

## JCOM 330: JOURNALISM AND DEMOCRACY

CRN: 26592

Winter 2025

Lawrence 166

8 to 9:50 a.m. Tuesdays and Thursdays

**Instructor:** Lori Shontz, Professor of Practice

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

- **In-person drop-in hours, no appointment necessary, Allen 328:**
  - Thursday, 11 a.m. to 1 p.m.
- **In-person, phone or Zoom appointments:**
  - Schedule at this link: <https://calendly.com/lorimshontz>
- **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.

### WHY THIS CLASS EXISTS

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.

## 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. But 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 to the readers, viewers and listeners who will consume the work 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 here.

Specifically, this is what you'll do:

- Identify the ethical principles of public-interest journalism and analyze how these principles work in practice, both historically and currently.
- Explain the current discussions and debates in the industry around what journalism is and what journalists' role is in a healthy democracy.
- Explain the practices that journalists, particularly ones from underrepresented communities and identities, use to support a healthy democracy and meet community information needs.
- Evaluate the relationships between journalists and the communities they cover – and the innovations that are attempting to facilitate stronger relationships.
- 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 or PDFs posted on Canvas. Canvas will also include podcast episodes and YouTube videos.

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](https://canvas.uoregon.edu); log in with your DuckID.
- **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](https://livehelp.uoregon.edu).

## WHAT YOU'LL DO IN THIS CLASS – AND WHY

- **You will follow the news.**
  - **Why?** Being informed matters for everyone. Journalism majors have an additional and important responsibility: to consume news with the purpose of getting familiar with the conventions of journalism. This has two benefits: giving you models for your own work and deepening your ability to critique what works and what could be better.
  - **How I'll measure your progress:** Weekly quizzes.
- **You will build a strong base of skills for your future journalistic work.**
  - **Why:** Again, icebergs are powerful because of what's below the surface. So we're going to build a strong base: listening, observing and mingling with communities you will eventually cover.
  - **How I'll measure your progress:** You will visit a public library, attend a public meeting and spend an hour at a community event – as a curious community member, not a journalist – and you will report back. In each case, you'll use the skills we practice together during class.
- **You will begin to develop your personal journalistic values and ethical philosophy.**
  - **Why:** Journalism is a public good, and part of the job is being responsible to the communities you cover. Perhaps that's most obvious when you cover government, but this also matters when you cover culture, arts, sports ... anything.
  - **How I'll measure your progress:** You need to keep current with the daily read/watch/listen and be an active participant in your discussion groups. The weekly quizzes may have conceptual questions. You'll also write a short reflection in class for each unit, and you'll do an analysis and reflection for your final project.

## 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, [lhontz@uoregon.edu](mailto:lhontz@uoregon.edu), and I'll get back to you within 24 hours except over the weekend, when it may take longer.
- **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.
- **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 [uoaec@uoregon.edu](mailto:uoaec@uoregon.edu).*
- **In general:** If you are having trouble connecting with the university in any way, email [uoadvising@uoregon.edu](mailto: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.
  - **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 assignments and your success in this class and beyond.
  - **There is no need to ask for permission to miss class.**
- **Attendance exceptions:**
  - **Illness and disruptive life events:** Do not come to class if you are sick; please stay home, rest and recover. If you miss an assignment due to illness, email me so we can discuss your options.
  - **Accommodation for religious observances:** The University of Oregon respects the right of all students to observe their religious holidays and will make reasonable accommodations, upon request, for these observances. ***If you need to be absent from a class because of a religious obligation or observance, please complete***

*the [Student Religious Accommodation Request](#) form and email it to me by the end of Week One so we can make arrangements in advance.*

- **Accessible education, military service and university-sponsored events:** Upon request, UO makes attendance exceptions for accessible education, military service and university-sponsored events, including but not limited to athletics. *For university-sponsored events, students must provide documentation to me by Week One; this documentation must be signed by a university employee verifying the student's participation in the event(s) and indicating the dates of the class(es) they will miss.* If reasonable coursework modifications can be made, the absences will be permitted.
- **Pregnant and parenting students:** Consistent with Title IX, UO provides pregnant students, students who have given birth and students who have experienced false pregnancy with modifications related to pregnancy, childbirth, loss of pregnancy, false pregnancy, termination of pregnancy, lactation, and related medical conditions. If you need to request accommodations, [use this form](#).
- **Extraordinary circumstances:** The course attendance policy is meant to cover ordinary, day-to-day absences. If you experience an extraordinary circumstance, I will work with you to consider how we might make adjustments to course requirements where possible. You are not required to give me personal details, but please let me know as soon as you are able if you experience an extraordinary event.

