

Neighborhood News Bureau Syllabus

(MMC 6936)

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Phone	727.873.4881	Office Hours	9 a.m.-9:30 a.m. and 10:45 a.m.-11:45 a.m. Tuesdays and Thursdays at NNB. Also, By Appointment.
Office	FCT 204	Bureau	2335 22 nd Avenue South

Texts:

The Weekly Challenger

St. Petersburg Times

A recent copy of the The Associated Press Stylebook.

Writing and Reporting News: A Coaching Method

Supplemental Texts:

St. Petersburg's Historic 22nd Street South by Rosalie Peck and Jon Wilson

The Authentic Voice edited by Arlene Notoro Morgan, Alice Irene Pifer, and Keith Woods

Supplies:

Digital Recorder (Available in bureau)

Digital Camera (Available in bureau)

Flash Drive – 256MB+

Description:

The Neighborhood News Bureau is a learning laboratory. This course will provide students with experience and possibly news clips. Classes will be a mix of lecture and editorial meetings, with students acting as reporters and the professor serving as editor. Students will report and write about Midtown in the heart of St. Petersburg. Midtown is a 5.5-square-mile area that sits mostly south of Central Avenue. The majority of residents are African-American, and many are poor. The area is located between 4th Street South and 34th Street South and 2nd Avenue North to 30th Avenue South. Students will meet and interview Midtown residents, identify sources, and delve into public records for five stories about people, issues, and trends. Each student will be responsible for a beat and will report and write from the Neighborhood News Bureau at the James B. Sanderlin Family Service Center, 2335 22nd Avenue South. Stories will be pitched to *The Weekly Challenger*, the *Neighborhood Times*, the Bay News 9 website and other local newspapers. Reporting and writing will be supplemented by readings from national newspapers and handouts. Students will master research, attribution of quotes and

information, use of the Associated Press style, story structure, race, legal and ethic issues, and other topics.

Goals:

1. Master Research

- Develop story ideas, not topics
- Differentiate between news and public affairs
- Compile and use a list of sources
- Build a beat
- Differentiate between a news story and public affairs
- Conduct interviews in person and on the telephone

2. Report and write

- Analyze issues affecting Midtown
- Cover a beat
- Identify racial, ethical, and legal issues affecting Midtown

3. Edit

- Effectively use AP Style
- Edit classwork for style
- Edit student work for style

Upon completion of this class, the student will be able to:

- * Research fully a topic related to Midtown
- * Write a multi-source story on an important community issue
- * Analyze community issues within Midtown

Communication:

I prefer to communicate in person, not via email. Please talk to me during my office hours or schedule an appointment when a problem or concern arises.

Much of our communication outside of class will be electronic and distributed via your **USF email** address and **Blackboard**. **All new postings to Blackboard will be completed by 6 p.m. Please check every evening Monday through Thursday.**

Be prepared for some course changes this semester. Journalism is a spontaneous endeavor, and there may be an occasional unannounced in-class assignment. Any and all changes will be posted on Blackboard. Please check it regularly.

Expectations:

Journalists must meet deadlines, therefore late work will not be accepted. Students should use class time to report and write. Much of your work will occur outside of class. All students are expected to participate in class by asking thought-provoking questions and debating current journalistic issues. Failure to participate in class will affect your final grade.

Neighborhood News Bureau:

Classes will be held at the Neighborhood News Bureau. The office is outfitted with telephones and computers so that students may report and write at the bureau. Students may also borrow digital tape recorders and digital cameras to help complete their assignments. The bureau is located at the James B. Sanderlin Family Service Center in the heart of Midtown at 2335 22nd Avenue South.

Beats:

Each student will develop a beat, and only one student will be assigned to each beat. Each student will find leaders on a beat, discover beat issues, list public meeting dates and times, and then attend at least one or two meetings. These beat notes will become part of the bureau and will be updated each semester. Beats are: Business and Economy, City of St. Petersburg, Community Development, Education, Environment, Health, Religion, Cops and Courts, Parks and Recreation, Family Life and Culture, Arts and Entertainment, NAACP and UHURU, Housing, Social Services, Personal Finance and Banking.

