



MPJO-630-01: ART OF INTERVIEWING

GEORGETOWN UNIVERSITY: MPS-JOURNALISM

Mondays, 5:20 p.m. to 7:50 p.m. | Fall 2014

Instructor: Linda Kramer Jennings

Downtown campus, room C215

- 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, a Twitter interview and an "as told to" feature. Each student will also conduct an "on the spot" interview in front of the class with a guest arranged by the instructor.

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, including 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, and 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.

Please note that we will have a Saturday session on Nov. 8 from 8:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. that will serve as the makeup for Columbus Day and Nov. 10, when the instructor will have to miss class. Students should mark their calendars now. Note that one of the assignments is due at the end of that double session.

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 (with the exception of Vox Pops 2).** Written work must be double-spaced. Five points per day late will be subtracted for missing deadline.

- Getting to Know You blurb (Deadline: Sept. 2)
- Read Janet Malcolm articles and post comments on class blog (Deadline: Sept. 8)
- Vox Pops 1 & 2 – interviews with people on the street (Deadline 1: Sept. 15; Deadline 2: end of class, Nov. 8)
- Q&A – edited question-and-answer article (Deadline: Sept. 22)
- Twitter chat story – a short story based on an in-class Twitter chat (Deadline: Oct. 6)
- “As Told To” in video/audio – a video or audio interview edited to share a subject’s story solely in his/her words (Deadline: Oct. 14)
- Twitter interview – short interview done via tweets (Deadline: Oct. 27)
- “As Told To” in text – a longer interview for print that presents a subject’s story in his/her words (Proposal deadline: Nov. 3; Story deadline: Nov. 24)
- On the Spot – an in-person interview in front of the class with a guest speaker (Deadline: Each student will be assigned a specific date for this throughout the semester.)

GRADING

Your course grade will be based on the following:

Getting to You Know blurb	1 point
Janet Malcolm blog post	3 points
Vox Pops 1	8 points



Q&A	15 points
Twitter chat story	9 points
“As Told To” video/audio	12 points
Twitter interview	10 points
Vox Pops 2	7 points
“As Told To” text	20 points
On the Spot	5 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 AUG. 27)

OVERVIEW

- What to expect this semester and a discussion of the different kinds of interviews and how their goals differ. We'll watch the famous (infamous) interview by Martin Bashir with Princess Di and analyze what worked and what didn't.
- In-class exercise: Students will interview each other and write up a Getting to Know You blurb.

Assignment due Sept. 2: Getting to Know You blurbs

Assignment due Sept. 8: Read Janet Malcolm articles and share your insights on class blog.

NO CLASS SEPT. 1 FOR LABOR DAY

WEEK 2 (MONDAY, SEPT. 8)

VOX POPS and VIDEO INTERVIEWS

- How do you get good quotes when you walk up to a total stranger for a "man-on-the-street" or "Vox Pops" interview? We'll discuss strategies and then students will go out and conduct "Vox Pops" interviews on an assigned topic.
- In the second half of class, Nancy Cordes of CBS will share pointers on the challenges of getting good video interviews.
- "On the Spot" student interview with Nancy Cordes

Assignment due Sept. 15: Vox Pops 1. Read assigned articles.

WEEK 3 (MONDAY, SEPT. 15)

PREP AND GET LAB

- Researching and preparing for the interview from nuts to bolts. Strategies for doing an edited question-and-answer article. Students in groups will take a topic and figure out who they need to interview, how they will find those sources and how they will convince them to cooperate.
- Going Audio: Strategies for making interviews succeed in audio with Amita Parashar of NPR and freelance audio journalist Jocelyn Frank
- "On the Spot" student interviews with guest speakers

Assignment due Sept. 22: Q&A



WEEK 4 (MONDAY, SEPT. 22)

CHALLENGES

- What does it take to get a successful interview through the DOD or State? Sandy Dean, a public affairs officer at Walter Reed National Military Medical Center and former State Department press officer, will share her strategies for how to get what you need when dealing with these massive bureaucracies.
- “On the Spot” student interview with Sandy Dean
- In class, we will dissect a story to reconstruct what questions were asked.
- Feedback on Vox Pops 1

Assignment for Sept. 29: Read handouts and prepare for the in-class Twitter chat.

