Syllabus
JOU 4181 Public Affairs Reporting
Spring Semester 2008

Meets:
Tuesday and Thursday, 4:30 p.m. – 5:45 p.m.
Room COM 211

Instructor: Dan Shaver
Office: Nicholson School of Communication Rm. 227
Office Hours: 2:00 p.m. – 4:30 p.m., Tuesday and Thursday
10:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m., Wednesday
Other times available by appointment

Contact me at:
Office Phone: 407-823-5958
Mobile Phone: 407-758-7962
Home Phone: 407-909-0085
(Please don't call before 8 a.m. or after 9 p.m.)
Email: dshaver@mail.ucf.edu

Class Web Site: http://pegasus.cc.ucf.edu/~dshaver/ (or Google “Dan Shaver Class”)
At the web site, click on the link to the pages related to this course.

Course Description:
This class is intended to improve your reporting and writing skills and to acquaint you with government agencies and public policy issues regularly covered by reporters. It is intended to strengthen your understanding of how government works (particularly at the city and county level), how to unearth news and information about public institutions, and how to use public records and open meeting laws to facilitate news reporting.

Prerequisites/Course Details:
You must have completed JOU 2100 and possess solid English grammar skills, an understanding of news story structure, and a solid mastery of AP style. Completion of Advanced Reporting or another advanced reporting skills class is strongly recommended. You must be prepared to read and critique your own work and that of your classmates--and to be critiqued by others. News writing is a craft that develops through practice and feedback. When you work in a professional setting, you will receive lots of feedback from your colleagues and your editors. Much of it will be useful and assist in your development as a professional journalist; some of it will be off the mark and annoying. Virtually all of it will be painful. Now is the time to begin developing your ability to give and receive feedback that helps you and others hone stories and professional abilities in a positive manner. Courtesy, thoughtfulness, honesty and the ability to listen to things you would rather not hear in a non-defensive manner are the keys to making this work for you, both now as a student and later as a professional journalist. You must also be
willing and able to work as part of a news team—sharing in the planning and development of coverage.

**Required Texts:**


Other readings as assigned during the course.

You should also read the *Orlando Sentinel* on a daily basis.

**Recommended:**


**NewsU:**

For some portions of this class, we will use interactive online training modules developed by The Poynter Institute. In the second class, we’ll establish accounts that will allow each of you to access the modules. Because the modules typically take 90 minutes to three hours to complete, we’ll use a substantial portion of the class time for you to work on these learning activities. If you do not complete the module in class, you can access the Poynter site and resume work on the module from home, from one of the university labs or even on your laptop from Starbucks. You are expected to complete each of the modules we begin in class and to document that by turning in at the beginning of the next class period a summary of the content covered and chief learning points. The summary should not exceed one page. Failure to do so will adversely impact your class participation grade. Since the computers in COM 211 do not have speakers, you will be responsible for providing your own earphones for the NewsU exercises. Please remember to bring a set to class on the days that a NewsU exercise is scheduled on the syllabus.

**Course Structure:**

In this course, you will work in a three- or four-member bureau that covers a single city in Central Florida. Your final grade will depend on a combination of individual and team-produced work. The assignments break down as follows:
We’ll take time in the first class for you to form teams. Each team should then spend time reviewing possible coverage cities. Recommended options include:

- Winter Park
- Orlando
- Oviedo

If your team would like to cover a city not on the recommended list, I must approve the choice. Any alternative city must have a city council or city commission that meets at least twice a month and a chief executive officer (Mayor or City Manager). In choosing a city, please remember that your team will be responsible for covering six consecutive city council meetings. Some city councils meet afternoons. Others meet evenings. Others meet at different times on different days of the month. Do not make a final choice until you determine that every member of your team will be able to attend two of your city’s council meetings. Information about the meeting schedules for various cities can be obtained either online or by a call to the city clerk or mayor’s office. Be sure to identify at least one suitable city by January 15 when we will make final assignments in class. More than one team may cover the same city, but the teams must operate entirely independently in their reporting efforts.

One member of the team will serve as the bureau chief. The bureau chief is responsible for maintaining the bureau notebook, coordinating coverage to ensure that unexpected events don’t disrupt coverage of city council meetings and ensuring that group projects due on his or her watch are completed and turned in on deadline. To equalize the workload, each member of the team will take a turn as bureau chief.

