

JRN 221 SAMPLE

JRN 221 Reporting 1
3 hours, 3 credits.

Fundamentals of news reporting and writing in a multimedia context. News-gathering and storytelling styles and approaches to writing for newspapers, magazines, radio, television, and the Internet. Emphasis on grammar, syntax, punctuation, and spelling.
Pre/co requisites: None

Instructor

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Office hours Monday 1 p.m. to 3 p.m. and by appointment.

Learning Objectives

The students will gain an understanding of journalism's role in society and a skill-base for reporting and writing the news for all media. They will learn:

The basics of news writing and reporting for newspapers, magazines, broadcast, TV, online news sites and public relations.

How to read newspapers and online news sites to follow significant news stories.

Standard written use of the English language

How to strive for accuracy.

Work under deadline pressure.

Expected Learning Outcomes (ELO)

Students will be competent in researching and writing reportage, such as news and features that conform to genre conventions.

About the Course

What is this class about?

In JRN 221 you'll study the fundamental values and purpose of the free press and its role in democracy. You'll learn the basics of news reporting and will practice writing with clarity, brevity and accuracy. In this class you will be studying what Journalism is all about and its role in society while working as a reporter, covering issues of public policy relevant to Bronx and NYC neighborhoods. You will write articles and conduct radio style interviews with candidates running for office, attend public meetings and hearings and digest policy reports. These interviews will be turned into a radio show and podcast that will air on BronxJournalRadio, the streaming station of our JMS department. You'll practice crafting social media publicity to promote the articles and interviews. In this class you'll produce journalism in each form: print, audio, video and promote it via twitter and IG according to best practices in the profession.

Through writing assignments, readings, fieldwork, current events discussions and guest speakers the course is designed to provide training in a range of essential journalism skills.

Students are expected to read the news from legitimate, professional journalism operations every day and to participate actively and frequently in class discussions.

Attendance/participation counts for 10% of the course grade. If you are not in class, you are not earning points towards that 10%. If you are not in class you are also denying yourself the considerable learning that emerges between students during discussion and dialogue. I work hard to establish a learning environment that is not simply top down (the instructor talking), but rather horizontal: the students learning by doing, discussing and articulating. If you are not in class you miss that. Making up a class is not as simple as reading lecture notes or reading an assignment. If you are not in class you have a weaker foundation for the work you'll be asked to do. Also: Instructors are required to record attendance to certify eligibility for financial aid. Please see the "Attendance Policy and Procedures" section of the Lehman Student Handbook.

Assignments:

Assignment #1: Reading responses and discussion guide *Elements of Journalism*, Kovach and Rosensteel, 4th edition. **Chapter 1 What is Journalism?**

Students will file carefully written two-page reading responses and discussion prompts summarizing the themes in the chapter and specifically relating them to contemporary examples in the news. The reading response must explore the relationship between journalism and democracy, journalism and either the enlightenment or the progressive era. It should discuss the what role reliable information plays in civil society and should connect the ideas in the chapter to specific current examples. The paper needs to include three questions, drawn from the text, to prompt discussion among classmates.

Assignment #2: Local Government: Who Reps Me?

Students will use <https://www.mygovnyc.org/> to determine which local, state and federal elected officials represent the neighborhood where they live. Students will produce a memo identifying each of these elected officials, including a brief bio, party affiliation, information on how long they have served in elected office, what committees they serve on and what legislation they have sponsored and supported. Students will identify immediately upcoming hearings, meetings, forums in which legislation or other matters of public policy will be discussed.

Assignment #3: Local/Government: Public meeting memo.

Attend in-person a public meeting, hearing or community forum identified in assignment #2. Take notes on what is discussed at the forum, selecting one item, piece of legislation or agenda item to focus on – based on its relevance, immediacy, importance to community or other **news values** discussed in class. Gather copies of the agenda, legislation, transcripts of the meeting and any other sources of information. Ask questions of stakeholders present at the forum, both elected and unelected and members of the public in attendance until you understand what the issue is about and can articulate multiple positions on the matter and understand their importance. Speak to at least three people. Take notes on everything you see and hear. Get a copy of the agenda or legislation. Get the names, titles and contact info for everyone you spoke to and everyone who spoke on the matter in an official capacity. Write a reporter's memo recapping what happened, assessing what was at stake and identifying positions from a variety of sources and points of view. If everyone present was on the same side of the issue, take time to think through why someone might hold an opposite or

different position on the matter. Identify what group or groups of people will be impacted by the item in question. How will it impact them? Write out the questions you asked of people present and the answers each person gave, including the person's name and contact info. Assess which sources of information are most relevant and reliable. This reporting memo will form the basis of your first news article. Five pages.

