Journalists play an important role in our democratic society. The best reporters are watchdogs, exposing corruption and incompetency in government. They also stand up for the little guy, giving a voice to those without the political power backed by big money. The best reporters can teach a community about itself by reporting on its diverse populations. They spot, analyze and explain important societal trends by telling the stories of the individuals being affected most. They can help make the world a better place.

The worst reporters do more harm than good in our society. They are easily manipulated because they are lazy. They don’t seek documents. They don’t ask the right questions. They function more as stenographers than reporters, perfunctorily repeating whatever they’re told without much thought. They get not just the facts wrong but also the gist of the story.

No one wants to be the worst at any job.

This course will help you discover if journalism is the career for you and will teach you how to be among the best. Toward that end, you will be expected to learn to:

- Be properly prepared for interviews, so you can ask the right questions.
- Use the High Five methodology to add substance, context and relevance to your reporting and writing.
- Make use of the state’s Open Records and Open Meeting laws.
- Locate, understand and use a number of government documents.
- Represent human diversity in your reporting and writing as well understand its importance in the newsroom.
- Use math to understand and explain the news.
- Write clearly and concisely.
- Write to entertain as well as to inform.
- Act ethically and apply the industry’s codes of ethics to relevant situations.

To make the most of this course, you should:

- Keep up with assigned readings.
- Study diligently for quizzes and examinations.
- Participate intelligently in class discussions.
- Take lab exercises seriously.
- Complete out-of-class assignments on deadline.

In short, you are expected to do your best. Enthusiasm, initiative and a strong desire to improve will greatly increase the likelihood of your success.

Your reward will be greater confidence in your abilities, a stronger clip file and a better chance of landing the reporting internship or job you want.
As a student in an accredited professional program in journalism, you are expected to demonstrate certain learning outcomes by the time you graduate. This course will address the following outcomes in these ways:

1. Demonstrate appropriate writing, editing and production techniques in mass communications.
   The difference between the “right word” and the “almost right word” can cause confusion, embarrassment and even a lawsuit. Think about what you’re writing to ensure your information is delivered as you intended. Assessment of this learning outcome is accomplished through evaluations of your stories written outside class and of your weekly writing assignments in lab.

2. Demonstrate critical, creative and individual thinking.
   The ability to critically examine information and to make judgments about its truthfulness and value is fundamentally important to being among the best journalists. You develop your thinking critically and creatively by finding and carefully considering information. Assessment of this learning outcome is accomplished through an evaluation of your reporting outside class and your demonstrated ability to convey information accurately, clearly and concisely. It also will be evaluated through examinations and quizzes that will require you to (1) identify definitions, reporting philosophies and potential sources; (2) apply to hypothetical situations what we have covered in class; and (3) effectively illustrate points or themes from the course.

**PORTFOLIO REQUIREMENT**

To comply with the assessment requirements of Oklahoma State University and the Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communication, the School of Journalism and Broadcasting requires all undergraduate students majoring in the School to develop and maintain a portfolio exhibiting specific and appropriate assignments or projects from SJB classes. School faculty, staff and industry professionals will evaluate these portfolios periodically and offer guidance and constructive criticism. The portfolios also should be helpful in showcasing your performance when you apply for internships or jobs. *Portfolio organization will include:* Current résumé; List of references; Statement of goals; Appropriate class projects/assignments; and Program entry date.

From this course, your portfolio must include your articles written outside of class – either published versions or corrected copies. These materials will be collected at the conclusion of your capstone or equivalent course, usually the second semester of your senior year.

**REQUIRED READINGS**

These textbooks were chosen because they provide a solid grounding in the philosophies, strategies, sources, and writing techniques used by the best reporters. Now that you’ve spent the money – USE THEM. Read the assigned pages (listed in the syllabus) before the start of class. Our quizzes, lab exercises, in-class discussions, exams and out-of-class assignments are based on the readings. If you don’t keep up, you will be lost in class and fail to make the most of your assignments. Don’t be in a hurry to sell back these textbooks. Long after this course is completed, you will find them to be excellent resources.

4. Handouts provided by the instructor
5. Online Readings

*Please, come to class and lab prepared by having completed the reading guides found on D2L.*
D2L

Handouts, assignment instructions, reminders, announcements and other course-related materials will be posted to D2L. It also contains reading guides and links to online readings. Check your e-mail and the D2L site regularly. To access D2L, use your university-provided login and password and select this course. You also can check your grades on assignments throughout the semester. If you notice a discrepancy in the recorded grade, please notify me immediately. Keep your returned assignments, quizzes, exercises and examinations, so I can verify any discrepancies.

