

J399: JOURNALISM AND DEMOCRACY

CRN: 25295

Winter 2023

HEDCO 220

Tuesdays and Thursdays, 4 to 5:50 p.m.

Instructor: Lori Shontz, Professor of Practice

Email: lshontz@uoregon.edu

Student drop-in and appointment hours, virtual and in-person:

- **In-person drop-in hours, no appointment necessary, Allen 328:**
 - Thursdays, 11 a.m. to 1 p.m.
- **In-person, phone or Zoom appointments:**
 - Schedule at this link: <https://calendly.com/lorimshontz>
 - Availability mostly late afternoon Wednesdays, randomly on Mondays.
- **What are these for?** They're for you. Getting to know your instructors matters—research shows that students who connect with faculty have more success in college. It matters to me, too: I'm better able to make recommendations for internships and jobs, and I'm able to give better advice for scheduling, etc. Plus, it's fun to get to know everyone.
 - You don't need a specific question or problem to come to drop-in hours or make an appointment. We can just chat.

GE: Emilee Jackson

Email: emileej@uoregon.edu

Email: ehutcher@uoregon.edu

Student mentoring hours: 11-1 Mondays,
Allen 106

Undergraduate assistant and student

mentor: Ella Hutcherson

WHY THIS CLASS EXISTS

This is a journalism class in which you will not do any journalism.

That's because journalism at its best is a public service, a public good that makes democracy work. To serve the public's interest, journalists must have a deep understanding of the communities they serve. You need to build a strong base that informs you and your work.

We're going to build that base by emphasizing civics and the power of community. We're going to focus on how to make journalism more diverse, more inclusive and – therefore – more accurate.

Journalism is essential for a healthy democracy. That's why the First Amendment exists.

That doesn't mean all journalism lives up to these ideals. It doesn't, so we'll critique the reasons why. That also doesn't mean that every piece of journalism needs to be an investigative, watchdog piece. Part of what journalism does is set cultural narratives, and reflecting communities back to themselves, accurately, is also important.

Just as important as what journalists do is *how* they do it. We'll focus, as well, on the journalistic process, on both the steps that produce work that is fair and accurate and community-focused and the ways that process is evolving. Being a journalist means you need to be a continuous learner, and this class will give you strategies for doing that efficiently and, I hope, enjoyably. Most important of all is a skill you'll practice all term long: active listening.

I listened a lot as I built this class; I had the time to do so because of support from the University of Oregon's Agora Journalism Center. I facilitated multiple focus groups with undergraduate students, inside the SOJC and, importantly, outside it. I listened to colleagues across campus and the country who care about journalism but don't necessarily do it. Ella Hutcherson, an SOJC senior, has been instrumental in the development of this course, and you'll analyze the stories she chose and listen to the podcasts she created.

To this point in your academic career, it's likely that a lot of your writing and thinking has focused on your personal perspectives and opinions. You've likely also been consuming stories for personal enjoyment and paying attention to the news to gather information that you need. You should keep doing that! And you need to go one more step: This class will prepare you to go beyond the personal, to begin focusing on writing and reading and listening not as consumers, but as creators.

WHAT YOU'LL LEARN

My favorite metaphor for doing journalism is an iceberg. Most of an iceberg, of course, is below the surface. You can see only the tip, which can be impressive on its own. What's unseen, below the surface, is what gives an iceberg its power.

In this class, you'll build that powerful base. Perhaps it won't be immediately obvious in the stories, podcasts, photos and videos you create when you leave this class. But your work is going to be stronger and do a better job of fulfilling its journalistic purpose because of what you've learned.

Specifically, this is what you'll do:

- Characterize the current discussions in the industry around what journalism is and what journalists' role is in a healthy democracy.
- Evaluate the relationships between journalists and the communities they cover – and the innovations that are attempting to facilitate stronger relationships.
- Explain the basic workings of government, plus the rights and responsibilities of individual citizens in a democracy.
- Identify the ethical principles of public-interest journalism and analyze how these principles work in practice, both historically and currently.
- Explain the practices that journalists, particularly ones from underrepresented communities and identities, use to support a healthy democracy and meet community information needs.
- Analyze works of journalism for the choices authors make as part of their process.
- Develop the beginning of your personal journalistic philosophy and chart the start of your personal path as a journalist or communicator.

