



Sept 3, 2020

INSTRUCTOR: Dr. Patricia (Trish) Elliott pelliott@firstnationsuniversity.ca

Office hours: Open drop-in help sessions on Thursdays 1:00 - 2:00 pm in the LifeSize Room. One-on-one meetings by appointment. An individual LifeSize room is provided.

DESCRIPTION

INDG 390 AQ is an introduction to the techniques and processes of investigative journalism, with a focus on research and storytelling collaborations. The course is built around hands-on learning and multimedia storytelling. In the first half of the course we'll get to know some basics and then practice telling community stories, as a written story and in a class podcast, with several opportunities to publish with media partners. In the second half students will do deeper research into a topic and try out some of the basic techniques of investigative research, as part of a national collaboration. The course prepares students for INDG 493 AQ, an opportunity to further develop these skills into advanced data journalism and investigative research, by taking part in a major national investigation.

PARTNERS and PLATFORMS

- [Missinipi Broadcasting Corp. \(MBC Radio\)](#)
- [INCA News: Endurance: Indigenous Voices in COVID Times](#)
- [Project Pandemic](#)
- [Maclean's Magazine - They Were Loved](#)
- [Institute for Investigative Journalism](#)

REQUIREMENTS

Note: This course will not require you to buy textbooks. Instead, students are asked to invest in suitable communications technology for effective learning and conducting interviews.

- Home computer/laptop with webcam (contact me if you need assistance)
- Audacity audio editor (free download)
- Recording capability (free phone apps and other options will be discussed in the first class)
- Headset recommended (available for \$20-\$40)
- There is no required textbook. A variety of free-to-use online resources will be provided by the instructor.

APPROACH

Synchronous and asynchronous learning. 'Laddered' project-based assignments (no exams).

TYPICAL FRIDAY SCHEDULE

1:30 - Check in and opening class
 discussion 1:45 - Daily lesson or guest speaker
 2:30 - Work on individual or team assignments (professor available in Lifesize room for help)
 3:45 - "Take-aways" session: group discussion of your key discoveries, problems and ideas coming out of the day's session
 4:15 - Class ends

DURING WEEK: Work on assignments, consult one-on-one with the instructor as needed.

All students are expected to show up and participate every Friday afternoon. Although material is posted online, this is not a purely self-study course - we will work and learn together on a weekly basis. This is an approach students really grow to appreciate and enjoy! It helps you keep on top of your assignments and to make friends. It helps the instructor get to know you and ensure you are on a path to successful learning.

STUDENT RESOURCES

Remote Learning: Due to this unprecedented time, please make sure to visit Remote Learning on the COVID-19 site at <https://www.uregina.ca/term-updates/>

Accommodations: If you require academic accommodation for your course, make sure to contact the Centre for Student Accessibility as soon as possible at accessibility@uregina.ca or call 306-585-4631

For help with UR Courses visit <https://www.uregina.ca/cce/flexible-learning/live-online-support/index.html>

Please fill out the questionnaire that will be posted on UR Courses so that your instructor is aware of your learning environment and circumstances.

COMMUNICATION

The instructor will communicate with the class by email to your university email addresses via UR Courses. Emails contain important information about assignments, scholarships and other opportunities. Promptly open, read and acknowledge receipt. If you do not open emails and/or have them forwarded to your preferred email accounts, you will most certainly miss valuable information, for which the instructor bears no responsibility.

TENTATIVE SCHEDULE

Friday classes will be organized around the following learning modules and will move at the pace required to successfully complete the course assignments. Lesson schedule subject to change.

UNIT 1 – FINDING OUR FEET

WEEK 1 - Sept 4

Lesson

- Thematic overview: Telling local stories about the global pandemic
- Basics of collaborative research and storytelling
- Ethical and professional approaches
- Introduction to projects

Assignment 1 (Online Footprint): Request your personal data from Facebook, Google, Apple, etc., for use later in the course (instructions will be provided)

Assignment Learning Goal: To understand how your information is stored and tracked by corporations, and your rights as a consumer

In class - Watch NAJA Roundtable video, discuss

WEEK 2 - Sept. 11

Lesson: Contacting people and preparing for an interview.

Guest speaker: Maclean's magazine special sections editor

Assignment 2: Classmate interview (done in class)

- Explain yourself and your intent, and request permission for an interview (in-class role play)
- Record an interview with a classmate about their pandemic experiences
- Write and share a story focus statement with your classmates

Learning Goals:

- Practice ethical interviewing approaches and agreements
- Learn to prepare focused questions
- Learn to record and play back an interview
- Learn to share a recording in a drive folder
- Learn to create a focus statement from an interview

Submit your focus statement and best clip to the instructor by Sept. 18 latest.

UNIT 2: Community-Focused Journalism Collaborations

WEEK 3 - Sept 18

Lesson: Solutions Journalism - What is it?