WEEK 5 (MONDAY, SEPT. 29)

TWEET TALK

- New tools expand our ability to reach people and get quotes. Kimberly Leonard of U.S. News will show us how she uses Twitter to get great content. After her presentation, the class will participate in a Twitter chat.
- “On the Spot” student interview with Kimberly Leonard
- Feedback on Q&As

Assignment due Oct. 6: Twitter chat article

WEEK 6 (MONDAY, OCT. 6)

BAN JARGON

- The nation’s capital is ground zero for jargon. We’ve got bureaucrats, elected officials, military, academics and experts of all stripes who live in a bubble of jargon and acronyms. Angela Greiling Keane, Bloomberg White House correspondent, will share strategies for getting sources to use everyday language.
- “On the Spot” interview with Angela Greiling Keane
- In-class exercise: Role playing to get the real story behind a press release

Assignment due Oct. 14: As Told To in audio/video

Assignment due Oct. 20: Read assigned material.

NO CLASS OCT. 13 FOR COLUMBUS DAY (MAKEUP CLASS NOV. 8)

WEEK 7 (MONDAY, OCT. 20)

SURVIVORS

- How do you interview survivors of trauma? Asking someone to recount the trauma may in itself cause additional distress. Kate Hull 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” student interview with Kate Hull
- Feedback on As Told To in audio/video

Assignment due Oct. 27: Twitter interview

WEEK 8 (MONDAY, OCT. 27)

ON AIR

- What does it take to produce the news making interviews of a Larry King or Candy Crowley? We’ll hear from veteran CNN producer Carrie Stevenson.
- We’ll also take a look at famous “walk offs” and a really bad interview.
- “On the Spot” student interviews with Carrie Stevenson and our other guest

Assignment for Nov. 3: Proposal for As Told To in text

WEEK 9 (MONDAY, NOV. 3)

GETTING BEYOND TALKING POINTS

- Ryan Lizza of the New Yorker will share how he gets beyond the programmed responses of politicians to get stories that go deeper.
- “On the Spot” student interview with Ryan Lizza
- View clips and discussion of Frost/Nixon interview
- Feedback on Twitter interview stories

Assignment for Nov. 17: Work on As Told To stories. Post progress on class blog.

WEEK 10 and 11 (SATURDAY NOV. 8)

NEWSLAB (C229)

- This double class (8:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.) will be a reporting lab session. Working in teams, you will gather background and go out and get man-on-the-street interviews to flesh out your story and then return and produce the article. The story is due by the end of class.
- “On the Spot” student interviews with two guests

In-class assignment: Vox Pops 2

WEEK 12 (MONDAY, NOV. 17)

THE OTHER SIDE

- Bethany Lesser, communications director for Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand (D-N.Y.), will share her point of view about interviews from the other side of the microphone. What has she observed about the interview skills of reporters and what are her tips for getting a good interview with someone like her boss?
- “On the Spot” student interviews with Bethany Lesser and our other guest



Assignment due Nov. 24: As Told To in text. Read assigned articles.

WEEK 13 (MONDAY, NOV. 24)

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. Vulture and Washington Post pop culture writer Jen Chaney will share tales from covering Hollywood on the Potomac.
- "On the Spot" student interviews with Jen Chaney

Assignment due Dec. 1: Read each other's As Told To text stories and prepare feedback.

WEEK 14 (MONDAY, DEC. 1)

FEEDBACK

- Workshop discussion of your As Told To stories
- Final round of "On the Spot" interviews with guest speakers

NO CLASS DEC. 8 FOR STUDY DAYS

WEEK 15 (MONDAY, DEC. 15)

AND THAT'S A WRAP

- 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.