WHAT YOU'LL READ AND WHAT YOU'LL NEED

Most readings will be links on PDFs posted on Canvas.

We are going to discuss during the first week of class how we want to follow the news this term. Stay tuned for details.

You will need to use The Associated Press Stylebook, which you can access for free through the Knight Library at [this link](#) (you'll need your DuckID)

The Technology:

- **Canvas:** Everything you need for this class is at canvas.uoregon.edu; log in with your DuckID.
- **Zoom:** I will create a Zoom link just in case circumstances dictate that we need to learn remotely at times during this term. You can access this video conferencing system through the Canvas page. I've set up one recurring meeting for the entire term. The Zoom password: YesWeWrite. You'll need that password, which is also in the Zoom invite, and you'll be placed in a waiting room until I let you in.
- **Technical support:** If you have questions about accessing and using Canvas, visit the [Canvas support page](#). Canvas and Technology Support also is available by phone or live chat: [541-346-4357](tel:541-346-4357) | livehelp.uoregon.edu.
 - **If you face Internet access challenges:** Companies are offering free access during this challenging time. To learn more about options, visit Information Services' [web page on going remote](#).

COMMUNICATING WITH ME

My favorite part of teaching is talking with students—getting to know you, coaching you, connecting you with former students I think you should know. So please don't hesitate to contact me with questions, suggestions ... even complaints. I mean it.

This is how you can reach me—and how I'll reach you. Communication is a two-way street, and I'll do my best to hold up my end.

- **Canvas announcements:** This is the easiest way to reach the entire class, so I'll primarily post updates and changes here. You should receive announcements in your inbox. If you don't, let me know.
- **Email:** I am reachable via email, lshontz@uoregon.edu, and I'll get back to you within 24 hours.
 - I am building time away from my job into my schedule this term, and I recommend you do something similar. This means:
 - I do not answer emails on Saturdays – that's the day to replenish that I've built in for myself this term – or after 8 p.m. weekdays.

- I also don't answer emails first thing in the morning—that's my thinking/reading time. I'll get back to my inbox late morning.

Important: If something's not working for you, let me know as soon as you can.

BASIC NEEDS

If you have challenges outside the classroom that are making it harder for you to learn, there is help for you. If you're comfortable telling me about any such challenge you are facing, please do so. If there is anything I can do to help, I will.

You can also get information and help at these links:

- **Mental health:** The UO's [Counseling Center](#) is open; see the link for information about in-person appointments and remote options. Note that there is a [Let's Talk service](#), which enables you to talk to a human being without making appointment; you Zoom in for designated drop-in hours each day.
- **Food:** If you are having trouble affording food, please [visit this webpage](#), where the UO has a list of resources and programs with free food.
- **Internet:** If you are having trouble getting online, please [visit this webpage](#), which has some no-cost and low-cost options for students.
- **Accessible Education Center:** I know that some of you may have disabilities or other health conditions that make remote instruction more difficult. And as always, *the University of Oregon is working to create inclusive learning environments. I encourage you to contact the [Accessible Education Center](#) in 164 Oregon Hall at 541-346-1155 or uoaed@uoregon.edu.*
- **In general:** If you are having trouble connecting with the university in any way, email uoadvising@uoregon.edu.

WHAT I EXPECT FROM YOU

Come to class – when you are healthy.

- **Attendance policy:** This is a face-to-face class, and you need to be here and to interact with the rest of the class to be successful. A successful class, like a successful piece of journalism, requires a diversity of perspectives, which means your attendance matters. I want you to benefit from coming to class. I want your classmates to benefit from your presence. I want to benefit from having you all in class, too.
- ***While there is no automatic grade deduction for missing class, if you miss more than four classes this term, you are unlikely to pass.*** The activities we do during class time are directly connected to your final project.
- That said, we are still in a pandemic. COVID-19 can be a serious illness, and no one wants to get the flu or RSV, either. ***If you are sick, do not come to class.*** I'll work with you.

