

ADJO 22901, INVESTIGATIVE JOURNALISM: Critical Thinking 2015 (Fall Semester) Four credits

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Schedule (class times and day(s): Thursdays, 6:15-9:15 p.m. Room:
Stokes 133S. Sept. 3-Dec. 17

Boston College Mission Statement

Strengthened by more than a century and a half of dedication to academic excellence, Boston College commits itself to the highest standards of teaching and research in undergraduate, graduate and professional programs and to the pursuit of a just society through its own accomplishments, the work of its faculty and staff, and the achievements of its graduates. It seeks both to advance its place among the nation's finest universities and to bring to the company of its distinguished peers and to contemporary society the richness of the Catholic intellectual ideal of a mutually illuminating relationship between religious faith and free intellectual inquiry.

Boston College draws inspiration for its academic societal mission from its distinctive religious tradition. As a Catholic and Jesuit university, it is rooted in a world view that encounters God in all creation and through all human activity, especially in the search for truth in every discipline, in the desire to learn, and in the call to live justly together. In this spirit, the University regards the contribution of different religious traditions and value systems as essential to the fullness of its intellectual life and to the continuous development of its distinctive intellectual heritage.

Course Description

[Provide the catalog description, verbatim found here

<http://www.bc.edu/content/bc/schools/advstudies/courses.html>]

ADJO 229001 Investigative Journalism

Whether your interest lies in the human interest story, breaking news, the expose or in honing your critical thinking and writing skills, this course offers the practical skills necessary for

mastering journalistic form, drawing on credible sources, reporting the facts and sharpening your inquiry and interpretive skills. This course introduces the public documents on which investigative reporters depend and the various locales, City Hall, State House, courthouses, where such records reside. Students learn how to access, read, and interpret records which inform decision making.

Course Objectives

1. This course will introduce students to the skills involved in doing investigative reporting, the resources that it draws on as well as the many benefits and few perils that come with it. Investigative reporting has been a staple provided by our daily newspapers and television stations for nearly 40 years when a reporter for The New York Times exposed a massacre by American soldiers in My Lai, Vietnam and two reporters for the Washington Post refused to accept statements of non-involvement coming out of the Nixon White House about a break-in at the Democrats' national headquarters at the Watergate Hotel complex in Washington, D.C.
2. The course will familiarize students with public records needed to make essential decisions, where to access the records and how to read and analyze them for information. The records include court files; property records; inspection reports; etc. Data measuring the performance of schools, police departments, hospitals and other public agencies will also be reviewed.
3. The course will instruct students on how to write more clearly, concisely and dramatically from the coverage of oncampus events and other assignments.
4. "The student will demonstrate competency in attending on campus events, to make inquiries of speakers whose lectures are being attended and relate to audiences diverse in their age, gender and culture who are attending such events.
5. "The student will demonstrate ethical standards in fulfilling their assignments fully and independently.

Grading

WCAS Grading System: All papers will be edited and depending on their quality received grades based on the WCAS grading system, described as follows:

The undergraduate grading system consists of twelve categories: A (4.00), A (3.67), excellent; B+ (3.33), B (3.00), B- (2.67), good; C+ (2.33), C (2.00), C- (1.67), satisfactory; D+ (1.33), D (1.00), D- (.67), passing but unsatisfactory; F (.00), failure; I (.00), incomplete; F (.00), course dropped without notifying office; W (.00), official withdrawal from course.

The graduate grading system is A+ (4.00), A (3.67), Excellent; B+ (3.33), B (3.00), good; B- (2.67), C (2.00), passing but not for degree credit; F (.00), failure. Grade Reports. All students are required to log into the web through Agora to access their semester grades. Students must utilize their BC username and password to log on. If your username or password is not known the HELP Desk located in the Campus Technology Resource Center (CTRC) in O'Neill Library

will issue a new one. The CTRC requires a valid picture ID (a BC ID, driver's license or passport) to obtain your password.

Text(s)/Readings (Required)

The Investigative Reporter's Handbook, 4th edition, by Brant Houston, Len Bruzzese and Steve Weinberg. We will use this text to learn the various resources that are publicly available for information necessary for researching investigative stories. REQUIRED.

