

New York University, College of Arts and Science
Summer 2024, Syllabus “Covering a Beat Through the LGBTQ Lens
(JOUR-UA 204 005 // JOUR-UA 204 062)

Mondays, Wednesdays from 9AM-12PM ET

Professor: Spencer Macnaughton (Pronouns: he/ him) |

Email: sam9515@nyu.edu

Slack: nyujournalism.slack.com | Channel: #covering-a-beat-through-the-lgbtq-lens

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 two stories in this class: a profile and a final story. In addition to this, there will be complementary assignments that will be graded as well as a grade for class participation.

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, 9AMP-12PM ET

Office Hours: on an as needed basis. Email me to schedule something.

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/Pronouns: 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.

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 the deadline, 50% will be deducted from the assignment's grade.
- If turned in three or more days after the deadline, the assignment will receive a zero.
- Please attend class 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.*
- Please leave your cameras **ON** and login to the class in an environment where you won't be distracted by other people, places or things.
- This class is very discussion based. Please stay committed to participating every class and engaging with me and your classmates.

Grade breakdown

PROFILE = 35%

FINAL STORY = 45%

CLASS PARTICIPATION = 10%

HISTORICAL LGBTQ STORIES REFLECTIONS = 5%

EDITS ON IN-CLASS INTERVIEW EXERCISE = 5%

Class 1: (Wednesday, July 3) -- 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: [Ann Northrop](#)

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.
- 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 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. [More Homos Aided to Become Heterosexual](#), *The New York Times*, 1971
3. [The Transgender Tipping Point](#), May 29, 2014, Katy Steinmetz, *Time*
4. [In Sickness and in Health; Building Loving Relationships When One Partner Has H.I.V.](#), David W. Dunlap, March 13, 1995, *The New York Times*
5. 1966 -- 4-Part series on gay Chicago. Note: there are multiple articles in the attachment. Each article counts as its own reflection (in other words, you don't have to read and review all four).

6. [What Is a Woman? The dispute between radical feminism and transgenderism.](#) Michelle Goldberg, July 28, 2014, *The New Yorker*
7. [Homosexuality and Biology](#), Chandler Burr, March 1993 Issue, *The Atlantic*
8. [LESBIAN STUDY LAUDED BY HEALTH ACTIVISTS](#), Tomoko Hosaka, January 19, 1999, *Washington Post*
9. [Study: White Gays, Lesbians, Have More Mental Disorders than Blacks](#), *Fox News*, October 3, 2007.
10. [Do Bisexual Men Really Exist?](#), *CBS News*, August 30, 2005 (cannot download this one as a PDF cleanly. Please use hyperlink).
11. [Why it's never too late to be a lesbian](#), *The Guardian*, July 22, 2010, Kira Cochrane.

Class 2 (Monday, July 8): 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 15 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 post the raw transcript to our Slack channel before class 3 (before Monday, July 17th at 5PM ET).**

Resources to be discussed in class -- no need to read ahead of class):

1. Trans Journalists Association Style Guide, 2020, <https://transjournalists.org/style-guide/>
2. 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*

Class 3 (Wednesday, July 10): Finding sources/ getting access

- Discussion: on interviewing each other and how to ask the right questions.
- Exercise: editing each others Q&A's
 - In class exercise: Look at two of the raw transcripts of your classmates' Q&A (I will select which transcripts you will edit). 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?"
- Lecture/ discussion: elements that make a great story.
 - how to find characters/ get access to big interviews or difficult moments.
 - How to use social media to find sources
 - How to use research and data to find/ develop LGBTQ-themed stories.

Assignment:

- Start to think about the stories you want to pitch for your profile and your final story. You will spend a lot of time reporting/ speaking to people about this topic. In addition to making sure your pitches are newsworthy, **make sure you're interested and excited about the area of coverage.**

Class 4 (Monday, July 15) -- Story structure, researching LGBTQ stories, how to pitch!

