

**COMM 332-001**  
**Investigative & Public Affairs Reporting**  
**Loyola University Chicago**  
**Fall 2023**  
**Mondays 4:15 PM to 6:45 PM**  
**Corboy Law Center - Room 710**

**Instructor:** Katie Drews

**Email:** kdrews1@luc.edu

*(Please allow up to 24 hours for a response & longer on weekends)*

**Office Hours:** Email me to schedule

**Bio:** <https://www.luc.edu/soc/adjunctfacultydirectory/katiedrews.shtml>

## **Course Description**

This course introduces students to the tools and techniques of in-depth watchdog reporting. You will learn the practical skills of the investigative journalist both by studying professional investigative work and by doing your own work mining public records, analyzing data and cultivating sources, all while adhering to the highest standards of accuracy and ethics. This class will include lectures and discussions, but much of the emphasis will be placed on independent fieldwork, including reporting out a long-term investigative project.

A note of caution: This is not the type of course in which you can procrastinate and file the final project after pulling an all-nighter. Good investigative reporting takes time and unfolds gradually as pieces of a puzzle are assembled over many weeks of sustained effort. This class requires substantial reporting, research and writing effort each week. Please take this into account when planning out your schedules.

### **Course objectives**

You will advance your reporting and writing skills and learn strategies necessary for tackling any in-depth investigative assignment, including but not limited to the following:

- How to develop an investigative story idea and hone in on an angle
- How to manage your time and plan/execute a long-term story

- How to find and utilize records to elevate your work
- How to cultivate sources and handle difficult interviews
- How to problem-solve when things don't go right (and they never do!)
- How to thoughtfully approach your work and consider ethical questions
- How to condense, organize and present your material in a meaningful way
- How to bullet-proof your story with authority

## Required Materials

- “She Said: Breaking the Sexual Harassment Story That Helped Ignite a Movement” by Jodi Kantor and Megan Twohey
- Associated Press Stylebook (*Either the book or [an online subscription](#)*)

Not required, but you might want to consider:

- [The Investigative Reporter's Handbook](#): A Guide to Documents, Databases, and Techniques (6th Edition) by Brant Houston
- [Student Membership](#) to Investigative Reporters & Editors (*Students receive the same membership benefits as professionals. The cost for students is \$25, down from the regular price of \$70. Added bonus, you can renew at the student rate after graduation for up to three years.*)
- [Evernote Premium](#) (*Students receive a 40 percent discount on the professional plan*)

## Logistics

We will be meeting in person for class every Monday unless otherwise specified. The bulk of this course, however, will consist of independent fieldwork. Also, two weeks during the semester are designated for one-on-one conferences to discuss your story's progress.

Sakai should be your first stop for information. The “lessons” tab will be updated every Monday. Look there to see the game plan for the week, including required readings and other homework assignments. Details for assignments will be spelled out in the “assignments” tab. Unless otherwise specified, your work will be submitted to me via Sakai in the “assignments” tab as well.

## **Assignments**

You will spend the majority of the semester crafting an original news investigation through which you can demonstrate all of the skills you have acquired. Throughout the reporting process, you will deliver story pitches, a FOIA request related to your project, a story memo that outlines your progress, a draft of your story and a final article. Additional work may be assigned as needed.

In lieu of a final exam, you will submit a project retrospective that reflects upon and analyzes the merits and shortcomings of your investigative piece and semester-long reporting experiences.

## **Readings**

You will regularly have reading assignments that showcase investigative journalism. These examples will be used as the basis of our classroom discussions.

## **Participation**

Collaboration is key in newsrooms, particularly when it comes to investigative work. I encourage everyone to regularly share tips, sources, ideas, questions -- you name it -- throughout the reporting process. Your contributions in this regard will factor into your participation grade.

You will also be expected to display a proper level of professionalism by attending class regularly, arriving on time, staying until dismissal, being prepared for class, paying attention during lectures and participating in discussions and exercises. Please limit unrelated computer and cell phone use for urgent matters only. In addition, criteria for grading classroom participation includes:

- A: Frequent and meaningful contributions to class discussion that show insight and understanding of material
- B: Frequent and meaningful contribution to class discussion
- C: Occasional participation to class discussion
- D: Only participates when called upon
- F : No class participation

## **Attendance**

Since this class only meets once a week, missed classes will affect your ability to perform well. Not only will you miss course content, you will also be unable to participate in discussions. You will be allowed one free absence throughout the semester. Two or more absences and/or frequent tardiness/leaving early will result in a lower participation grade. During class, we may complete in-class assignments and exercises that you cannot make up if you are absent.