- You can find the university's COVID resources [at this link](#). Let's take care of each other.

Participate, and be respectful: There are lots of ways to participate, well beyond just raising your hand to talk in front of the entire group. You can show up prepared for your structured reading group. Engage in our in your small group in-class activities. Visit my office hours, and/or Ella's mentoring hours. Send me interesting links. We will learn together—and I include myself in that “we.” Journalism is in disruption, so we're all learning all the time.

Make deadline: Every assignment has a deadline, and there's a good reason for them. Reflections are due so that Emilee and I have time to read them and use your insights to help plan class activities. Reporter's Notebook assignments are spaced so that we have time to give you actionable feedback for the next assignment and your final project.

- **Late Assignment policy:** Life happens, in j-school and in newsrooms. When you're covering breaking news, deadlines are not negotiable, but in other circumstances they can be. In recognition of this, *I allow three late assignments with no penalty. You can use a 24-hour grace period three times, not including the final Reporter's Notebook.* You don't have to email me; just turn it in when you are finished. If you need more than 24 extra hours or find yourself needing more than three automatic extensions, then email me, and we'll talk about solutions.

Be accurate: Credibility is everything in journalism. This is an introductory class, so you'll have some time to get the hang of it. *Starting Feb. 13 (Week Six), an assignment will receive C-minus at best if it has a major fact error such as the misspelling of the subject's name, the incorrect outcome of an event or a misidentification of a major figure.* Minor factual errors and earlier major errors will be penalized less harshly.

Have fun! I know this might seem odd, or even wrong, given the state of democracy in the United States and the state of journalism. We will be discussing hard topics and contentious issues. But there is joy in the craft and in the hard thinking that prepares you to do the craft. I hope that you can think of that as fun. I want our Journalism and Democracy community to be an engaging place for you to be a part of.

WHAT YOU CAN EXPECT FROM ME

Prompt feedback and return of assignments: I will return your assignments—with feedback and, if applicable, a grade—before the next assignment is due. Usually, that will be within a week of turning in an assignment. If something prevents me from meeting my goal, I will let you know in advance.

High standards: I'm not going to penalize you for circumstances that are beyond your control. That said, I would be doing you—and the communities who rely on accurate and excellent reporting—a disservice if I didn't hold you to a high standard on your weekly written assignments. *To get an A or a B, expect to spend at least four hours a week outside of class reading, writing and reflecting.*

Help: If you're struggling, let me know. *If my comments on your work are unhelpful or if you don't understand them, email me and let me know.* Communication requires at least two people; I will work to hold up my end of the conversation.

GRADING

I want you to focus on three things this term:

- Considering how you are going to show up for your communities and as a citizen. Democracy is not a spectator sport.
- Building a strong base for your career in journalism or any other field you choose. I can promise you that a deep foundation in journalism pays off no matter what you do.
- Getting comfortable with being uncomfortable. The journalism industry is in disruption and has been for a while. The pandemic has exposed cracks in all parts of society. And this country has never grappled with the racism that's been inherent since before its founding. These are wicked problems, and they aren't easy to solve.

I don't want you to focus on trying to reach a certain grade.

Peer-reviewed scholarly research (that's the highest standard) shows that grades prevent students from absorbing and using feedback. *And the feedback is the point; that's how you learn.* The most important part of this class is building a foundation for your upcoming journalistic work and your life as a citizen.

I have built a grading scale that reflects this knowledge, and your final project, which is the biggest part of your grade, will have plenty of pieces that lead up to it. You'll get feedback from Emilee and me as well as grades.

