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JOUR 570.01: News Reporting

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The University of Montana

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Journalism 570
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Office hours: 10:30 am to noon Monday and Wednesday

In this class, we'll learn the principles of gathering news through various sources. Those sources include interviews, your own observations, events, meetings and public records and other documents. You will learn to write news stories and features for broadcast and print. We'll also explore basic issues and perspectives around reporting standards and practices in the shifting landscape of journalism today.

- **Send all assignments to: rjstruckman@gmail.com.**
- **All assignments must be in Microsoft Word documents as attachments. If you don't have Word, paste the assignment into the text of the email.**
- **Multiple assignments must come to me in one email.**
- **Label each attachment: Your last name and the due date of the assignment.**

Week 1 Aug. 31: Introduction to this class, each other and your instructor. Overview of the syllabus. An introduction to news.
Assignment: Due 10 pm on Aug. 31, a profile of one of your fellow students and a pitch.

 Sept. 2: Develop beats, learn about story generation and the form of the basic news story. Introduction to AP style.
Assignment: Write one feature with photo based on the pitch and generate 10 story ideas for your beat. Due 10 pm, Sept. 4

Week 2 Sept. 7: No school.

 Sept. 9: Trouble-shoot beats and stories. Workshop story generation and refinement. Nonfiction reading assignments and review due dates.
Assignment. Due 10 pm on Sept. 11, news story 1 and photo.

Week 3 Sept. 14: Introduction to the justice beat and the ride-along.
Assignment: Set up and do a ride-along. Feature with photo due 10 pm, Sept. 18.

 Sept. 16: Introduction to enterprise journalism. How can you make the most of the cop beat? Beat assignment TBD.

Week 4 Sept. 21: Introduction to statistics, and how to write about the mundane issues everyone ignores. How to prepare for every interview.
Assignment: Beat assignment TBD.

Book review due in class.

Sept. 23: Story critiques. And how to use quotes.
Assignment: A statistic story due 10 pm, Sept. 25.

Week 5 Sept. 28: Introduction to government news coverage.
Assignment: Beat assignment TBD.
Book review due in class.

Sept. 30: Field trip to Missoula County Courthouse.
Assignment: Find the front steps without asking me and be there on time with notebook in hand. In your notebook should be the names of every city council member, the mayor and Missoula county commissioners. Bonus points to anyone who can name the city's press liaison and her former job.

Week 6 Oct. 5: Introduction to Missoula City Council.
Assignment: Cover Missoula City Council meeting starting at 7 pm at 140 W. Pine St. News stories due at midnight on the night of the meeting.
Book review due in class.

Oct. 7: Workshop the "meeting" story. Or, how to make a long meeting into a good story.
Assignment: Beat story TBD.

Week 7 Oct. 12: What stories matter to a city? How to break past the city council narrative.
Assignment: Cover Missoula City Council meeting starting at 7 pm at 140 W. Pine St. News stories due at midnight on the night of the meeting.
Book review due in class.

Oct. 14: Introduction to the idea of "beat maintenance." How to develop the best sources.
Choosing your enterprise story, due at end of semester.
Assignment: Beat story TBD.

Week 8 Oct. 19: Covering the whole city. What's up with the library? And street repair? And the utilities? The planning board? The sewage plant? The housing authority?
Assignment: Cover Missoula City Council meeting starting at 7 pm at 140 W. Pine St. News stories due at midnight on the night of the meeting.
Book review due in class.

Oct. 21: Planning the big story. Covering your beat. Getting deeper than the muttering characters at city council. Who's going to bring down Roger Millar?

- Week 9 Oct. 26: Planning long-term coverage of the city and its institutions, including the redevelopment agency and how the city finances its operations. Where does the money come from? Why does the city have such a bad credit rating?
Assignment: Cover Missoula City Council meeting starting at 7 pm at 140 W. Pine St. News stories due at midnight on the night of the meeting.
Book review due in class.
- Oct. 28: Profiles, quick features and other little stories.
Assignment: TBD.
- Week 10 Nov. 2: How to come up with cool seasonal features.
Assignment. Beat story TBD.
Book review due in class.
- Nov. 4: Executing that cool seasonal feature. This is how to scramble.
Assignment: A cool seasonal feature with art due Nov. 6, 10 pm.
- Week 11 Nov. 9: How to get a handle on a big story that's getting away from you.
Story critiques.
Assignment: Beat story TBD.
Book review due in class.
- Nov. 11: No school.
- Week 12 Nov. 16: Covering a calamity.
Assignment: Beat story TBD.
Book review due in class.
- Nov. 18: It's all about the bankruptcies, and talking to the source who you know hates you.
Assignment: A 500-word description of your final project including sources, interviews (and what the interviewee will likely add to the story) and other source material and relevance. Due Nov. 20, 10 pm.
- Week 13 Nov. 23: Jails and prisons.
Assignment: A reporter's notebook. Due: 10 pm, Nov. 24.
- Nov. 25: No school.
- Week 14 Nov. 30: Introduction to federal facts and figures, reports, investigations and other source material.
Assignment: Beat story TBD.

Dec. 2: Reporting on social issues and distinct cultural or ethnic groups.
Assignment: TBD.

Week 15 Dec. 7: Planning the coverage of an electoral season. Who's worth covering and why. Case in point: The Ron Paul phenomenon. And: Are you conservative or liberal, does it matter, and how will you behave as a reporter?
Assignment. Beat story TBD.

Dec. 9. Problem solving with big stories. How to get the piece into the paper? Or online. Or whatever.

Week 16 Dec. 16: Final assignments due. No class.

Reading assignments: I expect you to read and review a nonfiction reporting classic. Examples include *Best and the Brightest*, by David Halberstam; *Silent Spring*, by Rachel Carson; *Unsafe at Any Speed*, by Ralph Nader; *Road Back to Paris* by A.J. Leibling; *The Road to Wigan Pier* by George Orwell; *Beirut to Jerusalem* by Thomas Friedman; *Common Ground*, by J. Anthony Lukas; *All the President's Men* by Carl Bernstein, Bob Woodward; *Lenin's Tomb*, by David Remnick; or a book of your choosing (which I need to approve).