Assignments:

All writing assignments must be approved by the professor. Failure to seek approval may result in a failing grade for an assignment. After approval, each student will produce a developed story idea. When a story idea fails to come together, a student must develop a new story idea as well as write the story. In that case, both will be due when the story is due. Failure to produce a developed story idea with each story will result in a letter grade deduction for that writing assignment. Stories about the University of South Florida St. Petersburg will only be approved when they affect the residents of Midtown.

All assignments must be double-spaced and typed in a 12-point font.

Attendance:

Attendance is required, not merely a suggestion or a recommendation. A student who **DECIDES** not to attend class and fails to produce proper documentation for an excused absence has also **DECIDED** to receive a failing grade on any assignments due the day a class is missed and any coursework completed during that class.

All student work is due at 9:30 a.m. Late work will not be accepted. Students will provide the professor with an electronic AND a hard copy of his work. Failure to provide a hard copy of the work at 9:30 a.m. will result in a failing grade. If a student is unable to attend class, it is his responsibility to ensure work is completed and turned in on time. Excused absences will only be granted when a doctor's note is submitted, or a student has a death in his immediate family -- mother, father, sibling, grandparent. Please do not schedule a doctor's appointment or other appointments during class.

In the unlikely event a student must miss class, he or she must contact the professor via telephone or email **BEFORE** the class is missed or inform the professor immediately **AFTER** the class meets.

Evaluation:

Students will complete two assignments and write five stories. Each student will “hang out” at a location in Midtown, as well as develop a beat note. Both assignments account for five percent of the grade, or a total of 10 percent. Students will write five news stories during this course. The first two stories will each account for 10 percent of the final grade, for a total of 20 percent. The third and fourth stories will each account for 20 percent of your grade, or a total of 40 percent. The remaining 25 percent of the grade will be based on the final story. The remaining 5 percent will be based on the graduate presentation. All grades will be posted on Blackboard. See Expectations section above.

Grades will reflect journalistic enterprise, grammar, use of AP Style, and the inclusion of a source list, complete with names, addresses, and telephone numbers. **Failure to provide a source list – complete with the names, titles and telephone numbers – for each of your assignments will result in a failing grade for that assignment.**

Students who receive less than an A- on any assignment will receive a written explanation about the grade received. All assignments will be posted on Blackboard. Failure to follow directions may result in an F for an assignment.

A – 93-100 – Story has four sources.

A- 90-92.9 – Story has four sources.

B+ 87-89.9 – Story has three sources.

B 83-86.9 – Story has three sources.

B- 80-82.9 – Story has three sources.

C+ 77-79.9 – Story has two sources.

C 73-76.9 – Story has two sources

C- 70-72.9 – Story has two sources.

D+ 67-69.9 – Story has one source.

D 60-66.9 – Story has one source.

F Below 60 –No source list. Plagiarism or dishonest reporting

Graduate Presentation:

Each graduate student will present to the entire class how he reported and wrote a story, the pitfalls he encountered and what he learned from the experience.

Rewrites:

Students who are not satisfied with a grade of a C+ or below may rewrite the assignment for up to 10 additional points. Rewrites are due one week from the day an assignment is returned. Rewrites submitted at the end of the semester for work completed earlier in the semester will not be considered for additional points.

A rewrite consists of additional reporting, rewriting the lead and nutgraph, reworking the story structure, and making other significant changes to the story. A rewrite **IS NOT** simply correcting style and punctuation errors. The final story assignment for this class may not be rewritten.

