INTRODUCTION TO DATA JOURNALISM - SPRING 2022
Department of Journalism, Rowan University

January 18 – May 6

Tuesday and Thursday 11:00 a.m. – 12:15 p.m.
301 High Street 205
CRN 24789 JRN 02363 1

INSTRUCTOR:
Mark Berkey-Gerard
Email: berkey-gerard@rowan.edu

OFFICE HOURS:
I welcome conversations outside of class. My dedicated office hours are on Mondays and Wednesdays between 12:30-2:00pm. My office is at 6 High Street or I can also meet via Zoom or by phone. You can also set up a time to meet with me before or after class or another time to meet. Email is the best way to contact me.

COURSE DESCRIPTION:
This course is an introduction to the collection, analysis, and presentation of data by journalists for the purpose of engaging and informing the public.

COURSE OBJECTIVES:
In this course, students will:
• Explore key data journalism concepts and skills.
• Gain insight into how data journalism is practiced in newsrooms.
• Think critically about the potential and limitations of data.
• Learn how to obtain data sets through strategic searching, FOIA and scraping.
• Review basic newsroom math and statistics.
• Learn spreadsheet techniques to help with analyzing data.
• Create infographics and visualizations.
• Pitch and create a data news project.

TEACHING METHODS:
The course is comprised of lectures, readings, in-class activities, take-home assignments, and a final project. I will conduct the course as a group facilitator and editor. Students will learn much of the content through practical, hands-on work. Success in the course requires students’ attendance, participation, curiosity, effort and teamwork.

READING AND TEXTS:
All lecture notes, assignments, readings and tutorials will be posted online at http://rudataj.wordpress.com and on Canvas. Students should check sites weekly. Students are expected to complete all readings before the assigned classes, come with thoughtful questions and comments, and participate fully in all class discussions and activities.

The Associated Press Stylebook by Norm Goldstein (editor) is the required book for the course. All writing for this course must follow AP style. Every journalism student needs this book. Buy it. New and used copies are available in the Rowan bookstore, Amazon.com, and other locations. You should be able to find a copy for between $10-$20.
EQUIPMENT:
Students will need regular access to a computer that can access all Rowan online platforms as well as some third-party online platforms.

PLATFORMS:
Students will use the following platforms for remote learning and producing digital news stories:

- **Rowan email** - Please check your Rowan email several times a week. Each Friday, I will send out an email and Canvas announcement with upcoming assignments and reminders. Email is also the best way to reach me.
- **Canvas** - For course materials, quizzes, discussions, announcements, and grades
- [http://rudataj.wordpress.com](http://rudataj.wordpress.com) - Word Press site with video lectures, assignment details, resources, etc.
- **Zoom** - For synchronous remote class time or meetings. TBA.
- **Google Sheets** - For spreadsheets
- **Flourish** - A free data visualization tool
- **Google Drive** - For storing files

ROWAN UNIVERSITY ACADEMIC POLICIES:
Students are expected to read and abide by all Rowan University policies for attendance, classroom conduct, use of devices, inclement weather, and academic integrity. For updated policies for Spring 2022 semester, see the Canvas shell for this course.

RESOURCES FOR STUDENTS:
If you are in crisis, call 856-256-4911 to speak to a counselor on call. You can also find assistance at the following:

- **Wellness Center**: [https://sites.rowan.edu/wellness/index.html](https://sites.rowan.edu/wellness/index.html)
- **Counselling & Psychological Services**: [https://sites.rowan.edu/wellness/counseling/index.html](https://sites.rowan.edu/wellness/counseling/index.html)
- **The SHOP** – Student food pantry and resource center [https://sites.rowan.edu/theshop/index.html](https://sites.rowan.edu/theshop/index.html)
- **Philabundance Program** (for fresh fruits and vegetables): [https://sites.rowan.edu/theshop/helpful_resources.html](https://sites.rowan.edu/theshop/helpful_resources.html)

INCLEMENT WEATHER POLICY:
The University has made it a practice to hold classes during inclement weather whenever possible. As the Attendance Policy states, it is the student's decision, based on his or her assessment of the situation, whether or not to attend class. Students will not be penalized for missing classes because of inclement weather; however, they must contact their professors prior to class and make up any work assigned.

ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING:
Student work will be assessed through class attendance and participation, a series of in-class activities, take-home assignments, and a final project. Students must earn at least a C- for the course to count toward Journalism major or minor requirements.

For consistency, **all assignments will be due on Sundays at 11:59pm** unless otherwise specified. All work must be turned in on time or a late penalty will be assessed.

**Attendance and Participation (15 points)**
Points are earned only if students arrive on time and attend and participate fully in the class. Each student receives two “free passes” during the semester. Beginning with the third instance, points will be deducted
for absence, arriving late, leaving early, or failing to participate in class. Students who miss class are responsible for all material covered in that class and must meet all deadlines related to that material.

Excused absences include religious observances, documented illness, death of family or loved-one and pre-approved school-related activities.

Anyone with COVID-like symptoms should get tested and stay home until symptoms improve. You should follow state health guidelines found on the Wellness Center’s isolation and quarantine requirements website. You must email me if you miss class because of symptoms or exposure.

In cases of COVID infection or exposure, students must complete and submit an absence notification form if they miss in-person or remote classes, in advance if possible. Professors will receive a notice from the Dean of Students Office and will be asked to offer support for those who cannot attend class. Students who are impacted by COVID may ask faculty for temporary special arrangements for remote instruction.

Take-Home Assignments (65 points)
There will be a series of “open note,” take-home assignments that cover material from lectures, reading and in-class course work.

Assignment 1 - Search, fact-checking, FOIA
Assignment 2 - Writing with numbers and spreadsheet basics
Assignment 3 - Using Google sheets for data analysis
Assignment 4 - Data visualization

Final Project (20 points)
In the final weeks of the course, students will produce a piece of originally reported data journalism that demonstrates the skills learned. It will consist of multiple steps; each one will be graded. All assignments must be completed and turned in on time.

SCALE FOR FINAL GRADES:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>93-100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>90-92.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>87-89.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>83-86.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td>80-82.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C+</td>
<td>77-79.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>73-76.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C-</td>
<td>70-72.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D+</td>
<td>67-69.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>60-66.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>0-59.9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

JOURNALISM DEPARTMENT CODE OF CONDUCT:
The Department of Journalism Code of Conduct was created to serve as a practical guide for students as they advance in their academic careers. These policies are meant to encourage students to meet the high standards in the news industry and earn the privilege of becoming a journalist with ethical standards. It is a compliment to Rowan University’s Academic Integrity Policy, which students are required to read and follow.
Journalism is by its nature a public act. As stated in the Society of Professional Journalists’ Code of Ethics, journalists must recognize that the work of “gathering and reporting information may cause harm or discomfort” to others and must do all they can to “minimize harm” and ensure their work is “accurate, fair and thorough.” Therefore, student journalists must always be clear, upfront and honest about who they are and what they are doing. They are expected to abide by the Society of Professional Journalists’ Code of Ethics. Students must take full responsibility for their conduct and work.

The policy below is not all-inclusive, but identifies situations that frequently arise among Journalism students.

**Prohibited Conduct**
Plagiarism is a serious offense. Do not use words, phrases, or ideas without proper attribution. This includes copying content from the Internet. Essentially, plagiarism means trying to pass someone else’s work off as your own. It does not necessarily mean copying an entire paper, although that would clearly be plagiarism.

For example, you plagiarize if you:

- Use an interview someone else did or use a quote someone else obtained and don’t credit the source.
- Cut and paste a variety of sources and cobble them together without proper citation and with no evident thought on your part as to the thrust of the piece.
- Lift a segment verbatim without citation. A few words here or there are permissible – there are only so many ways to say “Edward R. Murrow died of lung cancer” – but you can’t drop in even a sentence of somebody else’s work verbatim into your piece if you don’t credit it. Just listing the title of a source in a bibliography is not sufficient. You must be very clear about the source of words that are not yours, put quotes around verbatim usage, and cite the source in the text of your paper or article. Remember, if you take a direct quote from another source, word-for-word, you must not only cite but you must put it in quotation marks. Failing to put quotation marks around something you have appropriated is a serious issue and could result in lowering of your grade or a formal referral for academic discipline.
- Use facts and figures that are not common knowledge without citing the source, creating the impression you gathered the information yourself.
- Use your own work from another context without citing that it was used previously. If you are researching or reporting on a topic that you have written on before, you must clear it with the professor beforehand.