- Elements that make a great story continued:
 - Overview of different story structures.
 - how to approach LGBTQ-themed research with a critical eye.
- 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. [How to successfully pitch The New York Times \(or, well, anyone else\)](#), Tim Herrera, Oct. 22, 2018, *NiemanLab*
2. [How to write the perfect pitch](#), Abigail Edge, May 26, 2016, *journalism.co.uk*
3. [Pitch to me, 2019 edition!](#), Jessica Reed, Feb 28, 2019, Medium

Assignment:

- Find three statistics, facts, or trends impacting the LGBTQ community that have been published within the last two years and email me thoughts related to how you could use this data toward a pitch for your profile assignment.
 - For two of the figures, a few sentences to a paragraph will suffice.
 - For the third figure-> 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 by TBD.

Class 5 (Wednesday, July 17) -- 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: TBD.

Readings:

1. [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*
2. [Top outlets are breaking their own policies by deadnaming trans people](#), Alex Paterson, May 5, 2020, *Media Matters for America*
3. [NY Times theater critic's apology for misgendering a nonbinary character underscores the need for intentional writing about the trans community](#), Brennan Suel and Brianna January, July 27, 2018, *Media Matters for America*
4. [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*
5. [What I Saw at Drag Queen Story Hour](#), Charlotte Allen, Oct. 9, 2019, *The Wall Street Journal*
6. [Teachers forced to attend 'LGGBDTTTIQQAAPP' training session](#), Tucker Carlson, Nov. 29, 2017, *Fox News*

Assignment -- Pitches:

- 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 TBD.

Class 6 (Monday, July 22): Stress testing green lit pitches/ making reporting plans + Writing for Journalism

- Students will 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/ viewings:

- [How to Write: News Writing](#), Peter Cole, Sept. 25, 2008, *The Guardian*
- [Mike Pence and 'Conversion Therapy': A History](#), Liam Stack, Nov. 30, 2016. *The New York Times*
- [Caitlyn Jenner: The Full Story](#), Buzz Bissinger, June 25, 2015, *Vanity Fair*
- WATCH: [The Unseen Face of Meth Use](#), Spencer Macnaughton and Joe Posner, Aug. 24, 2015, *Vox*.

Assignment:

- Move forward with reporting and writing your profile.

Class 7 (Wednesday, July 24) -- Covering the transgender community/ One on one's with students about their profiles

- Intro to covering the transgender community
 - Guest lecture from a TBA journalist on covering the transgender and nonbinary community.
- One on one's: each student will get time in class for a one-on-one where I will give feedback on the first draft of their profile story. They'll also be asked to verbally "elevator pitch" their idea(s) for their final story.

Assignment:

- Deliver your profile by TBD.
- Based on feedback from Wednesday's one-on-one, move forward with reporting/ research on the pitches for your final story. Be prepared to "elevator pitch" your classmates during the next class.

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*.
4. Watch: Trans Kids Fight for Healthcare Rights, Seth Doane/ Spencer Macnaughton, June 20, 2021, *60 Minutes+*. **Link to come soon.

Class 8 (Monday, July 29) -- 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 assignment to the class.
- 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 9. Focus on your final story.

Class 9 (Wednesday, July 31) 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 first draft of final story by TBD.

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*.
3. [Straight, Gay or Lying? Bisexuality Revisited](#), Benedict Carey, July 5, 2005. *The New York Times*.

Class 10 (Monday, August 5) -- Class canceled// one on one's to discuss draft of final story

- Official class cancelled. 15 minute one on one's to discuss first draft's of final assignments and to discuss next steps to get each piece to the finish line.

Assignments (hand in draft of Final Story):

- Continue working on final story.

Class 11 (Wednesday, August 7) -- "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 make additional adjustments/ apply feedback (if they wish!).

Assignment:

- apply edits from the first draft of the final story and submit for final review by TBD.

Class 12 (Monday, August 12) -- Farewell class:

- TBD.

END