

# COMM 208 - 201 Reporting Fundamentals II: Technology for Journalists

Fall 2020

Mondays 5:30-8 p.m. Central Time  
Online (synchronous)

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## ◆ Course Goals and Objectives

This course is designed to teach you the fundamentals of basic technologies used by today's journalists to report events and tell stories. The course will be divided into broad sections focused on writing and blogging; social media in journalistic contexts; still photography; audio; video; and information graphics. Each section will be presented with the goal of making you feel comfortable and confident using these technologies to report and produce well-written, well-edited stories across platforms. The aim is to help you brand yourself and your content as a legitimate source of journalism. Ultimately, this course aims to offer you a taste of different mediums and technologies to help you choose how best to tell your stories, as well as your own path within journalism.

## ◆ Online Considerations and Expectations

As our course will be exclusively online, here are some considerations to help you get the most out of the class: Though our class is scheduled for 2.5 hours, we will *not* be doing Zoom sessions that stretch the entire time. We will start each Monday **live at 5:30 p.m.** for topical lessons, occasional guest speakers, discussions and exchanges, including group breakouts and sharing ideas. You will be given ample time to practice the concepts presented in class, but usually will be able to choose whether to practice during the scheduled class time or on your own.

## Attendance and Zoom Etiquette

As class meets just once per week, it is important to attend every session. Part of your grade will be based on **attendance** and **participation**. While you will be able to watch a recording if you miss a session, you will miss the interactions with me and with your classmates that are intended to enhance your experience in the class. (Note that watching the recorded session afterward will not count toward participation points.)

On each Zoom session, you are encouraged to use the video option as much as you feel comfortable. It helps the rest of us feel connected to you. If there are times you do not feel comfortable keeping the video on, you are encouraged to use a photo or a visual icon that reflects your personality and interests.

\*\*\*Please note: Even if/when you disable the video it will be important to stay engaged with the session, so you are not caught away from the computer if you are asked a question or when breakout rooms are assigned.

Additional Zoom etiquette and expectations will be discussed in class.

## **Loyola Policy on Recording of Class Sessions**

In this class software will be used to record live class discussions. As a student in this class, your participation in live discussions will be recorded. These recordings will be made available only to students enrolled in the class, to assist those who cannot attend the live session or to serve as a resource for those who would like to review content that was presented. As mentioned above, students who prefer to participate via audio only will be allowed to disable their video camera so only audio will be captured. \*\*\*Please share any concerns you may have about being recorded privately with me prior to the first recording (e.g., the first synchronous class session). All recordings will become unavailable to students in the class when the Sakai course is unpublished (i.e., shortly after the course ends, per the [Sakai administrative schedule](#)).

Please note: To limit the circulation of recordings of synchronous sessions beyond the classroom, and their possible use for “commercial purposes” as described in the Illinois Publicity Act, your ability to download these video recordings will be restricted. All systems currently used by Loyola for recording (Panopto, VoiceThread, and Zoom) are set to prevent students from downloading videos. This will not impact your ability to view the recordings using an internet connection.

Use of all video recordings will be in keeping with the University **Privacy Statement**:

Assuring privacy among faculty and students engaged in online and face-to-face instructional activities helps promote open and robust conversations and mitigates concerns that comments made within the context of the class will be shared beyond the classroom. As such, recordings of instructional activities occurring in online or face-to-face classes may be used solely for internal class purposes by the faculty member and students registered for the course, and only during the period in which the course is offered. Instructors who wish to make subsequent use of recordings that include student activity may do so only with informed written consent of the students involved or if all student activity is removed from the recording. Recordings including student activity that have been initiated by the instructor may be retained by the instructor only for individual use.

### **◆ Equipment needs**

For the first several weeks of class, the only equipment you will need is a smartphone and a computer. Later in the semester (**starting Oct. 12**) you will need additional equipment for the audio and video assignments:

- External microphone
- Stabilizer (tripod, monopod, etc.)
- Smartphone adapter for the tripod/monopod

This equipment will be available for checkout through the Owl Lab in SOC 004. For those who are outside of Chicago or otherwise unable to come in and check out equipment, the School of Communication has arranged to provide reimbursement if you purchase the microphone, stabilizer, and adapter on your own. (Details to follow.)

- There will be an *optional* assignment using a DSLR or mirrorless digital camera, if you have your own. There may also be a limited number of these cameras available from the Owl Lab. These cameras are not eligible for reimbursement.

Note that if you plan to visit the Owl Lab for equipment checkout, you must follow the [required personal safety practices](#) for coming to campus. Additional guidelines for navigating Loyola's campuses are outlined on the Return to Campus webpage under [Campus Scenarios](#).

