Learning Objectives:
In this course, students will
- Demonstrate awareness of journalism’s core ethical values
- Gain insights into the essential components of a news story
- Interview subjects, conduct research, and evaluate information
- Develop skills in finding stories and science angles on breaking news
- Practice techniques for structuring a news story
- Write clear, accurate and engaging prose for a general audience
- Work ethically in pursuit of truth, accuracy, fairness, and diverse perspectives

All homework and assignments are due at the start of class (10 am, Eastern) on date specified, unless a different time is specified below. Email homework and assignments to me. The format for all homework and assignments: single-spaced, single line between grafis, no indented paragraphs other than block quotes, MS Word files, not Google Docs. On the first page only, include your name, the date and the story or pitch word count. Homework and assignments received after they are due are unacceptable without prior approval from instructor. Most requests for extensions, especially those based on poor time management, will be denied. Phones must be silent and not visible on the classroom table. Please bring laptops to class for in-class exercises. Laptops should only be open during class for work related directly to material under discussion in class. Note-taking on paper, rather than typed into a laptop or other device, is strongly encouraged for better learning. No emailing, no texting, and no social media use during class. It’s OK during breaks.

Plagiarism will not be tolerated under any circumstances and can be punished with a failing grade or expulsion. See: [http://journalism.nyu.edu/about-us/resources/ethics-handbook-for-students/](http://journalism.nyu.edu/about-us/resources/ethics-handbook-for-students/).

Journalists who do not respect deadlines quickly fall out of favor. So, any assignment for this course that is turned in late -- even by minutes -- will be automatically reduced by half a letter grade. If an assignment is submitted more than 24 hours late, it will be reduced by a full letter grade; beyond 48 hours, it will be reduced by 1.5 full letter grades; beyond 72 hours, it will be reduced by 2 full letter grades.

Required books:
On Writing Well, by William Zinsser
*A Field Guide for Science Writers*, by Deborah Blum and Mary Knudson
*The Science Writers’ Handbook*, by Writers of SciLance and Thomas Hayden
*The Associated Press Stylebook*, by the Associated Press

**Grading:**
15% 350- to 400-word news story on a scientific paper (“1st writing assignment”) due 10/7
20% 600- to 700-word news story not on a scientific paper (“2nd writing assignment”) due 11/4
25% 1,000- to 1,200-word news feature (“3rd writing assignment”) due 12/2
15% class attendance, participation, homework
25% video module

One rewrite may be submitted within a week of receipt of the graded original (and no later) for each of the three news story assignments. If a story is rewritten, the overall grade on the story will be an average of the original and rewritten story grades. High class participation grades will be assigned only to verbal and non-verbal participation that is constructive, collaborative, professional and respectful of all students in class. Final course grades may take improvement into account.

I will note class attendance and absences in my records. Students must inform me in advance if they plan to miss all or any part of class.

**SCHEDULE**

**Week 1 topic - Journalism**

**Reading due Week 1:**
*(Monday, Sept. 9)*

“The End of Science Writing,” by Jon Franklin
*Why Journalism Matters*” by Matt Shipman
“Top journalists reveal the best reporting advice they have received,” by Adeshina Emmanuel and Justin Ray
“Ask TON: Breaking into Science Writing,” by TON Editors
TK clips suggested by Ryan Mandelbaum

**Guest:** Ryan Mandelbaum, Gizmodo, 11am

**Assignment due 9/16:** 1) Create accounts with one or two news/press release services or sites, e.g. Newswise.com, Eurekalert (which indexes several journals including Science and PNAS), Science Daily, Alpha Galileo, Nature’s press site (which indexes several journals), Futurity; 2) sign up for 5-10 major university, research institute, government agency or other science-news newsletters; 3) Identify five peer-reviewed research journals to follow for a few weeks of the semester, only two of which can be
Science, Nature, PNAS or PLOS journal. 4) Identify 3 uncovered original research papers/ideas from any peer-reviewed scientific research journal that are candidates for a future news story you might choose to write; 5) Email an MS Word file to me that includes the names of the news/press release service(s) that you join, the 5-10 universities/research institutes/agencies, the 5 journal titles, the three uncovered paper titles, and the urls for the 3 papers. For each uncovered paper, draft and include a jargon-free sentence or two that describes the news (what is new/what is the takeaway) in the paper.

