New York University
Arthur L. Carter Journalism Institute
Syllabus COURSE # TKTK

Virtual Newsroom: Covering the COVID-19 Pandemic

Summer 2020
Mon/Thu 1-4 p.m. ET via Zoom
Professor: Liza Hogan
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Office hours: Tuesdays/Fridays 1-2p and by appointment

Course Description

The COVID-19 pandemic is perhaps the biggest news story of our time, affecting every aspect of life for a majority of the world's inhabitants now and for years to come. Along with serious health implications, the pandemic has disrupted our lives, work, and culture. The role of a local reporter in this time is to find and report original, compelling stories that capture and explain the pandemic on a human scale: the family business denied recovery funds, the park converted to a hospital, the trumpet player serenading her neighbors, the prisoners unwittingly exposed to the virus, the nurse who hasn't seen his kids for two months, the protester who oppose business closures, or the expectant mother who cannot get a COVID-19 test. There are literally thousands of stories to be told, and through this class you will report as many of them as you can get to in six weeks.

Working with a team of student journalists (your classmates) in a virtual, daily newsroom you will learn by doing, employing the latest digital tools and storytelling techniques to report on the crisis in your community. You'll tell the COVID-related stories of people and places near you and document how daily life has changed and how people are struggling with or rising to meet these challenges. You will file at least five stories over the six-week period. Most of these will be short 500-word articles or 1-2 min videos (for students with multimedia skills). You will have time to shape and craft a longer, in-depth enterprise story for your final project.

Depending on the social distancing rules in your community and safety guidelines for NYU students this summer, you will be challenged to report from your home or at a safe distance. While difficult, these restrictions will make you a better reporter, more resourceful, able to find stories in unusual places and tell them in unique ways.

Learning Objectives

The class will emphasize learning-by-doing, with regular reporting and writing assignments inside and outside of class.

In this course, students will:
- Understand journalism's role and core ethical values in covering a public health crisis
- Exhibit 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
- Interview subjects, conduct research, and evaluate information
- Participate in the planning and maintenance of a daily news site
- Write/produce clear, accurate and engaging prose or video for target audiences
- Understand the different roles and steps involved in operating a newsroom
- Use digital tools effectively to promote articles and track audience engagement
- Learn how to pitch and market your work for outside publications

Course Structure
All classes will be held online using Zoom for video conferencing, Google Docs for drafting, editing and filing stories, Wordpress for publishing, and Slack and Gmail for communication.

The class will meet twice a week for three hours each session. Each class will begin with either a discussion of COVID-19 related coverage or a Q&A with a professional journalist covering the pandemic followed by an in-practice lesson or exercise. The remainder of the class will be devoted to planning, writing, editing and publishing COVID-related stories for the class website on deadline. Students will work as a team and in small groups to decide what stories the class will cover, shape and edit those stories, and prepare them for publication on the website. They will promote the stories on NYU's and their own social media accounts and analyze how they perform on the website and social channels.

Each student will report, produce and publish at least five (5) stories including a 1,200-word enterprise story with photos and a sidebar.

Required Texts
Covering the Pandemic e-book - A curated selection of COVID-19-related news articles, media criticism and video tutorials for reporting, writing and publishing news related to the pandemic. For most classes, students will have assigned reading from the e-book to be read before class begins.

Course Requirements

Attendance: Students are expected to log in to Zoom by the start of class and attend all online classes in full. We'll do some of our most important work in class and with only six weeks to work with, attendance is key. You can't, for example, skip all or part of a session because you have an interview lined up with a source who can only speak during class time. And please don't be late logging in: it's disrespectful to your classmates. There will be many in-class assignments, and you would receive an F for any you don't hand in. The only excuse that NYU accepts for skipping class is a death in the family or severe illness. It's not enough to attend the class, you must also participate in class discussions and the planning and running of the website.

Assignments: Don't miss deadlines. It is a grave offense in daily journalism. A well-researched, beautifully crafted story is useless if it lands on your editor's desk just as the paper is going to press or if it is simply old news by the time you get around to filing. Hand in assignments on time.

