

UC BERKELEY GRADUATE SCHOOL OF JOURNALISM

J134: International Reporting

Course Location: Etcheverry 3106 (opposite North Gate Hall, on Hearst Ave.,)

4 to 6pm Monday-Wednesday, 4pm to 5:30pm on Thursday,
July 2-Aug 9 (no class on July 4)

3 units

Instructor: Mary Kay Magistad
mkmagistad@gmail.com

Office Hours: Tuesdays and Thursdays, 1:30pm to 3:30pm, unless otherwise indicated.

Office Location: North Gate Hall B42 (in basement, go down the stairs, turn left, and follow the signs – door is near building exit).

COURSE PREREQUISITES: J100 Principles of Journalistic Reporting & Writing is preferred; students who have not taken J100 should notify the instructor in advance.

COURSE OVERVIEW

This course will help students appreciate the importance of international journalism in an interconnected world, develop an understanding of what it takes to do good international journalism of various types, understand the particular challenges of international reporting, hone the ability to analyze the quality, rigor and perspective of an international story, and to report and write such stories, and become familiar with some of the tools and methods used by international correspondents. Through discussions, demonstrations, in-class exercises, readings, viewings, weekly assignments and presentations by the instructor and by guest speakers with various types of experience in international journalism, students will be introduced to the skills, discipline,

rigor and cultural sensitivity needed to succeed as an international correspondent.

Mary Kay Magistad lived and worked as an international correspondent for more than two decades in East Asia, based in Beijing, Hong Kong, Bangkok and Phnom Penh. She has reported from some 40 countries, including covering conflicts, civil unrest and refugees, both on staff and as a freelancer. She opened NPR's bureau in China, and returned as East Asia correspondent for PRI's *The World*, 2003-13. Earlier, in Southeast Asia, she was a stringer for *The Washington Post*, *The Boston Globe*, and others, and a contributor to British Channel Four's "Frontline" and the PBS Newshour. Ms. Magistad continues to do international reporting for her podcast "Whose Century Is It?," which focuses, through a global lens, on trends and ideas and ideas shaping the long-term future.

While class assignments will be in written form, as though for a US newspaper or magazine, examples of audio, video and online international journalism will also be introduced in class, and students are welcome to learn more about radio/audio/podcasting by visiting the instructor during office hours.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Students will learn to recognize and appreciate good international reporting and what goes into it. They will learn how to think about story selection, pitching stories and reporting trips, what it takes to prepare for an international reporting trip, and how to work effectively with distant editors and with fixers or interpreters. They will hone their writing skills and familiarity with appropriate journalistic style, building on what was learned in J100. They will be introduced to how to develop sources, or find sources quickly, how to assess the quality of sources and the need to verify information, some ways to use online resources and local media in the places they're reporting, how to think about safety, particularly in situations with conflict or civil unrest, and how to produce compelling, clear stories, with appropriate context, for a distant audience. They will learn the importance of acting ethically, and with cultural sensitivity, especially when reporting in countries other than their own.

METHODS OF INSTRUCTION

A lively mix of talks by the instructor and guest speakers, discussion, readings and viewings will introduce students to various tools and methods of international reporting, while in-class exercises and weekly assignments will allow students to learn by using some of these tools and methods themselves.

Students will select a country, other than their own, from a shortlist given by the instructor, to follow particularly closely during the course. They will also be expected to follow international news more generally, and be able to discuss international current affairs, and to give examples of good international journalism of various types – investigative, explanatory, breaking news, features and ‘reporter’s notebook’ stories, as requested by the instructor. Recommended sources of international news: BBC World television, NPR, PRI’s “The World,” The New York Times, The Washington Post, The Wall Street Journal, The Guardian (UK), Al Jazeera, The Economist, Foreign Policy, GlobalVoices.org, Chinafile.com, and local media in the country each student has chosen to follow during the course.

COURSE MATERIALS

Selected readings, audio and video reports, to be assigned during the course, links or copies made available via bCourses. Expect to spend 3-6 hours per week on reading/listening/viewing assignments, plus additional time on reporting and writing assignments.

COURSE ASSIGNMENTS

Each student will have one written assignment per week during the first five weeks of the course, plus in-class exercises, and a final project due at the end of the course.