By January 17, the members of the team should identify the rotation cycle for the bureau chief job. Information regarding the rotation cycle and the dates that each team member will cover city council/commission meetings should be included in the notebook due January 31.

What happens if one member of the team refuses to pull his or her weight? Newsrooms depend on teamwork to succeed. If one member of a team consistently fails to live up to his or her responsibilities and it is damaging the ability of the team to complete schedule assignments, the other members may petition the instructor to “fire” the uncooperative team member. A detailed written explanation of the specific instances
in which the team member has failed to live up to expectations or assignments must be
presented and both petitioning team members must be in agreement that they can no
longer work with the individual. If, after meeting with the individual against whom the
complaints have been lodged, the instructor finds the complaints to be valid, the
offending member will be “fired” from the bureau. This means that the individual will
receive an “F” on all future group assignments, including the final project.

**Group Assignments:**

*Group assignments are bureau assignments and all members of the team are expected
to participate. All members of the team will receive the same grade on these exercises.
All group assignments should include a minimum of five human sources. Internet
sources are acceptable as sources for information, but do not count toward the
minimum of five human sources. Stories with less than the required minimum number
of sources will be graded lower.*

**Beat Notebook:**
Preparation of the Beat Notebook is designed to familiarize you with your coverage area
and to provide a resource for you and other members of your bureau to use on an on-
going basis. The notebook should be turned in for review and grading at the beginning of
class on January 31. At that point, the notebook should contain at least the following:

- An in-depth description of the selected beat. This should include the names and
  phone numbers of the city attorney, city clerk, chief of police, fire chief and public
  information officials, mayor or town manager, and council/commission members.

- List other important organizations on your beat, and include their phone numbers and
  addresses. The organizations might include the chamber of commerce and key civic
  groups. Include at least one community activist or activist group on your beat. This
  might be an individual or group that is critical of the city.

- Provide a brief description of the organizational structure and major departments
  within city government. What are their roles, approximate budgets, and to whom
does each report?

- List significant public and private facilities (including schools) on your beat. These
  are places where people gather on a regular basis, including courthouses, libraries,
parks, shopping malls and various cultural and recreational attractions.

- At least one member of your team must personally visit the following buildings:
  - City hall/county administration building
  - Police department/sheriff’s office headquarters
  - Courthouse in your beat’s jurisdiction.

Describe what goes on inside each building. Also, describe the kinds of public
records that are housed in each building and how the public can access them. You
should include room numbers, telephone numbers, specific personnel or other details required to allow someone else (another member of your team) to utilize these resources.

- Details regarding the meeting schedules of key governing bodies and the most important current issues facing these officials. Describe the governing body’s members, their political affiliations, philosophies and normal alliances. Identify the URL of the website where meeting minutes, agendas, etc. can be accessed.

- You should also include your plans on keeping up with your beat. Who will be responsible for maintaining regular contact with which sources regarding which topics?

To complete this assignment, you may rely on handouts (news releases), calendars, interviews, Internet sources, directories, phone calls, archived news stories, etc. At least one member of your team, however, must personally visit the buildings noted above and provide a written account of their findings.

Through the rest of the semester, as stories are written, additional sources are developed and relevant events are reported from your beat by other media, information and copies of news stories should be added to the notebook so that it becomes an appropriate resource for bureau staffers.

Neatness, clarity and organization, as well as completeness and usability, will be considered in grading the notebook.

**Budget Story:**

Review the operating budget of your city or of a key agency within your city. Compare budgets for the previous and current operating years. Identify areas of significant change in expenses and/or revenues. Determine which change(s) have the greatest impact on residents and your readers and write a story of 500 to 800 words exploring the causes and impact of the change.

The purpose of the story is not to simply describe the general areas in which the budget has changed. Focus on one or two areas that have specific impact on readers in your area. For example, if the police budget has increased or decreased significantly, what additional resources are being added or subtracted? How will this impact law enforcement and services in your community? How will readers be affected? What does the police chief say? What do commissioners or council members say?

This story should feature a broad range of perspectives, relevant public records and sources. It should address the impact of the change on the future of the city and the reaction of various interested citizen groups. The story is due April 1.