In addition, under the Journalism Department’s Code of Conduct, students **may not**:

- Fabricate – Deliberately invent or alter information with the intent to deceive.
- Cheat – Misrepresent one’s mastery of material on an academic exercise or help someone else do so.
- Misrepresent oneself or work.
- Submit late work without penalty.
- Use others’ words or media without proper attribution and copyright permission; it is always best to use third-party content that is licensed under Creative Commons.
- Use friends or relatives as sources for stories.
- Submit work, in part or in full, from another class.
- Pitch same story or assignment in multiple classes.
- Conduct interviews via email without prior approval from instructor.
- Submit assignments in alternate form than required (i.e. via email when required to submit in person).
- Act unprofessionally to the instructor or other students in the classroom.
- Habitually leave class early or arrive late.
Repeatedly fail to participate in class.
Use cell phones or electronic devices in class for non-class activity.

Consequences for Violations of Journalism Department Code of Conduct
Instructors will use their discretion to ensure that these policies are met. The consequences for violating the Code of Conduct will be based on the seriousness of the offense and be determined by the instructor, and when necessary, in consultation with the chair of the department.

For serious violations (i.e., plagiarism, fabrication, cheating, lying), students may:
- Fail the course.
- Have the incident reported to Academic Integrity Review Board for further disciplinary action.

For major violations, (i.e., violating copyright, improper sourcing, submitting work from another class), students may:
- Receive no credit for the assignment.
- Be required to attend a workshop on academic integrity.
- Have incident reported to Provost’s office.

For significant violations (i.e., submitting late work, failure to attribute facts, using friends or family as sources), students may:
- Lose points or fail an assignment.

For minor violations, (i.e., using cell phone in class, failing to participate, or repeatedly arriving late) students may:
- Be asked to leave classroom.
- Lose points for participation/attendance.

GUIDELINES FOR REPORTING DURING COVID:
During the pandemic, journalism students need to carefully consider their safety and the safety of others while reporting. As always, we encourage students to pursue their reporting with dedication and determination. We also expect our students to use best practices and do all they can to remain safe while reporting. While these guidelines are not exhaustive, they represent common-sense practices for asserting your rights as a journalist and staying safe while reporting. The following guidelines were compiled after reviewing the practices of other universities and news organizations around the country. These guidelines are relevant whether you’re taking remote classes on campus or from home. They are designed to allow students to get their reporting done while also remaining safe.

- Remember: No story assignment is worth sacrificing your health or the health of others.
- You have options beyond face-to-face interviews. Interviews can be conducted via phone, Skype, Zoom, FaceTime – pick your platform. Most journalists agree that email interviews are not a good idea, especially when dealing with public officials. But coordinate with your individual instructor, who may make exceptions, especially when conducting follow-ups.
- All face-to-face interviews must be conducted outdoors at least six feet away from the interview subject (10 feet is suggested.)
- Wear a mask or face shield at all times during the interview process – before, during and after. Practice speaking loudly and clearly when asking questions, so the interview subject can hear you.
- When possible, keep face-to-face interviews short. Think in terms of getting your key questions answered. You can always follow up by phone. Make these guidelines clear to your interview subjects during the pre-interview so they understand that you’re not being rude.
- Stay away from crowded locations when conducting interviews (this will involve some planning).
• For video and broadcast: Use a shotgun mic mounted on camera to record audio if you can check one out.
• Photography students should follow the same basic rules as reporting students - work outdoors as much as possible, maintain at least six feet of distance and use telephoto lenses whenever possible.

