

**WR 228 Media Writing, Winter 2020**  
Instructor: Eben Pindyck, pindyck@pdx.edu  
MW 2:00 – 3:50 p.m. @ Broadway 218  
Office Hours: MW 1:00 - 1:50 and by appt @ FMH 318

**COURSE DESCRIPTION**

The goal of this course is to learn to create interesting, informative, and accurate news articles. Doing so demands engaging in the most fundamental aspect of journalism: reporting. This might entail talking with a stranger on the street, interviewing an expert over the phone, or even witnessing a heated public protest. Exhaustive reporting, as a rule, makes the writing process much easier.

**REQUIRED TEXT:**

*She Said* by Jodi Kantor and Megan Twohey

**COURSE REQUIREMENTS**

- Reading. See the attached course schedule. In addition to Kantor and Twohey, we'll focus on contemporaneous news articles from both local and national publications. Articles will be listed on D2L in advance of class. Be prepared to discuss reading assignments.
- Papers. Students will turn in 4 papers for this class.
  - o Deadlines
    - Jan. 22: First 850-word news story.
    - Feb. 10: Second 850-word news story.
    - Feb. 24: 300-word pitch for the feature.
    - Mar. 18: 1,500-word feature.

Deadline: the start of class unless otherwise announced. Hand a hardcopy to me--except for the final, which should be sent to me via email.

Story format: I'm not picky about this. Your words are what matter, but you must list sources at the end of each story. Include phone numbers or email addresses of human sources. I reserve the right to check stories for accuracy by calling your sources. In addition, I may ask you to record your interviews--and submit the recordings for fact-checking.

Revisions: you may revise each 850-word story, as well as your feature pitch, for a higher grade. Revisions are due one week after receiving my edits. The new grade will be the average of the revision and first draft. No revisions for the final.

Editing: you will be closely edited with detailed comments.

Please visit during office hours to discuss story ideas, problems, etc.

Electronics policy: be respectful. I expect you to pay attention during class. Laptops should be closed unless you are using one for an in-class exercise. If you need to use your cellphone, just step outside.

## GRADING

Your final grade is based on the four written assignments. The 850-word stories, and the feature, each count for 30% of your grade. The pitch is 10%. Missing a deadline in the field of journalism is profoundly unprofessional, and you are all journalists for the duration of this course. If you do miss a deadline, I will lower your course grade by one level (e.g. A to A-).

Stories turned in on time and with course requirements completed will be graded accordingly:

A: Excellent effort and achievement; few or no issues in its sourcing, structure, or writing.

B: Good effort and achievement; minor issues in its sourcing, structure, or writing.

C: Acceptable in effort and achievement; significant revision needed to sourcing, structure, and/or writing within an otherwise workable story.

D: Below acceptable in effort and achievement; story needs a significant or total rewrite, and/or has major shortcomings in sourcing, structure, or writing.

F: Unacceptable; fails to meet basic academic standards of effort, accuracy or ethics.

I: May be issued by arrangement with the instructor to allow the completion of missing writing assignments. This grade is not applicable to absence from in-class activities.

## ATTENDANCE

### **a. Attendance**

Be on time and prepared, and remain in class until the end of the class period. With two weeks or more of absences, your grade may be lowered; with three or more weeks of total absences, you may fail the course. If you must miss class, try to contact me ahead of time to rearrange deadlines and be aware that you are responsible for completing missed assignments.

### **b. Medical and other Emergency Absences**

The above guidelines do not apply to medical and other emergency absences. Please note that if you miss a course or withdraw due to these reasons, you may file a Deadline Appeal Petition with the university.

### **c. Flu Policy**

Please show consideration for the health of yourself and your classmates. Do not come to class with flu symptoms, and follow the CDC guideline to not return until at least 24 hours have passed entirely free of fever *without* needing fever-reducing medication.

### **d. Non-Attendance (from the Registrar)**

“Students are responsible for dropping courses they do not attend. Non-attendance does not cancel tuition charges, nor does it prevent the course and grade (probably an F, NP, X, or M) from appearing on the student's academic record. Some departments have a policy of dropping students for non-attendance to accommodate other students trying to enroll. If this happens, the student 1) remains responsible for any tuition charges associated with the registration, and 2) the course may be recorded permanently on the academic record, depending on when the department processes the drop.”