Weekly assignments overview:

- Weeks 1 and 2 will focus on story selection and reporting trip pitches and preparation. Assignments will be assessed on strength of story idea, quality of research, and whether the pitches reflect realistic goals for time and resources needed to do the reporting for the stories offered.
- Story assignments in Weeks 3 and 4 will be assessed on strength of story idea, quality of research and reporting, clarity, rigor, accuracy,

appropriateness of tone, approach and explaining of context for an audience unfamiliar with aspects of the place being covered, quality of journalistic writing, and the extent to which stories incorporate lessons learned in class and readings, and follow the guidelines for the assignment.

- Story assignment in Week 5, an in-class simulated breaking story with new information coming in as you write, will be assessed on the extent to which there is clear, concise, accurate writing under time pressure, an appropriate lede, anchored by an informative nut graf that provides necessary context, and a well-synthesized and well-written body of the story.
- Respect for deadlines is imperative, in class as in life as a journalist. Unless instructor indicates otherwise, assignments will be due by 11pm Friday each week.

Final Project:

- A well-researched and reported 1,500-2000 word current affairs, explanatory or investigative feature, focusing on the country the student chose earlier in the course, as his or her 'beat.'
- The final project will be assessed on strength of story idea, originality in approach, quality of research and reporting, clarity, rigor, accuracy, quality of journalistic writing, organization of ideas, setting of context, and the extent to which they incorporate lessons learned in class and readings.
- Final project is to be filed electronically by Thursday, August 9th, at 2pm.

COURSE PLAN:

Week 1:

Day 1: Introduction to the course. What is international journalism? Why have international correspondents? A short history of how the profession and practice have evolved over time, including related to diversity of the

press corps, the types of media that offer international news, the many ways international journalism is done, resources available to journalists doing international reporting. How to develop a good working relationship with your foreign editor. How to think about story selection, how to research and pitch stories to an editor, whether as a freelancer or staff correspondent. How to budget your time and plan ahead, as an international correspondent with multiple deadlines. **Assignment:** Pitch a story idea as you would to a foreign editor, 150-200 words, from your chosen 'beat,' reflecting good research, a fresh angle, and a realistic approach. Deadline: Friday, July 6, 11pm.

Week 2:

Continuing focus on story selection, story pitches, and reporting trip pitches, with in-class exercises to practice these skills, simulating pitching stories from your bureaus to a foreign editor in the home office. Analysis of prize-winning international journalism in print, audio and video. Importance of maintaining a 'beginner's mind' when covering other countries and cultures -- open-minded interest, coupled with rigorous reporting and fact-checking. **Assignment:** Pitch a reporting trip, in 600 words, as you would to a foreign editor, with three stories, each well-researched, well thought out, and realistic in terms of what you can do in the time you'll be traveling. Deadline: Friday, July 13, 11pm.

Week 3:

Ethical and cultural considerations when doing international reporting. Learning to see from, and reflect, different perspectives, and correct for your own biases and cultural framework. How to work with a fixer or translator. Teaming up with other journalists in the field, pros and cons. Interviewing techniques.

Assignment: 700-800 word news feature, topic and guidelines to be given in class. Due Friday, July 20, at 11pm.

Week 4:

Hazardous duty reporting. When to do it, how to survive it, what you need to know before you go in. Covering war and refugees, civil unrest and demonstrations, natural disasters and sensitive subjects in authoritarian countries. Advantages and disadvantages of being embedded. Dealing with flaks, spies and spokespeople. Mitigating risks of internet surveillance and

hacking, getting detained and more. Considerations for how to protect sources, and those working with you. Online resources and approaches to help enhance safety when reporting conflict. Challenges and advantages (at times) for female reporters.

Assignment: 900-1,000 word news analysis/situationer on a specific conflict, details to be given in class. Due Friday, July 27, at 11pm.

Week 5:

Breaking news – how to cover it responsibly, how to evaluate sources, how to deal with competitive pressures while retaining accuracy, with in-class exercises to practice writing on tight deadlines, with new information coming in that may or may not be accurate, and may change the story. Tips for freelancing.

Assignment: In-class breaking-news simulation, on tight deadline.