Text(s)/Readings (Recommended)

The Boston Globe (Daily & Sunday) Important Policies

<http://www.bc.edu/content/bc/schools/advstudies/guide/academicinteg.html>

Written Work

Graduate and undergraduate students are expected to prepare professional, polished written work. Written materials must be typed in the format required by your instructor. Strive for a thorough, yet concise style. Cite literature appropriately, using APA, MLA, CLA format per instructors decision. Develop your thoughts fully, clearly, logically and specifically. Proofread all materials to ensure the use of proper grammar, punctuation, and spelling. You are encouraged to make use of campus resources for refining writing skills as needed [<http://www.bc.edu/libraries/help/tutoring.html>].

Scholarship and Academic Integrity

It is expected that students will produce original work and cite references appropriately. Failure to reference properly is plagiarism. Scholastic dishonesty includes, but is not necessarily limited to, plagiarism, fabrication, facilitating academic dishonesty, cheating on examinations or assignments, and submitting the same paper or substantially similar papers to meet the requirements of more than one course without seeking permission of all instructors concerned. Scholastic misconduct may also involve, but is not necessarily limited to, acts that violate the rights of other students, such as depriving another student of course materials or interfering with another student's work.

Request for Accommodations

If you have a disability and will be requesting accommodations for this course, please register with either Dr. Kathy Duggan (dugganka@bc.edu), Associate Director, Connors Family Learning Center (learning disabilities or AHD) or Dean Paulette Durrett, (paulette.durrett@bc.edu), Assistant Dean for students with disabilities, (all other disabilities). Advance notice and appropriate documentation are required for accommodations. For further information, you can locate the disability resources on the web at <http://www.bc.edu/content/bc/libraries/help/tutoring/specialservices.html>.

Attendance

Class attendance is an important component of learning. Students are expected to attend all classes and to arrive by the beginning of and remain for the entire class period. When an occasion occurs that prevents a student from attending class, it is the student's obligation to inform the instructor of the conflict before the class meets. The student is still expected to meet all assignment deadlines. If a student knows that he or she will be absent on a particular day, the student is responsible for seeing the instructor beforehand to obtain the assignments for that day. If a student misses a class, he or she is responsible for making up the work by obtaining a classmate's notes and handouts and turning in any assignments due.

Furthermore, many instructors give points for participation in class. If you miss class, you cannot make up participation points associated with that class. Types of absences that are not typically excused include weddings, showers, vacations, birthday parties, graduations, etc. Additional assignments, penalties and correctives are at the discretion of the instructor. If circumstances necessitate excessive absence from class, the student should consider withdrawing from the class. In all cases, students are expected to accept the decision of the instructor regarding attendance policies specific to the class.

Consistent with our commitment of creating an academic community that is respectful of and welcoming to persons of differing backgrounds, we believe that every reasonable effort should be made to allow members of the university community to observe their religious holidays without jeopardizing the fulfillment of their academic obligations. It is the responsibility of students to review course syllabi as soon as they are distributed and to consult the faculty member promptly regarding any possible conflicts with observed religious holidays. If asked, the student should provide accurate information about the obligations entailed in the observance of that particular holiday. However, it is the responsibility of the student to complete any and all class requirements for days that are missed due to conflicts due to religious holidays.

There may be circumstances that necessitate a departure from this policy. Feel free to contact the WCAS at 6175523900 for consultation.

Deadlines

Everyone must complete every assignment. No exceptions.

Course Assignments (readings, exercises and/or experiences)

The class will meet two and a half hours every week and students will be expected to devote another two hours by reading from the assigned text and writing papers on the assignments given on nearly a weekly basis. Students will keep Prof. Kurkjian abreast of their progress in meeting their assignments via emails and/or phone calls. In addition, Prof. Kurkjian expects he will be meeting with students individually at the

WCAS office to advise on their progress in writing about the events they are covering and selecting topics for their final papers.

Since students are expected to learn the basics of writing in newspaper-form, they are expected to read *The Globe* on a daily basis (preferably, the newspaper rather than online)

Assignments will include: coverage of two on-campus events; attending of a district court criminal court hearing and examining of court documents; researching a land transaction on a particular residence or commercial property and coverage of human rights lecture. Each of these papers will consist of minimum of 800 words. Final paper of a minimum of five pages on an agreed-upon topic.