Assignment #4 Local/Government news article

Using the model discussed in class, write a news article about the public forum or hearing you researched in Assignment #3. What is the story you are trying to tell? What NEWS does it communicate? Can you answer the who, what, where, why, when, how of the story? Where do the voices of the people you interviewed fit into the story, in the form of quotes? The draft should include two authoritative sources, documents or statistics that provide additional context or complexity for you to interpret what occurred at the forum and among additional information. The draft article needs to include the perspective of a variety of sources including the point of view of people from the group or groups you identified in assignment #3 as impacted by the item or policy. Write an article that mimics the tone and style of any of the articles you've been reading every day in the New York Times (third person, succinct sentences, active voice, appropriately attributed quotes, careful copyediting).

Assignment #5: Reading responses and discussion guide Chapter 2 What is Journalism For? *Elements of Journalism*.

Students will file carefully written two-page reading responses and discussion prompt pieces summarizing the themes in the chapter and specifically relating them to contemporary examples in the news. The reading response must explore the social role and responsibilities of the journalist. What are some ethical guidelines for journalists' behavior? What are some ways in which journalism contributes to building or breaking civil society or community? Identify three specific issues of importance in your community and articulate ways the practice of journalism could be used to address them. The response should connect the ideas in the chapter to specific current examples. The paper needs to include three questions, drawn from the text, to prompt discussion among classmates.

Assignment #6 Reading responses and discussion guide Chapter 6 Monitoring Power *Elements of Journalism*.

Students will file carefully written two-page reading responses and discussion prompt pieces arguing the themes in the chapter and specifically relating them to contemporary examples in the news. What is the journalist's relationship to government? What are some ways journalism can hold government accountable? Present evidence from the chapter for your arguments. Historically, what constraints has U.S. government attempted to put on the free exercise of journalism? How has that changed in recent years?

Assignment #7 Reading response and participation Chapter 7 Journalism as a Public Forum. *Elements of Journalism*.

Students will file carefully written two-page reading responses and discussion prompt pieces summarizing the themes in the chapter and specifically relating them to contemporary examples in the news. The reading response must explore the ways in which journalism functions as public forum: a social space for debate, discussion and interaction between and among people of varied position and experience. Is journalism necessary to foster and preserve civic life? Provide two recent (past decade) examples of ways journalism institutions

serve as a platform for a wider society to consider multiple experiences, values and choices of individuals and groups. As part of studying this chapter, students must participate in the shared class project producing a live public forum with local news makers, elected officials or candidates for office. Contribute background research, questions for panelists, participate in planning, promotion and production of event, in collaboration with the Lehman College Multimedia Center or Bronxnet.

Assignment #8 Data to People

Using the U.S. Census data in the Furman Center State of New York City Housing and Neighborhoods, identify the community district where you live or a different NYC district. Study the statistics in the Community District profile. Select three statistics that are relevant to quality of life: for example, median rent, available park space, income level. Compare these to the NYC-wide average. Develop a graphic explaining these differences that can be easily shared on social media. Interview at least five people in this neighborhood about one or more of the social indicators identified in the statistical data. Ask people what they would like to preserve or change about their neighborhood. How does the data you've identified affect their life? (For example: Are they paying more than 30% of their income in rent? Do they have to travel long distances to work?) How does that affect their lives? What public policy suggestions are there for this issue?

Assignment #9 Public policy summary - audio.

Select a white paper or report from a public policy research entity or government department, such as the Center for NYC Affairs, Pew Research Center, The Center for an Urban Future or the NYC Department of City Planning relevant to the issues explored in Assignments #7 and #8 or on a different topic. Read the executive summary and the study. Examine the research methodology the authors used so that you can assess the quality and strength of the study's analysis. Study any data visualizations. Contact the study's authors and people impacted by the topic to conduct interviews to gather information from a variety of points of view. Produce a three-minute piece of audio journalism summarizing and interpreting the key findings in the study and including perspectives from the study's author and someone effected by the topic, using audio journalism conventions practiced in class.

Assignment #10 Journalism Under Threat

Prepare and present a carefully researched and polished five-minute oral presentation on a journalist who is identified as facing government repression or violent threats from other entities because of their work. You will read and watch many pieces of the journalist's work. You'll become familiar with their social media. You'll know their career trajectory. You'll review the issues, social movements, political parties and programs, business interests, conflicts or controversies this journalist has covered. Evaluate the arguments that they are at risk. Are you convinced that the journalist is in danger? Why and how? Explain succinctly but thoroughly why their work involves risk, what dangers they face and why they have come to the attention of free press and human rights organizations.

