

UNIVERSITY OF REGINA
SCHOOL OF JOURNALISM

Journalism 303 Research Techniques Fall 2013

Time: Tuesdays 1:30 – 4:15

Location: Large Lab

Instructor: Patricia Elliott

Office: AH 105.18 Ph 585-4449

Email: patricia.elliott@uregina.ca

Office Hours: Wednesdays 1:00-3:30 p.m.

Learning objectives:

- To become familiar with basic research sources and aids.
- To develop good habits and techniques that promote accuracy in journalism.
- To examine the role and placement of research in narrative structure.
- To learn how to convey complex information to the general public.
- To explore ethical considerations related to research.
- To explore the civic role of journalistic research.

Course overview:

The course is designed to give students practical and theoretical experience in journalistic research methods, including interviewing, observation, data collection, archival research and retrieval of public documents. Major projects will be centred around a university-community collaboration with the Willow Bunch Museum. Working across three courses – Research Techniques, Interviewing and Intro to Print – students will collaborate with museum volunteers to explore and present Willow Bunch’s past and present. Additional classroom learning will acquaint students with common research tools used by journalists, such as public accounts, corporate registries, freedom of information legislation, etc. Assigned readings and quizzes will compliment classroom and experiential learning.

Required Text:

Cribb, Robert, et.al. Digging Deeper: A Canadian Reporter’s Research Guide. Don Mills: Oxford, 2006.

Tentative schedule:

Week 1 Sept 10 – Context

Putting the news in context. The well-researched story. History research tools.

Guest speaker: David McLelland, author of *Our Towns*

Text book – Chapter 3: Building a Foundation.

Week 2 Sept 17 – Accuracy

The fact-checking process. Population, economic and agricultural data (Stats Can, Bank of Canada and Sask Agriculture). Setting up spreadsheets.

Site visit: Saskatchewan Archives

Text book – Chapter 6: Digging Into the Past

Week 3 Sept 24 – Data

Crunching the numbers. Computer assisted reporting (CAR) and data illustration.

Guest lab session: Keith Fortowsky, U of R Office of Resource Planning

Text book – Chapter 11: Computer-Assisted Reporting

Week 4 Oct 1 – People

Discussion: What do we know about Willow Bunch? Observation and interviews. The relationship between memory and fact. Using your notebooks and recorders. Finding experts. Academic and scientific journals. **Research quiz.**

Guest speaker: Jim Daschuk, author of *Clearing the Plains: Disease, Politics of Starvation and the Loss of Aboriginal Life*.

Text book – Chapter 7: Researching and Finding People; Chapter 8: Getting People to Talk

Week 5 Oct 8 – Being there Willow Bunch field trip**Week 6 Oct 15 – Research and the writing process**

Willow Bunch debrief. Writing research. Wikipedia: origins, uses and abuses. More about fact-checking. Set up Wikipedia accounts. Context in action: TV newsroom exercise.

Text book – Chapter 12: Organizing, Writing and Libel-proofing Your Story.

Week 7 Oct 22 – Public records

Property and corporate registries. Legal cases and hansard. Federal archives.

Textbook – Chapter 4: Using Public Records

Week 8 Oct 29 Accountability journalism

Accountability journalism: Public accounts, freedom of information, annual reports

Text book – Chapter 10: Getting Behind Closed Doors

Week 9 Nov 5 – Journalistic accountability

Checks and balances, getting the story right.

Research quiz**Week 10 Nov 12**

Research treasure hunt! In-class wiki work. Wiki entry due.

Week 11 Nov 19

Class presentations

Week 12 Nov 26

Class presentations

Week 13 Dec 3

Wrap up. Fact checker's pack due

Assignments

Research Quizzes	Oct. 1 & Nov. 5	Text book and research tools explored in class	20 points
Wikipedia entry	Nov. 12	500-800 words on assigned topic	30
Fact-checker's pack	Dec. 3	Annotated Intro to Print story with sources	30
Presentation	Nov 19 or 26	'My Willow Bunch'	5
Participation	Ongoing		15
Total			100

Marking Grid

Wikipedia entry

Writing is clear and precise	10 points
Reputable references are included	10
Research has depth, facts are solid, context is provided	10

Fact-checker's Pack

Required elements are present: Annotated copy, contact list, copies of sources, transcripts with time markers	10 points
Depth, quality and originality of research	10
Every fact is checked, material is well organized	10

Presentation

Informative and clear presentation	2.5 points
Displays excellent grasp of the topic	2.5

Wikipedia Willow Bunch entry: You will be assigned to write and publish on one of the following topics:

Geography

Natural history
 Climate and ecology
 Population characteristics
 Agriculture
 Industry, services and transportation
 Culture and tourism
 Architecture/Built environment

History

Pre-history
 First People (2)
 European contact and early settlement (to 1880)
 Sitting Bull and Willow Bunch
 Métis in Willow Bunch (2)
 Political history
 1880-1910
 1911-1930
 1931-1945
 1946-1960
 1961-1970
 1971-1990
 1991 to present

People

The Willow Bunch Giant (2)
 Mayors/Reeves and Notable People
 Women of Willow Bunch

Deadlines must be met.

Late assignments will be subject to the following penalties:

- Deduction of 5% of total mark per day late
- No grade if late by more than one calendar week.

Please contact your instructor immediately if you anticipate missing a deadline.

Students are required to attend all classes and demonstrate during discussions that you have read and considered assigned readings. Plagiarism or cheating, which includes the manufacturing of sources or quotes, will be dealt with harshly by the University.