If you want to send a confidential message to me, use my OSU e-mail address at the top of the syllabus.

ASSIGNMENTS

Your course grade will be calculated as follows:

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<tr>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Assignment</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10%</td>
<td>Language Notebook (Includes possibility of bonus points)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10%</td>
<td>Public Records Search</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15%</td>
<td>Quizzes (combined)</td>
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<tr>
<td>20%</td>
<td>Exams (combined)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20%</td>
<td>Lab Exercises (combined)</td>
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<tr>
<td>25%</td>
<td>Story Project</td>
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<tr>
<td>100%</td>
<td>Total</td>
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</table>

Scale: 100 – 90% (A); 89 – 80% (B); 79 – 70% (C); 69 – 60% (D); 59 – 0% (F)

Language Notebook: Due at start of class on Jan. 20, 25 and Feb. 1, 8, 15

In this assignment, you will sharpen your language skills by identifying and correcting errors in grammar and AP style. Your grade will depend on the number of entries in your notebook, quality of your commentary, clarity and conciseness of your writing, and your own grammar and AP style usage. Detailed instructions will be given Jan. 13.

Public Records Search: Due March 8

Through this project you will gain practical experience in locating and obtaining public records familiar to experienced reporters and in dealing with government officials. You will receive detailed instructions on Feb. 24.

Quizzes: You must come to lecture and lab prepared. If you have not thoroughly read the material, you will not be able to fully participate in the class discussion or apply the strategies, techniques and other useful information to your reporting and writing. To encourage your preparation, you will be given quizzes based on assigned readings. Reading guides will be provided on D2L. The quizzes can include true/false, multiple-choice and short-answer questions. Quizzes typically will be given during the first five minutes of class; however, some quizzes will focus on material presented in the lecture and will be given near the end of class. The quizzes are CLOSED BOOK / OPEN NOTES. This means that during the quiz you may use typed or hand-written notes distilled from the readings. But the textbooks and online readings themselves may not be used during the quiz. Notes may not be shared during the quiz. Cheating will not be tolerated. Expect a quiz in each lecture and lab.

If you show up to take the quiz, you are expected to stay until class ends. If you leave before then, you will earn a zero on that quiz. Your three lowest grades in the quizzes category will be dropped automatically at the end of the semester. Quizzes missed because of any absence or tardiness will be counted as zeroes. See Attendance.
Lab Exercises: You will have specific writing assignments to complete during labs. Do not use labs to finish stories assigned outside of class, e-mail friends, explore the Internet, etc. The points you earn in lab will be based on the quality of your work, not because you merely attended. These exercises require you to actively think about what we are reading and discussing, with the hope of improving your reporting and writing. Bring your Associated Press Stylebook, Working With Words and Telling the Story textbooks to each lab.

Your lowest two grades in the exercises category will be dropped automatically at the end of the semester. Exercises missed because of any absence or tardiness will be counted as zeroes. See Attendance.

Exams: Feb. 22 and May 3

Exams will require you to: (1) identify definitions, reporting philosophies and potential sources; (2) demonstrate correct language and AP Style usage; (3) apply to hypothetical situations what we have covered in class; and (4) illustrate points or themes from the course. The format may include true/false, multiple-choice, short-answer and essay questions. Rules governing the classroom environment and activities during the exam are posted on D2L under “Exam Etiquette.” Please read them. You are expected to abide by them.

Makeup exams may be given because of university- or military-required activities, but only if I am notified prior to the exam time. Makeup exams may also be given in the case of proven emergencies that prevent you from taking the scheduled exam, but only if I am notified immediately. Examples of such an emergency would be a death in your immediate family, your own hospitalization or a traffic accident on the way to the exam. Oversleeping, confusing the date of the exam, or visits by out-of-town friends are not emergencies.

Documentation must be presented to me before a makeup exam will be scheduled. I reserve the right to check the authenticity of all documentation and the right to reject bogus documentation.

Final exam schedules are available about eight months in advance of finals week. Therefore, you are expected to take the final exam for this course on the date and time scheduled by the university. If you have travel plans – even to go overseas or for a wedding – that conflict with the final exam, you have the option of changing your plans or taking the course the following semester. But you will not be able to take a makeup final exam because of those travel plans.

If you are tardy for an exam, you will be allowed to take it only if no one else has completed it and left the room. You will have only the remaining regular time allotted for the exam.

Students taking exams at the Testing Center are responsible for scheduling their exams and must start their exams at the same times on the same days scheduled for the rest of the class. If a scheduling conflict arises, contact me immediately.