Date Topic Reading/Exercises/Experiences Due Date

Week 1 - Introduction. What the course will cover, what will be expected of students and history of the importance and relevance of investigative reporting/critical thinking for both newspapers and our lives.

Week 2 - The court system - Part One: The criminal side. Will cover how to gain information on the prosecution of crimes - from police reports, court documents and decisions, from neighborhood district courts to the US Supreme Court. How the information provides the underpinning for all crime stories yet may lead to wrong assumptions about the guilt of those arrested. Students expected to visit on their own a local courthouse and attend a criminal court session.

Week 3 - The court system - Part Two - The civil side. Will cover how to gain information from civil lawsuits that are filed at both district court and superiors courts in Massachusetts. Also, what information is available concerning divorces and other family-related issues at county Probate courts and the federal bankruptcy court. How this information can provide valued information on individuals who are being profiled or caught up in a public controversy in the papers.

Week 4 - Where's What - From who really owns your apartment building to what the seller of the house you're hoping to buy originally paid for it, we'll learn where the information is available and how to access it. From the cleanliness of your favorite neighborhood restaurant to the purity of your tap water, we'll also learn how to access these records and compare with those of our friends in neighboring towns. Just about everything we pay for or consume is inspected and evaluated by local, state and/or federal governments. We'll learn how to find those records and make the necessary comparisons which make us better consumers.

Week 5 - Interviewing Techniques - We take a break from searching of public records to improve our interviewing skills. Gaining information, whether in person or over the phone, is an integral part of a reporter's job and we will learn about the importance of the task and how to improve those skills from one or two of The Globe's best, including, hopefully Ric Kahn, retired Globe reporter.

Week 6 - Politics - After BC football, politics is the most popular contact sport in this city and state. This semester presents a political junkie's dream season as candidates seeking nomination for the Republican or Democratic nomination for the US Presidency flock to New Hampshire for the 2016 primary. We'll talk about what are the key issues on which voters will decide their choices as well as how campaigns are run. We will explore how the billions that will be spent this year in the US federal elections is coming from and how to judge if candidates are being swayed by the money they're receiving or voting their conscience. Globe political columnist, Joan Vennoch, who has worked both at the paper's State House and City Hall bureaus, as well as its Spotlight Team, will be our guest.

Week 7 - Government's Most Important Services - From the schools that teach our children, the hospitals that treat our families, the nursing homes that care for our parents and grandparents, to the police and fire departments that ensure our safety - we pay dearly for these valuable services and we have grown to expect optimum performance. Have we been getting our money's worth? Public agencies must maintain data to answer those questions and like your local reporters you can gain access to that information and how to interpret it.

Week 8 - HUMAN RIGHTS LECTURE at Faneuil Hall.

Week 9 - Newspapers & Investigative reporting - How investigative reporting became hallmark of both good newspapers but also protecting the public from excesses of government and private industry. Also, how the privileges that are afforded to newspapers and journalists have evolved since the adopting of the First Amendment and the responsibilities that are attendant to those privileges. How to access public information through the Freedom of Information Law/Public Records Law.

Week 10 - The Internet - More than 30 years after I broke into the business, now everyone can be an investigative reporter and gather the information necessary that improves our communities and makes each of us better consumers, voters and citizens. From the sites that will show our own and our neighbors' tax assessments to those that will give you some idea of your financial credit rating, we will explore the ever-widening world of the web.

Week 11 - Legislation - From our utility rates to whether ticket scalping should be allowed, every year the Massachusetts Legislature makes scores of decisions that impact our lives and our pocketbooks. We look at the legislators spend their time on Beacon Hill, whether someone's pet project is getting special treatment while the state's larger problems are ignored or passed on. The Globe's coverage of recent scandals at the State House and elsewhere will be examined.

Week 12 - Ethics and the Protection of Privacy - What right do newspapers and reporters, especially investigative ones, have to pry into people's lives and judge whether a person, company or agency has performed poorly. What are the standards and who sets them in deciding to criticize the performance of a politician or public official, and are those standards the same for judging the performance of teachers, police officers or private citizens. We will review this week and next the explosive details of the illegal telephone hacking scandal that has consumed Rupert Murdoch's media empire and doomed the British tabloid News Of The World.

