

JRN275: NEWS REPORTING

MOLLY YANITY, Ph.D.

SPRING 2024/CCE136

8-9:15 a.m., Tues/Thurs

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OFFICE HOURS IN CCE 267

Tuesdays & Thursdays, 9:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m. or by appointment

In-person office hours are drop-in. You may also schedule a meeting on Zoom at my [personal meeting room](#) (873 158 5327), but I do request you make a confirmed appointment to meet digitally.

COURSE OVERVIEW

This is your first dive into the world of hard news and investigative reporting. **Welcome!**

Thomas Jefferson famously said in 1787, “The basis of our governments being the opinion of the people, the very first object should be to keep that right; and were it left to me to decide whether we should have a government without newspapers or newspapers without a government, I should not hesitate a moment to prefer the latter. But I should mean that every man should receive those papers and be capable of reading them.”

The founding father meant that journalism is needed to hold power to account – *and* that citizens need to be educated to make sound decisions.

Time and again, the free press have lived up to that responsibility. From the turn of the 20th century when Ida Tarbell profiled John D. Rockefeller and Standard Oil and Upton Sinclair exposed the ills of the Chicago meatpacking plants to the uncovering of what really happened in Vietnam by David Halberstam and Seymour Hersh, journalism has shaped the course of global history.

And, of course, nothing altered the path of this nation the way Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein did when they doggedly pursued the story of the Watergate Hotel break-in that led to the resignation of Richard Nixon.

The image shows the front page of The New York Times from Friday, August 9, 1974. The main headline reads "NIXON RESIGNS HE URGES A TIME OF HEALING; FORD WILL TAKE OFFICE TODAY". Below the headline are two photographs: one of Gerald R. Ford and one of Richard Nixon. To the left of the Ford photo is a sub-headline: "'Sacrifice' Is Praised; Kissinger to Remain". To the right of the Nixon photo is another sub-headline: "The 37th President Is First to Quit Post". The page includes various bylines and short articles, such as "Speculation Rife on Vice President" and "Political Scene: Rise and Fall of Nixon Career No Deal Was Made".

Recently, we have seen a revival of investigative journalism as an unorthodox recent president tested the limits of the U.S. Constitution. But, we have also seen hyper-partisan entertainment masquerade as “journalism” and blur the lines and confuse the public.

In this course, however, we are going to put some of those lines into focus. You will learn the basics of *news reporting* – how to identify, access and use public documents, as well as how to prepare for, conduct and best use interviews to put together strong, important investigative stories.

PURPOSE

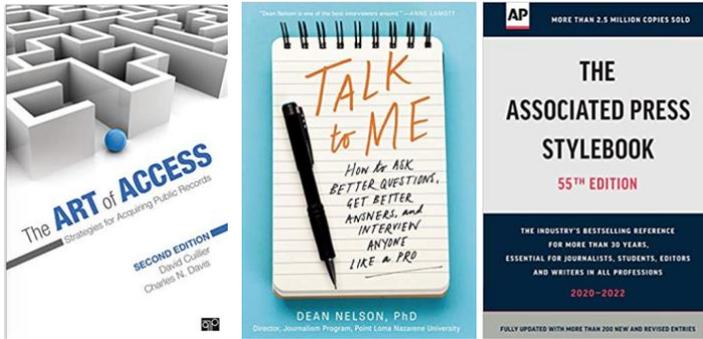
At the conclusion of this course, the assigned readings, class discussions and completed assignments should have helped you to be able to:

- Identify and pitch a fully developed investigative *story idea* that includes a source list and list of necessary documents,
- Determine appropriate sources for research and interview material,
- Use online databases and websites for gathering data,
- Conduct face-to-face interviews and ask good questions,
- Transcribe interviews efficiently,
- Use resources on the web, at the library and elsewhere for supportive data,
- Search and locate public records, including civil and legal documents,
- Write and file a Freedom of Information Act, or FOIA, request,
- Practice ethical research within the context of assignments,
- Understand contemporary issues related to privacy, and political implications associated with restricting public record availability.

REQUIRED COURSE MATERIALS

- Cuillier, David & Davis, Charles N. (2019). [The Art of Access: Strategies for Acquiring Public Records](#). ISBN: 1506380700
- Nelson, Dean (2019). [Talk to Me: How to Ask Better Questions, Get Better Answers and Interview Anyone Like a Pro](#). ISBN: 0062825208
- The Associated Press Stylebook (can be found online at www.apstylebook.com, or in paperback)
- An audio recorder is *needed* for interviewing. Accurate note-taking is not only expected, but it is essential to capture what is said, and transcriptions of interviews are required as part of certain assignments.
- Other readings are posted on the course website.