Here's how it breaks down:

- **Journalist's Notebook: 40%.** This is your final project, and you'll work on it all term.
- **Class preparation: reflections and structured reading group prep: 30%.** These are the assignments due Sundays, and they are vital to getting the most out of class.
- **Journalist's Notebook Excerpts: 20%.** These are the three sections you'll turn in during the term, and you'll get feedback to improve for the final project.
- **Structured reading groups: 10%.** This is based on your participation.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

The University Student Conduct Code (conduct.uoregon.edu) defines academic misconduct. Students are prohibited from committing or attempting to commit any act that constitutes academic misconduct.

You will be able to use your notes and any other resources you need for all assignments in this class—which is exactly how it works in a newsroom.

In J399—and in any journalism class or environment, in person or remote—academic integrity means the following:

- **Do not plagiarize:** Do not copy someone else’s work and pass it off as your own. That includes the work of professional reporters as well as the work of your classmates, friends, family, fraternity brothers, sorority sisters, teammates, roommates, fellow club officers, etc. You get the picture.
- **Attribute your work properly:** Use first and last names for everyone you quote or paraphrase in a story. Quotations are direct quotes—don’t tweak what someone said to make the sentence sound better. If you use information from another news source, attribute it to that source.
- **Don’t copy directly from websites or other background sources:** This is plagiarism, too. Don’t think you can fool me—or your readers—by changing a word or two around. That doesn’t fly. Again: Attribute your work properly. *Be especially careful if you are cutting and pasting information from the internet.* In fact, don’t do it.
- **Do not make things up:** Don’t invent sources, facts, people, scenarios, scores, quotes, etc. I truly hope this is self-evident.
- **Do not interview family, friends and/or acquaintances:** Credibility is everything. If you use people you know well as sources, your readers have cause to doubt whether you are being fully truthful or withholding information that would be damaging to those close to you.
- **IF YOU AREN’T SURE, ASK:** You’re still beginning journalists. If you are unsure about whether you’re skirting too close to the line, ask me.

If you plagiarize or otherwise violate these principles of academic integrity, you will flunk this class. Period.

TITLE IX

I am an assisting employee. For information about my reporting obligations as an employee, please see [Employee Reporting Obligations](#) on the Office of Investigations and Civil Rights Compliance (OICRC) website. Students experiencing sex or gender-based discrimination, harassment or violence should call the 24-7 hotline 541-346-SAFE [7244] or visit safe.uoregon.edu for help. Students experiencing all forms of prohibited discrimination or harassment may contact the Dean of Students Office at 541-346-3216 or the non-confidential Title IX Coordinator/OICRC at 541-346-3123. Additional resources are available at [UO’s How to Get Support webpage](#).

WRITING CENTRAL

Need another pair of eyes on your writing? Need someone to brainstorm interview ideas with? You should. No one writes in a vacuum, especially journalists, whose work informs the public.

Starting Week Two, you can get that help at Writing Central, where trained undergraduate coaches help with everything from fleshing out story ideas to crafting stronger sentences and improving your grammar/AP style. Coaches also can help with resumes and cover letters, personal statements and scholarship applications.

Feedback is available three ways:

- Pop-In Hours, 3-5 p.m. Monday through Thursday in Allen 106.
- Appointments: In person or over Zoom.
- Drop-n-Go: submit your work online and receive feedback within 48 hours.

To make appointments use the Drop-n-Go feature, visit writingcentral.uoregon.edu.

DIVERSITY AND INCLUSIVENESS

The best journalism reflects the community it covers. That's why I am passionate about increasing and maintaining diversity in newsrooms. If everyone is the same gender, race, ethnic group, sexual identity, religion, etc., you're going to produce a homogenous publication that is at best boring, at worst riddled with errors of fact and/or omission.

In this class, I will encourage open inquiry, freedom of expression and respect for difference. I expect you to respect the differences among you and your classmates and between the class and me. I will respect yours. We can certainly disagree—in fact, I expect that we will at times. But we can all respect each other, and we can all learn from each other.

If anything in this class makes you uncomfortable, let me know ASAP. Let's talk about it.