**Participate, and be respectful:** There are lots of ways to participate, well beyond just raising your hand to talk in front of the entire class. You can show up prepared for your structured reading group. Engage in our in your small group in-class activities. Visit my office hours. Send me interesting links.

**Make deadline:** Every assignment has a deadline, and there's a good reason for them. In a professional school, we are preparing you for what the industry expects.

- **Late Assignment policy:**
  - **I allow a 24-hour grace period three times with no penalty.** You can turn in an assignment late three times during the term, not including the final analysis/reflection. You do not need to ask for permission. Just submit.
  - **Feedback is not always possible for late assignments:** If you turn in your assignment more than 72 hours after the deadline, you will not receive detailed feedback. You will receive a grade.
  - **If you need more than 24 extra hours or find yourself needing more than three automatic extensions:** 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 in Week Six, an assignment will not receive a passing grade 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.

## 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. 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 United States is confronted with many wicked problems, and they aren't easy to solve. We are going to sit with all of this.

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. I've built a grading scale that reflects this knowledge.

Here's how it breaks down:

- **Weekly quizzes, 15%**
  - You'll take nine. You can drop two.
- **In-class reflections, 15%**
  - You'll do five, one per unit. Complete/incomplete.
  - Four completes = A, and you need to hit the standard for complete.
- **In-class discussion groups, 10%**
  - This is based on your participation and preparation to participate.
- **Out-of-class assignments, 30%**
  - Letter grades only.
- **Final reflection and analysis, 30%**
  - Letter grades only.

## ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

The University Student Conduct Code ([conduct.uoregon.edu](https://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 JCOM 330—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.

## GENERATIVE AI POLICY

First, let’s make sure we’re on the same page. ChatGPT is probably the best-known tool, but it’s not the only one. Other Generative AI tools include, but are not limited to, CoPilot, Claude, Gemini, Midjourney and Dall-E.

Part of what we will discuss and reflect upon in this class is how to use AI responsibly and ethically in journalism. Journalism is a public good. It's core to a functioning democracy. That requires journalists to prioritize accuracy and transparency, the two values that I have centered in this policy.

This is important: The journalism industry is figuring this out, and not everyone agrees. **These are the guidelines for our class.** I believe they'll serve you beyond this class, too, but I don't control that. That's going to be your call – and the call of your future teachers, editors, producers, bosses.

**You can use AI in this class only under specific conditions**, which I've explained below.

According to UO policy, if you use AI in other circumstances, I may submit a report of suspected academic misconduct to the Office of Student Conduct and Community Standards for that office to determine responsibility and, if warranted, assess a grade penalty.

Here's what you should be aware of as you decide whether you want to use Generative AI for journalism:

- **You need to double or even triple check everything.** No GenAI tool differentiates among verified information, honest mistakes, misinformation, disinformation, sarcasm, or satire. In short: GenAI is often wrong. Trust nothing. Verify.
- **A response to a GenAI prompt is based not on quality, but on the quantity of the material that has been used to train the tool.** A lot of published journalism is not the kind of journalism we teach at the SOJC. Some of it is boring. Some of it upholds problematic power dynamics, including white supremacy. That's not the kind of work I want you to do – or the kind of journalism communities and democracy need.
- **You must explain to your readers, viewers and listeners how you used Gen AI in your work.** GenAI is a source, and it needs to be treated as such.

**Here's how you CAN use Gen AI:**

- Transcribing interviews. Many journalists use Otter.ai.
- Searching for expert sources or a summary of basic facts to help get yourself familiar with a new topic you're reporting on. The host of the Newsroom Robots podcasts recommends Perplexity.ai, which pulls from peer-reviewed journals. Again. VERIFY.
- Copy editing and proofreading, including checking for correct grammar and AP style. Grammarly can be helpful.

