

# **Data Journalism in Enterprise Reporting**

## **COMM 4221~Wed/Fri 12:40-2:30 p.m.**

*AU2019*

*Office: The Lantern, 275B Journalism*

*Phone: 614.247.7030*

*Office hours: Wednesday, Friday 3 p.m. to 5 p.m.  
(or by appointment.)*

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### **COURSE DESCRIPTION/GOAL**

Welcome to the capstone of your journalism major!

For the past few years, you focused on mastering the skills that will prepare you for a career in media and in story development: reporting, interviewing, writing, editing, and photography. Now we add another tool that increasingly is in demand among news organizations that always look to hire the most-talented candidates.

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

We will set a project goal and then you—individually or with a partner—will develop and produce that project by semester's end. In this manner, this class will mimic the process many established news organizations already employ to produce their biggest stories.

Each individual or team will tell this story with the skills journalists must know: writing, photography, graphics and the strategic use of social media.

Aside from database analysis, which you will learn during our lab sessions, 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. Craft a compelling story that follows a format for project writing.
4. Create supporting multimedia pieces, which can include photos, visualizations and graphics built from your data analysis.
5. Present your project to the class.

**Textbook (suggested)**

***Computer Assisted Reporting: A Practical Guide, Brant Houston*** – is a great resource, but not required. Because data journalism involves computers, there's tons of helpful info online.

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

**Also, you will need:**

Email account you check daily

Computer (including Internet and word processing) access

A flash drive and/or computer hard drive capable of storing large amounts of data

To follow my Twitter account for attendance (@spencerhuntosu)

**GRADING (points) — Percent Final Grade**

Professionalism (50) — 5%

Twitter attendance (75) — 7.5%

Final Presentation (75) — 7.5%

Story Outline (100) — 10%

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 hands-on practice with data analysis software and techniques.

This will help you quickly master a reporting technique that might be new for you, but now is often expected of new reporters entering the field. Many of our first courses will work like a lab.

This will help us work more closely and will help me to assess and understand your individual needs and goals.

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, and I have many of those.

### ***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 platform, Tableau, and with Google-based web scraping tools. If your personal computer lacks these applications there will be time allotted during classes to perform the analyses you need to complete your stories. They also can be accessed through the cloud, on Microsoft 365.

Microsoft applications also are available for free download through the university's site license program. 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 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.***

### **COVID-19 PRECAUTIONS**

We are conducting this class in an unprecedented time, a pandemic-inspired public health crisis. I have made the choice that I want to be in a classroom working in person with students who want to become journalists. To do this safely, we must be responsible to ourselves and to each other.

So, if you feel ill, or if you feel you should isolate at home because you might become sick, then that is what you should do. I will conduct each class with a live Zoom link, and I will record each session so that if you miss it for any reason you can still view it. Live Zoom links also will be available for weekly editor meetings and writing exercises will be available via Carmen. It will be just as easy to meet class goals from home as it will be in person.

In addition, the University policy on how we will conduct ourselves in the classroom is clear:

All students, faculty and staff are required to comply with and stay up to date on all university safety and health guidance (<https://safeandhealthy.osu.edu>), which includes wearing a face mask in any indoor space and maintaining a safe physical distance at all times. Non-compliance will be warned first and disciplinary actions will be taken for repeated offenses.

### **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 and style errors, and misspellings are also VERY important in the pursuit of journalistic skill, so they are weighted heavily in this class.
3. Come on time and ready to work on the material for the day.
4. Staying in class: I know you have things to do. We all do. But we have committed to being in class together for two hours twice a week.
5. You are missed when you are absent: Twitter attendance, described later only works when you are here and attendance is part of your grade.
6. 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.
7. 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.
8. **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.
9. 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.
10. We never interview or quote friends, relatives, roommates, etc. In our industry, it's considered a conflict of interest.
11. 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...)
12. We always tell sources we are interviewing them for an article ***that could be pitched to The Lantern.***

13. Only if a Lantern editor accepts the article idea will we say we are writing for the paper, but we will always write with the goal of being published in *The Lantern*.
14. That means we do not tell sources we are “writing for a class assignment.”
15. 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.