Story Project: Due April 21

You will report and write a package of substantive articles outside of the classroom and lab. This project will require you to put into practice the reporting and writing skills taught in the class.

All stories must be submitted to The Daily O'Collegian or other news media outlet for publication.

Your articles are expected to be clearly newsworthy and well-written. They should be thorough and correctly use the High Five to answer the pertinent questions. Leads should be clear, concise, interesting and emphasize the news. The articles should be well-organized according to the High Five and contain effective transitions, quotations, descriptions and anecdotes. The writing should be tight and lively. Your aim should be to inform, not to bore, your readers.

Articles will be graded on their newsworthiness, content, accuracy, High Five structure, writing style and language usage. See Late Work for more on meeting deadlines. More instructions will be provided on Feb. 24, but you should begin thinking about possible topics.
ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Honesty has a special meaning for journalists because our credibility depends upon truthfulness in communicating with people each day. Academic honesty also is fundamental to the activities and principles of a university. Members of the university community must be confident that each person’s work has been responsibly and honorably acquired, developed and presented. While you are strongly encouraged to study with classmates, this does not mean copying someone else’s answers during a quiz, exercise or exam. In this course, academic dishonesty also includes, but is not limited to, the following:

- Using someone else’s material and claiming it is yours, including news stories written or broadcast by others and passages taken directly from stories in the morgue.
- Handing in someone else’s work as your own.
- Having someone other than the instructor edit your writing.
- Making up quotes, inventing sources, or not interviewing people who appear in your stories. You must accurately quote and represent all sources in your story.
- Not giving appropriate attribution or citation of a source where information has been obtained, including documents, books, scholarly articles, etc.

Academic dishonesty is an extremely serious matter, with serious consequences that could include a failing grade in the course and expulsion. When in doubt about plagiarism, paraphrasing or quoting, please consult with me before you hand in your work. Your assignments will be checked.

If the instructor determines that you have committed plagiarism, used quotes or paraphrases from people not interviewed by you, or attributed information to fictitious sources, you will receive a zero for the assignment and an “F” for the course. You also will be referred to university officials for further disciplinary action, including suspension from the university and a prohibition from taking courses in this school. The instructor will follow the procedures and policies as outlined by Oklahoma State University and the Board of Regents.

If plagiarism or other forms of academic dishonesty are suspected, the procedures and policies governing student behavior as outlined in the Acts of Academic Dishonesty and Misconduct Policy of Oklahoma State University and the Board of Regents will be followed.

You are expected to abide by the following university statement: “I will respect OSU’s commitment to academic integrity and uphold the values of honesty and responsibility that preserve our academic community.” OSU’s policy regarding academic integrity applies equally to the student whose exam or quiz answers are being copied. Under the policy, students “must take reasonable care the examination answers are not seen by others.”

OSU Policy Statement: Oklahoma State University is committed to the maintenance of the highest standards of integrity and ethical conduct of its members. This level of ethical behavior and integrity will be maintained in this course. Participating in a behavior that violates academic integrity (e.g., unauthorized collaboration on homework or assignments, plagiarism, multiple submissions of the same assignment, cheating on examinations, fabricating information, helping another person cheat, having unauthorized advance access to examinations, altering or destroying the work of others, and fraudulently altering academic records) will result in your being sanctioned. Violations may subject you to disciplinary action including the following: receiving a failing grade on an assignment, examination or course, receiving a notation of a violation of academic integrity on your transcript, and being suspended from the University. You have the right to appeal the charge. Contact the Office of Academic Affairs, 101 Whitehurst, 405-744-5627, <http://osu.okstate.edu/acadaffr/aa/academicintegrity.htm>.

5
**PROFESSIONALISM:** This is a professional course. You are training and learning to be among the best journalists. Consequently, you are expected to meet the professional standards of one, including avoiding conflicts of interests, having an adequate number of sources for stories, ensuring the accuracy of the information in your stories, meeting deadlines, editing your stories, being in class and lab on time, keeping up with the news, and knowing and following instructions. You are expected to refrain from text messaging, e-mailing or other Internet access or activity not part of a class or lab assignment and to turn off cell phones while in class or lab.

At times, guest speakers will make presentations in lecture. Material from their presentations might appear on exams. Speakers will be public officials or journalism professionals with experience or special knowledge in areas of study in this course. It is expected that guest speakers will be received with courtesy and respect. You also are expected to participate intelligently in discussions with these speakers. That begins with staying awake and ends with politely asking challenging questions.

During at least two labs, we will visit public facilities to speak with government officials. They are pertinent to your out-of-class assignments. You are expected to attend as well be on your best behavior.

