

UC BERKELEY GRADUATE SCHOOL OF JOURNALISM

J134: International Reporting

Instructor: Mary Kay Magistad
mkmagistad@gmail.com

Graduate Student Instructor (GSI): Richard Grijalva
ragrijalva@berkeley.edu

Course Location: Donner Laboratory 155
4 to 6pm Monday-Wednesday, 4pm to 5:30pm on Thursday,
July 3- Aug 11 (no class on July 4)

(3 units)

Magistad office hours: Tuesdays and Thursdays, 1pm to 3pm.
Office Location: TBD

Grijalva office hours: Mondays and Wednesdays, 2:30pm to 3:30pm.

COURSE PREREQUISITES: J100 Introduction to News Reporting 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 create international journalism of various types, understand the particular challenges of international reporting, develop an ability to analyze the quality, rigor and perspective of an international story, 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, 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 a foreign correspondent for more than two decades in East Asia, based in Beijing, Hong Kong, Bangkok and Phnom Penh, and 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, returning there for PRI's *The World*, and has been a stringer for *The Washington Post*, *The Boston Globe*, and others, and a contributor to British Channel Four's *Frontline* and the PBS *Newshour*. She continues to do international reporting for her podcast with PRI's *The World, Whose Century Is It?* While class assignments will be in written form, as though for newspapers, other forms of international journalism will 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 high quality 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 a reporting trip, and how to work effectively with distant editors and with fixers or interpreters. They will be introduced to how to develop sources, or find sources quickly, when to be wary of sources, 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, Chinafile.com, and local media in the country each student has chosen to follow during the course.

COURSE MATERIALS

Scoop by Evelyn Waugh.

The Washington Post Pulitzers: Anthony Shadid (Kindle edition available on Amazon; \$2.99; readable with free downloadable app.)

Dispatches by Michael Herr.

Every Man in This Village is a Liar, by Megan Stack

Selected readings, audio and video reports, to be assigned during the course. Expect to spend 4-6 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:

- Targeted length will range between 500 and 800 words.
- Assignments 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 they incorporate lessons learned in class and readings, and follow the guidelines for the assignment.
- Respect for deadlines is imperative, in class as in life as a journalist. Unless instructor indicates otherwise, assignments will be due by 10am Friday each week.

Final Project

- A well-researched and reported 1,500-2000 word news/current affairs, explanatory or investigative story, focusing on the country the student chose earlier in the course, as his/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 10.

COURSE PLAN:

Week 1:

Introduction to the course. What is international journalism? Why have foreign correspondents? A short history of how the profession and practice has evolved and changed over time, and how it has varied from country to country. What international correspondents do, why it's of value, and the various ways in which international correspondents are perceived in different countries. How the United

States looks when covered as a foreign country. **Readings: Scoop.**
Assignment: Interview at least two students in J134 from two countries other than your own about how international correspondents from their own country are regarded, and how foreign correspondents and foreign coverage of their country are viewed. 500 words. Due by Friday at 10am.

Week 2:

Getting started – ways to become an international correspondent. Learning from the best: analysis of prize-winning international journalism in print, audio and video. Value of finding a mentor or mentors. Merits of being based in the country or region being covered, vs. doing shorter reporting trips from your home country. The art of adopting a ‘beginner’s mind’ when approaching a culture and political system other than your own. The importance of skills of good story selection. How to build a relationship with a foreign editor. How to pitch a story; how to pitch a reporting trip. **Readings: *The Washington Post* Pulitzers: Anthony Shadid. (finish by July 10), others TBA. Assignment: Pitch a reporting trip to a foreign editor, 500-600 words. Due by Friday at 10am.**

Week 3:

Review of different types of international stories – breaking news, investigative, explanatory, features, reporter’s notebooks. Importance of research ahead of reporting trips. How to work with a fixer or translator. Teaming up in the field, pros and cons. Interviewing techniques. Dealing with flaks, spies and spokespeople, and how to recognize when you’re being spun. 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. **Readings: *SPJ Code of Ethics* (Available at <https://www.spj.org/ethicscode.asp>) (finish by July 17), *Every Man in This Village is a Liar* (finish by July 18).**
Assignment: Interview at least two current or former foreign correspondents on at least two of the following aspects: why they got into this work, the stories they’ve done that have stood out for them and why, the challenges they have faced while reporting and how they’ve dealt with them, how their profession

is changing and why, and how they feel about those changes. Story should also reflect additional online reading and research. 600-700 words. Due by Friday at 10am.

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. How to deal with surveillance and hacking, getting detained and more. Considerations for how to protect those working with you, and sources. Online resources and approaches to help enhance conflict reporting. **Readings: *Dispatches*. Finish by July 24.**

Assignment: Write a story related to a conflict, to be named in class, using online resources, Skype or phone interviews, or similar, 700-800 words. Due by Friday at 10am.

Week 5:

Breaking news – how to cover it responsibly, how to evaluate sources, how to deal with competitive pressures while staying accurate. How to move toward specializing in a region or subject. Challenges and advantages (at times) for women reporters, and why their male colleagues should be aware of these. Tips for freelancing. **Readings: TBA. Assignment: Write a story based on a breaking news scenario, details to be given in class on Wednesday. 700-800 words, due by Thursday at 10am.**

Week 6:

Possible futures of international journalism. Ways to make a living as 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. 10, by 12pm.**

GRADING:

In class attendance, participation in discussion & completion of in-class exercises: 30 percent.

Weekly assignments: 50 percent

Final project: 20 percent.

Late assignments will be docked one grade for every day they are late.

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.

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 (i.e., 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.

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 10 minutes with the instructor in the third or fourth week of class, during extended office hours, Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday, noon to 3pm , each of those two weeks. Be prepared to talk about your final paper topic. 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 extreme situations, such as illness or a family emergency, and such exceptions must be approved in advance with the instructor.

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.

Students are encouraged to participate voluntarily, but instructor will also call randomly on students in class.

Each student is expected to visit the instructor during office hours at least once during the course.

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 make an appointment with the instructor to have a confidential discussion of what you will require 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.