### **WITHDRAWALPOLICY**

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

### **MOBILE TECHNOLOGY**

Although many classes may ban or limit the use of mobile technology, in this class we will learn to use your mobile phone and tablet for reporting and disseminating news—in other words, for good and not evil. Keep it out and be prepared to use it for class work, which will include tweeting. That said, this is not the time to text and tweet your friends or surf the web.

### **EQUIPMENT:**

You will be able to use the cameras and video cameras from COMM 3226, if they are not in use by the other class. You are welcome to use your own equipment, but please know that it is up to you to determine if it is compatible with our computers and software, and you will need to do any necessary conversions. The COMM 3226 equipment is available for checkout from the Lantern photo department in room 275 of the Journalism Building.

Once again, you must have appropriate storage media, a hard drive and/or USB flash drive (aka thumb drive, jump drive, pen drive, Gizmo (USB key), to keep copies of your work files.

### **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 arrive on time, contribute to discussions, turn in work on time, treat classmates with respect, dress appropriately, and communicate respectfully and clearly in persona and in writing will earn you professionalism points. Everyone starts with zero points—you build them up through professional behavior throughout the semester.

### **Twitter Attendance (75 points)**

To help build that skill—and brand, we take attendance through Twitter, which means every student gets credit for attendance by tweeting something insightful or asking a question from each class session, with the goal of engaging the outside world. In addition, social media is extremely useful for journalists, and your ability to use it responsibly and constructively will help you establish your personal brand and, hopefully, get employed in the future. The goal is we all learn the potential impact of Twitter in “talking” to the world—and learn how to prevent negative impacts.

Use my Twitter handle @spencerhuntosu, AND the hashtag #capstone for all posts. Please make sure to follow me to help me track down tweets that lack the tag, which sometimes happens. Please also make sure that your account is not private. I cannot receive tweets from private accounts.

### **Final Presentation (75 points)**

Every individual or team will be responsible for showing us the final project. We can then read the article and discuss the writing with you. 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 points)**

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 each time you met with your subjects and what happened during those sessions. I will check it through the semester—both on the scheduled dates and randomly—so you will need to provide me the link by our second session of class. It can be a Google doc or a blog. You must also provide in this journal a list of contacts and phone/email. I will be touching base with your sources to evaluate the contact and content of your time.

### **Pitch/Story Outline (100 points)**

You will provide a description of your project, what EXACTLY your project is about. We need as much detail as possible about your story, what makes it newsworthy, the data and records involved, sources and how they will contribute to your article. Please include an **interview or transcribed notes** with **one source** from your project. Include **all source contact info**. *Put in Canvas assignment.*

### **Midterm (150 points)**

As a midterm, you will turn in your first draft of the written portion of, your project, with a data AND multimedia component. It will be placed in the assignment in 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.

### **Final Project (400 points)**

In your final project Carmen assignment will be all of the written photo, video and graphic modules in their full and completed forms, shaped into a singular and comprehensive project. Please note: *Each person in a team must equally participate in the research, creation and presentation to receive full credit.* **Post to assignment in Canvas.**

### **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 using words and images. The goal: is to get all or part of the project used by The Lantern or another media organization. *You will be presenting your projects to the class near the end of the semester.*

### **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. 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.

## **SAFE & HEALTHY**

Keeping students healthy and preventing the spread of illness is important to your University—and to me. You are encouraged to stay home if you are sick, and you may be asked to leave class if you are coughing/sneezing. Students who are sick and cannot attend class must contact me **BEFORE** class to receive class any materials and turn in assignments via the drop box or email. If you do not notify me, your assignment will not be accepted.

## **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.

## **PLEASE TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF (Mental Health Statement):**

As a student you may experience a range of issues that can cause barriers to learning, such as strained relationships, increased anxiety, alcohol/drug problems, feeling down, difficulty concentrating and/or lack of motivation. These mental health concerns or stressful events may lead to diminished academic performance or reduce a student's ability to participate in daily activities. The Ohio State University offers services to assist you with addressing these and other concerns you may be experiencing.