**ATTENDANCE:** Each class and lab is designed to highlight and explain the strategies and techniques that should be applied to your reporting and writing. Your attendance is necessary if you are to do your best in this course. Students who miss class typically find themselves lost on assignments and exams. Neither of us wants that to happen. Let’s work together to make the class rewarding and worth attending.

Lectures typically include a quiz. Labs typically include an exercise. By automatically dropping a specified number of your lowest grades in each category, I am giving you “personal days” just as you might receive on a job. In other words, you are being given excused absences for the semester. These are the only excused absences you will receive during the semester. Use these days wisely. Save them for when you really need them. Before deciding to skip class because you just don’t feel like attending, consider whether it’s possible that you will be ill, need to attend a funeral or go to a job interview later in the semester.

**Exceptions** to this policy are made for students **REQUIRED** by either the university or military to miss more than two classes and one lab and for students who are hospitalized for more than two classes and one lab. In these situations, the student’s first two required absences from lecture and first required absence from lab would count toward the lowest quiz/exercise grades to be dropped.

Only the required absences in excess of these will be excused. For a student to qualify for this exception, **I must be notified in writing by the appropriate university, military or medical official prior to the required absence.** Required means more than your participation in student organizations or university activities or even a university job on campus. Required means your scholarship or course grade is jeopardized if you do not participate in a mandated activity. An example would be a field trip required in another class.

You are expected to attend the lab for which you are enrolled. To attend the lab for which you are not enrolled, you must receive permission from me first.

**LATE WORK:** Learning to meet deadlines is an important step to being a successful reporter. Late assignments will be accepted only in cases of verified emergencies, such as a traffic accident happening to you on the way to class, your hospitalization or a university- or military-required activity if I am notified prior to the deadline. The expectation is that you had completed the work on time but some unforeseeable event out of your control occurred to you on the way to class. When the assignment is submitted, you must provide documentation, such as an accident report or towing bill. I reserve the right to check the authenticity of all documentation and the right to reject bogus documentation.

Do not slide assignments under my office door or put them in my mailbox unless otherwise instructed.
## Daily Schedule

Complete all readings prior to the start of class.

*Telling* = *Telling the Story*  
*WWW* = *Working With Words*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Reading</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1/11</td>
<td>Introduction to Course &amp; Reporting</td>
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| 1/13 | **Assign Language Notebook**  
Recognizing and Finding News | *Telling*: Ch. 1  
Handout: *Everything I know about Journalism*  
Home Page: SPJ Tips for Smarter Reporting |
| **Lab 1:** | Refresher on Grammar, AP Style and Tight Writing  
Bring all three textbooks to each lab.  
*Telling*: Appendix 2 & 3 (Review before lab. Expect a graded exercise on language and AP usage.) | |
| 1/18 | **Martin Luther King Jr. Holiday** | |
| 1/20 | Starting Your Career  
What the Future Holds | *Telling*: Ch. 2 |
| **Lab 2:** | Exercise: Writing Leads | *Telling*: Ch. 6  
*WWW*: Ch. 14 |
| 1/25 | Cultivating Diverse Sources | *Telling*: Ch. 4  
Home Page: SPJ Rainbow Sourcebook; SPJ Tips for Better Sourcing; Diversity is Accuracy |
| 1/27 | Evaluating Sources  
Striving for Accuracy & Truth  
Reading Copy to Sources | *Telling*: Ch. 4  
Handout: *Rumor often reported as fact . . .*  
Home Page: PoynterOnline Guidelines for Evaluating Sources; ASNE, RTNDA & SPJ codes of Ethics |
| **Lab 3:** | Writing and the High Five  
Exercise: Writing in the High Five | *Telling*: Ch. 7  
Handout: High Five; *Everything I Know About Journalism* |
| 2/1 | Interviewing and Attribution | *Telling*: Ch. 3  
*WWW*: pp. 177-83 |
| 2/3 | Reporting With Numbers | *Telling*: Ch. 5  
Online: Newsroom Math Crib Sheet |
<p>| <strong>Lab 4:</strong> | Exercise: Meeting stories | <em>Telling</em>: Ch. 8 |</p>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Notes</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2/8-10</td>
<td>Ethics &amp; Reporting Philosophies</td>
<td><em>Telling</em>: Ch. 15, pp. 11-14</td>
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<td>Handout: <em>Everything I Know About Journalism</em></td>
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<td>Online: ASNE, RTNDA and SPJ codes of ethics</td>
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<td><strong>Lab 5</strong>: Exercise: Writing meeting stories</td>
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<td>2/15</td>
<td>Writing Online</td>
<td><em>Telling</em>: Ch. 13</td>
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<td><em>WWW</em>: Ch. 16</td>
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<td>2/17</td>
<td>Writing for Radio &amp; TV</td>
<td><em>Telling</em>: Ch. 11</td>
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<td><em>WWW</em>: Ch. 15</td>
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<td><strong>Lab 6</strong>: Exercise: Report online, write for the newspaper</td>
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<td>2/22</td>
<td><strong>Mid-Term Exam</strong></td>
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<td>2/24</td>
<td><strong>Assign Public Records Search</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Assign Story Project, Discuss Story Ideas</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Lab 7</strong>: Reporting Exercise</td>
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<td>3/1</td>
<td>Oklahoma Open Records Act</td>
<td>Online: Open Records Primer; Model Letter for Requesting Public Records</td>
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<tr>
<td>3/3</td>
<td>Oklahoma Open Meeting Act</td>
<td>Online: Open Meeting Primer</td>
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<td><strong>Lab 8</strong>: Reporting Exercise</td>
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<tr>
<td>3/8</td>
<td><strong>Public Records Search DUE</strong></td>
<td><em>Telling</em>: Ch. 10</td>
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<td>Covering Beats</td>
<td>Home Page: Turn the Beat Around</td>
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<td>3/10</td>
<td>Covering Government</td>
<td><em>Telling</em>: Ch. 10, pp. 98-105</td>
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<td>Home Page: Bonds-Basics; Moody Bond Ratings</td>
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<td></td>
<td><strong>Lab 9</strong>: Writing Exercise</td>
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<tr>
<td>3/15-17</td>
<td><strong>SPRING BREAK</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td><strong>Lab 10</strong>: Spring Break</td>
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3/22  Covering Law Enforcement  
*Telling*: pp. 223-24, 338-40  
Online: Poynter Tips for Covering Cops; Criminal Justice Journalist’s Covering Crime and Justice – Introduction thru Arrest Process

