



MPJO-630-01: ART OF INTERVIEWING

GEORGETOWN UNIVERSITY: MPS-JOURNALISM

Mondays, 5:20 p.m. to 7:50 p.m. | Spring 2016

Instructor: Linda Kramer Jennings

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Downtown campus, room C230

- Office hours are by appointment.

COURSE OVERVIEW

Journalists ask questions for a living. But how do you figure out what questions to ask and how to pose them? How do you stay in control of the conversation? This class will explore the art and the science of the interview, from tactics for securing your subjects' cooperation to strategies for getting the information you need from them.

We will engage in hands-on exercises to hone these skills, hear tips from guest speakers and analyze interviews to figure out what works and what doesn't. Assignments will include a reported Q&A, person-on-the street interviews and an "as told to" feature.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

By the end of the semester, students will have learned:

- Interviewing skills for text, audio, video and online
- Strategies for lining up and securing interviews
- How to edit interviews in keeping with good ethical practices
- How to approach sensitive interviews with survivors of trauma

REQUIRED READING

There is no required text for this class. However, the instructor will assign transcripts and articles to read throughout the semester. Students are expected to read them and be prepared to discuss them in class.

ATTENDANCE

As outlined by the university, missing more than two classes will result in a final grade reduction of one level (for example, an A will be converted to an A-). **Absences for classes, beyond the initial two, will result in further reduction of the final grade.** If you are absent for more than four classes, you will be in danger of failing this course.

It is your responsibility to notify the instructor of all absences and to make up any work from classes you have missed. Email the instructor as soon as you know that you will miss a class or be late. Promptness is expected.

CLASSROOM ETIQUETTE, CLASS PARTICIPATION AND OTHER GUIDELINES

A successful class depends on the active engagement of all students. Students should turn off all cell phones, pagers or other communication devices while in class. Class discussions should be respectful and considerate of others' views and opinions. What happens in class stays in class unless you receive permission from the instructor to share something.

Instructional continuity: In the event of a weather emergency (or any other widespread emergency) that would close the Georgetown Downtown building, we will plan to meet virtually through online videoconferencing tools. More information will be provided on how this will work later in the semester.

ASSIGNMENTS

The instructor will issue a rubric with specific guidelines for each assignment. **All assignments are due by noon on the day specified in the rubrics.** Generally, this is the day before class meets. Double-space text docs. Five points per day late will be subtracted for missing a deadline.

- Mini classmate profile (Due Jan. 26)
- Read Janet Malcolm articles and post comments to your Blackboard blog (Due Feb. 2)
- Vox Pops– interviews with people on the street (Due Feb. 9)
- Q&A – edited question-and-answer article (due Feb. 23)
- Prep 1 and 2– Prepare questions for a specified interview (due Feb. 16 and March 30)
- “As Told To” video/audio – a video or audio interview edited to share a subject’s story solely in his/her words (Due March 15)
- Interview Ask Strategy – written request for an interview (Due March 2)
- Twitterview – interview of someone using Twitter (Due April 12)
- “As Told To” text – an interview for print that presents a subject’s story in his/her words (Due April 26)
- On the Spot – an in-person interview in front of the class with a guest speaker (Students will sign up for specific weeks)
- Interview Analysis – select an interview to share with the class and analyze it. (Students will sign up for specific weeks)

GRADING

Your course grade will be based on the following:

- | | |
|-----------------------------|-----------|
| • Mini profile of classmate | 2 points |
| • Janet Malcolm post | 3 points |
| • Vox Pops | 10 points |
| • Interview Prep 1 | 5 points |
| • Interview Analysis | 7 points |
| • Q&A | 10 points |
| • Interview Prep 2 | 5 points |
| • Twitterview | 10 points |
| • “As Told To” video/audio | 12 points |
| • Interview Ask | 6 points |
| • “As Told To” text | 14 points |
| • On the Spot | 6 points |
| • Class participation | 10 points |

| | |
|--------------|-------------------|
| Total | 100 points |
|--------------|-------------------|

Graduate course grades include A, A-, B+, B, B-, C and F. **There are no grades of C+, C- or D.**

| | | | |
|----|----------|----|----------|
| A | 100-93 | B- | 82.99-80 |
| A- | 92.99-90 | C | 79.99-70 |
| B+ | 89.99-88 | F | 69.99-0 |



B 87.99-83

The instructor will provide a warning by mid-semester to any student who appears to be on track for a poor final grade.

