

New York University, College of Arts and Science

Summer 2021, Syllabus “Covering a Beat Through the LGBTQ Lens (JOUR-UA 102, section 4) Professor Spencer Macnaughton (Pronouns: he/ him) | Email:

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Welcome to COVERING A BEAT THROUGH THE LGBTQ LENS! In this course, students will develop their journalistic skills by covering the LGBTQ community. Students will build a beat from scratch and will learn fundamental reporting and writing skills by investigating a community that has been overlooked and often reviled throughout history. They’ll learn to report and write about the community in a fact and science-driven way that is nonpartisan, informed, and fair. They’ll learn the difference between a topic and a story as well as the difference between a work of advocacy and a work of journalism. They’ll learn to identify when they’re getting spun by a source or fed misinformation and they’ll develop interview tactics that enable them to approach subjects with a combination of compassion and skepticism.

It takes courage and hard work to be a good journalist. In this course, I hope each student will challenge themselves to step outside their comfort zone, whether that be through cold calling the CEO of a company, following up with a source for a fourth time, or pitching a story idea about a community they’re unfamiliar with.

We will have many discussions about the history and current state of LGBTQ coverage. Trigger warning: On the reading list, there will be articles that haven’t aged well or that are flat out anti-LGBTQ. We’re going to talk about why these articles were green lit and develop our ability to identify good journalistic work by assessing problematic coverage.

Students will write and report three stories in this class: a Q&A, a profile, and a final story.

I’m looking forward to meeting you all and helping you develop your journalistic skills through covering a community with so many untold yet critically important stories. Ready, set, go! :)

Class Hours: Mondays/ Wednesdays, 6:00PM-9:00PM EST

Office Hours: TK

Accommodations: Students with disabilities that necessitate accommodations should contact and register with [New York University's Moses Center for Students with Disabilities](#).

Diversity and Inclusion: [The Arthur L. Carter Journalism 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.

Name/Pronoun: Please advise me of your name and your pronouns early in the semester and let me know if I need to make changes to my records.

NYU's Calendar Policy on Religious Holidays: [NYU's Calendar Policy on Religious Holidays](#) can be found here. Please let me know of religious holidays that might coincide with deadlines for the class to schedule mutually acceptable alternatives.

Communication: Please contact me with any questions regarding the course via email or Slack. Or feel free to visit me via Zoom during my office hours.

Rules of the Road: Meeting deadlines is a critical component to being a successful journalist. The following late penalties will apply for all assignments in this course*:

- If turned in more than 15 minutes after the deadline but still submitted on the due date, 10% will be deducted from the assignment's grade.
- If turned in the day after the deadline, 25% will be deducted from the assignment's grade.
- If turned in two days after deadline, 50% will be deducted from the assignment's grade.
- If turned in three or more days after deadline, the assignment will receive a zero.
- Please attend class and be on time! Attendance and promptness will be taken for this course and go towards the class participation grade. If you miss more than three classes, you will fail the course.
 - **Of course, life can happen. For illnesses or other emergencies, exceptions can be made.*

Grade breakdown

Class participation -- 10% -> *attendance + weekly reading responses*

Historical LGBTQ stories reflections -- 5%

Edits on in-class student Q&A's -- 5%

Q&A -- 10%

Profile -- 30%

Final story -- 40% (Grade will be based on your first draft and how you apply feedback and develop your story for your final draft).

Class 1 (Wednesday, July 7) -- Introductions, Style Guide, And a Quick History of LGBTQ Beat

- Introductions.
- Overview of the course/ rundown of the syllabus.
- Discussion: What makes something an LGBTQ story in journalism?
- Overview of the history of LGBTQ journalism // the evolution of how the media has covered the LGBTQ community
 - Guest speaker: [David W. Dunlap](#)

Assignment Historical LGBTQ stories reflections:

- Submit two reflections in response to two of the readings/ viewings of your choice. Upload each of them to our class Slack channel no later than **Sunday, July 11th at 2PM**. In each reflection, answer the following questions:
 - In one to two sentences, what is the story about?
 - When was the story published and by what publication?
 - Who was the target audience of this publication at this time?
 - Who did the journalist interview for this story? What resources/ additional sources did the journalist use for the story?
 - What did you like about this story?
 - Is there anything you found problematic about how the journalist covered the LGBTQ community in this story?
 - How might the time period have impacted the way the journalist reported out this story? How do you think the publication may have covered this story differently today?
 - What other voices or pieces of information would you have considered including in this story?