Academic integrity: Any plagiarism or unauthorized collaboration on assignments will result in a failure, and could be grounds for failure in the course, or in extreme cases, expulsion from the program. All quotes must be original and verifiable. That means you must have a means of contacting anyone you quote for further clarification, or for me to verify accuracy of quotes. If you draw from someone else's work without properly crediting them, you could fail that assignment.

Grades

By the end of the class you will have several graded assignments, both in an out of class. Your final grade will reflect your scores on both in-class and field assignments and class participation. Effort and progress will count, too.

In-class assignments	20 percent
Out-of-class assignments	60 percent
Participation, attendance and professionalism*	20 percent

Your participation grade reflects the quality and frequency of your in-class discussion and participation in discussions via email or other digital tools. Professionalism involves meeting deadlines, doing what you agreed to do for the class, handling edits in a professional manner and treating your fellow reporters and editors with respect.

Grading will conform to the Journalism Department's policy:
      A = publishable as is
      B = publishable with light editing
      C = publishable with a rewrite

D = major problems with facts, reporting, writing

F = missing key facts, containing gross misspellings, plagiarism or libel

Articles and videos will be graded for research, reporting and writing, as well as spelling and grammar. The following are essential:

- A compelling lede and second graf that expands and amplifies lede
- Development of article's facts and ideas in logical order with transitions
- At least two sources quoted or referenced
- Use of quotes and paraphrasing where warranted
- Descriptive details, including images that show don't tell
- Correct grammar and usage conforming to AP style
- Complete sourcing and attribution
- Fair and balanced reporting/sourcing
- List all people you spoke with and contact info for each at end of piece
- List key research sources at the end of the piece

Class Structure:

This class is primarily an in-practice, hands-on approach to covering the public health crisis. Together we will create and run a daily website devoted to local reporting on the COVID-19 pandemic. To guide our work, we will consider and discuss a range of topics journalists and editors consider in covering the crisis thoroughly and fairly, with a nose for fresh angles and great stories.

For most classes, we will use the first 30-45 minutes talking to a journalist currently covering the pandemic or discussing a relevant topic in journalism. (If you have a particular journalist or types of reporters or editors you'd like to hear from, let us know early in the class, so we can reach out.) We will then spend 30 mins. learning or practicing a reporting, writing or production skill. We'll devote the remainder of the class to working as a virtual newsroom, editing and publishing stories, and planning our coverage for the following week(s) as a team.

As a news team, you will decide on which 4-5 local beats to cover as a class. These may include topics like: business, government, politics, arts and culture, health, society, sports or education or more thematic beats such as race and equity, healthy communities or getting back to work.

Students are encouraged to pick a beat to explore a particular angle of the pandemic. There is also an option to cover your community across several beats. The goal will be to provide our audience with a selection of stories exploring the pandemic from a variety of local angles. Students are also welcome to collaborate with their classmates on story ideas. Example: A tale of two cities with different approaches to social distancing or a co-produced podcast on mental health.

WEEK ONE

Class 1 (May 28):

Topic: **How to Cover a Public Health Crisis from Your Kitchen**
Reading: Articles selected for the class in e-book; come ready to discuss
Workshop: Newsroom training, digital story types and AP Style
Newsroom: First news planning meeting: beats, roles and assignments
Assignment: Mini-Profile (500 words and one photo, due Friday May 29 at 12p.)

Note: If the students who sign up for the class are amenable, we will commence the course on Tuesday, May 26 expanding the first week's instruction over two classes. If students are not able to meet on May 26, the course will begin on May 28 as planned.

WEEK TWO:

Class 2: (June 1)

Topic: **Getting Down to Business: COVID's Impact on Local Economies**
(Speaker TBD)
Reading: Examples of local, COVID-related business reporting in e-book.
Workshop: Finding stories and sources, interview techniques and remote
reporting
Newsroom: Edit, post and promote profiles; pitch/plan stories for Week 3.
Assignment: Business Snapshot (500 words and 2 photos or graphics, due 12p.
Friday, June 5)

Class 3: (June 4)

Topic: **Government Accountability in the Age of Corona** (Speaker TBD)
Reading: Examples of local government accountability stories in e-book
Workshop: Finding public information in/or for your town
Newsroom: Edit, post and promote business snapshots, adjust planner Reading:
Government accountability stories in e-book.
Assignment: Continue working on Business Snapshot, finish publishing and
promoting mini-profiles.