**Beat Reports:** During the semester, you’ll be responsible for submitting at least five sets of story ideas from your beat, identifying why the idea would be newsworthy, what
sources would be used to write the story, and the focus/point of the story. Each report should include five separate story ideas. All bureau members should participate in the source contacts and preparation of the story ideas. Consolidation of the suggestions into a single report is the responsibility of the acting bureau chief. Beat reports will be due on the following schedule:

- Report 1: February 5
- Report 2: February 14
- Report 3: March 3
- Report 4: March 27
- Report 5: April 8

The format for presenting beat report story ideas should be:

**Story Idea:** Brief description of the proposed story including the slant/angle/focus. What are the critical elements to be included/addressed in the report? How is it related to the public affairs focus of your beat?

**Why is the story newsworthy:** What is the target audience for the story? Why is the information relevant/important/interesting to readers? What news values are contained in the story?

**What sources will be used to write the story:** Who will you contact or interview (names, affiliations, etc.)? What is their relationship to the story? What sources will you use to ensure balance? (At least four sources should be identified.)

Please use these headings for each story idea you submit. Please identify the report number on the first page of your report.

**Final Project:**

You will prepare a major investigative package, including at least one infographic and at least one sidebar. The scheduled final exam period has been reserved for each team to provide an approximately 20-minute presentation of their final project package to the class. In addition to reading portions of the stories, you’ll be expected to address the problems you encountered in the project and how you overcame them.

Your team should dig into your beat for ideas and brainstorm alternatives. Identify at least three solid ideas and prepare presentations on each following the guidelines for the beat reports. Bring 18 copies of your proposal to class September 12. The proposals should be professional in appearance and contain a minimum of five potential sources for each topic. The class, acting as an editorial board, will judge your proposals and decide which you should pursue—and how it can be improved. Each topic should be new, not something that is discussed week after week during the city council meetings.
The main story for your final package should run about 1,500 words. The sidebar should run 500-700 words. The infographic will be evaluated based on relevance, thoroughness and accuracy. This is not a graphic arts class, so the concept for presentation—not its execution—will be considered.

Your final project package will be due April 10 at the beginning of class. A final project status review is scheduled March 18. By that time, your team should be well into the project with a general outline of the investigation, specific reporting assignments made for team members, background research completed and some interviews conducted. You will make a presentation to the editorial board as part of the project review and raise any issues related to the project that remain unresolved for feedback. Be prepared for this review. Inadequate preparation or progress will negatively affect all team members’ class participation grade. The class periods of April 3 and April 8 will be devoted to questions, discussion and final group editing of your package. Each team will present their final project to the class on April 17 or during the scheduled exam period.

Individual Assignments:

City Council/Commission Reports:

Your bureau will be expected to cover six consecutive city council or commission meetings, beginning the week of January 31. Divide the work evenly so that each member of your bureau covers two meetings, rotating turns. To provide a sense of consistency to your coverage, file copies of your stories, notes and observations in your beat notebook for use by other reporters in your bureau. When it is your turn to cover a meeting, read the earlier stories and consult with others in your bureau so you understand the topics and are familiar with the people involved. (A reporter for a daily newspaper might check the clips in his or her paper’s library before attending a meeting or calling a source.)

For each council meeting for which you are responsible, you will file an advance or preview article, due to me by email by noon of the day before the meeting, and a coverage story, due 36 hours after the meeting. For example, coverage stories about a Monday meeting are due to me as an email attachment in Microsoft Word format by noon that Wednesday. Stories about a Tuesday meeting are due by noon Thursday. Stories about a Wednesday meeting are due by noon Friday. Stories about a Thursday or Friday meeting are due by noon Monday. Clearly identify yourself in the email and the copy since I have difficulty recognizing Yahoo email addresses. Slug the stories appropriately (e.g., “City Council Preview Story 1,” “City Council Coverage Story 1,” etc.).

If your city council’s schedule means that fewer than six meetings will fall during the coverage period or if your team has more than three members, two team members may
have to cover the same meeting independently so that each person has the opportunity to cover two council meetings before the end of the term. If this occurs, I need to know about it ahead of time and the acting bureau chief is responsible for coordinating these issues. If more than one member of the team is covering the same meeting, there should be no discussion or sharing of notes or quotes by the reporters.

A preview, or advance, story is an article that tells the reader about the most important topic(s), issue(s) or decision(s) expected to come up at the meeting. Each preview story should be 200-300 words. To write an advance story, you will have to obtain an agenda and, perhaps, make telephone calls or do other research to obtain more information about the topics. If your council or commission does not issue an agenda, call a clerk or secretary (or council or commission member or the mayor). Do not simply list the topics to be covered at a council meeting; explain each topic to your reader. Do not include routine, non-newsworthy items such as “approval of the minutes,” etc. The purpose of a council preview story is to alert your readers to issues that might affect them individually. Presenting a service award to the city manager or recognizing the local basketball team don’t usually fall into this category. Rezoning issues (What? They’re going to build a new shopping center on my street and increase traffic?) and issues affecting public services, street closings, etc. do.