Week 13 - Boston 2024 - How to make up your mind on whether Boston improves by hosting a Summer Olympics in 2024. Is this another Big Dig in the making, with taxpayers expected to bail out the next great boondoggle for developers and the politically-connected or does Boston finally get a boost in affordable housing and a transportation system it deserves.

Week 14 - Judging the Messenger. How good a job is your local newspaper or television and radio stations doing in covering your community and the issues that are important to it and you. How do these media outlets make their decisions in what is news and what to cover with their precious resources, and what does their decline in readership and revenue portend for the future?

Week 15 - How to make the research skills you have learned in our class work for you in the outside world? Whether advocating for a stop sign near your kids' school to filling a public records request to determine if a community board has been meeting behind closed doors - how to use these sharpened reporting skills to your advantage.

In addition, students are expected to complete the following out-of-class course assignments:

At least two of the papers will involve attending an on-campus event (nonathletic and nonmusical) and writing about the event in a minimum of 800 words.

Appendix

Design

How will students make progress on objectives you have chosen for your course? What activities will promote development of those skills, concepts, experiences? How will you and your students check their progress on objectives? What assessments will provide that feedback?

I will stay in contact with each student's mastery of the topics being covered by classroom discussion and their fulfilling of the assignments that have been given to them on a weekly basis.

Guidelines

The syllabus is a key communication tool between you and your students.

"Your syllabus is the first learning material students encounter in your course. Because of this it is important to include the tone of your class in addition to its form. In addition to its contractual nature, the syllabus represents your initial attempt to form a relationship with your students, to begin the process of community the class will take. Take advantage of that opportunity."

From: the Center for Teaching Excellence at the University of North

Carolina, Wilmington (see <http://www.uncwil.edu/cte/resources/Best Practices in Syllabus Construction.doc>). There are many models available to help you design this important document. The Center for Teaching Excellence at Iowa State has materials from a "Learning-Centered Syllabi" workshop. This site helps you put student learning at the center of this important document, including a detailed list of what to include:
<http://www.celt.iastate.edu/teaching/syllabi.html#intro>

A tutorial from the Center for Teaching and Learning at the University of Minnesota will help you construct a syllabus. Many examples are provided:
<http://www1.umn.edu/ohr/teachlearn/tutorials/syllabus/>

The "Teaching Tools and Resources" area of a web site at the University of Nebraska at Lincoln (originally prepared by their Teaching & Learning Center) has many suggestions about lots of aspects of the teaching and learning process arranged by topic, easy to browse for ideas. Included are ideas for planning a course, developing a syllabus, motivating students, as well as "101 Things You Can Do the First Three Weeks of Class."

Active learning tools

A great way to get more students engaged in the course material during class is to use Think-Pair-Share when you pose a question to the group. The advantages of this approach, and how to do it, are described in the following article by Susan Ledlow which also includes sample prompts to the class to help implement the approach.
http://www.hydroville.org/system/files/team_thinkpairshare.pdf

The following article by Susan Ledlow, found on the web site of the UOEEE Center for Teaching & Learning at Arizona State University, describes an often used cooperative learning approach, the Jigsaw Method, giving very specific instructions for implementation. One of the strengths of the jigsaw is that students collaboratively develop understanding of a piece of complex material and then are placed in the position to explain (teach!) that understanding to others. A synthesis assignment is also often part of the whole process.
http://www.hydroville.org/system/files/team_jigsaw.pdf

For a description of the Newsprint Dialogue method, go to the following site at Indiana University Purdue University of Indianapolis:
http://www.iupui.edu/~idd/active_learning/puNewsprint.htm

For a description of the Structured Academic Controversy, go to the following site at the University of Minnesota. Roger and David Johnson are internationally known experts on cooperative learning:

http://www.cooperation.org/?page_id=65

More general information on strategies for Active Learning can be found at the following websites:

From a text *Tools for Teaching* by Barbara Gross Davis, 1993, JosseyBass (available in the Center for Faculty Development Library—many chapters are available on line as well including this one on lecturing:

<http://teaching.berkeley.edu/bgd/delivering.html>

Indiana University at Bloomington Teaching Handbook:

http://teaching.iub.edu/wrapper_big.php?section_id=lect

Center for Teaching Effectiveness at the University of Delaware:

<http://cte.udel.edu/instructionaltopics/engagingstudents.html>

Center for Teaching Excellence at the University of California Santa Cruz

<http://teaching.ucsc.edu/tips/tipsactive.html>

Center for Teaching and Learning Services at the University of Minnesota: A tutorial on ways to use active learning strategies with PowerPoint presentations; includes 12 active learning strategies.