If you are absent, it will be your responsibility to check Sakai or seek out a classmate to see what you missed.

## **Confidentiality**

Some students may be reporting on sensitive topics and/or dealing with apprehensive sources. In order to ensure everyone feels comfortable talking through reporting obstacles and successes, please keep all of our classroom discussions confidential.

## **Grading**

Grades will be weighted according to the following scale:

Reporting memo + other assignments: 20%

Story draft: 25%

Final story: 25%

Retrospective: 20%

Participation: 10%

Assignments will be graded on a point system. At the end of the semester, the accumulated points will be converted into a letter grade based on the following scale: A 94-100%; A- 90-93%; B+ 87-89%; B 84-86%; B- 80-83%; C+ 77-79%; C 74-76%; C- 70-73%; D+ 67-69%; D 64-66%; D- 60-63%; F 0-59%

## **Story subjects**

For objectivity and in keeping with standard professional practice, avoid doing stories using your own family members, significant others, close friends or roommates as subjects. The best rule

of thumb is: Don't build stories around people you are related to or are particularly close to. Likewise, avoid doing stories about groups you belong to. Such stories will receive a grade reduction, unless: 1) it is a unique circumstance, 2) the story is about your connection to the story subject, and 3) the connection is revealed in the story. Please contact me in advance if you have a story idea that would justify first-person involvement, but these should be the exception and not the rule.

Furthermore, you should avoid using material from another journalist or news organization in your work. All work for this class must be original and produced during and for this course.

### **Deadlines**

Meeting deadlines is a critical part of being a journalist. So is managing multiple things at one time. Always be mindful of upcoming deadlines and manage your time accordingly. Remember to allow ample time for getting a hold of sources.

Assignments turned in within 24 hours of the due date will be deducted 15%. Assignments turned in within 48 hours will be deducted 50%. After that, late assignments will no longer be accepted.

If there are truly extenuating circumstances, you must discuss it with me *before your deadline*.

Late or make-up assignments will not be accepted for any in-class work.

### **School of Communication Statement on Academic Integrity**

A basic mission of a university is to search for and to communicate truth as it is honestly perceived. A genuine learning community cannot exist unless this demanding standard is a fundamental tenet of the intellectual life of the community. Students of Loyola University Chicago are expected to know, to respect, and to practice this standard of personal honesty.

Academic dishonesty can take several forms, including, but not limited to cheating, plagiarism, copying another student's work, and submitting false documents. These examples of academic dishonesty apply to both individual and group assignments. Academic cheating is a serious act that violates academic integrity. Cheating includes, but is not limited to, such acts as:

- Obtaining, distributing, or communicating examination materials prior to the scheduled examination without the consent of the teacher;
- Providing information to another student during an examination;
- Obtaining information from another student or any other person during an examination;
- Using any material or equipment during an examination without consent of the instructor, or in a manner which is not authorized by the instructor;
- Attempting to change answers after the examination has been submitted;
- Taking an examination by proxy. Taking or attempting to take an exam for someone else is a violation by both the student enrolled in the course and the proxy.
- Unauthorized collaboration, or the use in whole or part of another student's work, on homework, lab reports, programming assignments, and any other course work which is completed outside of the classroom;
- Falsifying medical or other documents to petition for excused absences or extensions of deadlines; or
- Any other action that, by omission or commission, compromises the integrity of the academic evaluation process.

Plagiarism is a serious violation of the standards of academic honesty. Plagiarism is the appropriation of ideas, language, work, or intellectual property of another, either by intent or by negligence, without sufficient public acknowledgement and appropriate citation that the material is not one's own. It is true that every thought probably has been influenced to some degree by the thoughts and actions of others. Such influences can be thought of as affecting the ways we see things and express all thoughts. Plagiarism, however, involves the taking and use of specific words and ideas of others without proper acknowledgement of the sources, and includes, but is not limited to, the following:

- Submitting as one's own material copied from a published source, such as Internet, print, CD-ROM, audio, video, etc.;
- Submitting as one's own another person's unpublished work or examination material;
- Allowing another or paying another to write or research a paper for one's own benefit; or
- Purchasing, acquiring, and using for course credit a pre-written paper.
- Submitting the same work for credit in two or more classes, even if the classes are taken in different semesters. If a student plans to submit work with similar or overlapping content for credit in two or more classes, the student should consult with all instructors prior to submission of the work to make certain that such submission will not violate this standard.