## ◆ Assignments and Projects

Assignments will be designed to help you develop skills using communication technologies in a journalistic setting. Each section will include projects on which to demonstrate those skills. Each person will also maintain a blog and *professionally focused* social media accounts. You will each choose a beat or focused topic area around which to build some of your stories, while some stories can be other general-assignment topics.

### Safety protocols and recommendations

For any assignments that require interviews, you may conduct interviews by phone, email, text, social media or video conferencing (Zoom, etc.). Consider your safety and comfort along with those of your subject. (Note that some assignments will require audio and/or video. Those may be done by Zoom or other similar technologies.)

If you conduct any face-to-face interviews, I strongly advise that you only interview people who are in your immediate family or circle of friends that you normally associate with (i.e., your "quaranteam"). Whatever you do, conduct yourself in a safe and healthy manner. All parties should wear masks, maintain six feet of distance, and follow all other safety guidelines for your area.

*\*\*\*Please note: I reserve the right to not accept any assignment that obviously violates these protocols.*

In keeping with journalism standards, you need to identify your relationship to the interviewee(s) in the story. And if it is not obvious from the elements within the blog post/story (such as video), you should *disclose* the method of the interview (via video conference, text, email, phone).

### Additional considerations:

- Beat or topic focus assignments: As you choose your beat or topic focus area, it is important to keep in mind that many stories will require interviewing sources. That is, your blog will be for covering newsworthy stories, not for expressing your opinion on a topic.
- Fact error deduction: Facts are of vital importance in journalism. Therefore, fact errors in stories receive an automatic deduction. Take care to make sure names are spelled correctly and that other facts are accurately presented. In the words of the late President Lyndon Johnson, "In the arsenal of truth, there is no greater weapon than fact."

**Deadlines:** Meeting deadlines is vital in journalism. Assignments not turned in on time will receive an automatic reduction in grade.

## Final Project

There will be a final project in lieu of a final exam, which will give you the opportunity to demonstrate the skills you have acquired throughout the semester. The project will incorporate several elements using the various technologies. Final projects will be due on the day and time of our scheduled final, **Monday, Dec. 7, 5:30 p.m.** You will also be assigned to peer-review a classmate's project. Details will be distributed later in the semester and on Sakai.

## Additional attendance notes

As mentioned on page 1, you are expected to attend every class, and absences will impact your ability to get the most out of the course. Your attendance and timely "arrival" for the Zoom sessions will be counted as part of your in-class grade. If you have a genuine emergency that keeps you from making the synchronous Zoom session, please notify me *prior* to class if possible.

At Loyola, we respect that you may miss class due to religious observances. In these circumstances, please notify me ahead of time that you will be gone.

## ◆ Grading

### Grades will be weighted as follows:

Website, Blog, Social Media	35%
Other projects	35%
Class "attendance" and participation	10%
Final project	20%

## Grading scale

Assignments will be graded on a point system. At the end of the semester, the accumulated points will be converted into a letter grade based on the following scale:

A 94-100%; A- 90-93%; B+ 87-89%; B 84-86%; B- 80-83%;  
C+ 77-79%; C 74-76%; C- 70-73%; D+ 67-69%; D 60-66%

## ◆ Rules and Responsibilities

### Academic Integrity

Loyola University and the School of Communication expect academic integrity and have policies regarding academic dishonesty. Specifically for the SOC:

1. Academic dishonesty of any kind will not be tolerated. Plagiarism in your work will result in a minimum of a failing grade for that assignment. The case may carry further sanctions from the School of Communication or the University, the most serious being permanent expulsion. Avoid turning in work that could be interpreted as plagiarism or academically dishonest (e.g., failing to properly credit a source or using someone else's ideas without clarifying that they are not yours). This is an academic community; being uninformed or naïve is not an acceptable excuse for not properly referencing sources.

### 2. It is dishonest to:

- Turn in the same work for two classes\*;
- Turn in a paper you have not written yourself; or
- Copy from another student or use a "cheat sheet" during an exam.

*Specifically for this course:*

*--You are not allowed to copy someone else's audio, video or visuals from the Internet, DVD, or any other source without proper attribution – and any use of such work in your stories should be limited to a few seconds and with a very clear purpose (e.g., YouTube video). You **cannot** use content from another journalist or organization in your work.*

*Turning in work that is not your own and representing it as yours will result in failure on the assignment and possible dismissal from the class.*

*\*If you are in two courses that generate news stories (for example, this class and Mosaic), it may be permissible to cover the same story for both courses if: 1) the stories are in different formats (such as broadcast and print), and 2) both professors know about and approve of the arrangement.*

You can find Loyola's policies regarding academic integrity at:

[http://www.luc.edu/academics/catalog/undergrad/reg\\_academicintegrity.shtml](http://www.luc.edu/academics/catalog/undergrad/reg_academicintegrity.shtml).