If you are or someone you know is suffering from any of the aforementioned conditions, you can learn more about the broad range of confidential mental health services available on campus via the Office of Student Life's Counseling and Consultation Service (CCS) by visiting [ccs.osu.edu](http://ccs.osu.edu) or calling 614--292--5766. CCS is located on the 4th Floor of the Yountkin Success Center and 10th Floor of Lincoln Tower. You can reach an on-call counselor when CCS is closed at 614-292-5766.

If you are thinking of harming yourself or need a safe, non-judgmental place to talk, or if you are worried about someone else and need advice about what to do, 24 hour emergency help is also available through the Suicide Prevention Hotline (Columbus: 614-221-5445 / National: 800-273-8255); or text (4hope to 741741); or at [suicidepreventionlifeline.org](http://suicidepreventionlifeline.org)

## **HONOR CODE & CODE OF ACADEMIC CONDUCT**

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 31 02). For additional information, see the Code of Student Conduct ([http://studentaffairs.osu.edu/resource\\_csc.asp](http://studentaffairs.osu.edu/resource_csc.asp)).



I will vigorously pursue any suspected cases of plagiarism, cheating or other violations of the University Code of Academic Conduct, whether completed or merely attempted.

## **SPECIAL ACCOMMODATIONS**

I am happy to make academic adjustments for students with documented disabilities. Please contact the Center for Students with Disabilities if this applies to you. The Center for Students with Disabilities is located in Room 101 of the Admissions/Student Services Complex, located on the north side of Main campus, next to Admissions. For more information, call (310) 434-4265 or (310) 434-4273 (TDD)

## **COVID-19 ACCOMMODATIONS**

The university strives to make all learning experiences as accessible as possible. In light of the current pandemic, students seeking to request COVID-related accommodations may do so through the university's request process, managed by Student Life Disability Services. 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. SLDS contact information: [slds@osu.edu](mailto:slds@osu.edu); 614-292-3307; [slds.osu.edu](http://slds.osu.edu); 098 Baker Hall, 113 W. 12th Avenue.



## DAILY SCHEDULE

Date	Topic	Before Class Reading (Links in Carmen)	Assignment/Due
		Activity	
Week 1 W 8/26	1-1 Introduction to class	<b>Read:</b> Links in Carmen  <b>Activity:</b> Review syllabus discuss grades, projects and computer assisted reporting.	<i>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.</i>
F 8/28	1-2 Understanding /Intro to Data Reporting	<b>Read:</b> C.A.R. What is it? The Golden Age of C.A.R. Digging for Truth with Data <b>Activity:</b> Declare partnerships or single project	Due: Declare partnerships or single work project.
Week 2 W 9/2	2-1 Developing your Story. How to identify, plan an enterprise story	<b>Read:</b> Pick and read one of three Enterprise Stories to discuss in class <b>Activity:</b> Discussing story ideas, hurdles	<i>Assignment: Narrow down list of story ideas, teammate. Identify potential sources of records and data.</i>
F 9/4	2-2 Getting your data and records	<b>Read:</b> Finding Data, and Your Right to Data <b>Activity:</b> 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 W 9/9	3-1 Data and the Dispatch	<b>Read:</b> Links in Carmen Dispatch data stories. <b>Activity:</b> Work with data Mr. Caruso provides	
F 9/11	3-2 Working with Excel	<b>Read:</b> Basic Steps in Working With Data. <b>Activity:</b> Basic functions, pivottables.	This Lab will be held in Journalism Rm 216
Week4 W 9/16	4-1 Writing /reporting for long form stories	<b>Read:</b> The Hourglass; The Five Boxes Approach; The Nut Graf Story Approach <b>Activity:</b> How to organize notes, records and data. Wrapping database management training.	<i>Assignment: Prepare online journal and entries for review.</i>
F 9/18	4-2 Working with Access	<b>Read:</b> Data tutorials in Carmen <b>Activity:</b> Linking lottery and census data tables and analyzing them using access	This Lab will be held in Journalism Rm 216  Due: First Journal
Week5 W 9/23	5-1 The Pitch: Outline your project	<b>Read:</b> Pitch Me a Story; Pitch Guidelines for the WCIJ <b>Activity:</b> Finish creating story outline in class for submission. Wrapping up how to recognize deal with bad data.	<i>Assignment: Refine outline. Prepare online journal for second check</i>
F 9/25	5-2 Scrape your data	<b>Read: Links in Carmen</b> <b>Activity:</b> In class web scraping exercise.	This Lab will be held in Journalism Rm 216  Due: Second Journal Entry