To find such journalists and begin to learn about their work, look at these organizations: [Committee to Protect Journalists – Defending Journalists Worldwide.Latest press freedom news from around the globe.](#) [Committee to Protect Journalists](#)

[International Consortium of Investigative Journalists - ICIJ](#)We work together with investigative journalists around the globe to investigate the most important stories in the world.[ICIJ](#)

[Writers at Risk](#)[PEN America supports writers at risk worldwide, defending jailed and threatened writers and public intellectuals from persecution.](#)[PEN America](#)

<https://www.hrw.org/topic/free-speech/press-freedom>

How do you calculate grades?

Grading Policy

Written assignments are graded according to a rubric that includes grammar, punctuation, syntax, clarity; cohesion of idea, organization; style and grace of writing; conformity to standard journalistic form; heft of reporting/research.

10% Attendance/in class participation

20% Reading responses, in-class writing drills

10% Who Reps Me? Memo

10% Public meeting memo

10% News article on public meeting

10% Engagement and contribution to preparation and production of public forum:

10% Data and People

10% Public policy summary and audio piece

10% Oral presentation journalists under threat.

Course outline:

Weeks 1-4 Class introductions and discussion of the purpose of journalism and its relationship to democracy. Structure and elements of news articles. Distinguishing journalism from advertising, polemic, propaganda. Reading local political journalism. Civics. Structure of local government. Policy and political issues.

Weeks 5-10 Dissecting structure of news articles. Finding reliable sources and cultivating multiple perspectives, distance and objective methods of reporting. Practicing a news article. Reporting on public meeting, accessing and using quality data. Social media promotion of our work. Building an audience.

Weeks 11-16 Selecting a topic and guests for public forum. Research and writing questions for forum. Putting together production of public forum. Listening to audio journalism, dissecting structure of audio journalism, learning audio hardware skills. Collecting sound. Learning from other reporters. Journalism in a global context.

Format Guidelines for Writing Assignments

All stories and homework assignments must be typed and double-spaced in Times New Roman, 12 pt and filed in Brightspace.

Make sure that you have paginated your story (that is, put in page numbers on the upper right-hand corner of the page).

Your work must be saved and labeled according to the instructions in the Brightspace assignments folder. **It is always Lastname.assignment name.**

The labeling rules in my class come from my 30 + years of working in the news industry.

Slugs (the labels) are of utmost importance in busy newsrooms where editors and producers are handing hundreds of pieces of audio, video and text each day, making updates to breaking news and making sure they air or are posted in the correct place. Verify the spelling of every name, checking for consistency.

We will explore ideas together and critique each other's work in a spirit of congeniality. The course requires significant time for interviewing and reporting beyond class time. Students will learn the fundamentals of the reporters' craft and contribute to the first draft of history by reporting on New York City, covering Bronx people and neighborhoods as we navigate this alarming and trying moment in history. Students will learn to use multiple forms of information ranging from interviews to public documents and government hearings to construct a news story. This is a practical course.

How much work is there for this class?

Some weeks have more work than others, but you will be reading and writing something every week. Assignments will be posted in each week's course module, all in one place. Fuller details are included there than in the syllabus. Assignments must be uploaded to Brightspace and labeled properly (see below).

Why do you make so many assignments?

So that each one is only worth a comparatively small amount and if you do poorly on a couple it won't ruin your whole grade.

Can I hand in work late?

Assignments more than one week late will not be accepted. Those more than one day late will lose points for each day they are late. Budget your time and hand in work on time. Journalism is a deadline business.

I sometimes get overloaded and disorganized but I always pull it together at the end of the semester. Can I just make up work at the end?

Handing in late assignments at the end of the semester is not an option. Begging to redo the semester in the final week in a spasm of labor is not an option. Work is assigned sequentially for pedagogical reasons and needs to be completed at the proper period in the semester.

How will I know what's going on in the class?

Communication between class meetings will be conducted via announcements through Brightspace and your Lehman College email. It is the student's responsibility to be able to access Brightspace and their Lehman College email. Make your Lehman College email the go-to one on your phone and download the Brightspace app. **Failure to check your Lehman College email or to sign in to Brightspace will never be accepted as an excuse for not receiving a communication from the professor.**

Is there a book I have to buy?

Digital versions of all readings will be uploaded in the course materials section of Brightspace. However, the first few weeks we will be reading chapters that are 20 to 40 pages long. It stinks to do this on a screen and it is more difficult to understand, integrate and recall information we read on a screen. I highly recommend you purchase the required book as a physical book. It can be got for about \$10.

Elements of Journalism, authors Kovack and Rosenstein; ISBN 978.0804136785. Published by the American Press Institute, edition 4, 2021. (Available for about \$10 on Amazon. Check the edition).