Your meeting coverage story should be detailed and complete. It should begin with the most important thing, topic or decision from the meeting and include other newsworthy actions. Be sure to include the full names of council or commission members and citizens who speak at meetings. Remember, your coverage of the meeting will not always end when the meeting adjourns. You may have to ask council members or speakers questions after the meeting or gather additional information. Your coverage story should be 500 - 700 words and longer if necessary for completeness. You should have a minimum of four human sources and more if that’s required for completeness and balance.

**Court Story:**

Spend time in a court—either civil or criminal; it’s your choice. Choose a trial that interests you and report on its progress or outcome. Be sure to talk to the attorneys involved and relevant witnesses. Do adequate background research. For example, in a criminal case you may want to review arrest reports and related documents. Look at complaints and other relevant public documents in a civil case. This story should be 500-700 words and is due at the beginning of class on January 31. Because I recognize that many of you have complex schedules, the January 24 class will be cancelled to allow you time to complete the work. Because court case loads vary widely between jurisdictions, you do not have to cover the court that serves your city. You may find it easier to cover an Orlando/Orange County court instead.

**Law Enforcement Story:**

Write a story about the law enforcement agency that serves your city or the UCF campus. You have a number of options:
• You can do a story about a specific crime (making certain that you check all relevant police documents and talk to relevant witnesses).
• You can write a story about a law enforcement issue facing your city—crime trends, for example.
• You can do a story about an unusual or newsworthy law enforcement program—community policing, drug education programs, community watch initiatives, etc.

The story should be 350-400 words and will be due at the beginning of class on February 19.

Education Story:

Identify an issue related to the educational system in your city. It may be a large issue affecting budgets and programs, a broad story regarding educational trends or issues such as school grades or FCAT programs, or a more focused story regarding issues affecting a particular school or community. The story, however, should be an “issue” story rather than some sort of personality profile of a favored teacher. If you have any questions about the appropriateness of the topic you’re considering, please check with me. Make use of appropriate sources and public records in writing your 500 – 600 word story. The education story will be due at the beginning of class on March 6.

Story Analysis:

Each class member will be responsible for providing an analysis of a news story of a particular genre. A signup sheet will be provided at the second class meeting so you can pick the type of story you will analyze.

Your analysis should address the structure, completeness and organization of the story. You should also contact the reporter who wrote the story and provide information about how he or she reported the story, difficulties they encountered, records or other resources that they used. You may also, if appropriate, contact sources or individuals quoted in the story for their take on the reporting.

In addition to the class presentation, you should also turn in a written analysis of no more than two double-spaced pages summarizing your findings and conclusions.

General Story Guidelines:

• Each story must be based on interviews with a minimum of three sources unless more are specified in the assignment. Even stories about speeches, or congressional testimony, should be balanced by indicating conflicting opinions or including reaction. Stories should reflect the sense that public policy issues are multi-faceted; journalists do this by including sources whose positions, background, knowledge and interests give them reason to know and understand how public policy in a particular
area is developing and the impact of policy decisions. Documents and reports should also be used as sources where appropriate, but they will not count against the four human source minimum. Your relatives, friends and classmates are NOT acceptable sources. Phone numbers and/or e-mails for each source, and the date and time of the interview must be included at the end of each story. Failure to do this will result in a one-letter-grade reduction. You should not be surprised if I call these sources to verify the accuracy of the information you report. Documents must be fully cited along with the location where they can be examined in this addendum.

- To prepare for your assignments, read The Orlando Sentinel and other relevant local publications and clip the stories it publishes about the government agencies you will cover during the semester: police news, lawsuits and council meetings, for example. File these clips in your notebook for future reference. The Sentinel’s stories can serve as models for the stories you write about similar topics. The background information may also be helpful. Assume that each story you write could be published in The Sentinel the morning after it is submitted; while writing your stories, consider The Sentinel’s audience and standards.

