Investigative Reporting Project
Fall 2014
53-3525-01
Tuesdays, 12:30 to 3:20 p.m.
Sept. 2 through Dec. 9, 2014
33 E. Congress, Room 213

Course description: This seminar course offers outstanding upper-level students the opportunity to do a significant piece of professional-level reporting and writing project, with a multimedia emphasis and suitable for publication.

More information about the course: There are **two** major assignments and a process blog, both of which will be housed on a website and some of which will be published in established media outlets. All students will contribute to each of these. Students may choose various roles on each story; many stories will be collaboratively written/designed/recorded/shot, and all stories will be edited and fact checked.

Our aims for this course are that you gain the mindset and the tools of investigative reporting, develop an understanding of how these local stories connect to global issues, contribute to two pieces pitched and published in professional outlets, and contribute actively to a process blog.

Instructors:

> Sharon Bloyd-Peshkin
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> 33 E. Congress, Room 201B
> Office: 312.369.8918
> Cell: 708.363.3893 (if you text me, please include your name and observe reasonable texting hours: 7 a.m. - 9 p.m.)

> Jeff Kelly Lowenstein
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> 33 E. Congress, room 201R
> Office: 312.369.8902
> Cell: 312.532.7902 (if you text me, please include your name and observe reasonable texting hours: 7 a.m. - 9 p.m.)

Instructors' bios:

> Sharon Bloyd-Peshkin is an associate professor in the Journalism Department. A former editor (*Vegetarian Times, Chicago Parent*) and editorial board member (*In These Times*), she is now a freelance writer and editor with work published in *Chicago* magazine, the *Chicago Tribune*

Magazine, *In These Times, Common Review*, the *Chicago Sun-Times, Sea Kayaker, Adventure Kayak* and *Ocean Paddler* magazines, among others. She holds a BA from the University of Chicago and an MA from the University of Virginia.

Jeff Kelly Lowenstein is a lecturer in the Journalism Department, and the former database and investigative editor at Hoy newspaper. His work has been published by The New Yorker, the Chicago Tribune and the Boston Herald, among many other publications, and has received local, national and international recognition. A Fulbright Scholar and Specialist, Kelly Lowenstein holds a master's degree in journalism from Northwestern University, a master's degree in education from Northeastern University, a master's certificate in refugee trauma and a bachelor's degree in History from Stanford University.

Office hours:
Sharon
Wednesdays 10 a.m. to noon
Thursdays noon to 2 p.m.
or by appointment

Jeff
Monday, 3 to 5 p.m.
Tuesday, 10 a.m. to noon
or by appointment

Course Prerequisites: Permission of the instructors

Learning Objectives:
Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to:
- Refine the reporting and writing skills necessary to complete an in-depth reporting project.
- Create multi-source, contextual stories that go beyond the routine and expected.
- Assess the already created work on the subject being studied and build on it.
- Perform advanced interviewing skills with special emphasis on drawing out context, color and other details.
- Employ multi-media and social media skills, including recording and editing audio and video segments, creating slideshows, and using Twitter and Facebook.

Required texts and materials:

- Investigative Reporters and Editors' web site-www.ire.org and the 5th edition of *The Investigative Reporter's Handbook: A Guide to Documents, Databases and Techniques* (Brant Houston and IRE Inc., 2009)

- Other readings will be provided on Moodle or in class.

Recommended reading and resources:
- Past and current daily reporting from many media outlets, including the *Chicago Tribune, Chicago Sun-Times (including the newspaper's daily Homicide Watch), DNAInfo Chicago, Crain's Chicago Business, Chicago Public Radio (WBEZ) and The New York Times*

Equipment Guide: Equipment may be required for this course. Please refer to the Journalism Department Equipment Guide for full details. http://www.colum.edu/Academics/Journalism/Equipment%20Guide/

Submitting assignments: All assignments must be double-spaced. Point size must be at least 12. You must upload them to Moodle at 9 a.m. on the day class begins and print out two hard copies: one for me, MEANING BOTH OF YOU? and one for you to read in class.

