

CNS INVESTIGATIVE BUREAU

Knight Hall 3210

10-6 Mondays & Wednesdays

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The CNS Investigative Bureau works on national reporting projects, often in collaboration with investigative journalists and students based at universities around the country. Stories are published and aired on CNS, the AP national wire and by partner news organizations.

This is a 6-credit CNS capstone for undergraduates and advanced skills course for master's students.

You are required to commit to two full days of work in the bureau. You must report to the bureau 10-6 Mondays and Wednesdays. (That includes 1 hour total for lunch and breaks). Special arrangements can be made to work around courses and Diamondback duties as well as for project-related interviews and events outside those days and hours. **Regardless, you must log 14 hours a week working for the bureau** (including time spent traveling or in the field reporting.)

Each student will:

- Work in teams on reporting, research and writing assignments
- Assist the CNS data and design teams on acquiring, analyzing and reporting out data and on developing interactives

Assessment:

40% Reporting
40% Writing and accuracy
10% Teamwork
10% Deadlines

IMPORTANT: See the rubric below for details on what we you need to do in order to earn an 'A' in each assessment category.

Your rights: For information about your rights, accommodations for disabilities, learning and counseling assistance, disciplinary procedures, missed assignments and more:
<http://www.ugst.umd.edu/courserelatedpolicies.html>

**Investigative reporting is hard! I know that... I'm here to help!
I want you to succeed!**

WHAT IS INVESTIGATIVE REPORTING?

"...Exposing to the public matters that are concealed – either deliberately by someone in a position of power, or accidentally, behind a chaotic mass of facts and circumstances that obscure understanding"– Story-based Inquiry: A Manual for Investigative Journalists

Outcomes:

You will:

1. know and apply professional ethical standards for journalists
2. use public records access laws to obtain original source documentary materials
3. identify and cultivate credible, reliable human sources; conduct in-depth interviews to obtain relevant, verifiable information
4. employ online tools for finding people and information and for verification
5. find, and use effectively, relevant studies and subject-matter experts
6. learn and apply social science observational tools
7. utilize data analysis to identify patterns and provide context
8. use time management and organizational skills effectively
9. write and produce complex, investigative narratives
10. perform a thorough fact check of yours and another reporter's work

Manuals/textbooks:

[Story-Based Inquiry](https://tinyurl.com/storybasedinquiry) tinyurl.com/storybasedinquiry

Student membership in [IRE.org](https://ire.org) (\$25) ire.org/membership/

[InvestigateWashington.org](https://investigatethewashingtonpost.com)

[SPJ Code of Ethics](https://spj.org/ethicscode.asp) spj.org/ethicscode.asp

[Washington Post Standards and Ethics](https://www.washingtonpost.com/standards-and-ethics/)

SCHEDULE for *READING* ASSIGNMENTS & WORKSHOPS

Note: Reporting and research assignments are in addition to readings. Reporting assignments are TBA and will depend on/change based on project needs & developments.

Before WEEK 1: [SPJ Code of Ethics](https://spj.org/ethicscode.asp) | [Washington Post Standards and Ethics](https://www.washingtonpost.com/standards-and-ethics/)

WEEK 1

What is Investigative Journalism?

Read chapters 1 of [Story-Based Inquiry](https://storybasedinquiry.com)

Bureau workshops: [Investigative reporting](https://investigativereporting.com), CNS standards

WEEK 2

Using hypotheses: The core of investigative method

Read chapters 2 of [Story-Based Inquiry](https://storybasedinquiry.com)

WEEK 3

Using the Open Doors: Backgrounding and deduction

Read chapter 3 of [Story-Based Inquiry](https://storybasedinquiry.com)

Tools: [FOIA](https://www.foia.gov)

WEEK 4

Using Human Sources

Read chapter 4 of [Story-Based Inquiry](#)

Tools: [Backgrounding people](#)

WEEK 5

Organization: How to Set Yourself Up to Succeed

Read chapter 5 of [Story-Based Inquiry](#)

