# Data Journalism in Enterprise Reporting
## COMM 4221~Wed/Fri 12:40-2:30 p.m.

*AU2025*                                         *Professor: Spencer Hunt*
*Office: The Lantern, 275B Journalism*           *E Mail: hunt.754@osu.edu*
*Phone: 614.247.7030*
*Office hours: Wednesday, Friday 3 p.m. to 5 p.m.*
*(or by appointment.)*

**COURSE DESCRIPTION**

This is the capstone of your journalism major!

Up to now, you focused on mastering the skills that will prepare you for a career in story telling: reporting, interviewing, writing, editing, and photography. This course will add a final set of tools that are increasingly in demand among news outlets looking for the most talented job candidates.

In this class, we will practice data journalism, also called computer assisted reporting. This reporting strategy uses computers to analyze the ever-growing amount of publicly-available data to produce unique and compelling stories. This course will teach the fundamentals of such techniques and combine your data analysis enterprise reporting project. You willcreate a story that springs from the records you analyze.

We will set a project goal and then you—individually or with a partner—will acquire and analyze that data to help produce the basis of the story.

You will then tell this story with the skills you've developed in previous journalism classes: reporting, writing, photography and the strategic use of social media.

Aside from database analysis, which you will learn here, the skills you need for this class will come from your prior classes, and you will use all of them to:

1. Find and research a topic that's compelling and important.
2. Use the results of your analysis to identify and connect with sources and people who will help tell the story your data reveal.
3. Interview and spend quality time with those sources.
4. Use the data and interviews to write a powerfully written, streamlined article that has a bold, clear narrative structure.
5. Create supporting multimedia pieces, which can include photos, visualizations and graphics built from your data.

6. Create a rough draft, edit your story.
7. Present your project to the class.

**Textbook (suggested)**
***Computer Assisted Reporting: A Practical Guide, Brant Houston –*** is a great resource, but not required.

**Similar to the Practicum class** (COMM 2223), I will provide numerous links to access through Carmen, which you will be responsible for reading and reviewing prior to each class period.

**Also, you will need:**
A computer (including Internet and word processing) access
Cloud storage, a thumb drive and/or computer hard drive capable of storing and holding a clean copy of your data.

**GRADING (points) — Percent Final Grade**
Professionalism (50) — 5%
Final Presentation (100) — 10%
Pitch Outline (150) — 15%
Digital Journal: (150) — 15%
Midterm draft (150) — 15%

***Final Project (400):*** Story development (100) Research (100) Writing (100) Multimedia (100) — **40%**

These points tallied together will give you your final grade of the following (100-93=A; 92-90=A; 89- 88 B+; 87-82=B; 81-80=B ; 79-78=C+; 77-72=C; 71-70=C ; 69-68=D+; 67-60=D; 59 and below=E).
*Please note: I am not able to negotiate grades, either during or after the semester.*

**DATE OF FINAL EXAM: This class has no final exam but a final presentation.**

**Instructor Methods**

You must prepare for each class by reading the required links in Carmen. Our class time, particularly at the beginning of the semester, will be divided by a short presentation followed by one-on-one consultation on your projects and hands-on practice with data analysis software.

I believe that this will help you quickly master a reporting technique that might be new for you, but is increasingly expected of new reporters entering the field. Many of the courses will work like a computer lab.

This will help us work more closely and will help me to assess and understand your individual needs and goals. Each project is different and no one lecture can handled everything.

Since this class involves data analysis techniques and those techniques advance and evolve, changes in Carmen modules and schedules are likely. Any such changes will be announced through emails. Please let me know if you have other ideas for what might augment our class or better serve your learning experience.

I encourage you to email and tweet any and all questions that arise, and to share any information you find useful outside our class content, and to meet with me during office hours. Office hours are listed, but I am also in the newsroom 9-5 most weekdays, outside of class. If the door is open, I'm most often available.