Anything else I have to read?

The people of the State of New York bought you a copy of the *The New York Times*. You are required to collect your digital subscription. You need to read the newspaper every day, at least three articles. Every day. This will improve your writing and teach you more about journalism and the world than any class. Claim your free CUNY-provided subscription by going to nytimes.com/passes and entering your CUNY email and graduation year. There will be in class reading assignments and news quizzes.

Citylimits.org. Put this website in your favorites/bookmark and read it every day. Subscribe (free) to their newsletters.

Do I have to come to class?

Yes.

Students “Students in basic skills courses are required to attend classes. Students in all other courses are expected to attend classes regularly, and instructors are required to record attendance for grading and counseling purposes. Individual instructors, as well as departments or degree programs, may establish specific attendance requirements. Instructors have the right to weigh attendance and class participation in determining grades. It is the student's responsibility to ascertain the effect attendance may have on the grade in a course.” <http://lehman.smartcatalogiq.com/en/2017-2019/Undergraduate-Bulletin/Appendix/Board-of-Trustees-Rules-and-Regulations-on-Campus-Conduct/Attendance-and-Absences>

Accommodating Disabilities

Lehman College is committed to providing access to all programs and curricula to all students. Students with disabilities who may require any special considerations should register with the Office of Student Disability Services in order to submit official paperwork to instructor.

For more information, please contact the Office of Student Disability Services, Shuster Hall, Room 238, 718-960-8441. For detailed information on services and resources visit: <http://www.lehman.edu/student-disability-services/>, or email: disability.services@lehman.cuny.edu.

Academic Integrity and Plagiarism Policy

“Academic dishonesty is prohibited in The City University of New York. Penalties for academic dishonesty include academic sanctions, such as failing or otherwise reduced grades, and/or disciplinary sanctions, including suspension or expulsion.” All violations are reported to the Department and Lehman College’s Academic Integrity Officer.

For detailed information on definitions and examples of Academic Dishonesty, including

Cheating, Plagiarism, Obtaining Unfair Advantage and Falsification of Records and Documents, please refer to the student handbook or visit:
<http://lehman.smartcatalogiq.com/en/2017-2019/Undergraduate-Bulletin/Academic-Services-and-Policies/Academic-Integrity>

Technology and Brightspace Information (if applicable)

You are required to use **Brightspace** to access course materials and to post assignments to Safe Assign.

You are required to sign into your Lehman student **email** account for course messages—and check it! Brightspace will only allow me to send individual and mass messages to Lehman accounts. If there is an issue, this is the *only* account to which I can send and if I email the class something, the fact that you didn't know about an assignment or course change because you don't use your Lehman account will never be accepted for not knowing the information. For Information Technology: <http://www.lehman.edu/itr/>

Instructional Support Services (ISSP)

Lehman College's Instructional Support Services Program (ISSP) is home of the Academic Center for Excellence (ACE) and Science Learning Center (SLC). Both offer students an array of activities and services designed to support classroom learning. Open to students at any level, there are individual, small group, and/or workshop sessions designed to improve "proficiency in writing, reading, research, and particular academic subject areas. Computer-assisted writing/language tutorial programs are also available," as well as individual tutors, workshops and tutors.

To obtain more information about the ACE and the SLC, please visit Old Gym, Room 205 or <http://www.lehman.edu/academics/instructional-support-services/humanities-tutoring.php> or

call ACE at 718-960-8175, and SLC at 718-960-7707.

Regular tutoring hours for fall & spring semesters are:

M—T 10 a.m.-7 p.m., and Sat. 10 a.m.-2 p.m.

Library Tutors are also available in the Library. These tutors offer help with Library resources and computers.

Writing-Intensive Course Requirements

Lehman Students must complete four writing-intensive courses. In a WI Course, "students should be expected to write approximately 15-20 pages of proofread, typed work that is turned in to the instructor for grading." Various courses stipulate various requirements designed to meet this requisite over the course of the semester. WI courses focus on revision, short & long assignments, graded and ungraded writing, journals, etc, and each will have "a class-size limit of twenty-two. Under no circumstances will more than twenty-five students be admitted to any writing-intensive section."

For more information, see: <http://www.lehman.edu/academics/general-education/writing-faqs.php>

Student Handbook

Students are strongly encouraged to download and become familiar with the Student Handbook: <http://www.lehman.edu/campus-life/support-services.php>

Dates and assignments, along with readings subject to change or addition, depending on the pace of class discussion and comprehension. Changes will be accompanied by notification through Brightspace announcements and reflected in the due date in Brightspace assignments.