**Revision – move law/ethics to beginning of course.**

**J460 – Investigative Reporting (Spring 2015)**

M/W 1pm-2:15pm

EP 213

**Instructor:** Gerry Lanosga

**Office:** EP 103

**Office Hours:** M/W 2:30-4:30 pm, or by appointment

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*“I didn’t like people being pushed around. I didn’t like bullies. I didn’t like people being taken advantage of.” – Walt Bogdanich, The New York Times*

**About the Course**

The goal of this course is to ground you in the heritage, tools and techniques of investigative and in-depth reporting. You will learn the practical skills of the investigative journalist both by studying professional investigative work and by doing your own work using tools such as public records and computer-assisted reporting. You will learn to conduct intensive backgrounding work using public records, to cultivate sources, to find and analyze data, and finally to produce a multi-platform investigative story in a compelling and understandable way.

**Objectives**

By the end of this semester students should be able to:

* Understand the history of investigative reporting and its role in democratic society.
* Use ethical research techniques and strategies to find information from a variety of sources, including individuals, government and business.
* Gain experience conducting interviews with sources.
* Learn how to use public access laws to obtain information.
* Learn how to analyze data using computer-assisted reporting techniques.
* Acquire a working knowledge of the ethical and legal boundaries investigative reporters must observe.
* Employ critical thinking skills to evaluate, select, synthesize, organize, edit and present information.

**Required Materials**

* *The Investigative Reporter’s Handbook* (5th ed.), Brant Houston and Investigative Reporters & Editors, 2009.
* Associated Press stylebook.

I also want you to seek out examples of current investigative journalism and be prepared to discuss them in class. To that end, you should be regularly monitoring journalism trade publications, scanning local and national media, and keeping an eye on some of the myriad online investigative news organizations such as ProPublica and the Midwest Center for Investigative Reporting. One helpful resource is [www.ire.org](http://www.ire.org), the website of Investigative Reporters & Editors, which is updated regularly with the latest examples of investigative reporting from around the country.

In addition to the textbook, there will be a number of short readings during the semester that I will provide to you either through web links or PDFs on Canvas.

**Assignments and Grading**

You will be required to complete the following assignments:

* Weekly research memos, detailed in the schedule below. Each memo should be at least 350 words long. (Along with attendance and participation in class discussion and activities, these memos will count for **10%** of your course grade.)
* A critique of a recent investigative story by a professional news organization. **(10%)**
* An in-depth background dossier on a prominent local community member, to be compiled from research you conduct using public records. **(20%)**
* A medium-length in-depth news story (roughly 1,000 words or broadcast equivalent) based primarily on a data source you will identify, obtain and analyze. **(15%)**
* A formal public records request exercise. (**10%**)
* An investigative project that will serve as your final project in lieu of an exam. More information about the project will be announced in the coming weeks. **(35%)**

I use the university’s standard grading scale, which is calculated automatically in Canvas.

**Deadlines**

Media professionals work in an environment of constant deadlines. In keeping with that basic reality of journalism, I accept late work only in cases of extreme hardship.

**Communication**

I use Canvas to post class resources and send out announcements as the need arises. Please check your official IU e-mail daily. The best way to reach me is by e-mail. Please allow at least 24 hours for me to respond to any emails you send. If you would like to have a phone conversation, please e-mail or text your request so we can set up a time that works for both of us. Also, I encourage you to visit my Delicious page for this course, listed above, on a regular basis. I use this to bookmark links of relevance to what we are doing in the course. You are also welcome to follow me on Twitter, where I post items of interest to both research and professional communities (especially in my areas of interest – journalism history, media law and journalistic practice).

**Attendance Policy**

Missing a class is like missing a day of work. I expect you to show up prepared and on time. If you know you’re going to miss class or be late, please let me know in advance. An excused absence generally involves a personal or family illness or emergency that must be documented. Routine medical appointments, job obligations, computer problems, missed buses, meetings with advisers and interviews (for stories or for jobs) are not valid reasons for missing class.