Readings:

1. [NEW HOMOSEXUAL DISORDER WORRIES HEALTH OFFICIALS](#), Lawrence K. Altman, May 11, 1982, *The New York Times*
2. [How the homophobic media covered the 1969 Stonewall uprising](#), Gillian Brockell, June 8, 2019, *The Washington Post*
3. [What was The Body Politic, anyway?](#), Arshy Mann June 9, 2016. *Daily Xtra*.

Class 2 (Monday, July 12): Principles of Journalism and The Art of The Interview

- Overview of the basic principles of journalistic storytelling
- Discussion: time management/ organization
- Overview of the NLGJA/ AP style guides we'll be using for all our assignments and stories.
 - Discussion: The Importance of style guides in LGBTQ journalism.

- The Art of the Interview
 - In class exercise:
 - In pairs, you'll each take a turn interviewing your partner about something that they had to "come out" with. That could mean coming out of the closet or something completely different -- coming out about something at work, at school, with family, etc. Each student gets 20 minutes to act as interviewer and then we'll swap roles. Make sure you record your interviews.

Assignment -- Edits on in-class student Q&A's -- 5%:

- At home assignment: transcribe your interview and send the raw transcript to three classmates by **Tuesday, July 13th at 12PM.**
- Look at the raw transcripts of the three interviews you receive and comment in all places where you felt the interviewer could have asked more follow-up questions. E.g.) Places where you could have followed up with a "Why? How do you know that? How did that make you feel? How so?" **Send your edited interviews back to the interviewer before class on Wednesday, July 14th.**

Readings/ viewings;

1. Watch: ["Outing Celebrities" - The View 11/17/06](#) // YouTube via Stephen Rayson, Nov. 17, 2006
2. Trans Journalists Association Style Guide, 2020, <https://transjournalists.org/style-guide/>
3. GLAAD Media Reference Guide -
 - a. [Introduction: Fair, Accurate & Inclusive](#)
 - b. Glossary of Terms/ Language: [Lesbian / Gay / Bisexual / Queer, Transgender, AP, Reuters, & New York Times Style](#)
 - c. In Focus: [Covering the Bisexual Community](#), [Covering the Transgender Community](#)

Recommended/ Additional Readings:

1. [The Atlantic tried to artistically show gender dysphoria on its cover. Instead it damaged the trust of transgender readers.](#), Sydney Bauer, September 4, 2020, *Poynter*
2. More Homos Aided to Become Heterosexual, *The New York Times*, 1971

Class 3 (Wednesday, July 14): Finding sources/ getting access + covering the transgender community

- Discussion: on interviewing each other and editing each others work
- Elements that make a great story.
- Lecture: how to find characters/ get access to big interviews or difficult moments.
- Introduction of Q&A assignment + rules of the road for "publishable" Q&As.

- Intro to covering the transgender community
 - Guest lecture from TK journalist on covering the transgender and nonbinary community (hopefully [Imara Jones](#), [Raquel Willis](#), or [Meredith Talusan](#))

Assignment -- Q&A first draft -- 10% of final grade:

- Find a fascinating member of the LGBTQ community and interview them. The person's story can be related to the current news cycle but does not have to be.
- Transcribe the entire interview and then whittle it down to 800 words.
- **Due Sunday, July 18th by 6PM.**

Readings/ viewings

1. [Unerased: Counting Transgender Lives](#), Meredith Talusan, Dec. 8, 2016, *Mic*.
2. [My Husband Is Now My Wife](#), Alex Morries, Sept. 22, 2015, *New York Magazine*
3. Watch: Trans and Target: Am I Next, Juju Chang, Dominique Jackson, Oct. 4, 2019, *Nightline*. [Part 1](#) // Part 2 TK.
4. [Maldonado Becomes First Openly Transgender Boy Scout](#), Spencer Macnaughton, Feb. 10, 2017, *The Wall Street Journal*

Class 4 (Monday, July 19) -- Story structure, researching LGBTQ stories, how to pitch!