**Class Tools**
To better serve the needs of the class, the classroom-provided computers will include all of the applications needed to learn the basics of data journalism. These will include Microsoft Excel, the Access database manager, and ArcMap, a data mapping program. We also will work with a popular data visualization platforms, including Flourish, and with Google-Drive based web scraping tools. If your personal computer lacks these applications there will be time allotted during classes to do the work needed to complete your stories.

The Microsoft applications are available for free download through the university's site license program and online Microsoft 365. Information on how to request the software for student use is available here. https://ocio.osu.edu/software Students should note, however, that Microsoft does not make its database manager, Access, available for Apple products. Likewise, you should be wary of any program available on the web that offers to make Access functional on Apple computers.

*It is important, however, that you be able to store and back up your data on something that's yours, a cloud/flash/thumb drive or your own computer's hard drive so that they are not lost to the whims of the computer gods, power surges or usually-reliable Ohio State computing equipment.*

**CLASS PROFESSIONALISM**
College is intended to prepare you for the real world. You can and will make a lot of mistakes here, but the goal is to learn from them and not to make them again. To that end, I will treat you professionally and I need you to do the same.

1. You will be graded primarily on your writing and editing, and how you work as a writer.
2. Fact errors are also VERY important in the pursuit of journalistic skill.
3. Come on time and ready to work on the material for the day. This is increasingly an issue and weighs heavily on your professionalism grade.
4. You are missed when you are absent: Twitter attendance, described later only works when you are here and attendance is part of your grade.

5. Treating classmates/coworkers with respect: Everyone's ideas have merit, and allowing a civil discussion, even when we disagree, is a key to future success.
6. Dressing for success: I know this is college, but you never know who might come to class who could help you with an internship or guide your academic or professional career. Please know I don't want to discuss appropriate class dress with you, but I will if need be.
7. **Deadlines are deadlines:** Assignments must be submitted in the Dropbox by the pre-determined time and cannot be accepted late, barring a medical excuse or an attempt to reach me prior to the deadline.
8. I believe in using social media in class. I encourage you to use your devices, and require Twitter for attendance, and our research in class will use all electronic devices. Remember, if I can see what you post—so can future employers. Be responsible in how you present yourself online.
9. We never interview or quote friends, relatives, roommates, etc. In our industry, it's considered a conflict of interest.
10. We never write on topics of which we have a personal stake or relationship (places where we work, groups of which we are a member, etc…)
11. We always tell sources we are interviewing them for an article ***that could be pitched to The Lantern.***
12. That means we do not tell sources we are "writing for a class assignment."
13. Lying, cheating or stealing will get you fired: In this class, if you plagiarize anything you will fail the course and I will report you to academic misconduct.

**WITHDRAWAL POLICY**
Not all classes fit your schedule or your academic plan. However, I very much wish to meet with you before you drop to see what we can do to work through any challenges you face. If you do have questions about how to drop or the impact on your transcript or financial aid, please visit the Academic Advising website.

**EQUIPMENT:**
You will be able to use the cameras and video cameras from the Lantern news room locker. You are welcome to use your own equipment, but please know that it us up to you to determine if it is compatible with our computers and software, and you will need to do any necessary conversions. Just a reminder the camera locker is in room 275 Journalism and checkouts are during posted hours.

## ASSIGNMENTS

### Professionalism (50 points)

Treating this class like a job will go a long way toward helping you be prepared for your post-graduation life. Your ability to come to class on time, contribute to discussions, turn in work on time, treat classmates with respect, dress appropriately, and communicate respectfully and clearly in person, email and in writing will earn you professionalism points.

### Final Presentation (100 points)

Each individual or team will share the final project with class. Team members must both be present and able to discuss their work to receive the same grade. The schedule for the presentation will be determined as the semester draws to a close.

### Digital Journal (150)

Spending time analyzing data, researching records and the notes you take from interviews are key parts of this story. You will keep a digital journal of your participation, describing in detail the progress you've made in three areas: data acquisition and analysis, reporting and sourcing, and efforts to develop photos and data visualizations. Aside from one-on-one sessions these journals are critical to assessing your progress and for your final grade.