3/24  Writing Crime, Accident & Fire Stories  
*Telling*: Ch. 9  
Online: CJJ’s Covering Crime and Justice – Crime Beat Issues, Be Prepared, 12 Questions, Writing the Story

**Lab 11:** Exercise: Writing crime, accident and fire stories

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3/29  FOI and Law Enforcement  
*Police Records Training Video*  
*(Demonstrate OSCN)*

Handout: Law enforcement records under the Oklahoma Open Records Act  
Online: CJJ’s Covering Crime and Justice – Access and Records & Digging In

3/31  Covering Fire Departments  
*Speaker from Stillwater Fire Dept.*

Online: Stillwater Fire Department; International Association of Fire Chiefs; Oklahoma State Firefighters Association

**Lab 12:** Visit law enforcement agency. Details will be provided closer to this date.  
Attendance is expected as it is for all labs. This will be counted as an exercise grade.  
*(Visit to jail and/or Stillwater Police)*

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4/5  Spring Media Monday – Class will not meet. Work on your story project.

4/7  Covering Campus Crime  
*Speaker from OSU Police*

Online: OSU Police Department; SPLC’s Student Media Guide to the Clery Act

**Lab 13:** Paul Miller Lecture. (Labs will NOT meet. Work on your stories.)

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4/12  Covering Courts  
*Telling*: pp. 200-01, 224-227  
Online: CJJ’s Covering Crime and Justice – Covering Courts

4/14  Covering Courts  
Online: CJJ’s Covering Crime and Justice – Covering Criminal Courts, Covering Civil Courts

**Lab 14:** Visit Payne County Court Clerk’s Office. Details will be provided closer to this date.  
Attendance is expected as it is for all labs. This will be counted as an exercise grade.

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4/19  How Prosecutors Work  
*Speaker from local DA’s Office*

Online: CJJ’s Covering Crime and Justice – How Prosecutors Work

**4/21**  STORY PROJECT DUE  
Racial and Ethnic Issues in Police Reporting  
Online: CJJ’s Covering Crime and Justice – Racial and Ethnic Issues

**Lab 15:** Exercise: Writing court stories  
*Telling*: Ch. 9
4/26  Interviewing Victims of Crimes  

4/28  Getting the Internship or Job That You Want  

Lab 16: Exercise: Writing court stories

5/3  Final Exam (2 p.m. – 3:50 p.m.)

No two groups of students are the same. Some take a particular interest in certain topics, or world and/or local events may necessitate discussions not listed in the syllabus. Therefore, I reserve the right to make changes in the syllabus to fit the needs of the class and to allow for the unscheduled arrival of guest speakers, etc.