### **Managing Life Crises and Finding Support**

These are extraordinary times that can sometimes feel overwhelming. Should you encounter a crisis during the semester (e.g., securing food or housing, addressing mental health concerns, managing a financial crisis, and/or dealing with a family emergency, etc.), I strongly encourage you to contact the Center for Student Assistance & Advocacy (LUC.edu/csaa) to submit a CARE referral for yourself or a peer in need of support. If you are uncomfortable doing so on your own, please know that I can submit a referral on your behalf – just email me or schedule a virtual meeting with me. Learn more about the center and its resources at:

<https://www.luc.edu/csaa/forstudents/studentresources/>

### **Special Needs**

If you have a special circumstance that may impact your course work and for which you may require accommodations, please contact me early in the semester so arrangements can be made with the Student Accessibility Center (SAC) (formerly known as SSWD). We will accommodate your needs as best we can. Loyola's policy is that it is the student's responsibility to plan in advance in order to meet their own needs and assignment due dates. Additional information about the services available at Loyola, including eligibility for services, is on the SAC website: <http://www.luc.edu/sac>.

### **◆ Electronic Communication & Information**

**Sakai:** Course information, recordings of class sessions, and assignments will be available on Sakai. That is also where you will submit the assignments not posted on your blog. Please notify me if you have any problems using the class Sakai site.

**Email:** I will answer email within 24 hours on weekdays but will not always access it on weekends. You may not receive a response to a late Friday email until Monday.

### ◆ **About your professor**

This is my 12th year at Loyola, and I was recognized in 2018 with the national Edward L. Bliss award for distinguished broadcast journalism education. I have 18 years of experience in television news, most of that as a producer. I worked at TV stations in Denver, and before that produced and anchored newscasts in Huntsville, Alabama. My newscasts earned regional Emmy awards for hard news and spot news and a Colorado Broadcasters Association best newscast award. I also have experience in reporting (both news and sports), photography and editing, and worked in radio and newspapers before starting my television career. I hold a PhD in Communication from the University of Colorado. My research interests include journalistic uses of technology; local news and the audience relationship to it; as well as corporate and consolidation influences on local news and local news outsourcing. I have a master's degree from the University of Colorado and a bachelor's degree in broadcast journalism from the University of Missouri. I am a member of the Chicago regional board of directors for the National Television Academy.

**Week 1      Mon Aug 24**

- General introduction and expectations
- Role of technology in journalism
- Blogging styles and purposes
- Journalistic-style writing refresher

**Week 2      Mon Aug 31**

- Setting up your blog and deciding what to write about
- Using and monitoring social media in journalism
- Bit.ly's and related tools

➤ **Due:** Classmate profile; "blog log" assignment

**Week 3      Mon Sept 7      Labor Day, no class**

➤ **Due by Friday Sept 11:** First blog post; topic focus and story ideas

**Week 4      Mon Sept 14**

- Headlines and SEO basics
- Posting photos and videos to your website
- Captions and credits
- Legalities and ethics of using images (Creative Commons, etc.)

➤ **Due:** First social media posts

**Week 5      Mon Sept 21**

- Photography unit I: Making the most of your smartphone – tricks and techniques

➤ **Due:** Blog post incl. minimum two visuals with captions and credits

**Week 6      Mon Sept 28**

- Photo editing, combining photos and text, mobile slide shows

➤ **Due:** Photo assignment #1

**Week 7      Mon Oct 5**

- Photo authentication and verifying images
- Shooting with a DSLR

➤ **Due:** Mobile slide show

**Week 8      Mon Oct 12**

- Broadcast writing and audio stories
- Gathering and using sound

➤ **Due:** DSLR shooting assignment or optional smartphone assignment

**Week 9      Mon Oct 19**

- Non-linear audio editing
  - Putting together audio stories
  - Podcasting basics
- **Due:** Audio interview for editing

**Week 10      Mon Oct 26**

- Video unit: Uses, how-to, basic story types
  - Shooting video sequences: tools, tricks and choices
- **Due:** Edited audio wrap

**Week 11      Mon Nov 2**

- Video editing
- **Due:** Video sequence shot (for editing and uploading during class)
- **Note:** Have Adobe Premiere installed by this point

**Week 12      Mon Nov 9**

- Video Interviewing
  - Video packages
- **Due:** Election reaction blog post and social media elements

**Week 13      Mon Nov 16**

- Information graphics to enhance your stories
  - Final project expectations
- **Due:** Mobile video package

**Week of Nov 23      Thanksgiving Break**

**Week 14      Mon Nov 30**

Semester wrap-up; last day of class

- **Due:** Information graphics assignment

**Mon Dec 7      Final Projects due by 5:30 p.m.  
(peer review of classmate's project due later)**

\* We will try to stick to this schedule, but there may be changes if circumstances dictate or special opportunities arise.  
*Expect additional assignments and due dates as the semester progresses.*