### Pitch Outline (150)

Your first major grade will mimic a real-life exercise many professional journalists follow to gain the time and resources to work on a long-term project and free themselves from the rigors of daily reporting. You will prepare a pitch based off your initial reporting and analysis and then outline your vision for the story and the different elements, photos, graphics and any sidebar stories that might accompany it. An example of how to do this is found in Carmen.

### Midterm (150)

As a midterm, you will turn in your first draft of the written portion of your project to Carmen. This should have the look and feel you are intending for your final project, but it is open for editing until the final version is complete. This will mark the first attempt at a writing style that is not inverted pyramid. The rough draft will then become the living document you continue to revise and develop into the final story. No project story is written the night before it is published. If it takes months to report, it will take weeks to write.

**Final Project (400)**

Here you will file the final version of the story along with the photos, graphics and social media strategy in their full and completed forms. This represents the story, and story elements that a reporter feels is their best work and are ready to hand in for final editing. The story, photos, graphics and social media plan can be handed in as they are to editors, in a single file. Final projects that combine each of these elements into a single document are acceptable, as long as each element can be fully read and assessed by the instructor. Please note: *Each person in a team must equally participate in the research, creation and presentation to receive full credit.*

**Multi-Step Process**

No matter what issue or topic you identify for your capstone project, you will follow this process to produce it

1. **Identify the story**. Use traditional print library resources, Web sites and social media like Facebook and Twitter to find your topic/subject/issue.

2. **Research/analysis**. Using the sources above, along with in person or telephone interviews, write a 1-2 page pitch/outline of the subject selected. The pitch should include likely sources of data local, national and/or international that will help form the basis for the story.

3. **Reporting**. Your data analysis is just a starting point. Your story will grow from the places that data point to. Statistics are dry and impersonal. The people who are affected by them are not. Regularly update your progress in the Google file and write entries that will help you write your midterm and final stories**.**

4. **Write/produce**. Start putting everything together into a story package that includes as many of the following as possible: text, photos and graphics. This includes a rough draft that will serve as the midterm grade.

5. **Review/edit.** You should be doing this constantly. Class time also will be used to do it in your partnerships.

6. **Rewrite, re-research and redo** anything needed to complete the final project. Your continuing reporting, as well as discussions with the instructor should aid this process.

7. **Completion.** Put it all together in the most effective way possible.

**OFFICE HOURS**

My office hours are listed on the front of the syllabus, and I would love to meet with you to get you extra, article assistance. I am always available to provide feedback on rough drafts before they are submitted. Meeting outside of class will become more important as we near final submission and are in the midst of presentations at the end of the semester. With that in mind, I try to keep my schedule as open as possible for these meetings. Keep in mind that you should look for the feedback, days, not hours before the submission deadline.

**SYLLABUS**
Every effort has been made to create a syllabus that is as comprehensive and accurate as possible, but each class is a living entity and changes may arise. Most things will work as planned, but some things may need to be adjusted as the semester proceeds. If that happens, I will notify you in writing of the changes to be sure everyone is aware and can adjust accordingly.

**LIBEL and PLAGIARISM**
Any story that includes libelous material or material that is someone else's work but represented as your own will result in a zero for the assignment. Examples would be if you describe someone as a murderer in your story before he or she has been convicted, or if you misidentify a subject and implicate someone not guilty of a crime. Another example would be directly copying Ohio State's written accounts of sports games.

**Academic Misconduct**
It is the responsibility of the Committee on Academic Misconduct to investigate or establish procedures for the investigation of all reported cases of student academic misconduct. The term "academic misconduct" includes all forms of student academic misconduct wherever committed; illustrated by, but not limited to, cases of plagiarism and dishonest practices in connection with examinations. Instructors shall report all instances of alleged academic misconduct to the committee ([Faculty Rule 3335-5-48.7 (B)](#)). For additional information, see the [Code of Student Conduct](#).