Note: All assignments are due (uploaded to Moodle) at 9 a.m. -- not at 12:30 when class begins!

Additional suggestions for succeeding in this class:
- Turn things in on time. Journalism is a deadline-oriented field. If you turn in an assignment late, you will be penalized one increment of a letter grade per day. (An assignment that would earn a B becomes a B- on day one, a C+ on day two, a C on day three, and so on.)
- Check your loop.colum.edu email daily.
- Fact-check your work. If we catch factual errors (incorrect spelling of a proper name, wrong address, wrong name, incorrect title, incomplete source list), you will be lose one increment of a letter grade per mistake.

Evaluation/Grading:

Memos, interview notes and other assigned work	30%
Stories, videos and other published/posted work	40%
Contributions to the process blog	20%
Collaboration, improvement, leadership	10%

More about grades: Your interviewing, researching and other reporting skills will be assessed, as will the organization, flow and writing of your stories. Because this project will require close collaboration, your ability to work with others and

meet deadlines also will be important factors in determining your final grade. Improvement and persistence will be rewarded as well.

Grading Scale
Your written assignments will be graded on the following scale:

A: Shows mastery of facts. Includes sufficient and appropriate sources. Demonstrates publishable quality of writing, appropriate style for target publication, and awareness of audience.

A-/B+: Accurate, contains all relevant material, but may lack maximum precision and clarity. May have minor spelling or grammar errors or minor content holes. The difference between and A- and a B+ is the degree to which these occur.

B: Handled assignment fairly well, but needs some polish, has a few holes but no major errors.

B-/C+: A significant problem or two somewhere in focus, writing, sourcing, style, organization, etc. The difference between a B- and a C+ is the degree to which these problems appear.

C: Significant organizational or writing problems, content holes and/or inaccuracies. Needs considerable re-reporting and rewriting.

C-: A very weak effort. Needs major rewriting and re-reporting.

D: A poor effort that demonstrates few of the assignment's objectives.

F: Failure to meet assignment requirements and standards, or failure to turn in assignments by deadline, or at all.

Communication: Check your loop.colum.edu email account and MOODLE regularly for announcements, updates and changes in the course schedule. Our contact information is at the top of this syllabus and can be used to schedule individual meetings.

WE expect you to be on time to each class session and to be fully engaged until each session is over. You are expected to attend class because important assignments will be completed in class each week. If you are ill, contact US before class and bring in a note from a doctor or clinic afterward in order for the absence to be excused. If it is excused, you are entitled to make up any assignment or quiz after the original due date.

Grading Requirements: Students must earn a C (not a C-) or better in a journalism course for it to count toward their journalism major. If a student does not meet the C standard in a prerequisite, the student cannot progress to a subsequent course.

Journalism Department Attendance Policy: Excessive absences may result in a lowered grade, or in extreme circumstances, failure of the course. Likewise, chronic lateness or missed deadlines can result in a lowered grade. Please discuss this with your instructor.

As noted in the learning objectives, journalists are expected to be on time and prepared for each class session. Grades will also be reduced for lateness and leaving early.

Story and Source Lists Policy: Refer to http://www.colum.edu/academics/Journalism/story-and-source-lists-policy.php for the complete Story and Source Lists Policy.

Academic Honesty Policy: Academic honesty is expected of all students. All quotes and source material must be properly attributed and verified. Your reporting must be original, truthful, accurate and free of fabrication. Any work you present as your own must be your own. Violations of this policy include plagiarism, fabrication and any other form of cheating. An instructor who suspects a violation will discuss the matter confidentially with the student. If the matter remains unresolved, the issue will be referred to the Journalism Department Chair and the Academic Integrity Committee, where both instructor and student must provide documentation of their positions. Consequences of violating the policy may include failing the assignment, failing the course, or a recommendation of suspension or expulsion from the college.

Refer to further information and definitions found on the Journalism Department website: http://www.colum.edu/Academics/Journalism/academic-honesty-policy/.

