

Newsroom: From Pitch to Publish

Summer 2024 (6 Week) – Session 1

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Tuesdays and Thursdays, 4-7pm

NYU Arthur L. Carter Journalism Institute, Room TBA

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Course Overview:

A vibrant newsroom buzzes with editors and journalists constantly looking for—and evaluating—ideas. In two weekly sessions, students will study the specifics of that exact process: learning how to hone, write, edit, and then publish their stories. The classes will consist of pitch meetings, coupled with instruction, lectures, and meetings with editors and writers. Students will work on their own pieces, and collaborate with peers.

We will partner with a set of pre-established media outlets who are open to reviewing pitches. We will bring in editors who are willing to talk through story ideas and offer insights into the editorial process. They will also address the class on topics including how to find ideas, how to interview people, how to find the right framing for your story, and how to edit the stories.

This class offers students a unique, real-time opportunity to gain clips for their portfolio. Graduate students will be required to finish the session with three publishable pieces; undergraduates will be required to finish with two. The goal of this class is clear: frame ideas, report them out, and ultimately *get them published*.

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Class format:

We will run our classes like a newsroom, with overarching themes to consider when pitching. What's the story? What's the plan of action? Who have we pitched? And how can we make it work with said editors? We're aiming for several stories with pitches ready to go, paired by feedback from the professors and their peers.

Distinct from other classes in the curriculum, this course's explicit intent is publication. We'll do that through team collaboration in a newsroom setting and one-on-one support from start to finish. Prof. Dangerfield and Prof. Surico share extensive experience in getting work published, from both the editor's and writer's point-of-view, respectively.

We intentionally made the syllabus broad so that we can mold the instruction to the students' ideas. For example, although we'll talk about editing in general, we'll focus on editing the particular stories in the class. This isn't a baseline reporting class, per se; instead, this will be an opportunity for students to apply the skills they've learned during previous courses in real-time.

Reading/Assignment List:

This reading list may shift throughout the class, according to the news cycle. But we want to focus on stories that have run in our partner publications and/or were published by students.

How to Train Your Light Bulb:

- How to think about events: Magazine student Elizabeth Patrick's "[Stepping up: Grueling Empire State Building Run-UP sees 150 people test themselves against 1,576 stairs,](#)" in AMNY
- How to find ideas within your beat (no pun intended): "[How a Group of Brooklyn Beatboxers Became Ambassadors to the World](#)" by alum Tani Levitt for The New York Times
- Read a few "How to Pitch" guidelines as a way to think about story ideas: "[How to Pitch The Cut](#)" and "[How to Pitch Grist](#)"

How to Track Down Sources:

- Go through how alum Jane Zhang met James Cotto in this piece "[James Cotto is Still Living in New York City's Golden Age of Roller Skating,](#)" which ran in Hell Gate.
- Go through how alum Maria Clara Cobo went from a general idea to a specific idea for "'Phantom,' Ends. For Musicians, So Does a Gig of a Lifetime," which [ran in The New York Times](#)

How to Frame a Story:

- "[What Bobby McIlvaine Left Behind](#)" by Jennifer Senior, The Atlantic
- How to interview subjects in tough situations: "[He never expected to be a single dad. Then, a gunman in Virginia Beach made him one,](#)" by our guest Ian Shapira, Washington Post
- Go over how alum Juliette Maigné shot and wrote "[There's a Lot More to Being a Leatherman Than You'd Expect](#)" for VICE."

How to Edit a Story

- Go through editing back-and-forth with both a writer and editor. TBA.

How to Finish a Story

- Go over how alum Arielle Domb made a story she was writing work for a pitch call: [“The Satanic Abortion Clinic That’s Pissed Off Pretty Much Everyone...and Might Beat the Bans Anyway,”](#) Cosmopolitan
- Read How to Pitch Guides with pitching in mind: [How to Pitch Hyperallergic](#), [How to Pitch Slate](#)

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Publications

We are approaching outside publications that we actively pitch in several different ways:

1. Partners who will float topics/areas/ideas that they’d like us to cover and who are willing to review pitches from us.
2. Publications who are willing to review pitches that we think would be a good fit.
3. We will also reach out to other publications, in response to story ideas.

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Grading:

50% - Participation (Attendance, in-class discussions, exercises)

50% - Written output (In-class exercises, assignments)

Note: We won’t be giving incompletes.

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Credits

This class has four credits. We are working with the OPT office to get it approved for CPT.

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Schedule:

Week 1

Theme: How to Train Your Lightbulb

Question: How do we find our stories?

- Get to know each other
- Syllabus review
- Lecture: Topic vs. story angle
- Write initial pitches

Review Stakeholder Editors

Guest Speaker: TBD

Week 2

Theme: How to Frame a Story

Questions: What is the story's thesis?

- Nutgraf writing / outlining exercises
- Lecture: the news peg
- Finalize pitches / Start thinking about second ideas

Stakeholder Editors: 30 min with editors

Week 3

Theme: How to Track Down Sources

Question: How do we find and talk to sources?

- Interview prep exercises
- Lecture: Source gathering
- Finalize second pitches / any follow-up on first pitches

Stakeholder Editors: 30 min with editors

Guest speakers: TBD

Week 4

Theme: How to Edit a Story

Question: How do we structure a story?

- Editing exercises
- Lecture: story structure
- Finalize pitches + pitch plan

Guest speaker TBD

Week 5 *ONE CLASS THIS WEEK/ JUNETEENTH*

- Exercises and assignments TBD

Week 6

Theme: How to Finish a Story

Question: How do we work with editors?

- Crafting game plans for final stretches;
- Settling stories and sources.

Guest speaker TBA

Week 7 *ONE CLASS THIS WEEK/ FINAL*

Theme: Wrapping Up

- Class reflection
- Lecture: workshopping and wrap-up
- Finalize stories