- You may quote another newspaper or newsmagazine or news release, and lift quotes or other information from another newspaper or newsmagazine or news release IF:
  - You tried at least three times but failed to reach the source yourself;
  - You could not find another source that could provide you the same information;
  - You could not reach a spokesperson for the person;
  - You could not obtain the source document yourself, despite repeated attempts;
  - You fully credit the material to the original publication;
  - You outline to me in a separate note the steps you took to reach the person or obtain the document that failed.

Please note that turning in a story in which most of the information is gleaned from a news release or a story in The Sentinel is tantamount to getting a D on the assignment.

- Final stories due at the beginning of a class period should be stapled with your name, the identification of the assignment (e.g., “Beat Report 4” or “Education Story”), and the date of submission at the top of the page. All printed copies of submitted material must be double-spaced with one-inch side margins and 12 pt. type. Stories should be printed on only one side of the page. The total word count for the story should be listed at the bottom of the last page. Each story should have a separate sheet of paper listing the name, telephone number and, when possible, the e-mail address for each person interviewed or quoted and relevant information about public documents cited. The use of non-existent sources or plagiarism will result in an automatic F in the class. Submissions that fail to adhere to these requirements will be returned ungraded for resubmission and will be considered late.

- Deadline stories (City Council previews and coverage stories) should be emailed to me at dshaver@mail.ucf.edu as a Microsoft Word file attachment. The time stamp on
the email will verify that you met your deadline. The formatting on the Word file should follow the same rules as for stories submitted in print form.

Class Policies:

• The School of Communication’s Journalism Division adheres to the Code of Ethics adopted by the Society of Professional Journalists (SPJ). Journalism is a limited access program, and students who violate the code – who plagiarize or fabricate, for example – will be dropped from the program. Cases will be reviewed by a committee of faculty members. Students who cheat in a class will be given an “F” for the class and, at the faculty members’ discretion, violations of the SPJ code – or of UCF’s Golden Rule – may also be referred to Student Legal Services.

• Do not arrive late. Do not miss class. If you are ill or must miss a class for any reason, call or email me before class to explain the problem. If you must miss class, all work will be due as scheduled unless you make other arrangements with me ahead of time.

• Please do check your email account or engage in unrelated web surfing during class. Those doing so may be excused from the class so that the educational process will not infringe on their personal interests.

• Only those assignments where initial filings are required to meet “deadlines” may be e-mailed without advance permission. All others must be delivered at the beginning of class in hard copy meeting the formatting requirements noted above.

• All assignments, except those specified as email, are due at the beginning of class. There will not be an opportunity to print them out in the classroom, so do it ahead of time. Failure to turn in a story on time reduces the grade by one letter grade for each day past the original deadline. Failure to turn in a story within one week of the due date results in an F for that assignment. NOTE: All assignments must be turned in to achieve a passing grade in this course. Failure to turn in an assignment—even if it is too late to receive a passing grade—will result in an F for the course.

• It is your responsibility to sign the attendance sheet at the beginning of class. If you arrive late and the sign-in sheet has already been passed around, it is your responsibility to see me at the end of class to add your name to the list. Failure to do so will count as an absence. Do not approach me several days later and say you were there but missed the sheet. Attendance has a significant impact on your class participation grade.

• Using someone else’s notes to write a story (falsely implying that you attended a meeting or trial) is cheating and will result in a final grade of F for everyone involved.
**Representation to Sources:**

As you are reporting stories, you may be asked whom you represent. You should tell any sources that you are a journalism student at the University of Central Florida and that your assignment is for a class. For some assignments, you will be asked to rely upon public information, which any members of the public, including you, are entitled to see. You are welcome to give sources my name, number and e-mail to contact if there are any questions. If you are considering submitting the story for publication, the source should be informed that the story might be offered for publication.

**Grading:**

The following components will determine your final grade:

- **Team Projects** …………………………………. 50%
  - **Weights:**
    - Beat Notebook …………… 10%
    - Budget Story………………. 10%
    - Beat Reports ………………. 10%
    - Final Project………………. 20%

- **Individual Stories** …………………………………..50%
  - **Weights:**
    - City Council Preview 1 ……… 3%
    - City Council Coverage 1 …….. 7%
    - City Council Preview 2 ………. 3%
    - City Council Coverage 2 ………. 7%
    - Education Story ………………10%
    - Court Story ………………………. 5%
    - Police/Crime Story……………. 5%
    - Story Analysis………………. 5%
    - Class Participation……………. 5%

The Grading Scale is:

- A = 4.0
- A- = 3.75
- B+ = 3.25
- B = 3.0
- B- = 2.75
- C+ = 2.25
- C = 2.0
- C- = 1.75
- D+ = 1.25
- D = 1.0
- D- = 0.75
- F = 0.0
Stories will be evaluated according to the below criteria. Plus and minus grades provide differentiation between the major categories listed. The primary criteria will be suitability for publication in a daily newspaper as submitted, but please note the penalties associated with grammar, spelling, factual errors, or missed deadlines.