**Open AI**
Can you use OpenA!? The answer is, "It depends." We have structured ways that we encourage the use of ChatGPT to maximize your writing and learning, and these assignments will be clear and evident in class. Students are allowed to use Open AI and other language models for certain aspects of this course. This policy outlines the guidelines and expectations for using Open AI.

**Purpose of Using Open AI:**
Open AI is designed to help in generating human-like text responses based on given prompts. In this course, you may use Open AI to brainstorm, generate ideas, improve your writing, or explore complex concepts. However, it is essential to remember that ChatGPT should complement your efforts, not replace critical thinking and the core learning process.

You are permitted to use Open AI in the following ways:
• **Brainstorming:** Use Open AI to generate ideas, concepts, or potential solutions to specific problems or assignments.
• **Writing Assistance:** Leverage Open AI to enhance your OWN writing, receive suggestions on sentence structure, grammar, and style and refine your written work.
• **Concept Exploration:** Use Open AI to gain insights into challenging topics, explore different perspectives and deepen your understanding of course materials.

**Responsible Use and Academic Integrity:**
While Open AI can be an invaluable resource, it is crucial to uphold academic integrity and responsible use. **Plagiarism and cheating are strictly prohibited and will result in a report to COAM.** When using Open AI, you must always provide appropriate attribution if you incorporate any generated content into your assignments or projects.

**Limitations of AI**
Keep in mind that Open AI is a machine-learning model and has its limitations. It may not always produce accurate or reliable information. As such, you must critically evaluate the responses generated by ChatGPT and verify the information from reliable sources before incorporating it into your work.

**Support and Guidance**
If you are unsure about the appropriate use of Open AI or have any questions related to its implementation, please
ASK before you use and submit!

**Disability Services**
The university strives to maintain a healthy and accessible environment to support student learning in and out of the classroom.  If you anticipate or experience academic barriers based on your disability (including mental health, chronic, or temporary medical conditions), please let me know immediately so that we can privately discuss options.  To establish reasonable accommodations, I may request that you register with Student Life Disability Services.  After registration, make arrangements with me as soon as possible to discuss your accommodations so that they may be implemented in a timely fashion.

If you are ill and need to miss class, including if you are staying home and away from others while experiencing symptoms of a viral infection or fever, please let me know immediately. In cases where illness interacts with an underlying medical condition, please consult with Student Life Disability Services to request reasonable accommodations. You can connect with them at [slds@osu.edu](mailto:slds@osu.edu); 614-292-3307; or [slds.osu.edu](https://slds.osu.edu).

# Religious Accommodations
Ohio State has had a longstanding practice of making reasonable academic accommodations for students' religious beliefs and practices in accordance with applicable law. In 2023, Ohio State updated its practice to align with new state legislation. Under this new provision, students must be in early communication with their instructors regarding any known accommodation requests for religious beliefs and practices, providing notice of specific dates for which they request alternative accommodations within 14 days after the first instructional day of the course. Instructors in turn shall not question the sincerity of a student's religious or spiritual belief system in reviewing such requests and shall keep requests for accommodations confidential. With sufficient notice, instructors will provide students with reasonable alternative accommodations with regard to examinations and other academic requirements with respect to students' sincerely held religious beliefs and practices by allowing up to three absences each semester for the student to attend or participate in religious activities.

Examples of religious accommodations can include, but are not limited to, rescheduling an exam, altering the time of a student's presentation, allowing make-up assignments to substitute for missed class work, or flexibility in due dates or research responsibilities. If concerns arise about a requested accommodation, instructors are to consult their tenure initiating unit head for assistance.

A student's request for time off shall be provided if the student's sincerely held religious belief or practice severely affects the student's ability to take an exam or meet an academic requirement and the student has notified their instructor, in writing during the first 14 days after the course begins, of the date of each absence. Although students are required to provide notice within the first 14 days after a course begins, instructors are strongly encouraged to work with the student to provide a reasonable accommodation if a request is made outside the notice period. A student may not be penalized for an absence approved under this policy.