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Week 2 topic - Pitching

Reading due Week 2:
(Monday, Sept. 16)

“How Much Time Should I Spend Preparing a Pitch,” by the TON Editors
“Pitching Errors: How Not to Pitch,” by Laura Helmuth
Ch. 1 “Finding story ideas and sources,” by Philip M. Yam, in A Field Guide for Science Writers
Ch. 2 “Finding Ideas,” by Emily Sohn, in The Science Writers’ Handbook
Ch. 3 “Making the pitch,” by Thomas Hayden in The Science Writers’ Handbook
Browse: The Open Notebook’s Pitch Database
TK clips suggested by Julia Calderone

Guest: Julia Calderone, New York Times, 1pm

Assignment due 9/23: Write two email-ready science- or health-news story pitches to a real, currently working assigning or beat editor at a suitable outlet or publication, each between 200 and 225 words long, most likely based on two of the three original research papers noted at the end of your first homework assignment. Be prepared to pitch your pitches verbally in class. Pitches should be complete with salutation to named editor, opening/lead-in, brief methods info for study, nut graf/importance of finding, broader potential applications or implications of research, etc., so you have the option to send the pitch to this editor later this semester, after we edit it. Include the email’s subject line for both draft pitches. On the first page only, include your name and the date.

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Week 3 topic - Reporting

Reading due Week 3:
(Monday, Sept. 23)

“Taking good notes: Tricks and tools,” by TON editors
“How to read a scientific paper,” by Adam Ruben
“How to read and understand a scientific paper: A guide for non-scientists,” by Jennifer Raff
How to pitch a science editor, compiled for SciDev.net
How not to pitch: Pitching errors, by Laura Helmuth
Ch. 2 “Reporting from science journals,” by Tom Siegfried, in A Field Guide for Science Writers
Ch. 3 “Understanding and using statistics,” by Lewis Cope, in A Field Guide for Science Writers
Ch. 4 “Getting the story, and getting it right,” by Andreas von Bubnoff, in The Science Writers’ Handbook
Ch. 5 “By the numbers: essential statistics for science writers,” by Stephen Ornes, in The Science Writers’ Handbook
See email for recent work by TKTK
"The bowls at Chipotle are supposed to be ‘compostable’,” by Joe Fassler
TK clips from Bahar Gholipour

Guest: Bahar Gholipour, freelance

Assignment due 10/7: report, research and write a science-, health- or environmental news story that is no longer than 400 words in length and based on a pitch approved by me in advance. (Due 9/29: Draft of a sentence or two in which you summarize the main point or news in your story; if this prose is not likely to be the opening/entrance of your story, you may include a draft of that entrance/first sentence too, and I will look over both). The story must cover a published piece of original research. Include a headline and a dek/teaser. Reporting should be drawn from a minimum of two interviews with sources, at least one of which was was conducted by telephone or in person (the other can be conducted by email).

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Week 4 topic – Ledes, nut grafis and other story elements

Reading due Week 4:
(Monday, Sept. 30)

“Good Beginnings: How to Write a Lede Your Editor--and Your Reader--Will Love,” by Robin Meadows, TON
“Good Endings: How to Write a Kicker Your Editor--and your Reader--Will Love,” by Robin Meadows, TON
Ch. 4 “Writing well about science: techniques from teachers of science writing,” in A Field Guide for Science Writers
On Writing Well, by William Zinsser – Chs. 1-11, 14, 15
TK clips from Arielle Duhaime-Ross, possibly: “Black lung segment”, Arielle Duhaime-Ross
Meteorologists/climate skeptics segment, Arielle Duhaime-Ross
EPA campfire segment, Arielle Duhaime-Ross