<http://www1.umn.edu/ohr/teachlearn/tutorials/powerpoint/index.html>

Classroom Assessment Techniques (CAT)

The key text about classroom assessment is Angelo, T.A. and K.P. Cross. 1993 *Classroom Assessment Techniques: A Handbook for College Teachers*. 2nd ed. San Francisco: JosseyBass Publishers. This text has detailed descriptions of 50 different CATs including instructions on how to implement them and examples of use in various courses. The text categorizes CATs by the type of goal the CAT helps you assess.

Additionally this text contains a selfscorable Teaching Goals Inventory. Available from the Center for Faculty Development Library.

•A partial list of Classroom Assesment Techniques from Iowa State:

<http://www.celt.iastate.edu/teaching/cat.html>

•From the Schreyer Institute for Teaching Excellence at Penn State University—an article introducing Classroom Assessment and discussing several techniques “An Introduction to Classroom Assessment Techniques” by Diane M. Enerson, Kathryn M. Plank, and R. Neill Johnson

http://www.schreyerinstitute.psu.edu/pdf/Classroom_Assessment_Techniques_Intro.pdf

•The FLAG (Fieldtested

Learning Assessment Guide) site, created by the National Institute for Science Education housed at the University of WisconsinMadison, provides extensive descriptions of several CATs, including the Minute Paper and Concept Mapping. <http://www.flaguide.org/cat/cat.php>

For the Minute Paper description specifically, go to:
<http://www.flaguide.org/cat/minutepapers/minutepapers1.php>

•From the Teaching Effectiveness Program at the University of Oregon: This site gives short descriptions of such CATs as the OneSentence

Summary; Word Journal; Directed Paraphrasing; Application Cards.

http://tep.uoregon.edu/pdf/assessment/Ways_to_Assess_Student_Learning_During_Class.pdf

IDEA student centered Teaching Methods

1. Displayed personal interest in students and their learning
2. Found ways to help students answer their own questions
3. Scheduled course work (class activities, tests, projects) in ways which encouraged students to stay up-to-date in their work
4. Demonstrated the importance and significance of the subject matter
5. Formed “teams” or “discussion groups” to facilitate learning
6. Made it clear how each topic fit into the course
7. Explained the reasons for criticisms of students’ academic performance
8. Stimulated students to intellectual effort beyond that required by most courses
9. Encouraged students to use multiple resources (e.g., data banks, library holdings, outside experts) to improve understanding
10. Explained course material clearly and concisely
11. Related course material to real life situations
12. Gave tests, projects, etc. that covered the most important points of the course
13. Introduced stimulating ideas about the subject
14. Involved students in “hands on” projects such as research, case studies, or “real life” activities
15. Inspired students to set and achieve goals which really challenged them
16. Asked students to share ideas and experiences with others whose backgrounds and viewpoints differ from their own
17. Provided timely and frequent feedback on tests, reports, projects, etc. to help students learn
18. Asked students to help each other understand ideas or concepts

19. Gave projects, tests, or assignments that required original or creative thinking
20. Encouraged student-faculty interaction outside of class (office visits, phone calls, email, etc.)

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Choose two to three Operationalized Learning Objectives (this list from IDEA)

1. Gaining factual knowledge (terminology, classifications, methods, trends)
2. Learning fundamental principles, generalizations, and theories
3. Learning to apply course material (to improve thinking, problem solving, and decisions)
4. Developing specific skills, competencies, and points of view needed by professionals in the field most closely related to this course
5. Acquiring skills in working with others as a member of a team
6. Developing creative capacities (writing, inventing, designing, performing in art, music, drama, etc.)
7. Gaining a broader understanding and appreciation of intellectual/cultural activity (music, science, literature, etc.)
8. Developing skill in expressing myself orally or in writing
9. Learning how to find and use resources for answering questions or solving problems
10. Developing a clearer understanding of, and commitment to, personal values
11. Learning to analyze and critically evaluate ideas, arguments, and points of view
12. Acquiring an interest in learning more by asking my own questions and seeking answers

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