Week 6:

Possible futures of international journalism. Ways to make a living as an international correspondent, or in other professions, with some of the same skills required to be an international correspondent. Discussion of lessons learned, both in how to do international journalism, and appreciating good international journalism as part of being an informed global citizen.

Final story: 1500-2000 words, on a subject in the country you selected on which to focus. Due Thursday, Aug. 9th, by 2pm.

GRADING:

In class participation in discussion, demonstrating familiarity with assigned reading, viewing and listening: 15 percent.

Active participation in and completion of in-class exercises, including in bureaus (not including Week 5 breaking news simulation): 15 percent.

Week 1, Story idea pitch: 5 percent

Week 2: Reporting trip pitch: 5 percent

Week 3: News feature: 10 percent

Week 4: Conflict reporting situationer/news analysis: 15 percent

Week 5: Breaking news, in class: 10 percent

Final project: 25 percent.

Late assignments will be docked one grade for every day or portion of a day they are late.

***Bonus:** Students who get all assignments in on time, always get to class on time and have no unexcused absences, will get their final grade bumped up by half a grade.

In class: An “A” student will participate regularly, constructively and collegially in class discussions, displaying both open-minded, intelligent inquiry and an understanding of the readings and of current reporting of international issues, particularly in the country on which s/he has chosen to focus.

On assignments:

An “A” grade on an assignment will reflect strong story ideas, rigorous research and reporting, accuracy, clarity, explanatory context, good writing appropriate to the assignment (ie, writing a pitch for a reporting trip is different from writing a breaking news story, which is different again from writing a feature), and incorporating lessons learned in class and from readings, following the guidelines for the assignment. In short, an “A” grade goes to a story that is publishable in a major newspaper or magazine, as is. An A- goes to a story that is publishable with some minor copyediting.

A “B” grade on an assignment will reflect accuracy, good but not exceptional story selection, reporting and writing, some explanatory context, and a demonstrated understanding of the lessons learned in class and from readings, while fully following the guidelines for the assignment.

A “C” grade will reflect an assignment that largely but not entirely follows the guidelines, and/or has minor inaccuracies, including misspellings of names and places, has inadequate reporting (such as a story with only one interviewed source when the requirement was to have at least two), and sub-standard writing, analysis, context and clarity.

A “D” grade will be given to assignments with significant inaccuracies, and to those that do not follow the guidelines or reflect that effort has been made to try to learn the lessons taught in class and through the readings.

An “F” will be given to an assignment that plagiarizes, fabricates information or sources, or otherwise shows a significant lack of regard for the accepted practices and standards of journalism, as taught in this class and in the journalism minor in general.

Mid-term meetings with instructor:

While students are always encouraged to seek help or ask questions during office hours, each student is required to schedule a mid-term meeting with the instructor in the third week of class, during extended office hours, during which you will do a story pitch of your final paper topic in a way that shows you’ve already started to research it. A sign-up sheet will be posted on bCourses.

COURSE POLICIES

Class starts on the hour, at 4pm. Arriving late or leaving early, or missing a class, without advance permission from the instructor, will be taken into account in grades.

Deadline extensions will be granted only in case of severe illness or injury, or a family emergency. In such cases, contact the instructor in advance to get an excused absence. Students who miss more than two classes without such approval will be in danger of failing the course.

Phones must be turned off when in class, and computers and iPads must be put away during instructor and guest lectures and discussions, though can be used for research during in-class exercises. Learn to take notes by hand while mostly keeping your eyes up; you’ll be doing it as a journalist.

Disabled Student Services:

If you need an academic accommodation for this course, you must follow the intake and accommodation procedures to obtain a Letter of Accommodation. Please contact Extension Disabled Student services (EXDSS) at extension-dss@berkeley.edu, or at (510) 643-5732.

If you already have a Letter of Accommodation from Extension Disabled Student Services for this course, please see the instructor during office hours

to have a confidential discussion of what accommodation you need for this course.

Academic Dishonesty and Plagiarism

Students will abide by the Student Code of Conduct <http://students.berkeley.edu/uga/conduct.asp>. There is a zero tolerance policy for work that is submitted without proper attribution and that constitutes plagiarism. If students are unsure about the expectations regarding the Student Code of Conduct, please seek advice from the instructor.