SCHEDULE

**This could change, based on news events or life in general.
I'll announce changes on Canvas and in class.**

Every Tuesday: Civics corner
Every Thursday: News discussion

WEEK ONE, Jan. 9-15

Community and citizenship, rights and responsibilities. Part One. We'll get to know each other and begin exploring what these concepts mean in practice.

- **Thursday's class:** Practice Journalism Reflection: Obituaries for the Homeless, Eugene Weekly (material also on Canvas: Files>reflections>Week 1)
 - [Telling Their Stories](#), By Bob Keefer
 - [Kristi Ann Schmidt, 1973-2021](#), By Bob Keefer
- **Due 11:59 p.m. Sunday:** Journalism Reflection No. 1: Documenters (podcast on Canvas: Files>reflections>Week 1)

- o [Documenters FresnoLand](#) website
- o [Clovis City Council 1/18/22](#)

WEEK TWO, Jan. 16-22

Community and citizenship, rights and responsibilities. Part Two. Now that we know each other, we'll dive a little deeper.

- **Thursday's class:** Practice structured reading group: [The danger of a single story](#), Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, TEDxGlobal.
- **Due 11:59 p.m. Sunday:** Structured Reading Group prep No. 1: History (material on Canvas: Files>reflections>Week 2)
 - o [45 words: The story of the First Amendment](#), The Newseum (video: 15 minutes)
 - o Objectivity, from The Influencing Machine, by Brooke Gladstone and Josh Neufeld
 - o Excerpts from The News Media: What everyone needs to know, by C.W. Anderson, Leonard Downie Jr. and Michael Schudson

WEEK THREE, Jan. 23-29

Journalism's role in democracy. Part One. Now that we're grounded in the importance of communities and democracy, we'll begin to explore where journalism fits. We're going to define it, too – in this media environment, what does journalism look like?

- **Tuesday's class:** Structured reading group: history
- **Due 11:59 p.m. Sunday:** Journalism Reflection No. 2: Education Lab (material also on Canvas: Files>reflections>Week 3)
 - o [Seattle-area youth created this guide to connect teens to multicultural mental health care](#), by Jenn Smith, Education Lab, Seattle Times

WEEK FOUR, Jan. 30 to Feb. 5

Appreciative Inquiry: We'll learn a community engagement technique that will help you to get familiar with the communities and people you'll meet as a journalist. We'll practice this technique in class so you'll be able to use it for your Reporter's Notebook and beyond.

- **Due 11:59 p.m. Friday:** Reporter's Notebook excerpt No. 1
- **Due 11:59 p.m. Sunday:** Structured Reading Group prep No. 2: objectivity (material also on Canvas: Files>reflections>Week 4)
 - [Inside the revolts erupting in America's big newsrooms](#). By Ben Smith, The New York Times, June 7, 2020
 - [A reckoning over objectivity, led by Black journalists](#). By Wesley Lowery for The New York Times, June 23, 2020
 - [Newsroom managers urge journalists to keep abortion views under wraps](#). By Charlotte Klein, Vanity Fair, May 11, 2022 (Note: this link takes you to my Pocket collection, which enables you to read without registering for or paying the magazine.)

WEEK FIVE, Feb. 6-12

Journalism's Role in Democracy. Part Two. We'll look more closely this week at who is producing journalism. What should they do? How should they behave? What should they believe, and should they be transparent about that?

- **Tuesday's class:** Structured reading group: objectivity
- **Due 11:59 p.m. Sunday:** Journalism Reflection No. 3: Oregon political coverage (material on Canvas: Files>reflections>Week 5)
 - [Oregon has a housing crisis. Can the next governor solve it?](#) By Lauren Dake, Oregon Public Broadcasting
 - [Questions for the candidates: Betsy Johnson answers OPB's questions on housing,](#) OPB
 - [Questions for the candidates: Republican Christine Drazan answers OPB's questions on the housing crisis,](#) OPB
 - [Questions for the candidates: Democrat Tina Kotek answers OPB's questions on the housing crisis,](#) OPB
 - [Mystery group sending anti-Democrat mailers, prepping web ads,](#) by Julia Shumway, Oregon Capital Chronicle

WEEK SIX, Feb. 13-19

Deliberation: Doing the work of democracy. This week's classes will be a two-day forum focused on an issue that's important to our community. We'll learn to listen to reach other and how to disagree productively, and we'll discuss how this work intersects with journalistic work.