**EPA campfire** segment, Arielle Duhaime-Ross

**Guest:** Arielle Duhaime-Ross, VICE News Tonight

**Assignment due 10/15:** write two news pitches between 200 and 225 words in length for your second writing assignment. For this assignment, the story could be pegged to and shed light on a current event in the news, a new policy, a new disease outbreak, new concerns being raised by an interest group, political entity, policy-maker or everyday people, or a new perspective in research — in short, some new development or happening other than a recently published paper. This is not an event story. The story likely will mention recent research that’s relevant and should definitely include interviews with researchers who study subjects related to your story. Submit pitches as a Word file which includes the name of the outlet to which you would pitch the story, the email subject line and the email that you would send to an identified working editor (figure out who you would pitch at outlet you choose and write pitch as if it would be sent to them) at the selected media outlet. So, the body of the email should include a salutation to a working editor, the body of the email with pitch, and a sign-off. Also, identify a third back-up idea for a feature pitch, but do not write a pitch on it.

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**Week 5 topic – Interviewing**

**Reading due Week 5:**

*(Monday, Oct. 7)*

“Conducting and Condensing Q&A Interviews,” by TON editors
“*The craft (and art) of the interview, from thoughtful homework to whatever happens,*” by Sally James
*On Writing Well*, by William Zinsser – Ch. 12
TK clips suggested by Doris Salazar

**Guest:** Doris Salazar, freelance

**Assignment:** no new assignment

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**MONDAY, OCTOBER 14 – FALL RECESS, NO CLASS**

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**Week 6 topic - Editing**

**Reading due Week 6:**
(**Tuesday**, Oct. 15)

“The First Critic Is You: Editing Your Own Work,” by Tien Nguyen
*On Writing Well*, by William Zinsser – Chs. 15, 16
Ch. 8 “Working with editors--and their edits,” by Monya Baker and Jessica Marshall, in *The Science Writers’ Handbook*  
Ch. 16 “Science editing,” by Mariette DiChristina, in *A Field Guide for Science Writers*

TK clips suggested by Michael Lemonick

**Guest:** Michael Lemonick, *Scientific American*

**Assignment due 11/4:** report, research and write a 600- to 700-word news story on a research trend, policy issue or other science-related subject or happening. For this assignment, the story could be pegged to and shed light on a current event in the news, a new policy, a new disease outbreak, new concerns being raised by an interest group, political entity, policy-maker or everyday people, or a new perspective or outlook in research — in short, some new development or happening other than a recently published paper or a staged or organized event featuring scientists. This is not an event story. The story likely will mention recent research that’s relevant to the subject of your story and should definitely be informed by and quote from interviews with researchers who study subjects related to your story. The subject of your story must be approved in advance by Robin; interview three sources minimum, at least two by phone or face-to-face. Emailed interview questions are acceptable for other sources. (**due 10/21:** a sentence or two in which you summarize the main point or news in your story; if this prose is not likely to be the opening/entrance of your story, you may include a draft of that entrance/first sentence too, and I will look over both.)

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**Reading due Week 7:**  
(Monday, Oct. 21)

“The Art and Skill of Working with News Sources,” by Keith Woods, NPR Training

Read at least two of Balter’s stories below and note the use of anonymous or pseudonymous sources:

“The sexual misconduct case that has rocked anthropology,” by Michael Balter  
“From Texas to the Smithsonian: following a trail of sexual misconduct,” by Michael Balter  
“When Texas Tech investigated sexist behavior, it found no one to blame,” by Michael Balter  

ALSO read for use of anonymous sources: “Rod Rosenstein suggested secretly recording Trump and discussed 25th amendment,” by Adam Goldman and Michael S. Schmidt

**Week 7 topic - Sources**
Guest: Michael Balter, freelance, 1:15pm

**Assignment due 10/28:** “The Turnaround” is a fantastic series of interviews that podcast impresario and host Jesse Thorn conducted earlier this year with some of the nation’s best interviewers, ranging from Terry Gross to Combat Jack to Werner Herzog. Early in the semester, I will match pairs of students with one of the episodes in the 15-part series. Listen to your assigned episode, learn from it, and with your partner, prepare a 5-minute presentation for the class on how to conduct a successful interview. Presentations will be made during our 10/28 session.