**Academic Integrity**

As a student at IU, you are expected to adhere to the standards and policies detailed in the [*Code of Student Rights, Responsibilities, and Conduc*](http://www.iu.edu/~code/)*t*. When you submit an assignment with your name on it, you are signifying that the work contained therein is all yours, unless otherwise cited or referenced. Any ideas or materials taken from another source for either written or oral use must be fully acknowledged. If you are unsure about the expectations for completing an assignment or taking a test or exam, be sure to seek clarification beforehand. All suspected violations of the *Code* will be handled according to University policies. Sanctions for academic misconduct may include a failing grade on the assignment, reduction in your final course grade, a failing grade in the course, among other possibilities, and must include a report to the Dean of Students, who may impose additional disciplinary sanctions.

**About Your Instructor**

I am an assistant professor in the School of Journalism. My work revolves around the intersection of journalistic practice and public policy, and I use a variety of research approaches to study both historical and contemporary issues such as freedom of information, investigative reporting, and political communication. I also aim to bridge the scholarly and professional realms by producing occasional journalistic works and by continuing involvement with industry organizations in areas that match my research interests, including The Midwest Center for Investigative Reporting, the Indiana Debate Commission and the Indiana Coalition for Open Government. I completed my Ph.D. in 2010 at Indiana University and taught at Ball State University before starting at IU. Previously, I spent nearly two decades as a print and broadcast journalist.

**Course Schedule**

Note: This syllabus is a living document and subject to change depending on a number of factors. I will notify you of any changes in class and via Canvas announcement. Readings should be completed in advance of the class in which they are listed.

**Week One (Jan. 11/13) – Overview. Introduction to investigative reporting – what it is and who does it.**

Reading:

* “Investigator: Uncovering the Veiled and Hidden,” Loren Ghiglione (Canvas)
* “The Challenges and Opportunities of 21st Century Muckraking,” Mark Feldstein, [www.nieman.harvard.edu/reports/article/101554/The-Challenges-and-Opportunities-of-21st-Century-Muckraking.aspx](http://www.nieman.harvard.edu/reports/article/101554/The-Challenges-and-Opportunities-of-21st-Century-Muckraking.aspx)
* “Who is doing real journalism?” Glenn Greenwald, www.salon.com/2008/07/24/journalism\_2/

**Week Two (Jan. 20; No class Jan. 19 – MLK Day) – The Practice and Heritage of Investigative Reporting.**

Reading:

* *The Investigative Reporter’s Handbook*, Chapter 1
* *The Journalism of Outrage*, Chapters 1 and 2 (Canvas)
* *Custodians of Conscience*, Chapters 1 and 2 (Canvas)
* “Dummies and ventriloquists,” Mark Feldstein (Canvas)

Memo due 1/20: Tear a page of legal notices from the *Herald-Times* and write about potential story ideas the ads contain.

**Week Three (Jan. 25/27) – Public records primer.**

Reading:

* *The Investigative Reporter’s Handbook,* Chapters 2-3, 5, 20
* “Loosening Lips,” Eric Nalder (Canvas)

Memo due 1/27: Part One: Poke around the Bloomington and Monroe County websites and then detail the documents and data available to the public; include at least two potential investigations based on the material you find. Part Two: Drive or walk around Bloomington and come up with at least two story investigations based on your observations; discuss what records and sources might be used for each.

**Week Four (Feb. 1/3) – Investigating Government**

Reading:

* *The Investigative Reporter’s Handbook,* Chapters 8-9

**ASSIGNMENT DUE 2-3: INVESTIGATIVE STORY CRITIQUE.**

**Week Five (Feb. 8/10) – Investigating Education**

Reading:

* *The Investigative Reporter’s Handbook,* Chapter 12

Memo due 2-10: Investigate the websites of Indiana University and the Monroe County public schools. Report on the documents and data available and any issues the might warrant investigation.

**Week Six (Feb. 15/17) – Data Journalism I**

Reading:

* *The Investigative Reporter’s Handbook,* Chapter 4
* *Computer-Assisted Reporting*, Chapters 1-2 (Canvas)

Memo due 2-17: Visit the Website of Investigative Reporters and Editors, click on “Extra! Extra!” then click on CAR (link on the right side). Find an example of a computer-assisted reporting story that interests you and write your reaction to it. Some questions you might consider: What data was used, and how was it analyzed? Is the story fair? Are there any shortcomings?