- **Due 11:59 p.m. Friday:** Reporter's Notebook Excerpt No. 2
- **Due 11:59 p.m. Sunday:** Structured Reading Group prep No. 3: journalism and race (material on Canvas: Files>reflections>Week 6)
 - Report of the national advisory commission on civil disorders, Chapter 15. The Kerner Commission. 1968
 - [Lessons from the Kerner Report,](#) Ariel Aberg-Riger, CityLab
 - [How Oregon's racist history can sharpen our sense of justice right now,](#) Walidah Imarisha, Portland Monthly

WEEK SEVEN, Feb. 20-26

Race, racism and journalism: In recent years, some news organizations – including the Oregonian -- have begun to grapple with the ways their reporting has upheld racist structures in this country. The New York Times Magazine's 1619 project, a work of journalism and history, has changed the national conversation. Is this the beginning of better journalism for everyone?

- **Tuesday's class:** Structured reading group: journalism and race
- **Due 11:59 p.m. Sunday:** Journalism reflection No. 4: Land Grab University (material on Canvas: Files>reflections>Week 7)
 - [Land Grab Universities: Expropriated Indigenous land is the foundation of the land grant university system,](#) by Robert Lee and Tristan Ahtone, High Country News

WEEK EIGHT, Feb. 27 to March 5

The link between local news and democracy: We'll spend both class periods this week doing activities with the Agora Journalism Center's most recent report, [Assessing Oregon's Local News and Information Ecosystem 2022](#).

- **Due 11:59 p.m. Friday:** Reporter's Notebook excerpt No. 3
- **Due 11:59 p.m. Sunday:** Structured reading group prep: community engagement (material on Canvas: Files>reflections>Week 8)
 - [Introducing City Bureau's community engagement guidelines](#). By Andrea Faye Hart, June 19, 2019. (Note this is to the introduction: There is a link that will take you to the living document, which is continually updated and annotated. I've chosen this reading because it gives background in addition to the guidelines.)
 - [Why we need constructive elements in journalism](#). By Cathrine Gyldensted for TEDxDresden. (video: 18 minutes, 49 seconds)
 - [I stopped reading the news. Is the problem me – or the product?](#) By Amanda Ripley for The Washington Post, July 8, 2022

WEEK NINE, March 6-12

What's next? We'll focus this week on innovations in journalism. Who's doing work to rebuild trust with communities who have lost their trust in the news media – or, equally important but less discussed, who have never had trust in news media?

- **Tuesday's class:** Structured reading group: community engagement
- **Due 11:59 p.m. Sunday:** Journalism reflection No. 5: Environmental reporting (material on Canvas: Files>reflections>Week 9)
 - Unless noted, all of these are by Cassandra Profita, Oregon Public Broadcasting:
 - [Arborists say ODOT post-fires tree cutting is excessive, rushed](#),
 - [Lawmakers investigate reports of irresponsible tree cutting after wildfires](#),
 - [ODOT to hire independent arborist to review hazard tree removal project](#)
 - [Experts scrutinize Oregon's troubled hazard tree removal project](#)
 - [Oregon is properly identifying hazard trees for removal in burn areas: independent review](#), by Monica Samayoa, OPB

WEEK 10, March 13-19

Grand finale: I will facilitate a workshop using the principles of [Open Space](#), an organizational development technique that puts the power in the hands of the attendees. That's you. We will have a blank agenda on the wall for our last two days of class, and you will fill it. We'll review what we've learned and deliberate on what the industry can do going forward.

- **Due 11:59 p.m. Wednesday, March 22:** Reporter's Notebook