Week 6 W 9/30	6-1 Photos and Photo essays	<b>Discussion:</b> Why you need photos <b>Activity:</b> Spending class time working on the pitch.	
F 10/2	6-2 Clean your data	<b>Read:</b> Carmen Links <b>Activity:</b> Cleaning Lottery data for analysis	This Lab will be held in Journalism Rm 216  <b>Due: Pitch outline</b>
Week 7 W 10/7	7-1 Multimedia Storytelling	<b>Read:</b> Multimedia Storytelling, Learn the Secrets <b>Activity:</b> Wrapping up work with ArcMap, if needed	<i>Assignment: By 9 a.m. Friday, post to your journal your reporting and research activities. Share any photos taken so far for discussion in class.</i>
F 10/9	7-2 Mapping your data	<b>Read:</b> Carmen Links on ArcView GIS <b>Activity:</b> Working with ArcView shapefiles and EPA data to map pollution	This Lab will be held in Journalism Rm 216  Due: 3rd journal entry
Week 8 W 10/14	8-1 Sources and the Longform Story		
F 10/16	8-2 Data "Viz" and Graphics	<b>Read:</b> Data Visualization DIY <b>Activity:</b> Learning about various options for data viz	This Lab will be held in Journalism Rm 216  Due: 4th journal entry
Week 9 W 10/21	9-1 Bias and Truth in the Long-Form Story	<b>Read:</b> Links to API and CJR and Tools to manage bias. <b>Activity:</b> discussion of our three enterprise stories	

F 10/23	9-2 Prep for the Midterm	Activity: recapping requirements and time to review drafts	
Week 10 W 10/28	10-1 Planning Your Social Media Strategy	<b>Read:</b> What Audiences Think of Journalists' Social Media Use; Social Media Isn't Optional	
F 10/30	10-2 Final prep for the Midterm	<b>Activity: Review session for Midterm which is due at EOD</b>	<b><u>DUE: MIDTERM DRAFT</u></b> by end of day (EOD)
Week 11 W 11/4	11-1 Exit Interviews	<b>Activity:</b> Classroom available for data work, research	
F 11/6	11-2 Writing with Data	<b>Read:</b> 10 Suggestions; Writing the Investigative Story	Due: 5th journal entry
Week 12 W 11/11	NO CLASS	<b>VETERANS DAY</b>	NO CLASS
F 11/13	12-1 Writing with Data	<b>Activity:</b> Examining past presentations to identify what works and what doesn't.	Due: Final Journal entry

Week 13 W 11/18	13-1 The last stages: Don't write a paper, write a story	<b>Activity:</b> Reviewing and discussing the challenges of organizing and writing a strong, compelling story.	<i>Assignment: Plot out final steps for project wrap up.</i>
F 11/20	13-2 Your final presentation: Elements of a strong last effort	<b>Activity:</b> Examining past presentations to identify what works and what doesn't.	
Week 14 W 11/25	WORKING SESSION	<b>Activity:</b> Summary of steps and expectations for final project and presentations	WORKING SESSION
F 11/27	NO CLASS	THANKSGIVING	NO CLASS
Week 15 W 12/2	FINAL	PRESENTATIONS	DAY ONE
F 12/4	FINAL	PRESENTATIONS	DAY TWO
Week 16 MONDAY 12/7	<b><u>Final Story</u></b>	<b><u>Due at Midnight</u></b>	<b><u>Final Story</u></b>