If students have questions or disputes related to academic accommodations, they should contact their course instructor, and then their department or college office. For questions or to report discrimination or harassment based on religion, individuals should contact the Civil Rights Compliance Office. (Policy: Religious Holidays, Holy Days and Observances)

## SAFE & HEALTHY

Keeping students healthy and preventing the spread of illness is important to The Ohio State University. Students are encouraged to stay home if they are sick and may be asked to leave class if they are coughing/sneezing. Students who are sick and cannot come to the newsroom during your regular hour(s) must contact Prof. Hunt *BEFORE your newsroom time.*

## Intellectual Diversity

Ohio State is committed to fostering a culture of open inquiry and intellectual diversity within the classroom. This course will cover a range of information and may include discussions or debates about controversial issues, beliefs, or policies. Any such discussions and debates are intended to support understanding of the approved curriculum and relevant course objectives rather than promote any specific point of view. Students will be assessed on principles applicable to the field of study and the content covered in the course. Preparing students for citizenship includes helping them develop critical thinking skills that will allow them to reach their own conclusions regarding complex or controversial matters.

## MANAGING STRESS

College can be a stressful time, and I am always here to help you—in this class and beyond. If, however, you feel you need more support, I encourage you to reach out to the Student Advocacy Center at 292.1111. They will always work with professors on your behalf.

**Food Security** (https://www.buckeyefoodalliance.org/, 614-688-2508). The Ohio State University is committed to ensuring that all students have access to adequate and healthy food. Any undergraduate or graduate student with a BuckID may confidentially use the Buckeye Food Alliance food pantries. No proof of need is required. The pantry is located in Lincoln Tower, Suite 150 (1800 Cannon Dr., Columbus, OH 43210). Check the website or call for current hours.

**SPECIAL ACCOMMODATIONS**

Any student who feels s/he may need accommodation based on the impact of a disability should contact me privately to discuss your specific needs. Please contact the Office for Disability Services at 614-292-3307 in room 150 Pomerene Hall to coordinate reasonable accommodations for students with documented disabilities.