UNIVERSITY RESOURCES

Georgetown offers a variety of support systems for students that can be accessed on main campus or at the downtown location:

- MPS Writing Resource Program
202-687-4246
<http://writingcenter.georgetown.edu/>
- Academic Resource Center
202-687-8354 | arc@georgetown.edu
<http://ldss.georgetown.edu/>
- Counseling and Psychiatric Services
202-687-6985
<http://caps.georgetown.edu/>

STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES POLICY

Students with documented disabilities have the right to specific accommodations that do not fundamentally alter the nature of the course. Students with disabilities should contact the Academic Resource Center (202-687-8354; arc@georgetown.edu; <http://ldss.georgetown.edu/index.cfm>) before the start of classes to allow time to review the documentation and make recommendations for appropriate accommodations. If accommodations are recommended, you will be given a letter from ARC to share with your professors. You are personally responsible for completing this process officially and in a timely manner. Neither accommodations nor exceptions to policies can be permitted to students who have not completed this process in advance.

GEORGETOWN HONOR SYSTEM

All students are expected to maintain the highest standards of academic and personal integrity in pursuit of their education at Georgetown. Academic dishonesty in any form is a serious offense, and students found in violation are subject to academic penalties that include, but are not limited to, failure of the course, termination from the program, and revocation of degrees already conferred. All students are held to the Honor Code. The Honor Code pledge follows:

In the pursuit of the high ideals and rigorous standards of academic life, I commit myself to respect and uphold the Georgetown University Honor System: To be honest in any academic endeavor, and To conduct myself honorably, as a responsible member of the Georgetown community, as we live and work together.

PLAGIARISM

Stealing someone else's work is a terminal offense in journalism, and it will wreck your career in academia, too. Students are expected to work with integrity and honesty in all their assignments. The Georgetown University Honor System defines plagiarism as "the act of passing off as one's own the ideas or writings of another." More guidance is available through the Gervase Programs at <http://gervaseprograms.georgetown.edu/honor/system/53377.html>. If you have any doubts about plagiarism, paraphrasing and the need to credit, check out <http://www.plagiarism.org>.

SYLLABUS MODIFICATION

The syllabus may change to accommodate discussion of emerging topics. Also, the schedules of guest speakers may require some shifting of the agenda. The instructor will make every effort to provide as much advance notice as possible for any alterations.



CLASS SCHEDULE

WEEK 1 (WEDNESDAY JAN. 20)

OVERVIEW

- What to expect this semester and a discussion of the different kinds of interviews and their goals.
- Interviewing basics from Hello to Goodbye.
- Watch and analyze a selected interview.
- In-class exercise: Students interview each other to write mini profiles.

Assignment due Jan. 26: Mini profile of a classmate.

WEEK 2 (WEDNESDAY JAN. 27)

GOING AUDIO

- Going Audio: how to make your interviews succeed in audio. We'll hear from Darci Marchese, news director at WTOP.
- "On the Spot" student interview with Darci Marchese.
- Student interview analysis presentations (2)

Assignment due Feb. 2: Read Janet Malcolm article and post takeaways on Blackboard.

WEEK 3 (WEDNESDAY FEB. 3)

INTERVIEWING ETHICS AND VOX POPS

- Discussion of Janet Malcolm article and ethical sourcing
- How do you get good quotes when you walk up to a total stranger for a "man-on-the-street" or "Vox Pops" interview?
- In the second half of class, students will go out to conduct Vox Pops interviews on an assigned topic.
- Student interview analysis presentation

Assignment due Feb. 9: Vox Pops. Find a Q&A article and post to Blackboard. Assigned reading.

WEEK 4 (WEDNESDAY FEB. 10)

Q&A AND COMMUNITY AND POLICE INTERVIEWING

- Strategies for doing an edited question-and-answer article
- More on researching and preparing for interviews
- How do you find sources and how do you interview them when issues of race, community and police collide in places like Ferguson and Baltimore? Cheryl Thompson of the Washington Post will share her insights and strategies.
- "On the Spot" interview with Cheryl Thompson
- Student interview analysis presentations (2)
- Assignment due Feb. 16: Interview Prep 1. Read assigned White House press conference transcripts.

WEEK 5 (WEDNESDAY FEB. 17)

CHALLENGES OF INTERVIEWING ON THE WHITE HOUSE BEAT

- Covering the White House is exciting, but it is a beat with many particular challenges and frustrations when it comes to getting questions answered. White House correspondents Darlene Superville of the

AP and Angela Greiling Keane of Bloomberg will discuss how they do it.

- “On the Spot” interviews with Darlene Superville and Angela Greiling Keane.
- Asking questions to get the real story behind press releases.
- Student interview analysis presentation

Assignment due Feb. 23: Q&A. Read assigned material.