REMOTE LEARNING CAMERA POLICY (IF NEEDED):
In the Ric Edelman College of Communication & Creative Arts, we understand that visual communication is a meaningful aspect of community building and successful learning. **We strongly encourage all students to turn their cameras on during all synchronous class sessions.** A camera on is one way to signal to your professor that you are present, engaged, and ready to learn. Your camera on is one way to show your peers that you are interested in what they think and that you are someone they can share this experience with.

Keeping your camera on also comes with long term advantages. When it comes time to seek letters of recommendation, you can be sure faculty will remember you, your work, and your participation in the course. You will also be able to make meaningful connections with classmates, which could result in creative collaborations or job opportunities in the future.

While strongly encouraged, we do not require cameras on during remote learning for all students because we understand that some students may have significant reasons to keep their cameras off—reasons related to accessibility, affordability, identity, personal circumstances, and more. Your professor can help you use the many features of your video conferencing platform to participate in class, make meaningful contributions, and form supportive relationships with your professor and peers.

Please understand that you are expected to treat our virtual classroom in a similar manner as a physical presence classroom. This means that you should be physically present for the full duration of each class period, be appropriately dressed, and be an engaged and attentive member of the class community. While our circumstances during the pandemic sometimes prevent us from having a space available that is suitable for virtual learning, we strongly encourage you to create such a space to the best of your ability (e.g., setting up a desk in a way that allows you to take notes, participate, etc.). Unless the only space available, we strongly discourage you from attending class from your bed.

To be sure that you are marked as present each day you attend, please be sure that you are logged in using a name your professor will recognize. In accordance with Rowan’s [Preferred Name Policy](#), the use of a preferred name is, as always, appropriate.

It is inappropriate, unacceptable, and unsafe for you to connect to your virtual classes while driving. If you must be driving during class time, please reach out to your professor for alternative arrangements, including taking an absence or making up in-class work at a safer time. Additionally, in most instances it is inappropriate for you to take class while on shift at your place of employment. Please do not schedule work and school at the same time.

CLASS SCHEDULE – SPRING 2022

The following schedule is a guide for the semester. Specific assignments and dates are subject to change. Check the home page of the class website and Canvas for updates. **Major deadlines are marked in bold.**

Week 1 - Jan 16
- Introductions
Course overview
- Data Journalism Example of the Week - https://pudding.cool/
- What is Data Journalism?
- A data story starts as a question

Assignment:
- Download and review syllabus, Canvas and all pages of http://rudataj.wordpress.com
- For Thursday, Jan. 20, explore https://pudding.cool/ Find one story you really like and be ready to tell us about it in class. Answer these questions:
  - Give brief overview of the story.
  - What is the data?
  - Where/how did they get it?
  - What question(s) did they set out to answer?
  - What did they do with the data that was unique or innovative?

Week 2 – Jan. 23
- Inverted Pyramid of Data Journalism
- Common Sources of Data
- Common Data File Types
- Tips and Tools for Smarter Searching
- Intro to FOIA

Assignment 1 - Search, fact-checking, FOIA due Sunday, Jan. 30

Week 3 – Jan. 30
- Assignment 1 review
- Writing with numbers

Week 4 - Feb. 6
- Basic newsroom math and statistics

Week 5 - Feb. 13
- Interviewing data with spreadsheets
- Google Sheets basics

Assignment 2 – Writing with numbers, newsroom math, spreadsheet basics due Sunday, Feb 20

Week 6 – Feb. 20
- Using Google Sheets formulas and functions for data analysis

Week 7 – Feb. 27
- Using Google Sheets formulas and functions for data analysis (cont.)

Week 8 - March 6
- Pivot tables

Assignment 3 – Using Google sheets for data analysis due Sunday, March 14

SPRING BREAK – March 14-19

Week 9 - March 20
- Assignment 3 review
- Putting everything together – scraping, cleaning, analysis

Week 10 - March 27
- Data visualization

Week 11 - April 3
- Data visualization

Week 12 - April 10
- Data visualization

- Assignment 4: Data visualization due Sunday, April 17

Week 13 - April 17
- Assignment 5 review
- Final project overview

Week 14 - April 24
- Final project work

Finals Week - April 30
- Final Project deadline TBA

Commencement Week - May 7