**Here's how you CANNOT use Gen AI:**

- Inputting your notes and asking it to use those notes to write your assignment.
- Inputting my assignment directions and asking it to produce a response.
- Using it to write a chunk of an assignment.
- As a search engine. It's not accurate enough. Google is better – when you get past the GenAI prompts at the top.

**In all other cases: ASK ME:**

- If you find yourself wanting to use AI in another way in this class, send me an email with the details first: what you want to use, why you want to use it, how you will use it.
- You must have my explicit permission before you proceed. You'll get that only in writing, not in a discussion with me.



### **One last, important, personal note:**

One of the most important things I do as a teacher is give you feedback. Obviously, that's because it sharpens your craft. That matters.

But it's also because giving feedback helps me to build a relationship with each one of you. Learning is social. We all learned that during the pivot to remote at the beginning of the pandemic, right? It was hard to learn alone.

You'll get better feedback when the original work comes from you, personally, rather than being filtered through GenAI. **Your original work and the struggle to produce it are vital to helping us build strong relationships, which are at the heart of both quality journalism and meaningful learning.**

## **TITLE IX**

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](https://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 to request information and resources.

Students are not required to participate in an investigation to receive support, including requesting academic supportive measures. Additional resources are available at [investigations.uoregon.edu/how-get-support](https://investigations.uoregon.edu/how-get-support).

All UO faculty members and graduate employees are designated reporters. For information about my reporting obligations as your instructor, please see [Employee Reporting Obligations](#) on the Office of Investigations and Civil Rights Compliance (OICRC) website. I am also a mandatory reporter of child abuse. For more information about my obligations to report child abuse, please visit [Mandatory Reporting of Child Abuse and Neglect](#).

## **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**

**Subject to change**

### **EVERY WEEK**

- We will work to build community in our classroom. The techniques we will use are transferrable to your eventual journalistic work.
- Class time will always include three things: (1) a conceptual summary, (2) discussion with your group and (3) time to practice the skill of the week. I'll often supplement the out-of-class Read Watch Listen with additional material during class. That material will be available on Canvas.
- This is a journalism class, and news will happen. I'll adjust as necessary, and I'll communicate changes via Canvas announcements.

### **WEEK ONE, Jan. 6 to 12**

**Concepts:** Defining our terms: What is news? What is journalism? Who is a journalist? What is a democracy?

**Skill of the week:** listening

- **Tuesday's class:** Introductions, building community, looking at legacy media
- **Prepare for Thursday:** Syllabus annotation/reflection
- **Thursday's class:** Syllabus review, building community, looking at community and alternative media
  - **Note:** practice quiz

### **WEEK TWO: Jan. 13 to 19**

**Concepts:** What is news? What is journalism? Who is a journalist? What is a democracy?

**Skill of the week:** listening

- **Prepare for Tuesday:** [Hank Green makes the truth go viral](#), On The Media, Nov. 27, 2024. (podcast: 24 minutes, 48 seconds)
- **Tuesday's class:** News consumption strategies, looking at news influencers
  - **Note:** Weekly quiz
- **Prepare for Thursday:** [I'm a journalist and I'm changing how I read news. This is how](#). By Laura Hazard Owen, Nieman Lab, Nov. 12, 2024
- **Thursday's class:** News consumption strategies, compare/contrast legacy media, alternative and community media, and news influencers.
  - **Note:** Unit-ending reflection during class

### **WEEK THREE: Jan. 20 to 26**

**Concepts:** The First Amendment and press freedom in practice

**Skill of the week:** looping

- **Prepare for Tuesday:** [45 words: The story of the First Amendment](#), The Newseum (video: 15 minutes)
- **Tuesday's class:** Historical foundations of journalism and its principles
  - **Note:** Weekly quiz
- **Prepare for Thursday:** [My plea to newsroom leaders at this dangerous moment](#), by Margaret Sullivan, American Crisis Substack, Dec. 2, 2024
- **Thursday's class:** Current state of and concerns about press freedom
  - **Note:** Unit-ending reflection in class
- **Due 8 p.m. Friday:** Public library report

