Data Journalism
New York University • Fall 2017

Mondays 10:00 AM - 1:40 PM
Instructor: Meredith Broussard
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Office: 20 Cooper Square, #702
Office hours: Tuesdays 2-4 or by appointment

The course: In this introductory class, students will learn the skills needed to create visually exciting and thought-provoking online journalism. Topics include data journalism, data analysis, computer-assisted reporting, [painless] coding for journalists, and data visualization. The class is designed for an interdisciplinary group of students interested in writing, editing, visual design, or technology. Student-created projects will influence the path of the class: in a given semester, we may create infographics, investigate current political or economic issues, or develop innovative news apps. The Fall 2017 class will focus on NYC open data.

Prior experience is not assumed, nor is it necessary. Students are expected to be comfortable with learning software beyond basic social media or word processing, and should be willing to learn new technology skills.

Learning objectives:
- Learn how to use spreadsheets, databases, and data visualization tools for reporting
- Develop intermediate and advanced skills in Microsoft Excel, SQL, and Tableau Public
- Learn to find, get, and clean data for investigative stories
- Collaboratively develop and implement a data journalism project

Required Reading:
Data Points, by Nathan Yau
NICAR course pack, available for purchase via Google Classroom link
Weapons of Math Destruction, by Cathy O’Neil
Networks of New York, by Ingrid Burrington
Additional readings on Google Classroom

Recommended Reading:
The Data Journalism Handbook, edited by Jonathan Gray, Liliana Bounegru, and Lucy Chambers
Computer-Assisted Reporting: A Practical Guide by Brant Houston

Books are available for purchase at the NYU bookstore. Please purchase (or borrow from a library) print copies of the 3 books listed above. The NICAR coursepack is electronic only. Additional readings are posted on Google Classroom.

Attendance: Mandatory. A third of a letter grade will be deducted from your final attendance grade for each unexcused absence. For an excused absence—in the event of a serious illness or an approved athletic event, for example—you must submit documentation from a third party.
All assignments must be turned in by the assigned deadline. For journalists, deadlines matter. We will cultivate the habits of successful journalists in this class, which means that deadlines must be met. Unless otherwise indicated, each assignment is due at the beginning of class. Assignment details, including formats, will be announced in class and details will be available on Google Classroom. Some assignments will be submitted via Google Classroom, others will be submitted in print; printed assignments should be typed, double-spaced and printed with pages numbered. You are responsible for keeping track of the requested format. Assignments should not be submitted via email. Late work will be penalized by at least a third of a letter grade. Please remember to check Google Classroom for announcements and minor schedule changes.

Plagiarizing, copying or fabricating work will earn you an automatic F for the paper and possibly the course. Journalism is about reality, about telling people’s stories. There is huge amount of public trust given to us, and a huge amount of responsibility that goes with being a journalist. Don’t cheat.

Quizzes and tests: There will not be a final in the course. Pop quizzes will be given should it become clear that class members are not doing the readings or are coming unprepared to class.

Class Participation: You are expected to participate actively in the life of the class, inside and outside the classroom. Come prepared to class. Complete your reading and writing assignments on time. Attend regularly. Engage in class discussion. Get to know your fellow students. A percentage of your final grade will be determined by your participation in this writing community.

When responding to another student’s comments or writing, you are expected to demonstrate respect for the speaker or writer, appreciating that person’s effort and sensitivities. In the spirit of mutual support and reinforcement, only constructive criticism should be offered.

Phones, tablets, recording devices and other digital paraphernalia may only be used by arrangement with the professor. Please turn off all of your desktop and phone notifications during class. Phones should remain in your bag, out of sight, during class unless specifically requested for an assignment. Charging is available in the back of the classroom only.

Grading: Final grades will be calculated as follows:
40% Assignments and drafts
40% Final project
10% Attendance
10% Class participation

Special accommodations: Academic accommodations are available for students with documented disabilities. Please contact the Moses Center for Students with Disabilities at 212-998-4980 for further information.