

New York University
Arthur L. Carter Journalism Institute
Course Number: SS2: JOUR-UA 204
Covering the Arts: NYC Backstage
Summer 2023
Professor: Michelle Smawley
Tuesday/Thursday 4:00 PM – 7:00 PM
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Office Hours: Tuesday/Thursday 7:00pm-8:00pm

Description:

This is a multimedia class and open to students who have the skills to produce video pieces and audio stories with Smartphone technology, independently. While immersing yourself into the theatrical life of NYC, you will learn to perfect the art of the interview **and** hone your reporting skills. This course will delve deep into the most important components of the interview; such as human psychology, preparation, relationship building, how to gain access and the treatment of sensitive subject matter. Learn interview best practices: researching interview subjects, preparing questions, conducting meaningful interviews and practicing active listening. The goal of the course is to arm you with the confidence and knowledge to be fully prepared to conduct a successful interview with anyone and under any situation.

Learning Objectives

In this course, students will:

- Demonstrate awareness of journalism’s core ethical values
- Delve deeper into interview techniques and story development
- Prepare to conduct interviews with insight and care
- Identify and access story sources and subjects
- Adapt interview styles for different purposes and platforms
- Negotiate conditions for effective and ethical interviews
- Work ethically in pursuit of truth, accuracy, fairness, and diverse perspectives
- Arm yourselves with the experience to take your interviews to the next level

Course Structure: The course will include lectures, discussions, media screenings, visits to The Public Theater and other performance venues. **DOING THE READING, VIEWING OR LISTENING IN THIS CLASS IS CRUCIAL TO YOUR FINAL GRADE.** *Your contributions will have an enormous impact on how rich and rewarding classroom discussions are.*

***Note: The lecture schedule may be revised on short notice to take advantage of guest speaker opportunities and/or the schedule of the theater. The class will require some flexibility with time. For instance, class may start later or last longer to accommodate a performance.

ATTENDANCE: Students are asked to attend every class session because the course is deeply discussion-based and experiential. There will be rare opportunities to “make up” these kinds of classroom activities, so absences will directly impact the student’s grade. Please email me **in advance** if you are unable to attend.

Ethics: The Institute has a zero-tolerance policy on plagiarism, fabrication or any other type of misrepresentation; all are grounds for failing the course. Photos and videos must be yours. Be sure to read the Handbook for Students: <http://journalism.nyu.edu/about-us/resources/ethics>

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](tel: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 Arthur L. Carter Journalism Institute is committed to creating an anti-racist learning environment that embraces diversity, complexity, and honesty. We are an intellectual community enriched by diversity along a number of dimensions, including race, sex, gender identity, class, ethnicity, sexualities, abilities, religion, and culture. Our student body is excitingly international. We welcome a multiplicity of perspectives. We acknowledge that listening to other perspectives on some of these issues may be personally challenging, and we accept that challenge. We further acknowledge that our profession, journalism, and our home, New York University, have participated in the systemic racism that underpins U.S. history. We are committed to teaching and practicing fair, rigorous, and engaged journalism that helps all our communities move toward justice and

equality.

Staying Safe: Please make sure you are up to date on [NYU's COVID-19 policy](#).

Technical Problems: In this class, I am here to help you learn to help yourself. If you hit a technical problem, chances are somebody has had the same problem before.

- First step: **google the problem**
- Second step: email me

Students will produce:

- “My Journey Into Becoming a Critic” – Students will produce a Q&A with an intro with an arts critic. (100 points) Due **July 27 at 11am.**
- “Showtime”– Students will produce a piece surrounding the pre-performance rituals, feelings, emotions of the cast and crew of Shakespeare in the Park. (150 points) **August 10 at 11am.**
- Joe’s Pub— Students will produce a piece that focuses on a staff member at the Public Theater music venue. (100 points) **August 15th at 11 am.**
- Classroom participation (150 points)

TOTAL: 500 points

*****Late assignments will significantly impact your grade.** Any student found to be in violation of the Journalism ethics pledge will receive 0 points for the assignment.

SCHEDULE

July 6, 2023 CLASS 1: Intros/ The Interview

-Introductions

-Commando Smartphone Exercise—**please bring a Smartphone/cell phone (iPhone, Droid, etc.) that is capable of recording to class**

-Presentations: Smartphone Exercise

- Discussion : What makes a good interview?

-Assignment:

Read background articles on The New York Public Theater - due July 11

July 11, 2023 CLASS 2: Deep Dive- “The Interview”

- Discussion: Anatomy of an Interview
- Partner work: Interview Exercise/Question Prep
- Present: Interview Exercise
- Discussion: The Fundamentals of Booking

July 13, 2023 CLASS 3: The New York Public Theater

- Tour: Behind the Scenes of The New York Public Theater
- Discussion: Anatomy of an Interview Part 2
- Partner Work: Interview Exercise/The art of listening
- Discussion: Interview Exercise

July 18, 2023 CLASS 4: Theater Communications/Story Development

- Guest Speaker--Julie Danni, Director of Communications, The Public Theater
- Discussion: Elements of story development

-Assignment:

Interview a theater critic - due July 27, 11 am

July 20, 2023 CLASS 5: Brownsville Recreation Theater Troupe

-Class on location: We will travel to Brownsville Brooklyn and watch the Brownsville theater troupe in action. The troupe is made up of aging adults who are looking to enrich their lives through performance. We'll allot time for you to pair up with members of the troupe and interview them about their experiences, ultimately coming away with a profile about how theater enriches their lives.

July 25, 2023 CLASS 6: Real world interviews

Partner work: Theater troupe interviews
--Discussion: Theater troupe interviews post mortem
Viewing: Real world examples of the **best** and **worst** interviews and what you can take away from them

July 27, 2023 CLASS 7: Sensitive Subject Matter & The Interview

--Present: Interview with a theater critic
--Discussion: Case studies regarding sensitive topics

- Discussion: Trauma informed interview techniques
- Guest Speaker: Rachel Dissell was a reporter for The Plain Dealer from 2002 until 2020.

August 1, 2023—Shakespeare in the Park Prep

- Discussion: Class assignments for interviewees
- Discussion: Research prep for Shakespeare in the Park

August 3, 2023 CLASS 9: Shakespeare in the Park/"Showtime"

-Class on location: We will travel to Central Park and go behind the scenes with the evenings Shakespeare in the Park performance. You will each be preassigned someone from the production, ranging from cast and crew who you will interview before the show. Your interview assignment is titled "Showtime" and each of you are to delve deep inside the worlds of cast and crew before a performance.

*****This class will end after the night's performance.**

Assignment:

Produce/write "Showtime" interviews due August 10th at 11 am

August 8, 2023 CLASS 10: One on One Meetings

–One on One Meetings: We'll schedule individual meetings to discuss course progress and upcoming assignments

August 10, 2023 CLASS 11-- Joe's Pub

-Class on location: We will travel to Joe's Pub at The Public Theater, an independent music venue. You will go behind the scenes and learn more about the inner workings of a musical performance space. You will each be preassigned someone from the production, ranging from cast and crew who you will interview before the show. Each of you are to explore how music touches the lives of those that work at Joe's Pub. For this assignment you will use your mobile phone to portray your subject's story, through photography and text or sound.

Assignment:

Edit Joe's Pub assignment. Due August 15 at 1pm

August 15, 2023 CLASS 11–Last Class!

- Presentation: Joe's Pub Assignment
- A Celebration of You and Your Accomplishment