**DAILYSCHEDULE**

| Date | Topic | Before Class Reading (Links in Carmen) / Activity | Assignment/Due |
|------|-------|---------------------------------------------------|----------------|
| Week 1 W 8/27 | 1-1 Introduction to class | **Read:** Links in Carmen **Activity:** Review syllabus, discuss grades, projects and computer assisted reporting. | *Assignment: create a short list of ideas or issues you'd want to spend weeks on to develop into an enterprise story. Reach out to prospective teammate if desired.* |
| F 8/29 | 1-2 Understanding /Intro to Data Reporting | **Read:** C.A.R. What is it? The Golden Age of C.A.R. Digging for Truth with Data **Activity** Declare partnerships or single project | Due: Declare partnerships or single work project. |
| Week 2 W 9/3 | 2-1 Developing your Story. How to identify, plan an enterprise story | **Read:** Pick and read one of three Enterprise Stories to discuss in class **Activity:** Discussing story ideas, hurdles | *Assignment: Narrow down list of story ideas, teammate. Identify potential sources of records and data.* |
| F 9/5 | 2-2 Getting your data and records | Read: Finding Data, and Your Right to Data Activity: How to file FOI requests and other strategies to pursue information and records. | Due: Hand in final story ideas, teams for approval, if not approved already. |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Week 3<br><br>W<br><br>9/10 | 3-1 The Basics: Data and how it works | **Read:** Basic Steps in Working With Data. | |
| F<br><br><br>9/12 | NO CLASS | Alumni Reunion | Due: First Digital Journal |
| Week 4<br><br>W<br><br>9/17<br><br>.. | 4-1 Writing /reporting for long form stories | **Read:** The Hourglass; The Five Boxes Approach; The Nut Graf Story Approach<br>**Activity:** How to organize notes, records and data. Wrapping database management training. | |
| F<br><br><br>9/19 | 4-2 Working with Excel | **Read: Links in Carmen Activity:** Basic functions, pivot tables. | Due: 2nd Digital Journal |
| Week 5<br><br>W<br><br>9/24 | 5-1 The Pitch: Outline your project | **Read:** Pitch Me a Story; Pitch Guidelines for the WCIJ<br>**Activity:** Finish creating story outline in class for submission. | *Assignment: Refine outline. Prepare online journal with option as a practice pitch.* |
| F<br><br><br>9/26 | 5-2 Scrape Your Data | **Read: Links in Carmen Activity:** In class web scraping exercise. | Due: Third Journal Entry<br><br>(Pitch Practice) |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Week 6<br><br>W<br><br>10/1 | 6-1 Photos and Photo essays | **Discussion:** Why you need photos<br>**Activity:** Spending class time working on the pitch. | |
| F<br><br>10/3 | 6-2 Working with Access | **Read:** Data tutorials in Carmen<br><br>**Activity**: Analyze lottery and census data using Access | **Due: Pitch outline** |
| Week 7<br><br>W<br><br>10/8 | 7-1<br>Sources and the Long-form story | Review the three project examples from the beginning of the semester. | . |
| F<br><br>10/10 | 7-2<br>Clean your Data | **Read:** Carmen Links<br>**Activity:** Cleaning Lottery data for analysis | Due: 4th digital journal<br><br>.. |
| Week 8<br><br>W<br><br>10/15 | 8-1 Bias and the Long-Form Story | **Read:** Links to API and CJR and Tools to manage bias. **Activity**: discussion of our three enterprise stories | . |
| F<br><br>10/17 | **No Class** | **Fall Break** | **No Class** |
| Week 9<br><br>W<br><br>10/22 | 9-1 Finding those Sources | Reporting traps to avoid. How to find sources and get them to pay attention and respond. | . |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| F<br><br>10/24 | 9-2 Visualize your Data | **Read:** Carmen Links on data visualization<br>**Activity:** Working with Flourish and other data viz platforms | **Due: Digital Journal 5** |
| Week 10<br><br>W  10/23 | 10-1 Planning Your Social Media Strategy | **Read:** Links in Carmen | |
| F<br><br>10/25 | 10-2 Mapping Your Data | **Read:** links in Carmen<br>**Activity**: Using ArcGIS in the lab | **Due: Digital Journal 6** |
| Week 11<br><br>W<br><br>10/29 | 11-1 Writing with Data | **Activity**: Class room available for data work, research | |
| F<br><br>10/31 | 11-2 Writing with Data 2 | | **Due: Digital Journal 7** |
| Week 12<br><br>W<br><br>11/5 | 12-1 Don't write a paper, write a story | **Activity**: Reviewing and discussing the challenges of organizing and writing a strong, compelling story. | |
| F<br><br>11/7 | 12-2 Final review for Midterm | **Activity:** Draft reviews and final questions answered | **DUE: MIDTERM DRAFT,**<br><br>**by end of day (EOD)** |

| Week 13 W 11/12 | 13-1 Exit Interviews | .Classroom available for final data work. | *Assignment: Plot out final steps for project wrap up. Presentation Order Decided* |
|---|---|---|---|
| F 11/14 | 13-2 Putting the pieces together | All of the steps needed to complete the final | Due: Writing Exercise 8 |
| Week 14 W 11/19 | 14-1 Your final presentation: Elements of a strong last effort | | |
| F 11/21 | 14-2 Past Presentations | **Activity**: Examining past presentations to identify what works and what doesn't. | |
| Week 15 W 11/26 | NO CLASS | THANKSGIVING | NO CLASS |
| F 11/28 | NO CLASS | THANKSGIVING | NO CLASS |
| Week 16 12/3 | FINAL | PRESENTATIONS | DAY ONE |
| F 12/5 | FINAL | PRESENTATIONS | DAY TWO |
| **Week 17** **12/10** | **<u>Final Story</u>** | **<u>Due by EOD</u>** | **<u>Final Story</u>** |