/25</td>
<td>450-500</td>
<td>10/2</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EVENT</td>
<td>10/3</td>
<td>10/9</td>
<td>450-500</td>
<td>10/16</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q&amp;A</td>
<td>10/17</td>
<td>10/23</td>
<td>750-800</td>
<td>10/30</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COLUMN</td>
<td>10/31</td>
<td>11/6</td>
<td>950-1,100</td>
<td>11/13</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TREND</td>
<td>11/14</td>
<td>11/20</td>
<td>1,200-1,300</td>
<td>12/4, 12/12</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Pitches are due Thursdays, before class starts.

**Drafts and rewrites are both due by 12 p.m., Wednesdays. They will be edited, graded and returned by midnight. We will discuss the next morning in class.

Accommodations

Students with disabilities that necessitate accommodations should contact and register with New York University’s Moses Center for Students with Disabilities (CSD) at 212-998-4980 or mosescsd@nyu.edu. Information about the Moses Center can be found at www.nyu.edu/csd. The Moses Center is located at 726 Broadway on the 2nd floor.

Diversity & Inclusion

The Institute is committed to creating an inclusive learning environment. The Institute embraces a notion of intellectual community enriched and enhanced by diversity along a number of dimensions.
Weekly Schedule

(Subject to change due to events and class progress)

Sept. 5 -- Week 1: Getting started
- Go over syllabus & beat worksheet
- Choose your beats – What is a beat?
- Writing and reporting essentials
- Implicit bias, diversity, inclusion
- Interviewing techniques

Homework:
- Do Beat Worksheet Part 1
  o Bring a typed printout to class
  o Brainstorm possible places & events to cover
- Read handouts about how to cover a PLACE, how to PITCH and how to INTERVIEW

Sept. 12 -- Week 2: Exploring places, pitching & data
- Our librarian Katy Boss helps us research Beat Worksheet Part 2 (1 p.m.)
- PLACE story planning – destinations, critique the assigned reading
- Pitching exercise

Homework
- Draft of email pitch due Tuesday. Subject line: PITCH DRAFT
- Email real pitch by 11 a.m., Thursday. Subject line: PLACE PITCH
- Finish Beat Worksheet Part 2 & bring typed printout to class
- Bring AP Style book or app
- Read: Nut graf refresher
- Read handout on how to write up QUOTES

Sept. 19 -- Week 3: How a PLACE anchors your beat
- Present your PLACE pitch and get feedback
- AP Style exercise
- Photojournalism ethics
• Analyzing PLACE stories
• Using your beat worksheet to identify issues you’ll cover
• Brief 1:1 with me

**Homework**
• PLACE draft due by noon, Wednesday using submission guidelines
• Email subject line: PLACE1
• Read: Photo journalism basics and “Good” Photographs: The white male gaze and how we privilege ways of seeing.
• Read the handout on how to cover EVENTS

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**Sept. 26 -- Week 4: What EVENTS deliver + how to rewrite**
• Feedback on your PLACE drafts with workshopping + 1:1
• Rewriting exercise
• Choosing your best EVENT options & what to expect
• Review best ways to email potential Q&A subjects
• Visit from Craig Barboza, Career Services advisor and professor

**Homework**
• PLACE rewrite due by noon, Wednesday (subject line: PLACE2)
• Email EVENT pitch due by 11a.m., Thursday

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**Oct. 3 -- Week 5: Getting to know your beat at an EVENT**
• Critique & workshop PLACE pieces, lessons learned + 1:1
• Present your EVENT pitch and get feedback
• Structuring EVENT reporting, writing and developing sources

**Homework**
• EVENT draft due by noon, Wednesday (subject line: EVENT1)
  • Look for potential Q&A interview candidates at the event
• Read links for examples of Q&A stories
• Read: “Dear America,” Part 1 (“Living”)
  • This book begins our exploration of long-form journalism techniques, column-style writing and developing a distinctive voice
October 10 -- Week 6: Why structure is at the heart of your storytelling
- Guest speaker: Wagner Prof. Mitch Moss, political expert & media insider
- Storytelling activity
- Debriefing EVENT experience + EVENT drafts feedback, workshopping + 1:1
- Discuss Part 1 of “Dear America” with tiny quiz
- Go over Q&A interviewing options, emailing potential sources and what to ask

**Homework**
- EVENT rewrite due by noon, Wednesday (subject line: EVENT2)
- Q&A pitch due by 11 a.m., Thursday
- Read: “Dear America,” Part 2 (“Passing”)

October 17 -- Week 7: Using the Q&A to launch your TREND reporting
- Review EVENT rewrites and the use of chronology, quotes and transitions
- Present Q&A pitches for feedback
- Critiquing published Q&A stories
- Ways to use the Q&A to build your source and resource network
- Discuss “Dear America,” Part 2 (“Passing”) with tiny quiz

**Homework**
- Q&A draft due by noon, Wednesday (subject line: QA2)
- Read: “Dear America” Part 3 (“Hiding”) with tiny quiz

October 24 -- Week 8: How your story impacts the stories you cover
- Go over Q&A drafts with an eye on getting ready for doing TREND interviews
- Discuss “Dear America,” personal essay-style journalism and upcoming COLUMN