TEXTBOOKS



GRADING

Your grade will be comprised of the total score of the following:

Exam 1	15 percent
Exam 2	15 percent
Movie essay	10 percent
Assignment 1	15 percent
Story pitch draft	5 percent
Story pitch & interview	20 percent
Attendance	10 percent
Homework	10 percent

Scale:

A	93-100	C+	79-77
A-	90-92	C	73-76
B+	87-89	C-	70-72
B	83-86	D	60-69
B-	82-20	F	0-59

Rubrics for all assignments are included on individual assignment sheets, which will include late assignment policies and may vary by assignment.

COURSE POLICIES

ATTENDANCE/ENGAGEMENT

Participation and engagement: This class is a mix of lecture, discussion, in-class work, readings and screenings. Some of the material discussed in class is not in the readings. Class lectures, discussions and screenings will add complexity and keep the course up-to-date with current trends and issues in the media industries that pop up throughout the semester. Thus, attendance is mandatory and participation is extremely important.

I see the classroom as your “workplace” while you are in college. Thus, you should treat both your on-campus the same way you would treat work attendance. People who have 100 percent attendance will receive 110 points. You may miss **TWO class meetings** without penalty – consider these your “sick/personal days” – for 100 points. Each

additional absence is a 10-point deduction from the grade, unless you have a documented excuse for missing those additional class meetings (ex: serious illness, family emergency, etc.).

Other engagement notes:

- You need to come to class *prepared*. This means you have done the reading, done the homework, prepared questions and discussion points.
- You will regularly present your ideas, your opinions. You may be challenged. Respect and civility are expected -- so are your voice and uniqueness.
- While in class, I expect you to be on task. If you are working on other materials, devices or engaged in activities beyond the course, you may be asked to leave the room, which will count as an absence.
- **IF YOU MISS CLASS, it is YOUR responsibility to make up work. Do not ask the professor what you missed; ask a classmate, consult the schedule, etc.**

CONTACTING PROFESSOR YANITY

Reach me via email (Molly.Yanity@qu.edu) or at my office phone, 203-582-5031.

I'll respond within 24 hours on weekdays, although I'll usually get back to you sooner. I routinely send out emails and may post announcements via Blackboard, so be sure to check your QU email frequently.

Academic Integrity

Familiarize yourself with Quinnipiac University's [policy on Academic Integrity](#).

In addition to the university's policy, please understand that made-up sources, copying from previous or others' papers, cheating on an exam, helping someone else cheat on an exam, plagiarizing (or taking published work, quotations, etc. and passing it off on your own) or falsifying information will result automatically in a ZERO for the assignment. More than one infraction will result in an F for the course, as well as a referral to the university's Academic Integrity Board with two strikes.

Artificial Intelligence/ChatGPT. Your work is expected to be original and produced by you – which is the standard in the news industry. That said, we will discuss how AI may serve as a tool for your use, given that the product is fully original, vetted, fact-checked and accurate.

SYLLABUS REVISION DISCLAIMER

I reserve the right to revise the syllabus, class schedule or assignment guidelines at any point during the semester if I deem changes are necessary. I will inform you of any changes in class, via email and on the course website in a timely fashion.

Assistance

Quinnipiac University is committed to creating a learning environment that meets the needs of its diverse student body. If you anticipate or experience any barriers to learning in this course, please feel welcome to discuss your concerns with me.

If you have a disability, or think you may have a disability, you may also want to meet with the Office of Student Accessibility, to begin this conversation or to request reasonable accommodations. Quinnipiac University complies with the Americans with Disabilities Act and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973.

Please contact the Office of Student Accessibility by emailing access@qu.edu, or by calling (203) 582-7600. If you have already been approved for accommodations through the Office of Student Accessibility, please meet with me so we can develop an implementation plan together.

Supplemental Assistance

Understanding and using the basics of grammar, punctuation and writing structure are expected. If you are having difficulty with that, please seek assistance from the QU Learning Center at TH 119, or call (203) 582-8628.

UNIVERSITY/DEPARTMENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

Quinnipiac has established Essential Learning Outcomes and learning paradigms. They include Interpersonal Proficiencies: Written communication, oral communication, responsible citizenship, diversity awareness & sensitivity and social intelligence, and Intellectual Outcomes: Critical thinking & reasoning, scientific literacy, quantitative reasoning, information fluency, creative thinking and visual literacy. More on these outcomes is [available here](#).

The Department of Journalism's mission is "to prepare journalism professionals who reflect and can effectively report on the diversity of the human experience."

Students who graduate with a degree in journalism should be able to:

1. Demonstrate the ability to research, report, write and edit news stories that conform to professional journalism standards, including the ability to apply basic numerical and statistical concepts.
2. Demonstrate command of the techniques used to produce and present news in print, broadcast and digital environments, and understand the interconnectedness of these systems.
3. Demonstrate familiarity with the history of journalism, its social responsibility and the underpinnings of its practice in a culturally and racially diverse society.
4. Understand the implications of the First Amendment and the role journalism plays in democracy.
5. Engage in the ethical practice of journalism.