#### WEEK FOUR: Jan. 27 to Feb. 2

**Concepts:** Journalistic values and ethics

**Skill of the week:** looping

- **Prepare for Tuesday:** Objectivity, from The Influencing Machine, by Brooke Gladstone and Josh Neufeld (PDF on Canvas; this is an excerpt from a work of comics journalism)
- **Tuesday's class:** Objectivity and the reporting process
  - **Note:** weekly quiz
- **Prepare for Thursday:** [Code of Ethics](#), Society of Professional Journalists
- **Thursday's class:** Real-life ethical scenarios

#### WEEK FIVE: Feb. 3 to 9

**Concepts:** Journalistic values and ethics

**Skill of the week:** appreciative inquiry

- **Prepare for Tuesday:** [The View from Somewhere, Episode 1: The View from Nowhere](#), by Lewis Raven Wallace, Oct. 15, 2019 (podcast, 23 minutes)
- **Tuesday's class:** Critiques of objectivity
  - **Note:** weekly quiz
- **Prepare for Thursday:** [A reckoning over objectivity, led by Black journalists](#). By Wesley Lowery for The New York Times, June 23, 2020
- **Thursday's class:** Real-life ethical scenarios

#### WEEK SIX: Feb. 10 to 16

**Concepts:** Journalistic values and ethics

**Skill of the week:** appreciative inquiry

- **Prepare for Tuesday:** [Why we need constructive elements in journalism](#). By Cathrine Gyldensted for TEDxDresden, Nov. 1, 2016. (video: 18 minutes, 49 seconds)
- **Tuesday's class:** Innovation in journalistic thinking
  - **Note:** weekly quiz

- **Prepare for Thursday:** [AI slop is already Oregon's local journalism](#), by Ryan Haas, Oregon Public Broadcasting, Dec. 9, 2024
- **Thursday's class:** Generative AI and journalism
  - **Note:** Unit-ending reflection in class
- **Due 8 p.m. Friday:** Public meeting report

### WEEK SEVEN: Feb. 17 to 23

**Concepts:** Cultural competency for trust building

**Skill of the week:** facilitation

- **Prepare for Tuesday:** [Lessons from the Kerner Report](#), Ariel Aberg-Riger, CityLab
- **Tuesday's class:** Who are you? Who are your sources?
  - **Note:** weekly quiz
- **Prepare for Thursday:** [Talking about Journalism's Class Problem, by Heather Bryant](#), Medium, Oct. 27, 2017
- **Thursday's class:** Who are you? Who are your sources?

### WEEK EIGHT: Feb. 24 to March 2

**Concepts:** Cultural competency for trust building

**Skill of the week:** facilitation

- **Prepare for Tuesday:** [Publishing Prejudice](#), the Oregonian, Summer 2020
- **Tuesday's class:** Deep dive into the Oregonian's report on itself
  - **Note:** weekly quiz
- **Prepare for Thursday:** [Reimagining immigration news: North Carolina's case for the nation](#), by Liz Robbins, Define American, October 2022
- **Thursday's class:** Taking concrete steps toward change.
  - **Note:** Unit-ending reflection in class

### WEEK NINE: March 3 to 9

**Combining concepts and skills:** Oregon's local news ecosystem

- **Prepare for Tuesday:** [Assessing Oregon's Local News and Information Ecosystem 2022](#)
- **Tuesday's class:** Conversations with Oregon journalists and community members
  - **Note:** weekly quiz
- **Prepare for Thursday:** [Assessing Oregon's Local News and Information Ecosystem 2022](#)
- **Thursday's class:** Conversations with Oregon journalists and community members
- **Due 8 p.m. Friday:** Community event report

### WEEK 10: March 10 to 16

Combining concepts and skills: Focusing on Oregon's local news ecosystem

- **Prepare for Tuesday:** [Young journalists will reimagine a better press, by Christoph Mergerson](#), Nieman Lab, December 2024
- **Tuesday's class:** Conversations with Oregon journalists and community members
  - **Note:** weekly quiz
- **Prepare for Thursday:** TBA
- **Thursday's class:** Connecting our class to Fundamentals of Reporting and Interviewing
  - **Note:** Unit-ending reflection in class

## FINALS WEEK

- **Due 8 p.m. Tuesday, March 18:** Final reflection and analysis