WEEK THREE:

Class 4: (June 8)

Topic: **Follow the Curve: Using Data to Describe the Crisis** (Speaker TBD)
Reading: Examples of good data reporting and illustration
Workshop: Creating basic charts and graphics using data

Newsroom: Edit and post beat stories to Wordpress, promote on social media; plan coverage for Week 4; brainstorm enterprise story ideas.

Assignment: Beat story #1: Using Data (500-600 words integrating localized data with chart, Due Friday, June 12, 12p). Settle on enterprise story; pitches due by 12p on June 15.

Class 5: (June 11)

Topic: **Pivot to Video: Bringing Your Stories to Life** (Speaker TBD)

Reading: Review video examples and tutorials linked from e-book

Workshop: How to record, produce and post a basic video

Newsroom: Edit, post and promote remaining stories from week two; discuss enterprise pitches

Assignment: Complete data story due Friday. Record a narrated, single-take video on your phone or laptop to share in class Monday. (No editing, fonts or graphics required.) Uploading instructions to be provided in class.

WEEK FOUR:

Class 6: (June 15)

Topic: **Getting it Right: Copyediting and Fact-checking**

Reading: Read fact-checking and copy editing tutorials and articles in e-book

Workshop: Share video stories. In-class editing exercise.

Newsroom: Edit and post profiles. Pitch meeting for enterprise stories

Assignment: Beat Story #2: Immersive Story or Live Event (500-700 words with photos or 1-2 min video, due Friday, June 19, 12p)

Class 7: (June 18)

Topic: **Social Media: Showing Your Work** (Speaker TBD)

Reading: Social Media tutorial; social media storytelling examples

Workshop: How to share and track your work online; building a brand

Newsroom: Edit, post, and promote beat stories. Plan coverage for Week 5.

Assignment: Finish Beat Story #2. Share stories on a social channel using a new technique learned in class. Posts complete by Monday June 22 class time.

WEEK FIVE:

Class 8: (June 22)

Topic: **The Full Picture: Inclusive Reporting in a Pandemic** (Speaker TBD)

Reading: Read articles exploring the need for inclusive reporting on the pandemic

Workshop: How to expand your sources and deepen your perspective.

Newsroom: Edit and post immersive and live event stories; plan Week 6.

Assignment: Enterprise story first draft with photos due Friday June 26, 12p.

Class 9: (June 25)
Topic: **Service Journalism: The Art of the How-To**
Reading: Review examples of local service journalism on COVID topics
Newsroom: Workshop enterprise stories with peers; draft a how-to text or video sidebar for your enterprise story.
Assignment: Revise enterprise draft based on peer feedback and add the sidebar drafted during class. Enterprise articles will be edited over the weekend. Begin editing your enterprise story as soon as you receive edits or rewrite instructions from Prof. Hogan

WEEK SIX:
Class 10 (June 29)
Topic: **Pitch Perfect: Finding a Good Home for your Work** (Speaker TBD)
Reading: Review sample pitches and ideas pitching your work (e-book)
Workshop: Draft, share, and critique story pitches
Newsroom: Prepare enterprise stories for publication with social media posts.
Assignment: Craft and submit a pitch plan for your enterprise article.

Class 11 (July 2)
Topic: **Putting it All Together: New approaches, opportunities and challenges**
Newsroom: Finish posting enterprise stories to WordPress
Workshop: Students will present/walk through their published stories during class
Assignment: Complete social media promotion of stories by 5 p.m. July 3

Equipment: Students will use their own equipment for the class including a laptop or desktop computer and internet access. If students wish to produce videos or audio for podcasts as permitted by COVID safety guidelines, they also will need an iPhone, Android or equivalent phone or camera for recording. The university will provide access to programs needed for the class including NYU Google Drive, Zoom, and Wordpress. Your instructor will provide links and recommendations for free photo, audio and video editing software.

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.