A = The story is newsworthy and exceptionally well written with no style, grammar, or mechanical errors. It shows mastery of accuracy, news judgment, reporting, writing, spelling, grammar and AP style. It is ready for publication without further editing.

A- = The story is exceptionally well written; no more than one style error. It has no grammar or mechanical errors. It shows good news judgment and strong writing skills. It is ready for publication with minor editing.

B = The story is newsworthy and could be published with minimal editing. It has no more than one error of omission and/or has no more than two different style errors. The story has no grammar or mechanical errors. Story must be edited prior to publication. There are no major problems with structure or theme.

C = The story does not optimally reflect the news, has three or more style errors and/or would require extensive editing. The story may have several grammar and mechanical errors. Story may also have word usage errors. Some reporting or writing problems may be evident in this story and it needs rewriting and polishing before publication.

D = The story is superficial, would require extensive rewriting and/or has more than five style, grammar or mechanical errors. It is a poor effort lacking basic reporting and/or writing skills. The story may lack balance.

F = The story is confusing, incomplete or inaccurate or contains a misspelled proper noun or name or a statement that is libelous. A story will also receive this grade if it contains an error of fact.

You may rewrite any graded story—individual or team—except those in your final package. The rewrite must represent a significant improvement from the original story—not merely a correction of errors noted in the original grading. No rewritten story can receive a grade greater than an “A-“. There is no guarantee that the rewrite grade will be higher than the initial grade. For example:

- If you receive a C on the first story and make a factual error or commit libel in the rewrite, the new grade would be an F.

- If your initial story was flawed by a weak lead and organizational issues, and the rewritten story is different but no better, your final grade might remain unchanged.
If you rewrite a story, you must submit: (1) the original edited/graded story that I returned to you along with a copy of my comments; (2) a statement describing the lessons you learned in rewriting the initial story and the steps you took to improve the rewrite; (3) the rewritten story. Rewrites will not receive the same level of detailed feedback as the original story. All rewrites must be completed and resubmitted within one week of the class in which the original story is returned to you. Rewrites will not be accepted after that point. Electronic delivery of rewrites is not permitted because you cannot submit the original graded story electronically. Rewrites that lack either the original graded story with comments or the description of the steps taken to improve the story and lessons learned will not be accepted.

Questions I will ask myself as I evaluate your work include:

- Does the lead tell me what the story is about? Is the news in the lead? Did you choose an appropriate lead type? Is it interesting? Did you avoid a met, spoke, or newsless lead?
- Is the story well reported? Multisourced? Are all the readers’ questions answered? Did you get all the sides? Are the sources credible? Were public records sources used appropriately?
- Are the direct quotes informative and of high quality? Did you paraphrase when necessary? Did you attribute when necessary? Did you follow correct quote and attribution style?
- Is the material organized in a logical fashion? Did you use effective transitions?
- Is the writing clear and concise? Did you avoid jargon? Did you translate technical terms into language the reader can understand and apply?
- Does the story follow AP style?
- Are spellings and facts correct?
- Is grammar correct? Is punctuation correct? Did you use active voice as much as possible?
- Is the story written like a news story? Is it balanced? Did you get all sides? Did you avoid opinion and editorializing? Were you precise? Were sentences and paragraphs short? Did you “show me” rather than “tell me?”
- Have you tailored the story to its intended audience? Is the story format appropriate for the audience for whom you are writing?

**Warning:** Spelling and grammar are a reporter’s most basic tools. **ANY** written assignment (including beat reports) will receive a reduced grade for spelling, typographical and grammatical errors. Remember, failure to turn in a story on time reduces the grade by one letter grade for each day past the deadline. Failure to turn in a story within one week of the due date results in an F for that assignment.
Extra Credit:

Having a freelance story or “New Voices” column published in *The Orlando Sentinel* (or another professional, non-student newspaper) will result in the addition of .08 (the equivalent of two points on a traditional 100-point grading system) to your final average. Letters to the editor do not count, nor do articles published in *The Florida Future*. If you have any questions about whether a specific publication or a specific kind of submission is eligible for extra credit, please check with me. To qualify for the extra credit, you should provide a tear sheet containing your article. You may apply for this extra credit only once during the semester.