- Overview of basic principles of a well written story.
- Overview of different story structures.
- Lecture/ discussion + in-class exercise: research tools for journalists
 - how to approach LGBTQ-themed research with a critical eye.
 - How to use research/ data to find/ develop LGBTQ-themed stories.
- Lecture/ discussion: How to pitch! How do you convey to an editor that you have a story that satisfies the journalistic SO WHAT? And WHY NOW?

Readings/ viewings

1. [Straight, Gay or Lying? Bisexuality Revisited](#), Benedict Carey, July 5, 2005. *The New York Times*.
2. [40 percent of LGBTQ youth 'seriously considered' suicide in past year, survey finds](#), Tim Fitzsimons, July 15, 2020, *NBC News*.

Assignment:

- Find three statistics, facts, or trends impacting the LGBTQ community that have been published within the last two years and email thoughts related to how you could use this data toward a pitch for your profile assignment.
 - For one of your data points-> In up to 300 words, answer the following questions: What is the larger story you could tell with this statistic? What is the demographic

profile of the person you'd have to find to use them to center your story around this data point? What other people would you want to talk to for this story? What additional data/ research would you consider including? Post your three statistics as well as your written response to Slack **before class on Wednesday, July 21st.**

Class 5 (Wednesday, July 21) -- Journalistic Standards// How to Pitch // Misinformation, "fake news" and the LGBTQ Media

- How to pitch! -> Discussion about data point assignment // how students could turn their data into a pitch for their profile.
- The importance of standards departments when covering the LGBTQ beat.
- Assessing questionable LGBTQ coverage and misinformation.
 - Guest lecture: [Brennan Suen](#), Director, LGBTQ Program at Media Matters for America.

Readings:

1. [The right is dominating Facebook engagement on content about trans issues](#), Brianna January, July 20, 2020, *Media Matters for America*
2. [Right-wing media built the Texas government investigation into custody battle over trans child](#), Brennan Suen and Alex Paterson, October 25, 2020, *Media Matters for America*
3. [Top outlets are breaking their own policies by deadnaming trans people](#), Alex Paterson, May 5, 2020, *Media Matters for America*
4. [Review: Ye Olde Go-Go's Songs Hit the Renaissance in 'Head Over Heels'](#), Ben Brantley, July 26, 2018, *The New York Times*
5. [NY Times theater critic's apology for misgendering a nonbinary character underscores the need for intentional writing about the trans community](#), Brennan Suen and Brianna January, July 27, 2018, *Media Matters for America*
6. [Outside of CNN's LGBTQ town hall, evening TV news spent under 20 minutes covering 2019's anti-trans violence](#), Alex Paterson, April 8, 2020, *Media Matters for America*
7. [What I Saw at Drag Queen Story Hour](#), Charlotte Allen, Oct. 9, 2019, *The Wall Street Journal*
8. [Teachers forced to attend 'LGGBDTTTIQQAAPP' training session](#), Tucker Carlson, Nov. 29, 2017, *Fox News*

Assignment -- Pitches (due Sunday, July 25th at 12PM):

- Come up with at least two pitches for profiles (up to 400 words each) you want to report out as a story. You need confirmed access to the person featured in **at least one** of your pitches.
- Unless the character is one of a kind/ fascinating (which you'll have to argue in your pitch), the profiles must be a micro example of a larger LGBTQ-themed story.
- I will green light one of your pitches and return it to you with notes before Monday's class.