**Assignment due 2-19: Background dossier.**

**Week Seven (Feb. 22/24) – Data Journalism II**

Reading:

* *Computer-Assisted Reporting*, Chapters 3-4 (Canvas)

Memo due 2-24: Search federal, state or local websites and find a dataset that can be quickly downloaded. Write about how you would analyze it and what kind of story might result. This will become the basis of your short writing assignment.

**Week Eight (Feb. 29/March 2) – Law and ethics of investigative reporting**

Reading:

* *The Investigative Reporter’s Handbook,* Chapter 7
* *The Big Chill*, Chapters 6-8 (Canvas)

Memo due 3-2: In response to today’s readings, write three questions you would like to discuss. They can be related to your own work, but they don’t have to be.

**Week Nine (March 7/9) – Investigating Law and Order**

Reading:

* *The Investigative Reporter’s Handbook,* Chapters 10-11

Memo due 3-9: Find an example of an investigative story that examines law and order and attach it to this memo. Discuss structure, evidence, fairness and any criticisms.

**Assignment due 3-11: NEWS STORY**

**March 14/19 – Spring Break; no class.**

**Week Ten (March 21/23) – Investigating Business 1: For Profit and Not**

Reading:

* *The Investigative Reporter’s Handbook,* Chapters 13-14

Memo due 3-23: Download either an SEC proxy statement for a public company or a 990 tax form for a non-profit, review it and write about an issue worth exploring as a potential investigation. Attach the document to your memo.

**Week Eleven (March 28/30) – Investigating Business II: Special Sectors**

Reading:

* *The Investigative Reporter’s Handbook,* Chapters 15-17

**No class meeting March 30 – Meet independently with reporting groups**

**Week Twelve (April 4/6) – Transportation, the Environment, and Social Issues**

Reading:

* *The Investigative Reporter’s Handbook,* Chapters 18-19, 21

**No class meeting April 6 – Meet independently with reporting groups**

**Assignment due 4-8: PUBLIC RECORDS EXERCISE**

**Week Thirteen (April 11/13) – Writing the Investigative Project**

Reading:

* *The Investigative Reporter’s Handbook,* Chapter 6
* Investigative Journalism, Appendix 3 (Canvas)

**No class meeting April 13 – Meet independently with reporting groups**

**Week Fourteen (April 18/20) – In-class project work.**

No readings.

**Week Fifteen (April 25/27) – In-class project work. Final class meeting.**

No readings.

**Final PROJECT due 5 p.m. wednesday, May 6**

**IU Journalism – An Accredited Program**

IU Journalism is accredited by the Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communications. ACEJMC has articulated a list of 12 core values and competencies which it expects all journalism majors to learn by the time they graduate. For a complete list, visit the following URL and scroll down to Standard 2. Curriculum and Instruction: [www2.ku.edu/~acejmc/PROGRAM/STANDARDS.SHTML](http://www2.ku.edu/~acejmc/PROGRAM/STANDARDS.SHTML). In J460, you should expect to make significant progress in mastering the following values and competencies:

* Understand and apply the principles and laws of freedom of speech and press for the country in which the institution that invites ACEJMC is located, as well as receive instruction in and understand the range of systems of freedom of expression around the world, including the right to dissent, to monitor and criticize power, and to assemble and petition for redress of grievances;
* Demonstrate and understanding of professional ethical principles and work ethically in pursuit of truth, accuracy, fairness and diversity
* Think critically, creatively and independently
* Conduct research and evaluate information by methods appropriate to the communications professions in which they work
* Write correctly and clearly in forms and styles appropriate for the communications professions, audiences and purposes they serve
* Critically evaluate their own work and that of others for accuracy and fairness, clarity, appropriate style and grammatical correctness
* pply basic numerical and statistical concepts
* Apply tools and technologies appropriate for the communications professions in which they work.