## CONDUCT

You are expected to follow the PSU Student Code of Conduct. Please also note the following:

### **Academic Misconduct (from the PSU Student Code of Conduct)**

"Academic Misconduct is defined as fraud, deceit, or unauthorized use of materials prohibited or inappropriate in the context of the academic assignment. This includes, but is not limited to: (a) cheating, (b) fraud, (c) plagiarism, such as word for word copying, using borrowed words or phrases from original text into new patterns without attribution, or paraphrasing another writer's ideas; (d) the buying or selling of all or any portion of course assignments and research papers; (e) performing academic assignments (including tests and examinations) in another person's stead; (f) unauthorized disclosure or receipt of academic information; (g) falsification of research data; and (h) unauthorized collaboration; (i) using the same paper or data for several assignments or courses without proper documentation; (j) unauthorized alteration of student records; and (k) academic sabotage, including destroying or obstructing another student's work."

### **Please Also Note:**

- (a) The resubmission or reworking of papers or other assignments in multiple courses requires instructor permission.
- (b) Texts by fellow students are for use in this course only. If you wish to use or share their work elsewhere, you must have their written permission.
- (c) Story ideas by fellow students are to be respected as their creations or works in progress, and are not to be used without their written permission.

### **Classroom Conduct**

Students are expected to take part in a classroom environment conducive to learning. Disruptions to this, per the Office of Student Life, include "behavior that a reasonable faculty member would view as interfering with normal academic functions. Examples include, but are not limited to: Persistently speaking without being recognized; Interrupting other speakers; Behavior that distracts the class from the subject matter or discussion; In extreme cases, physical threats, harassing behavior or personal insults; Refusal to comply with faculty direction."

## TITLE IX REPORTING NOTICE

As an instructor, one of my responsibilities is to help create a safe learning environment for my students and for the campus as a whole. Please be aware that as a faculty member, I have the responsibility to report any instances of sexual harassment, sexual violence and/or other forms of prohibited discrimination. If you would rather share information about sexual harassment, sexual violence or discrimination to a confidential employee who does not have this reporting responsibility, you can find [a list](#) of those individuals or contact a confidential advocate at 503-725-5672. For more information about Title IX please complete the required student module [Creating a Safe Campus](#) in your D2L.

## ACCESS AND INCLUSION FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

PSU values diversity and inclusion; we are committed to fostering mutual respect and full participation for all students. My goal is to create a learning environment that is equitable, useable, inclusive, and welcoming. If any aspects of instruction or course design result in barriers to your inclusion or learning, please notify me. The Disability Resource Center (DRC) provides reasonable accommodations for students who encounter barriers in the learning environment.

If you have, or think you may have, a disability that may affect your work in this class and feel you need accommodations, contact the Disability Resource Center to schedule an appointment and initiate a conversation about reasonable accommodations. The DRC is located in 116 Smith Memorial Student Union, 503-725-4150, [drc@pdx.edu](mailto:drc@pdx.edu), <https://www.pdx.edu/drc>

- If you already have accommodations, please contact me to make sure that I have received a faculty notification letter and discuss your accommodations.
- Students who need accommodations for tests and quizzes are expected to schedule their tests to overlap with the time the class is taking the test.
- Please be aware that the accessible tables or chairs in the room should remain available for students who find that standard classroom seating is not useable.
- For information about emergency preparedness, please go to the [Fire and Life Safety webpage](https://www.pdx.edu/environmental-health-safety/fire-and-life-safety) (<https://www.pdx.edu/environmental-health-safety/fire-and-life-safety>) for information.