Incomplete Grade Policy: An "Incomplete" grade will be granted only in *rare* emergency instances, with both instructor and student signing the standard college agreement. For the full policy statement go to: http://students.colum.edu/handbook/entries/grading-system/

Repeating this course for credit: If you do not earn the minimum C grade required to count toward your journalism major, you will have to repeat this course (or take an alternative course if your concentration includes that option). You may take a course twice in your effort to earn a C or better grade. You will not be permitted to take it a third time. The policy applies to any course taken in

the Spring 2014 semester and beyond. Students must speak with a journalism faculty adviser before taking a course the second time.
Services for Students with Disabilities: Refer to www.colum.edu/Academics/Journalism for the complete policy.

Social Media Guidelines: Apply the concept of informed consent in deciding what to post on social media. A journalist would not quote a source without notification, and the same rules apply to social media. Also, social media sites, such as Facebook or Twitter, should not be used to harass or denigrate your classmates or teachers. Using offensive language or racial slurs is not acceptable and could result in disciplinary action.

The complete Social Media Guidelines are detailed at http://www.colum.edu/Academics/Journalism/social-media-guidelines/.

Disclaimer: Please note that many special events of interest to journalism students happen at the college and in greater Chicago that we did not know about when the syllabus was written. In addition to announcements in class and on MOODLE, the syllabus may be changed on short notice to take advantage of guest speakers, news events and other special opportunities. It is your responsibility to keep up with the instructor's postings. You are also encouraged to alert classmates about other relevant events, speakers and other newsworthy activities relevant to the course.

NO FOOD OR DRINK IS ALLOWED IN THE CLASSROOM.
LAPTOPS, SMART PHONES AND OTHER ELECTRONIC DEVICES MAY BE USED ONLY FOR TAKING NOTES AND DOING CLASS WORK. IF YOU DISRUPT THE CLASS WITH AN ELECTRONIC DEVICE OR ARE FOUND TO BE USING IT FOR NON-COURSE WORK, YOU MAY BE ASKED TO LEAVE THE CLASSROOM, WHICH COULD AFFECT YOUR COURSE GRADE.

IMPORTANT DATES

Sep. 2	Semester begins
Sep. 8	Last day to add courses
Sep. 15	Last day to drop courses
Oct. 27	Last day to withdraw from courses
Nov. 27-29	Thanksgiving holiday, college closed
Dec. 13	Semester ends

Class schedule:

September 2 (meet in Library classroom)
- Icebreaker.
- Introduction to the topic and the course: partners, summer work done, ambitions for this semester.
- Demo the data.
- Library as a resource (Arlie).
- Brainstorm interests, assets and ideas: stories, strategies under two umbrellas: Expansion of the Lottery; Effects on Education and using the tools of investigative reporing: maps, charts, timelines, stories, soundslides, social sharing, video, audio PLUS their own interests,ideas etc.
- Goals Assignment.
- Prepare questions for Lottery Director Michael Jones.

Assignments due next week:
- Designers begin working on logo and on design-driven story or graphics ideas.
- Read Chapter 1 of The *Investigative Reporter's Handbook* (*IRH*).
- Come to class with several story ideas, based on our brainstorming exercise, that we'll refine during class September 9.

September 9
- Small-group story and graphics idea refinement.
- Whole-class story and graphics idea refinement and assignment.
- Pitch to Natalie Craig (*Chronicle* editor).
- Who else do we need to talk to? Source list.
- Professional tweeting review.
- Designers show first batch of logo ideas, get feedback.
- Discuss class roles; go home with job descriptions and request forms.
- One or two students volunteer to speak to Larry Minsky's Ad Agency class (meets Thursdays, 9 a.m. to 11:50 a.m.).

Assignments due next week:
- Designers continue working on logo.
- Pitches of preliminary assignments (as collaborations) are due next week.
- Fill out job request forms; submit via Moodle by Monday at 9 a.m.
- Read Chapter 2 of *Investigative Reporter's Handbook* (*IRH*).
- Report back from Ad Agency visit.