**Homework**
- Q&A rewrite due by noon, Wednesday (subject line: QA2)
- COLUMN pitch due by 11 a.m., Thursday
Oct. 31 -- Week 9: Brainstorming what’s next for you and your beat
- Feedback on Q&As + discussion on finding sources for TREND
- Finding the issues that matter most on your issues, and that matter to you
- Shaping your column topics and takeaways
- Strategies for using everything you’ve got for the final push
- 1:1 mid-term grade discussions

Homework
- COLUMN draft due by noon, Wednesday (subject line: COL1)
- Read examples of trend stories
- Make note of the top 5 issues on your beat

Nov. 7 -- Week 10 – Exploring issues that lead to a TREND
- Our guest speaker: Prof. Krishnendu Ray, Food Studies dept. chair, 12:30 p.m.
- Workshopping COLUMN draft and the hunt for buried treasure + 1:1
- Issues vs. trend – what to look for
- Group story meeting – go over top five topics on your beat

Homework
- COLUMN rewrite due by noon, Wednesday, (subject line: COL2)
- TREND pitch due 11 a.m., Thursday

Nov. 14 -- Week 11: Establishing your TREND + long(er)-form writing
- Rewrite for extra credit? We will spend some extra time on the COLUMN critique.
- Analyzing long-form writing strategies; how it works

Homework
- TREND first draft due noon, Wednesday (subject line: TREND1)
- Bring a paper print-out of story to class, double-spaced

Nov. 21 -- Week 12: Creating your long(er)-form road map
- Intensive workshopping to lighten your load during the break
- 1:1 feedback

Homework
- TREND second draft due noon, following Wednesday (subject line: TREND2)
Nov. 28 -- Week 13 HOLIDAY! NO CLASS!

Dec. 5 -- Week 14: How to polish your drafts with fresh eyes
- Surgery, reading out loud and more.

**Homework**
- Final TREND draft due at 11 a.m., Thursday (subject line: TREND3)

Dec. 12 -- Week 15 LAST CLASS!
- Final class presentations -- read your column to the class, talk about your journey, passing the torch (overview summary of your beat)
- Party 😊
STORY REQUIREMENTS

The due dates below provide more details about specific assignments. Each one offers you a different reporting and writing experience. Once your stories are completed, you are free to pitch them wherever you want for publication.

The Pitch: Each major story begins with an informative, polished 250-word written pitch. You will deliver it as an email, not a Word document. Preparing a pitch helps the reporter laser in on an angle and create a reporting strategy. The pitch needs to convince the editor (me) that your story idea is worth covering.

The pitch captures your angle on the topic, which is called a hook. This hook is described in three or four concise, sentences. It includes: 1) an explanation of

1. what the story is about; 2) offers a little background on the topic; 3) shows off several key facts and statistics that show you know what you’re talking about.

2. This pitch also includes a summary of how and where the story has already been covered. Be sure to add the story links in case the editor wants to understand more.

3. After you’ve explained what’s already been covered by the media, describe what you have that's new or newsy. What are you offering that we haven't heard about yet? Your ability to present a fresh angle is called “advancing the story.”

4. Once you’ve explained why you want to do the story, explain how you’ll proceed. This is why every pitch includes a specific reporting plan. What’s your strategy for getting the job done? Name specific research sources and at least four “live sources” – i.e., “real” people you can realistically meet. You are required to interview people in-person, not just online or on the phone. (P.S. – Avoid harassing people for interviews!)

5. The pitch is done in at least two stages. You have the option of sending me a draft email BEFORE Wednesday night, so that I can give you feedback on how your pitch looks. On Thursday, everyone will present a verbal pitch in that day’s class. After feedback from us all, email me your written pitch by that Friday, at noon. The pitch will be graded. Unexcused late pitches will result in a zero.

6. As your editor, I will give reply to your emailed pitch with additional feedback asap. Your first draft will be due the following week.
The Story: Working on weekly writing submissions put you in a newsroom rhythm for reporting, writing and meeting deadlines. Word count will vary for each assignment. Most pieces will involve a second draft. The final piece will go through three drafts. Each rewrite is a chance to plug reporting holes, polish the writing and sharpen the focus – or maybe, even completely change the focus.

All assignments are due by noon, Wednesday. This way, I can edit, grade and return them to you before the next morning’s Thursday class.

Writing/reporting: Each story includes a nut graf, quotes, multiple sources, AP Style. Spelling, grammar and punctuation are a must. Start the first page with four lines: a one-word slug in capital letters, your name, your headline, and word count. Skip a few lines and then, start the story:

- Single space and flush left; no indent at the start of the first graf.
- Single space between graf.

Submit as a Word doc on an email with the assignment’s designated subject line.

1. Each assignment ends with a list of all sources. The source list will be annotated with names, job title, e-mails, dates of interviews, websites, book referenced etc.

2. At the very end of all versions of your story submission, include a some thoughts on “Lessons Learned.” What worked? What might you try differently next time? What did you learn about yourself, the city, your beat?

Social Media:
- Post a photo with a blurb on our class Instagram account @nyuimmigrantexperience (LI: BL12@sunywcc.edu; PW: discovery)

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