WEEK 6 (WEDNESDAY FEB. 24)

SPORTS INTERVIEWING AND ART OF PERSUASION

- WUSA Sports reporter Dave Owens will talk about how to get great interviews with athletes
- “On the Spot” interview with Dave Owens.
- Student interview analysis presentations (2)
- Why should someone grant you an interview? Strategies for getting to “yes.”

Assignment due March 2: Interview Ask. Read assigned material. Find example of audio or video As Told To story and share on Blackboard.

WEEK 7 (WEDNESDAY MARCH 2)

TALK SHOW INTERVIEWING

- What does it take to produce news making interviews for television? We’ll hear from Carrie Stevenson, executive producer CNN’s State of the Union and former executive producer for Larry King.
- Interviewing women candidates without stereotyping them. Susannah Wellford, president Running Start.
- “On the Spot” interviews with Carries Stevenson and Susannah Wellford.
- Student interview analysis presentation
- Strategies for doing audio/video As Told To pieces.

Assignment for March 15: As Told To audio/video story. Assigned reading..

SPRING BREAK: NO CLASS MARCH 9

WEEK 8 (WEDNESDAY MARCH 16)

STORYTELLING THROUGH INTERVIEWS

- Lonnae O’Neal of the Washington Post talks about digging deeper in interviews for profile and features.
- “On the Spot” interview with Lonnae O’Neal
- Interviewing to recreate scenes
- Discuss ideas for As Told To text articles
- Student interview analysis presentations

Assignment for March 23: Assigned reading. Work on ideas for As Told To text.

WEEK 9 (WEDNESDAY MARCH 23)

GATEKEEPERS

- How do press secretaries and publicists decide whether to grant your interview request and how do they then try to shape and control the interview? We’ll hear from several “gatekeepers” who will share their perspectives, including Mara Sloan, former communications director to Rep. Debbie Wasserman Schultz, chair of the DNC, Bethany Lesser, former communications director to Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand and Melanie Kaye Fonder, former communications director for Dr. Jill Biden.



- “On the Spot” interviews with guest speakers.
- Student interview analysis presentation

Assignment for March 30: Interview Prep 2. Read assigned material. Work on As Told To story.

WEEK 10 (WEDNESDAY MARCH 30)

TRAUMA INTERVIEWING

- Updates on As Told To interviews
- How do you interview survivors of trauma? Asking someone to recount the trauma may in itself cause additional distress. Kate Hull Fliflet from RAINN (Rape Abuse and Incest National Network) and survivor and author Liz Seccuro will share suggestions and insights. We also will discuss guidelines for interviewing minors.
- “On the Spot” interviews with Kate Hull and with Liz Seccuro
- Student interview analysis presentation

Assignment due April 5: Read assigned material.

WEEK 11 (WEDNESDAY APRIL 6)

INVESTIGATIVE INTERVIEWING

- Award-winning investigative journalists Roberta Baskin and Alison Fitzgerald will talk with us about the interview techniques they use when digging for information subjects don’t want to share.
- Interviewing using Twitter
- “On the Spot” interviews with Alison Fitzgerald and Roberta Baskin
- Student interview analysis presentation

Assignment due April 12: Twitterinterview. Work on As Told To text. Read assigned material.

WEEK 12 (WEDNESDAY APRIL 13)

RED CARPET

- Whether it’s Hollywood celebrities or political VIPs, reporters assigned to cover the red carpet face the challenge of getting usable quotes from people programmed not to give them. We’ll hear from Arnesa Howell about how she approaches celebrities on the red carpet to get great stories for People and other outlets.
- “On the Spot” interview with Arnesa Howell.
- Student interview analysis presentations (2)

Assignment due April 19: Assigned reading.

WEEK 13 (WEDNESDAY APRIL 20)

SPIN CONTROL: JOURNALIST V. CANDIDATE

- Discussion of your As Told To stories
- In an election year, the campaign spin can be overwhelming. We’ll hear from experienced political reporters Jodi Enda of CNN and Lynn Sweet of the Chicago Sun Times about interviewing that gets past the spin.

- “On the Spot” interviews with Lynn Sweet and Jodi Enda.
- Student interview analysis presentation

Assignment due April 26: As Told To text

WEEK 14 (WEDNESDAY APRIL 27)

FAMOUS AND INFAMOUS INTERVIEWS

- A look at the Frost/Nixon interview and the history-making Princess Diana interviews. What worked? What didn't?
- StoryCorps: tools you can use

Assignment due May 10: workshop prep

(No class May 4 due to study days)

WEEK 15 (WEDNESDAY MAY 11)

AND THAT'S A WRAP

- Workshop As Told To Text articles
- Prepare yourselves for a round of “America’s Next Top Interviewer” as we review the semester and wrap up our discussion of the art and science of interviewing.