New York University
Arthur L. Carter Journalism Institute
Syllabus JOUR-GA 1021-001
WRITING/REPORT WKSHP I BUSINESS AND ECONOMIC REPORT
Fall 2019
Professor: Blankfeld, Keren
T 9:45 AM - 1:45 PM
To contact professor: kblankfeld@nyu.edu
20 Cooper Sq., Room 659
Office hours: Tuesday 2:00 PM - 3:00 PM - please schedule appointments in advance.

Course Description
Writing, Research & Reporting I: BER is designed to help you develop a basic understanding of the economy and financial markets and the skills to cover business news in all its forms—hard news, soft news, blog posts, columns, etc. You’ll learn everything from how to write on a deadline for newspapers, websites and wire services to penning short and medium-length magazine pieces.

Learning Objectives
In this course, students will:

- Demonstrate awareness of journalism’s core ethical values
- Write clear, accurate and engaging prose in an audience-appropriate manner
- Demonstrate critical thinking, independence, and creativity appropriate to the role of journalism in a democratic society
- Interview subjects, conduct research, and evaluate information
- Work ethically in pursuit of truth, accuracy, fairness, and diverse perspectives

Course Structure
Almost every week you’ll have to research and write a story, which you’ll file to me by Monday at midnight. Each week at least two stories will be workshopped. We’ll put your story through the usual editorial process—editing, adding material, fact checking, copyediting, adding art, with an eye to potential publishing.

At the end of every story give two more story ideas that sprang from your reporting. Also list your sources with contact information. You should have at least five human sources for each story. Attach a list of these sources with contact information to the end of your story.
Be prepared to provide and receive constructive feedback with the goal of having your and your peers’ work published. I’ll also invite professional journalists to lead coverage on topics they cover, talk about their own work and challenges in the industry. Come prepared with questions specific to the guest journalists.

Another important skill is writing fast and short. This style is demanded by many news organizations such as Bloomberg and Reuters. You should expect weekly drills in class where you’ll write several stories on deadline.

**Readings**

**Required Readings:** Students are expected to regularly keep up with the news cycle. You must read at least one daily newspaper, whether it’s The New York Times or The Wall Street Journal, if not both. Other business sources to regularly keep up with include The Economist, Bloomberg BusinessWeek, Business Insider, Forbes and Fortune. Make sure you’re following these on Twitter.

We will discuss and analyze stories in class.

Students are required to use Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram for sourcing and audience engagement.

Twitter: Sign up for Twitter (if you already haven’t) and “follow” selected journalists, media critics, and thinkers relevant to business, technology, the media industry and your chosen beat. Use Twitter to filter through sources, market your stories and share stories relevant to your beat. My handle is @kblankfeld. Professor Penenberg’s is @penenberg and Professor Solomon’s is @stsolomon. Follow all of us.

Instagram: Students are required to post at least **one Instagram post per week** related to your beat. Each image must feature at least one person and a well-reported caption that includes full names, description of action, and context or relevance to your beat. Each post should include appropriate hashtags and tags. #ber_blankfeld
Course Requirements

Attendance
We’ll do some of our most important work in class, so attendance is required. Don’t tell me you have to miss a portion of class because you have an interview to conduct or a job interview to attend. NYU policy and your professor recognize only the following reasons for missing class: a documented illness, family emergency, or religious observance.

Tardiness is not acceptable. It is disruptive to the classroom and highly offensive to me and your classmates. If your tardiness was not approved by me in advance, you can expect your final grade to suffer accordingly.

Plagiarism, fabrication, and any other act of academic dishonesty will not be tolerated. They may result in failure in the course or expulsion from the university.

Cell phones are not allowed in class unless I specifically call for it. Turn them off and put them away during class.

You may bring a laptop to class -- we will use computers frequently for class drills (you can also use the computers provided in the classroom). Otherwise, please keep electronics OFF.

Grading
Final grades will be calculated as follows:
You will be graded in terms of effort, professionalism, level of improvement over the course of the semester, and contributions to the class.

Weekly Classwork and Participation = 80% of your grade.
Final project = 20% of your grade.

Late assignments will not be accepted, reviewed, nor critiqued. I do not chase down students for their work. You will fail the class if you hand in three or more assignments late.
**Syllabus**

* A note on the schedule: this syllabus is a living document and subject to change. Additional readings will be distributed by email or in class. Students will be advised in advance when guest speakers from institutions (such as Bloomberg, Reuters, Medium, Forbes, Business Insider, Inc., etc) are scheduled to visit our class. You are expected to familiarize yourselves with their work and have questions prepared.

**9/3/2019**  
**Course Intro: Getting started on your “beat.”**  
*Story analysis. Journalism ethics.*

**Assignments:**
- Write three pre-reported pitches for New York business stories. Speak to at least one human source per pitch, include contact info at the bottom of the article. You will pitch your stories to the class next week.
- Library Test: link and instructions will be emailed to you.

**Readings:**

- NYU Journalism Handbook: Ethics, Law & Good Practice:  
  https://journalism.nyu.edu/publishing/ethics-handbook/

- Professor Adam Penenberg’s Automated Learning Modules (ALM) Unit 3: Journalism Ethics:  
  https://sites.google.com/nyu.edu/ij-module-3

- Review two economic/business news articles you read this week -- one that you think is well-written and well-reported and another that you think could have been better. The articles can range from stories on fiscal policy, labor, economic indicators, companies, earning reports, etc. Point out the nut graf of the article. Your review should focus on why the story works (or doesn't work), what the reporter did well (got good quotes? good interviews?); what you think the story is lacking (should it have more statistics? fewer numbers? more sources? is it biased? what would you have done differently?).