Readings:

1. [Mike Pence and 'Conversion Therapy': A History](#), Liam Stack, Nov. 30, 2016. *The New York Times*
2. [Caitlyn Jenner: The Full Story](#), Buzz Bissinger, June 25, 2015, *Vanity Fair*
3. [The Unseen Face of Meth Use](#), Spencer Macnaughton and Joe Posner, Aug. 24, 2015, *Vox*.
4. [How to successfully pitch The New York Times \(or, well, anyone else\)](#), Tim Herrera, Oct. 22, 2018, *NiemanLab*
5. [How to write the perfect pitch](#), Abigail Edge, May 26, 2016, *journalism.co.uk*

Class 6 (Monday, July 26): Stress testing green lit pitches/ making reporting plans + Writing for Journalism

- Students will each explain where they're at in their reporting for their green lit pitch. We'll stress test the story and brainstorm what other elements the student will need as they report and write.
- Lecture/ in-class exercise: Writing for journalism/ writing about the LGBTQ community

Readings:

- [How to Write: News Writing](#), Peter Cole, Sept. 25, 2008, *The Guardian*

Assignment:

- Move forward with reporting and writing your profile.

Class 7 (Wednesday, July 28) -- Field trip to 60 Minutes or GLAAD or guest speakers from these org's

- **If COVID-19 permits: field trip to 60 Minutes!
- **If COVID-19 does not permit:
- TK 60 Minutes guest lecturer (hopefully 60 Minutes' executive story editor [Claudia Weinstein](#)) on what makes a great story + Q&A where students can ask Claudia questions about the industry and about their stories.
- Lecture/ discussion: the difference between LGBTQ journalism and LGBTQ advocacy

Assignment:

- **Deliver your profile by Friday, July 30th at 11:59PM.**
- **Produce two pitches for your final story to present to the class on Monday, August 2nd.**

Class 8 (Monday, August 2nd) -- Reflections on Reporting; Writing for Journalism:

- Discussion: trials and tribulations of reporting out the profile. What worked? What didn't? What have they learned as they head into their final story?
- Final story pitch day! Each student will present two pitches for their final story to the class. Pitches should be no longer than 350 words each.
- The class will brainstorm/ stress test which pitch sounds more interesting and newsworthy.
- I'll email you that evening with which pitch I feel you should move forward with.

Assignment:

- Work on final story.

Readings/ Viewings:

- No readings or viewings ahead of class 8. Focus on your assignments :).

Class 9 (Wednesday, August 4th) Covering the rest of the LGBTQ umbrella // the business of LGBTQ journalism // work on final story:

- Discussion: undercovered communities-> asexual, 2-spirited, intersex coverage in journalism.
- Lecture: The business of LGBTQ journalism. Where could you work? How much money could you make?
- Time in class to work on final stories/ brainstorm how to overcome reporting obstacles to bolster your story.

Assignments (work on Final Story):

- Work on final story. Submit **draft of final story for peer review on Friday, August 6th by 5PM.**
- Each student will peer **review two of their classmates work and send notes back to the author by Saturday, August 7th at 5PM.**
- Students will then **submit a draft of their final story to me for review by Sunday, August 8th at 7PM.**

Readings/ viewings:

1. [The Rise of the 3-Parent Family](#), Angela Chen, Sept. 24, 2020. *The Atlantic*
2. [At San Francisco's Two-Spirit Powwow, Gender Diversity Is Sacred](#), Delilah Friedler, Feb. 25, 2020. *Mother Jones*.

Class 10 (Monday August 9th) -- The Future of LGBTQ Journalism and time to work on “Final Story”

- Discussion: The future of LGBTQ journalism: where we are now and where we're headed.
- Reflections on lessons learned through reporting/ writing about the LGBTQ community.
- Wrap up.

Assignments (hand in draft of Final Story):

- No assignments.

Class 11 (Wednesday, August 11th) -- “One on one’s” of final draft:

- I will schedule 20-minute one on ones with each student to go over my edits on the first draft of their final story. Students will then have until August 14th to hand in a final draft of their final story.

Assignment:

- apply edits of first draft of final story and **submit for final review by August 14th at 11:59PM.**

END