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

### Writing Center

PSU has an excellent Writing Center -- their consultants can assist with undergraduate and graduate work alike, and can serve as a "second pair of eyes" on your writing. They are located at 188 Cramer, and have both drop-in hours and an online appointment reservation system: <http://www.writingcenter.pdx.edu>

### Office of the Dean of Student Life

If you need assistance with anything ranging from health to economic needs, or guidance to access resources (e.g. the Veterans Resource Center, Queer Resources, Student Legal Aid, etc.) please check the Office of the Dean of Student Life, at <https://www.pdx.edu/dos/student-resources>

### Week 1

Due Jan. 8<sup>th</sup>

Read *She Said*, Chapter One; also D2L stories. Start researching what event to cover. A good idea makes for a good story.

### Week 2

Due Jan. 13<sup>th</sup>

Read *She Said*, Chapter Two; also D2L stories.

Due Jan. 15<sup>th</sup>

Read *She Said*, Chapter Three; also D2L stories.

Week 3

Due Jan. 22<sup>nd</sup>

**Deadline—First 850-word news story.** Cover a local board meeting. Study the agenda and seek the best news story. Examples: Portland City Council, Neighborhood Associations, Multnomah County Board of Commissioners, Portland Public Schools, TriMet, Also, check the agenda for the Oregon Historical Society board, Oregon Medical Board, Board of Dentistry, Veterinary Board, etc. Follow the news outside the building.

No readings.

Week 4

Due Jan. 27<sup>th</sup>

Read *She Said*, Chapter Four; also D2L stories. Begin to research what local meeting to cover.

Due Jan. 29<sup>th</sup>

Read *She Said*, Chapter Five; also D2L stories.

Week 5

Due Feb. 3<sup>rd</sup>

Read *She Said*, Chapter Six; also D2L stories.

Due Feb. 5<sup>th</sup>

Read *She Said*, Chapter Seven; also D2L stories.

Week 6

Due Feb. 10<sup>th</sup>

**Second 850-word news story.** Cover an event. Apart from quoting people at the event you cover, your story must include quotes from at least two outside sources--people who were not there. They must illuminate and advance the power of the story and not just simply exist.

Examples of sources for local event listings include *Portland Monthly*, *The Portland Mercury*, *Willamette Week*, etc. Also, university event calendars, as well as posters around campus. And! Government agency event calendars, including Metro, Portland Parks and Recreation, etc.

No readings.

Due Feb. 12<sup>th</sup>

Read *She Said*, Chapter Eight; also "The Really Big One," by Kathryn Schulz *The New Yorker* July 20, 2015 issue.

Week 7

Due Feb. 17<sup>th</sup>

Read *She Said*, Chapter Nine; also "The Fighter," by CJ Chivers *The New York Times Magazine* Dec. 28, 2016.

Due Feb. 19<sup>th</sup>

Read *She Said*, Epilogue; also "Ice Poseidon's Lucrative Stressful Life as a Live Streamer," by Adrian Chen *The New Yorker* July 9 & 16, 2018 issue.

Week 8

Due Feb. 24<sup>th</sup>

**300-word pitch.** The goal of the pitch is to sell your editor (me) on your feature idea: that is to say, capture my interest! The pitch should display considerable "pre-reporting," including having already interviewed at least one human source. We will read and discuss each pitch during class.

No readings.

Due. Feb. 26<sup>th</sup>

Read "We Didn't Stand a Chance Against Opioids," by Joshua Hunt, *The New Republic*, Sept. 18, 2019; also D2L stories.

Week 9

Due Mar. 2<sup>nd</sup>

Read D2L stories.

Due Mar. 4<sup>th</sup>

Read "Last Taboo: Why Pop Culture Just Can't Deal with Black Male Sexuality," by Wesley Morris *The New York Times Magazine*, Oct. 27, 2016; listen to Longform Podcast #218 w/Wesley Morris. Longform.org

Week 10

Due Mar. 9<sup>th</sup>

Read "My Family's Slave," by Alex Tizon, *The Atlantic*, June 2017 issue.

Due Mar. 11<sup>th</sup>

Read "Thanksgiving in Mongolia," by Ariel Levy *The New Yorker*, Nov. 18, 2013; also D2L stories.

Due Mar. 18<sup>th</sup>

**1,500-word feature.** The feature is the story you will have the most time to report, and the topic you choose should be something that you want to go into with some detail, or something you want to investigate. You can pick up your edited

feature, with my comments, in my mailbox in the English Department office.