**9/10/2019**  
**Databases. Story Structure & Pitching Stories.**

* Guest Speaker: Katy Boss, Librarian*

**Assignments:**
- Write a 500-word New York business story that was approved by the class. Use at least five human sources, include contact info at the bottom of the article.
Readings:

- Review two economic/business news articles you read this week and focus on quotes that are used to tell the story. As we did last week, pick one article that you think is well-written and well-reported and another that you think could have been better. The articles can range from stories on fiscal policy, labor, economic indicators, companies, earning reports, etc. Point out the nut graf of the article. Why are you impressed by the quotes used (or why aren’t you)? What surprised you by the quote? Did the quotes bore you? Did they support the article, help move the story forward? Provide color?

- Professor Adam Penenberg’s Automated Learning Modules (ALM) Unit 5: Source Deals (60 to 90 minutes):
  https://sites.google.com/nyu.edu/ij-module-5/overview?authuser=2

9/17/2019 Interviewing, Extrapolation, Fact-Checking 101

Assignment:

- A 500-word article (minimum of five human sources) on tourism and the dollar. Head to Soho or the Village and interview tourists, shopkeepers, vendors, etc. to find out why so many foreign tourists are attracted to shopping in NYC. What are they buying? Where are they shopping? What countries do they come from? Check exchange rates against the dollar. Conduct background research on the issue. Make sure you get contact information from each source in case you need to go back for more information or clarifications, and ask for a job description so you can describe her.

Readings:

- Research the Conference Board, prepare questions. Prewrite articles as much as you can.

9/24/2019 *Field Trip to Conference Board* MEET AT 10 A.M.

Introduction to Deadline News & Economic Indicators

Assignment: A 500-word analysis piece on an economic indicator.

Readings:

- “Economic Indicators, A Primer,” The Street

- Warren Buffett’s Letter to Shareholders
● CNBC:

● Business Insider:

● Reuters:


● Review two economic indicator or earning’s report articles you read this week -- they must cover the same indicator but be from different sources and have different angles. What are the strengths and weaknesses of each? How did the reporter go about differently reporting each story? As always, point out the nut graf of the article.

**10/1/2019   Using Documents and More To Find Story Ideas**

**Assignment:** Write a story either about a recent lawsuit relating to a New York business, or a story that springs from a publicly-traded company’s recent SEC filing (recent, as in, filed in the last month). Have at least five human sources. No more than 600 words.

**Readings:** Review two articles you read this week that use a document as a main impetus for the story -- they cannot be a classic earnings story, they must be more substantial. What did the article do well? How did they use the document to write the story? Is the article dry, covered in numbers or jargon-y/difficult to understand language straight from the document? Is the article colorful? What are the strengths and weaknesses of the article? How are human stories used in the article? As always, point out the nut graf of the article.

**10/8/2019   Business Profiles & Ledes**

**Assignment:** Profile a local business owner. Use the profile to tell a newsworthy angle to the business or industry you’re writing about.
Readings:

10/22/2019 Using Statistics When Writing Stories

Assignment: Use statistical analysis to report on an industry trend or the local economy. Feel free to use a company’s annual report or a press release, however you must include human sources. As always, include contact information in the bottom of the story.

Readings:
- “Time for Journalists to Encrypt Everything,” Wired
  https://www.wired.com/2017/03/time-journalists-encrypt-everything/
- Lobbying Database Reporting Recipe, Propublica
  https://www.propublica.org/nerds/lobbying-registration-database-reporting-recipe

10/29/2019 Breaking News Reporting: Day of Drills

Assignment: Prepare three pre-reported pitches for your final project. Be ready to discuss your pitches in class. You should have enough research and specific individuals that you plan to interview. Email me your pitches in a Word document and be prepared to pitch the class next week.

Readings: Review two articles you read this week that are breaking a news story (a merger/earnings/bankruptcy/lawsuit/etc). What did the articles do well? Deconstruct how the reporter was able to write it quickly. How would you have prepared to write these articles? What could have been done better? What’s the nut graf?


Assignment: I will pick one of your stories from the semester and ask you to rewrite it.
Readings:
  ● To be distributed in class.

11/12/2019  How to Report and Write “The Explainer.”

Assignment:
  ● *To be discussed in class. You will write an explainer article on either a recent economic indicator’s effect in New York (e.g. employment numbers); or, a recent news event’s effect on local taxes/small business/employees/customers.

Readings:
  ● https://www.economist.com/the-economist-explains/2014/06/08/the-fashion-for-explainer-articles
  
  ● Review two articles you read this week that are explainers. Were the issues well-explained? Why do you think the reporter/editor decided to create explainers for this article? What was done well? What could’ve been better? What’s the nut graf?

11/19/2019  Social Media Seminar

Assignment:
  ● Write a business/economy-related 500-word news article that stems from a Tweet or another social media platform. Or: cover a news event using Twitter.

Readings:
  ● “Donald Trump’s Inadvertent Think Piece on James Comey, Russia and ‘The Fake Media,’” Fast Company

11/26/2019  The Business of Journalism

Assignment: First draft of your final story (1000 words). It has to be a full draft, ready to workshop. Make sure you’re working on a news story, not an essay or think-piece. Why does this story need to be told now? How is this new?
Readings: To be distributed in class.

12/3/2019    Workshop Final Project

Assignment: Final Assignment Due Next Week!

12/10/2019    Tips for landing internships and jobs. Final Project Due.

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.