Plagiarism or Dishonest Reporting:

The use of another's material without attribution or the fictionalization of sources or other material is grounds for failing this course. Copying something verbatim from the Internet and including it in any assignment without attribution will result in a failing grade for that assignment. Blind quotes – those attributed to merely a witness or government official -- will not be accepted. Failure to provide a source list – complete with the names, titles and telephone numbers – for each of your assignments will result in a failing grade for that assignment.

Course Schedule:

Date	Topic	Required Reading
January 9	Introduction. Read <i>The Deuces</i> . Hang Out story assignments. Review writing and story development formats. Start thinking of story ideas.	<i>The Deuces</i> written by <i>St. Petersburg Times</i> reporter Jon Wilson.
January 11	Tour of Midtown 9 a.m. until noon	<i>The Weekly Challenger and St. Petersburg Times</i>
January 15 January 16	Martin Luther King Holiday Discuss <i>The Deuces</i> . Start developing story ideas.	Rich: Chapter 15
January 18	Hang out due.	<i>The Weekly Challenger and St. Petersburg Times</i>
January 23	Assign beats.	<i>The Weekly Challenger and St. Petersburg Times</i>
January 25	Lecture: Race and Reporting. Washington Post Series: Being A Black Man. Story #1 idea due.	<i>St. Petersburg Times</i> <i>The Washington Post</i> Series: Being A Black Man.
January 30	Discuss: Being A Black Man	<i>The Weekly Challenger and St. Petersburg Times</i>
February 1	Reporting and Writing. Beat note due.	<i>St. Petersburg Times</i>
February 6	Rosa Lee by Leon Dash of <i>The Washington Post</i> .	<i>The Weekly Challenger and St. Petersburg Times</i>
February 8	Discuss: Rosa Lee.	
February 13	Lecture: Story Structure Story #1 due.	<i>St. Petersburg Times</i> Rich: Chapter 8

February 15	Lecture: Story Structure	<i>The Weekly Challenger and St. Petersburg Times</i>
February 20	Lecture: Storytelling Story #2 idea due.	<i>St. Petersburg Times</i> Rich: Chapter 9
February 22	Lecture: Storytelling	<i>The Weekly Challenger and St. Petersburg Times</i>
February 27	Guest speaker: Keith Woods, Dean of the Poynter Institute.	<i>St. Petersburg Times</i> Rich: Chapter 17
March 1	Lecture: Beats	<i>The Weekly Challenger and St. Petersburg Times</i>
March 6	Lecture: Speeches, News Conferences and Meetings Story #2 due.	<i>St. Petersburg Times</i> Rich: Chapter 18
March 8	Lecture: Covering the Government	<i>The Weekly Challenger and St. Petersburg Times</i> Rich Chapter 19
March 20	Lecture: Cops and Courts Story #3 idea due.	<i>St. Petersburg Times</i> Rich: Chapter 20
March 22	Lecture: What Makes a good feature	<i>The Weekly Challenger and St. Petersburg Times</i> Rich: Chapter 22
March 27	Lecture: Feature Writing	<i>St. Petersburg Times</i>
March 29	Lecture: Ethics	<i>The Weekly Challenger and St. Petersburg Times</i> Rich: Chapters 13 and 14.
April 3	Reporting and Writing Story #3 due.	<i>St. Petersburg Times</i>
April 5	Reporting and Writing	<i>The Weekly Challenger and St. Petersburg Times</i>
April 10	Story #4 idea due	<i>St. Petersburg Times</i>
April 12	Reporting and Writing	<i>The Weekly Challenger and St. Petersburg Times</i>
April 17	Reporting and Writing Story #4 due	<i>St. Petersburg Times</i>
April 19	Reporting and Writing Story #5 idea due	<i>The Weekly Challenger and St. Petersburg Times</i>
April 24	Reporting and Writing Graduate Student Melanie Cohen, Presentation	<i>St. Petersburg Times</i>
April 26	Last day of class	

May 3

Revised Beat Note due
Reporting and Writing
Story #5 due

*The Weekly Challenger and
St. Petersburg Times*