September 16
- Interview Lottery Director Michael Jones at 12:30.
- Designers show refined logo ideas, get feedback and finalize for next week
- Jobs assigned.
- Guest speaker: Rodolfo Jimenez, Art Director, *Hoy*
- Hands-on: Freedom of Information tutorial and submission.

- Two small-group meetings (Sharon in one, Jeff in the other) to refine pitches and incorporate design considerations.
- Discuss memos due next week.
- Discuss stand-up meetings and how we'll stay up on Lottery news.

Assignments due next week:
- Read Chapter 4 of I*nvestigative Reporter's Handbook* (*IRH*).
- Write memos for *Chronicle/*first batch of stories. Submit via Moodle Tuesday by 9 a.m.

September 23
- Stand-up meeting: What I've done, what I plan to do. Lottery news.
- Jobs assigned.
- Guest speaker: Provost Stan Wearden on the ethics of investigative reporting. (2:15 - 3 p.m.)
- Hands-on: Reverse engineer some investigative stories, come up with list of practices used.
- Two small-group meetings (Sharon in one, Jeff in the other) on memos, assign editors to each story.

Assignments due next week:
- Designers complete logo, continue working on graphics.
- First drafts due of *Chronicle/*first batch of stories due via Moodle by Tuesday by 9 a.m. A copy must be emailed to your editor.
- Production manager creates copy flow document, enters preliminary ideas.

September 30
- Stand-up meeting: What I've done, what I plan to do. Lottery news.
- Production manager update.
- Hands on: Editing bootcamp using submitted stories.
- Discuss options and make decisions about website and process blog.
- Brainstorm pitches for *In These Times* magazine.

Assignments due next week:
- Website and blog editors create first draft of wireframes and blog concept.
- Read Chapter 5 of *Investigative Reporter's Handbook.*
- Pitches due for *In These Times.* Submit via Moodle by Monday at 9 a.m.
- Editors' response memos to *Chronicle/*batch one stories due via Moodle by Monday at 9 a.m.

October 7
- Stand-up meeting: What I've done, what I plan to do. Lottery news.
- Production manager update.
- Guest speaker: Jessica Stites, Deputy Editor/Web Editor, *In These Times* - pitch her. (1 p.m.)
- Refine pitches in small groups.
- Hands on: Excel. Data processing: Acquire, clean, analyze, display.
- Designers present website options, get feedback.

Assignments due next week:

- Submit refined *In These Times* pitches via Moodle by Tuesday at 9 a.m.
- Continue working on *Chronicle/*first batch of stories; second drafts due Oct. 21.
- Designers refine website options, present again Oct. 21.
- Read pages about investigating lotteries in *Investigative Reporter's Handbook*

October 14
- Stand-up meeting: What I've done, what I plan to do. Lottery news.
- Production manager update.
- Guest lecture: Alden Loury, Senior Investigator, Better Government Assoc., former Publisher, *Chicago Reporter*.
- Hands-on: Mapping with Google Fusion Tables.
- Refine and assign *In These Times*/second batch stories; assign editors and designers.

Assignments due next week:
- Story memos for *In These Times*/second batch of stories due at Monday by 9 a.m. via Moodle and directly to your editors.
- Second drafts of *Chronicle/*first batch of stories are due Tuesday by 9 a.m. Submit via Moodle and directly to your editors.
- Be ready to present website.

October 21
- Stand-up meeting: What I've done, what I plan to do. Lottery news.
- Production manager update.
- Website presentation and discussion.
- Hands-on: Document Cloud and upload documents.
- Start discussion of end-of-term presentation, assign tasks.

Assignments due next week:
- Continue working on *In These Times/* second batch stories; first drafts are due Nov. 4.
- Editors complete work on *Chronicle/* first batch stories, submit via Moodle by 9 a.m. Monday.