Course Schedule:

The following schedule is strictly an outline and some dates, topics or assignments may change during the semester due to the needs of the class or the availability of guest speakers. Any changes will be announced in class and posted on the class web site. It is your responsibility to regularly check the site announcements page. From time to time, readings may be posted on the web site either directly or through links to other sites. These readings are considered required readings and you will be responsible for being prepared to discuss the material in class.

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<th>Class</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Assignment</th>
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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>January 8</td>
<td>Introduction and Team Formation</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>January 10</td>
<td>Team Building</td>
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<td>January 15</td>
<td>Effective Interviewing</td>
<td>• Identify Town to be Covered</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>January 17</td>
<td>Beat Basics (NewsU)</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>January 22</td>
<td>Covering Courts (NewsU)</td>
<td>• Beat Basics Summary</td>
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<td></td>
<td>January 24</td>
<td>No Class Meeting. Time to cover trial for court story.</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>January 29</td>
<td>Covering Meetings</td>
<td>• Covering Courts Summary</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Meeting Story Analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>January 31</td>
<td>Open Meetings and Sunshine Laws</td>
<td>• Begin City Council Coverage for your Beat</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Beat Notebook Due</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Court Story Due</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class</td>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Topic</td>
<td>Assignment</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>February 5</td>
<td>Final Project Proposals</td>
<td>• Beat Report 1 Due&lt;br&gt;• Need 18 copies of at least 3 final project proposals for your editorial board</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>February 7</td>
<td>Covering Cops and Crime (NewsU)</td>
<td>• Crime Story Analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>February 12</td>
<td>Dealing with Victims</td>
<td>• NewsU Cops &amp; Crime Summary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>February 14</td>
<td>Databases and Computer Assisted Reporting</td>
<td>• Beat Report 2 Due&lt;br&gt;• CAR Story Analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>February 19</td>
<td>Covering the Education Beat</td>
<td>• Education Story Analysis&lt;br&gt;• Law Enforcement Story Due</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>February 21</td>
<td>No Class/Time to Interview for Education Story</td>
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<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>February 26</td>
<td>Rewriting &amp; Editing (NewsU)</td>
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<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>February 28</td>
<td>Covering Elections &amp; Candidates</td>
<td>• NewsU Rewrite Summary&lt;br&gt;• Candidate/Election Story Analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>March 4</td>
<td>Surveys, Polls &amp; Social Science Reporting</td>
<td>• Poll Story Analysis&lt;br&gt;• Beat Report 3</td>
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<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>March 6</td>
<td>Covering Budgets and Writing With Numbers</td>
<td>• Budget Story Analysis&lt;br&gt;• Education Story Due</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>March 11</td>
<td>No Class/Spring Break</td>
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<td></td>
<td>March 13</td>
<td>No Class/Spring Break</td>
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<td>17</td>
<td>March 18</td>
<td>Final Project Status Review</td>
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<td>18</td>
<td>March 20</td>
<td>Diversity</td>
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<td>19</td>
<td>March 25</td>
<td>Media Ethics</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>March 27</td>
<td>Media Ethics (Continued)</td>
<td>• Beat Report 4 Due</td>
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<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>April 1</td>
<td>Covering Business and Economics</td>
<td>• Business/Economics Story Analysis&lt;br&gt;• Budget Story Due</td>
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<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>April 3</td>
<td>Final Package Editing</td>
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<td>23</td>
<td>April 8</td>
<td>Final Package Editing</td>
<td>• Beat Report 5 Due</td>
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<td>24</td>
<td>April 10</td>
<td>Media Audiences &amp; Convergence</td>
<td>• Final Project Due</td>
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<td>25</td>
<td>April 15</td>
<td>Audiences &amp; Converging Media (Continued) and Wrap-up</td>
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<tr>
<td>Class</td>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Topic</td>
<td>Assignment</td>
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<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>April 17</td>
<td>Final Projects Presentations</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Final Exam Period</td>
<td>Final Projects Presentations</td>
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* Note that the final exam period/day is not specified because our scheduling does not match any of the times listed in the university final exam schedule. We will discuss/resolve this issue during the semester.