Assignment 3: Hallway of Heroes

In partnership with the Institute for Investigative Journalism at Concordia

Find someone in your community who has helped others during the pandemic and agrees to be interviewed for publication

- Conduct an interview
- Obtain a photograph of the person
- Enter information about the person in Project Pandemic's Hallway of Heroes

website Learning Goals:

- Learn how to approach people
- Learn how to introduce yourself and explain your intentions
- Practice preparing questions and conducting an interview
- Publish your findings online

WEEK 4 - Sept. 25

Lesson: Basics of news reporting

Assignment 4 - Choice of one of two assignments

OPTION A - News Story

- Interview two people who know or have been helped by your 'hero.'
- Write a focus statement
- Write a 500-600 word news story about the person, using your interviews and the photo
- Post the story on the [INCA News / Endurance website](#)

Learning Goals:

- Learn about how a news story is structured and styled
- Practice writing and publishing an online story from interviews

OPTION B - They Were Loved

In partnership with Maclean's magazine

Interview a family member of two people who passed away from Covid, who would like to see their loved ones honoured in Maclean's [They Were Loved](#) project (2 different people honoured).

- Write two short character sketches of 200-300 words each, for publishing in Maclean's online and print editions

Learning Goals:

- To gain experience finding and approaching strangers to share their memories for publication.
- To practice writing in a creative, expressive manner that captures someone's essence
- To work with editors at a national magazine
- To write stories with a Maclean's byline for your professional portfolio

WEEK 5 - Oct. 2 **Podcasting**

Lesson: How to write and edit for broadcast.

Assignment 5: Class Podcast

In partnership with Missinipi Broadcasting

Create a podcast for Missinipi Broadcasting Corp. from our interviews. Students will be assigned roles as hosts, producers, writers and editors.

UNIT 3: Investigative Journalism Collaborations ***Online surveillance and manipulation***

WEEK 6 - Oct. 9 **Disinformation, misinformation and division in the media landscape**

Lesson: A look at how the online world influences behaviour. Tackling difficult subjects – trauma and triggers. Protecting yourself and your subjects.

Assignment 6: Social Media Scan - Discussion and Investigative Focus Statement

Search news reports and spend time looking through Facebook, Twitter, TicToc and other social media feeds that you and your friends use. How do you determine what's true and what's not? Do you see evidence of mis/disinformation? What types of mis/disinformation do you hear about where you live (eg friends, family, neighbours, classmates, etc.)? What are some typical social media groups and threads that help spread these messages, and how? Are there groups with extreme views active in your local area? What do they want? Can you find local news stories about them?

Create and share a focus statement based on something you found that would make an important local investigative story related to online-fueled extremism.

A look ahead to the final assignment (due Dec. 4):

OPTION A – NEWS STORY

Investigation

- Approx. 800-word news story for publication and focus statement
- Interview a person or people who have experienced racist or hateful actions, and/or someone involved in conspiracy theories or extreme political views
- Take steps to verify any incidents described (eg. speak to a witness, find a news account, court document or police report, etc)
- Interview an expert who can provide additional perspective/context (eg. social scientist, Elder, community leader)
- Conduct an accountability interview with someone who should respond to the incident (eg. police, community leaders, politicians, company owners)
- Seek data relevant to the story
- Find out if there are any counteractions (eg. anti-hate campaigns, counter-protests, etc.)
- Write a focus statement and pitch it to the national team

OPTION B – RESEARCH PAPER

- Approx. 1200-1400 word
- Study a group that spreads messages of anger/mistrust/misinformation online (eg. anti-maskers, yellow vests, western separatists, conspiracy theorists, etc).
- What are their origins, what motivates them, who is their audience, what other movements are they and their members linked with?
- Make a focus statement and pitch to the national team (one minute or less)

Learning Goals:

- To plan out an investigation
- To learn how to prepare and deliver a story pitch

WEEK 7 - Oct. 16

Planning and Designing a Standardized Survey

Lesson: How investigations use surveys for their research.

Class Activity: Based on your feelings about Assignment 1, what questions would you want to ask people?

Survey assignment: Field test your survey with 2-3 respondents.

WEEK 8 - Oct. 23

Data Journalism

Lesson: Data basics

Learning Goals:

- Understand the importance of numbers in investigative research
- Learn how to create a spreadsheet and conduct basic data analysis to support a story

WEEK 9 – Oct 30

Lesson - Searching legal cases

Investigative Focus Statement – present to classmates and discuss.

WEEK 10 - Nov 6

Lesson - Accountability Interviews

Weekly check-in and progress reports.

Fall Reading Week - Nov 13**WEEK 11 - Nov 20**

Unit 2 review and Unit 3 assignment planning.

Nov. 27 Lesson –

Government documents and Freedom of Information requests

Weekly check-in and progress reports

WEEK 13 – Dec. 4

Wrap-up and story pitches

ASSIGNMENT DUE DATES

Note that Unit 2 and Unit 3 assignments are designed to be interrelated parts of a whole project. Each assignment is like a ladder's rung toward a final product.

Assignment	Description	Value	Date
1	Online Footprint	5	Sept 11
2	Classmate Interview & Focus Statement	5	Sept 18
3	Hallway of Heroes	10	Oct 2
4	They Were Loved / Endurance	20	Oct 9
5a	Class Podcast - Individual Segment	10	Oct 16
5b	Class Podcast - Group Contribution	10	Oct 23
6	Investigative Focus Statement	5	Oct 30
7	Survey design and field test	5	Nov 6
8	Investigative Story / Paper	20	Dec 4
9	Class Participation	10	Ongoing
TOTAL		100	

Marking rubrics will be provided on UR Courses and in emails. Deadlines must be respected. If you anticipate difficulty meeting a deadline, please arrange a meeting with the instructor right away. Weekly attendance is mandatory, except by permission of the instructor for illness and special circumstances. A combined total grade of less than 50% at the end of the semester will result in an NP (failure) for the class.