WEEK 6

Bureau workshop: Interviewing

[Art of the Investigative Interview](#)

[Art of the Sensitive Interview](#)

WEEK 7

Verification

Read [The Verification Handbook for Investigative Reporting](#) : *A Guide to Online Search and Research Techniques for Using User-Generated Content and Open Source Information in Investigations*

Tools: [Social fact and source vetting](#)

Bureau workshop: [If your mother tweets she loves you, check it out](#)

WEEK 8

Writing investigations

Read chapter 6 of [Story-Based Inquiry](#)

WEEK 9

Bureau workshop: Bullet-proofing your investigation; fact-checking

REPORTING SCHEDULE

Subject to change depending on project development and needs.

Weeks 1-2 Immersive research into topic

Weeks 3-12 Reporting writing reporting writing reporting

Weeks 13-15 Writing, revising, fact checking

**FINAL FOOTNOTED, FACT-CHECKED, EDITED & APPROVED ASSIGNMENTS
MUST BE COMPLETED BY THE LAST REGULAR CLASS DAY.**

We also will meet on exam day to tie up any loose ends – and celebrate!

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Learning Goals (What you intend to learn)	Strategies (Specific processes to achieve goals)	Evaluation Methods (How you and others will evaluate progress. Please attach instructors grading rubric)
<p><i>You will learn by doing investigative reporting. You will learn how to:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - find, acquire and analyze documentary evidence - cultivate human sources - conduct in-depth interviews - write and produce complex, investigative narratives. 	<p>You will work on a national reporting project that examines why innocent people plead guilty to crimes they didn't commit.</p> <p>Through fieldwork on cases from across the country, court research and data analysis, you'll investigate the hardline prosecution practices and social, racial and economic realities behind the phenomenon – as well as the life-altering consequences of copping a plea.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Complete at least one footnoted story-quality case study - Report or co-report at least one publishable and/or broadcast-quality story. - Complete a fact check of one story. - Work with data and design team on analysis and graphics <p><i>Note: The number and nature of assignments may change based on the reporting and needs of the project.</i></p> <p>See attached rubric</p>

Category	Percentage Value	F	D	C	B	A
Writing and accuracy	40	1) Shows all of the following: poor writing, typos, major errors, logical inconsistency.	2) extremely poor writing, lack evidence, contain major errors.	3) Shows lack of clean writing or lack logical consistency. Sloppy writing, failure to cite clear evidence.	4) Sub-Professional: writes clean and logically consistent with clear evidence. Shows some evidence of carelessness below A level	5) Professional level: writes accurately, cleanly and logically consistent copy, backed with clear evidence in footnotes. All information is useful with few if any typos.
Reporting	40	1) Shows all of the following: poor source development, online search skills, document analysis and interviewing skills; lack of resourcefulness and initiative, inability to obtain even easily attainable information; no footnoting in memos and stories.	2) Extremely poor source identification and development, online search skills, document analysis and interviewing skills; little resourcefulness or initiative in obtaining basic information; inadequate footnoting.	3) Minimum source identification and development; basic online search skills; obtains useful but easily attainable information from interviews, documents and online research; doesn't dig much below the surface.	4) Inconsistently identifies and cultivates relevant, credible sources; obtains high quality information from interviews, document analysis, field and online research; shows resourcefulness and initiative in a overcoming obstacles.	5) Professional level: Consistently identifies and cultivates relevant, credible sources; obtains high quality information from interviews, document analysis, field and online research; shows resourcefulness and initiative in a overcoming obstacles.
Teamwork	10	1) Refuses to work with others	2) Rarely works well with others	3) Sometimes works well with others	4) Works well with others	5) Works well with others; takes the lead as needed.
Deadlines	10	1) Did not complete assignment.	2) Frequently misses deadlines.	3) Sometimes meets deadlines.	4) Usually meets deadlines.	5) Meets deadlines.