October 28
- Stand-up meeting: What I've done, what I plan to do. Lottery news.
- Production manager update.
- Hands on: Fact-checking bootcamp.
- Fact checking begins in class and must be complete by November 4.
- Launch our website, upload material to process blog.
- First half of the midterm meetings conducted.

Assignments due next week:
- Contribute to the process blog.
- First drafts of *In These Times/* batch two stories are due Monday at 9 a.m., uploaded to Moodle and emailed to your editors.

November 4

- Stand-up meeting: What I've done, what I plan to do. Lottery news.
- Production manager update.
- Workshop first drafts of *In These Times/* batch two stories.
- Editors incorporate instructor feedback on edited *Chronicle/* batch one stories.
- Guest lecture: Demetrio Cardona-Maguidad, Strategic Design Director, LimeRed Studio
- Second half of the midterm meetings conducted.

Assignments due next week:
- Contribute to the process blog.
- Editors submit stories to the *Chronicle* and upload batch one stories as "drafts" on website (for instructors to "publish").
- Editors upload response memos to *In These Times/* batch two stories to Moodle by Tuesday at 9 a.m. and email their writers.
- Press releases are due Tuesday by 9 a.m.
- PSA drafts due by class November 11.

November 11
- Stand-up meeting: What I've done, what I plan to do. Lottery news.
- Production manager update.
- Guest lecture: TBA
- Small group meetings on *In These Times/* batch two stories and editors' memos with Jeff and Sharon.
- Workshop press releases.
- Presentation of PSA drafts; feedback for designers and writers.
- Presentation about end-of-class presentation plans.

Assignments due next week:
- Contribute to the process blog.
- Second drafts of *In These Times/* batch two stories are due Monday at 9 a.m., uploaded to Moodle and emailed to your editors.
- Revised PSAs due by class November 18.
- Create list of recipients for press releases.

November 18
- Stand-up meeting: What I've done, what I plan to do. Lottery news.
- Production manager update.
- Hands on: Reverse engineer an investigative story
- PSAs presented.
- Send out press releases.

Assignments due next week:
- Contribute to the process blog.
- Editors' memos in response to *In These Times/* batch two stories due by 9 a.m. Tuesday. Upload to Moodle and email to the writers.
- PSAs completed by Nov. 25, ready to print and post.

November 25

- Stand-up meeting: What I've done, what I plan to do. Lottery news.
- Production manager update.
- Fact checkers take over *In These Times/* batch two stories; begin in class, finish by December 2.
- End of term presentation team presents plan to the rest of the class.
- Final look at PSAs and determine whether they're ready to print and distribute.

Assignments due next week:
- Contribute to the process blog.
- Complete fact checking of *In These Times/* batch two stories and submit via Moodle by Monday at 9 a.m.
- Press releases for *In These Times/* batch two stories due Dec. 2.

December 2
- Stand-up meeting: What I've done, what I plan to do. Lottery news.
- Production manager update.
- Prepare for end of term presentation.

Assignments due next week:
- Contribute to the process blog.
- Editors submit stories to *In These Times* and upload batch two stories as "drafts" on website (for instructors to "publish").
- Press releases for *In These Times* / batch two stories sent out.

December 9
- End-of-term presentation.

*The process blog will feature "ah ha" moments about the investigative process along with videos in which students talk about what they learned from guest speakers and their work to date. Think of it as "how the sausage is made."

THINGS TO ADD:

As we go, we'll find opportunities to connect with our partners (professionals and fellow students).

reverse engineer an investigative journalism story-- can we do this more than once? Time permitting, anyway?

monitoring of the lottery as we go, and the media covering it

look at IRE award applications

JKL has invited the following speakers. Please fold them in now!

Mark Horvit
Angela Caputo

Alex Richards

Other potential hands-on activities:
Twitter as an investigative tool-Hootsuite and Tweetdeck
How to join two datasets
Data Cleaning-Google Refine

Go to an investigative newsroom. TCR, for instance.

Go in the field to report.

Treat guest speakers as a story to report.