

## FALL 2019

### ENGL407 INVESTIGATIVE REPORTING

Instructor: Deborah Howlett

221 Memorial Hall

Office hours: T/R 2:00-3:15pm

[dhowlett@udel.edu](mailto:dhowlett@udel.edu) | office: 302.831.4921 | mobile: 609.712.0445

#### Course Description

This course aims to provide students with the journalistic insight and skills necessary to delve deeply into news stories in ways that shine a new light on the world around us. Students will move beyond basic journalism skills by developing reporting techniques that use documents, public records, databases, interviews, and shoe leather to produce enlightening and important stories that go beyond daily news headlines.

#### Learning Objectives

By the end of the semester, it is expected students will have developed:

- A deeper understanding of news and news gathering, including identifying and cultivating sources.
- A facility for gathering news and information using databases, public records, documents and other primary source materials.
- Professional-grade grammar, style and writing skills.
- The ability to create a story hypothesis and investigate whether the facts bear it out.
- An understanding of how to build multi-media into investigative reporting.

#### Mechanics of the Class

This class meets three times per week in a seminar format. While much of the reporting work will be done outside of class, we will use our time together in a news-room like environment to work collaboratively on a major group project that amounts to half of your grade. Smaller individual projects that account for the other half of your grade.

#### Required Texts & Supplies

- The Investigative Reporter's Handbook, 5th Edition, Houston, Brant [ISBN-13: 978-0312589974]
- AP Stylebook [Print or on-line version]
- IRE, semester membership [\[Information here\]](#)

#### Course Readings

In addition to writing, we will be doing a considerable amount of reading. Becoming a good writer means reading. Lots of reading. More reading. And even more reading. And then talking about what we read.

Students must subscribe to *The New York Times* and read it daily (online is fine). The Times' all-access student rate is \$1.50 a week. Free basic access is available through the UD library system

here: <https://library.udel.edu/databases/nytdigital/> (Links to an external site.)Links to an external site. Students also must read daily at least two other serious online news sources (such as Politico.com, Axios.com, WallStreetJournal.com, WashingtonPost.com, Guardian.uk, Economist.com, TheAtlantic.com, etc.). Finally, students must read the print version of the campus newspaper, *The Review*, before Wednesday's class meeting.

## **COURSE POLICIES**

### **Assessments**

Grades will be awarded according to the guideline established by the University of Delaware, which are outlined here: <http://www1.udel.edu/registrar/students/grades.html> This is how they break down by percentage of available points: A >93; A- ≥90; B+ >87; B >83; B- ≥80; C+ >77; C >73; C- ≥70; D+ >67; D >63; D- ≥60; F ≤59

### **Attendance**

There is no mandatory attendance policy for this course. However, much of what we learn will happen during class and that means your attendance is vital. If you miss a daily quiz or an in-class assignment without an excused absence, there will be no make-up. Missing class for a recognized holiday when the university is open (for example Diwali or Yom Kippur or Eid al Adha) is acceptable. If serious illness, family emergencies, or other crises occur during the term, you must contact the Dean of Students Office (831-8939) as soon as possible. This office can assist you in notifying faculty and in validating for your teachers what has happened.

### **Distractions**

Cell phones should be on silent and in your pocket or bag. Please refrain from texting or tweeting during class time. Laptops may be used for note-taking and research, not Netflix. Sleeping during class is frowned upon, especially if you snore.

### **Readings**

All readings should be done before the class period for which they are listed. Think of it as pre-reading so that we might have an intelligent discussion of the material in class. Early in the semester, much of the reading will be from the text. In the second half, it will mostly be long-form works of journalism in the genre we will be discussing that week.

### **Assignments**

Deadlines are sacrosanct in journalism. All assignments are due at the beginning of class on the assigned day. Late work will not be accepted unless arrangements have been made in advance.

### **Communication**

Because I am old and set in my ways, I prefer email as a means of quickly communicating information (or even a phone call). Please check your email at least daily. However, I am not averse to receiving texts, if that is your preferred means of communication. If there is a more complicated issue please feel free to call me or stop by my office during regular office hours or make an appointment.

### **Academic Integrity**

Please familiarize yourself with UD policies regarding academic dishonesty. To falsify the results of one's research, to steal the words or ideas of another, to cheat on an assignment, to re-submit the same assignment for different classes, or to allow or assist another to commit these acts corrupts the educational process. Students are expected to do their own work and neither give nor receive unauthorized assistance. Complete details of the university's academic integrity policies and procedures can be found at <http://www1.udel.edu/studentconduct/policyref.html> (Links to an external site.)Links to an external site.

Office of Student Conduct, 218 Hulliher Hall, (302) 831-2117. E-mail: [student-conduct@udel.edu](mailto:student-conduct@udel.edu)

## Harassment and Discrimination

The University of Delaware works to promote an academic and work environment that is free from all forms of discrimination, including harassment. As a member of the community, your rights, resource and responsibilities are reflected in the non-discrimination and sexual misconduct policies. Please familiarize yourself with these policies at [www.udel.edu/oei](http://www.udel.edu/oei) (Links to an external site.)Links to an external site.. You can report any concerns to the University's Office of Equity & Inclusion, at 305 Hulliher Hall, (302) 831-8063 or you can report anonymously through UD Police (302) 831-2222 or the EthicsPoint Compliance Hotline at [www1.udel.edu/compliance](http://www1.udel.edu/compliance) (Links to an external site.)Links to an external site.. You can also report any violation of UD policy on harassment, discrimination, or abuse of any person at this site: <http://sites.udel.edu/sexualmisconduct/how-to-report/> (Links to an external site.)Links to an external site.

## Semester Calendar

### I. The Investigative Process (IRE Handbook PP3-16)

1. Creating a research hypothesis
2. Choosing an investigation
3. The Paul Williams Way

### II. Secondary Sources (IRE Handbook PP 19-33)

1. Newspapers
2. Other news sources
3. Search Techniques

### III. Primary Documents (IRE Handbook PP 34-52)

1. Public records
2. Data bases
3. Technical & scientific resources

### IV. Computer-Assisted Reporting (IRE Handbook PP 53-65)

1. Finding and accessing data sources
2. Local & state data sources
3. Federal data sources

V. People (IRE Handbook PP 67-87)

1. Identifying and evaluating human sources
2. Online tools and directories
3. Interviewing

VI. Writing the Story (IRE Handbook PP 89-106)

1. Organization
2. Structure
3. Polish

VII. Major Group Project Outline/Checklist

VIII-XIV. Specific Investigations

- Federal Government
- State and Local Government
- Local Legislatures
- Judicial System & Law Enforcement
- Education
- Business & Financial Institutions
- Non-Profits

XV. Major Group Project Outline