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**Week 8 topic - Fast turnaround, short deadlines**

**Reading due Week 8:**
(Monday, Oct. 28)

“Ask TON: Mastering News Turnaround,” by TON editors
*On Writing Well*, by William Zinsser – Chs. 21-24
Ch. 17 “Deadline writing,” by Gareth Cook, in *A Field Guide for Science Writers*
Ch. 11 “Just write the friggin’ thing already,” by Anne Sasso, in *The Science Writers’ Handbook*

**Guest seminar led by:** Rachel Feltman, Popular Science, and Ryan Mandelbaum, Gizmodo, 10am

**Assignment:** No new assignment

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**Week 9 topic - Headlines**

**Reading due Week 9**
(Monday, Nov. 4)

“Four Editors Give Advice on Writing Headlines: You Won’t Believe What Happens Next,” by Tien Nguyen
TK clips suggested by Kate Wong

**Guest:** Kate Wong, Scientific American

**Assignment due 11/11:** write two pitches for a news feature on a science topic or controversy, for your third writing assignment, each between 20 and 225 words long; be prepared to pitch each idea verbally in class. Submit pitches as a Word file which includes the name of the outlet to which you would pitch the story, the email subject line
and the body of the email that you would send to a working editor at the selected media outlet. The email body should include a salutation and a sign-off.

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**Week 10 topic – Individual feedback sessions**

**Reading due Week 10:**
*(Monday, Nov. 11)*

*No reading assignment*

The class will not meet as a group. Instead, I will spend 15- to 20-minute appointments with each of you to discuss your second writing assignment, pitches and preparations for your third writing assignment and your progress in the course to date.

**Guest:** none

**Assignment due 12/2:** report, research and write a news feature (up to 1,200 words long) on a science topic or controversy (**story entrance or lede, nut graf, anticipated source list and update on any other progress with the story, due 11/25**). The story should include a headline, a dek/teaser, and material from a minimum of three sources interviewed by phone or in-person, not by email.

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**Week 11 topic – Complexity, cliches and jargon**

**Reading due Week 11:**
*(Monday, Nov. 18)*

"Ban Jargon!" by Roxanne Khamsi
"Let’s change how we report truth in science journalism," by Sharon Dunwoody, Scidev.net
TK packet of material from Amber Williams

**Guest:** [Amber Williams](https://www.nytimes.com), New York Times, 10am

**Assignment:** no new assignment
Week 12 topic – Visual storytelling

Reading due Week 12:
(Monday, Nov. 25)

“Glendon Mellow on science art: More than just picking the right image,” by Bethany Brookshire, TON
“Edward Tufte Wants You to See Better,” NPR Talk of the Nation
TK material from Clarisa Diaz

Guest: Clarisa Diaz, WNYC Radio

Assignment due: no new assignment

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Week 13 topic – Great stories, career start-up

Reading due Week 13:
(Monday, Dec. 2)

Storygram: George Johnson’s “Why Everybody Seems to Have Cancer,” on The Open Notebook – read it first after selecting the “hide all markup” option; then read it a second time after selecting the “show all annotations” option. Then read the author interview “A conversation with George Johnson” that is published beneath the annotated story.
TK clips suggested by Alicia Chang

Guest: Alicia Chang, Associated Press, 10am

Assignment: no new assignment

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Reading due Week 14:
(last class, Monday, Dec. 9)

No reading assignment

Topic – Audio and video festival

Guest: none

Assignment: no new assignment

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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 and 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.