The above list is in no way intended to be exhaustive. Students should be guided by the principle that it is of utmost importance to give proper recognition to all sources. To do so is both an act of personal, professional courtesy and of intellectual honesty. Any failure to do so, whether by intent or by neglect, whether by omission or commission, is an act of plagiarism. A more detailed description of this issue can be found at [https://www.luc.edu/academics/catalog/undergrad/reg\\_academicintegrity.shtml](https://www.luc.edu/academics/catalog/undergrad/reg_academicintegrity.shtml) .

Plagiarism or any other act of academic dishonesty will result minimally in the instructor's assigning the grade of "F" for the assignment or examination. The instructor may impose a more severe sanction, including a grade of "F" in the course. All instances of academic dishonesty must be reported by the instructor to the Associate and Assistant Deans of the School of Communication. Instructors must provide the appropriate information and documentation when they suspect an instance of academic misconduct has occurred. The instructor must also notify the student of their findings and sanction. The Associate and Assistant Deans of the School of Communication may constitute a hearing board to consider the imposition of sanctions in addition to those imposed by the instructor, including a recommendation of expulsion, depending on the seriousness of the misconduct. In the case of multiple instances of academic dishonesty, the Dean's office may convene a separate hearing board to review these instances.

The student has the right to appeal the decision of the hearing board to the Dean of SOC. If the student is not a member of the SOC, the dean of the college in which the student is enrolled shall be part of the process. Students have the right to appeal the decision of any hearing board and the deans of the two schools will review the appeal together. Their decision is final in all cases except expulsion. The sanction of expulsion for academic dishonesty may be imposed only by the Provost upon recommendation of the dean or deans.

Students have a right to appeal any finding of academic dishonesty against them. The procedure for such an appeal can be found at: [http://www.luc.edu/academics/catalog/undergrad/reg\\_academicgrievance.shtml](http://www.luc.edu/academics/catalog/undergrad/reg_academicgrievance.shtml) .

The School of Communication maintains a permanent record of all instances of academic dishonesty. The information in that record is confidential. However, students may be asked to sign a waiver which releases that student's record of dishonesty as a part of the student's application to a graduate or professional school, to a potential employer, to a bar association, or to similar organizations.

## **Use of Artificial Intelligence**

To maintain our culture of excellence and integrity, students are not to use AI assisted technology in the classroom unless they are specifically authorized to do so by their faculty for an assignment, a test, a quiz, or any deliverable that will be graded.

## **Accommodations**

Any student with a learning disability that needs special accommodation during exams or class periods should provide documentation from Services for Students with Disabilities confidentially to me. I will accommodate your needs in the best way possible, given the constraints of course content and processes. It is your responsibility to plan in advance in order to meet your own needs and assignment due dates.

## **Online Recordings**

In this class software may be used as needed to record live class discussions. As a student in this class, your participation in live class discussions will be recorded. These recordings will be made available only to students enrolled in the class, to assist those who cannot attend the live session or to serve as a resource for those who would like to review content that was presented. All recordings will become unavailable to students in the class when the Sakai course is unpublished (i.e. shortly after the course ends, per the [Sakai administrative schedule](#)). Students who prefer to participate via audio only will be allowed to disable their video camera so only audio will be captured. Please discuss this option with your instructor.

The use of all video recordings will be in keeping with the University Privacy Statement shown below.

## **Privacy**

Assuring privacy among faculty and students engaged in online and face-to-face instructional activities helps promote open and robust conversations and mitigates concerns that comments made within the context of the class will be shared beyond the classroom. As such, recordings of instructional activities occurring in online or face-to-face classes may be used solely for internal class purposes by the faculty member and students registered for the course, and only during the period in which the course is



offered. Instructors who wish to make subsequent use of recordings that include student activity may do so only with informed written consent of the students involved or if all student activity is removed from the recording.

## **Title IX Notice of Reporting Obligations for Responsible Campus Partners**

As an instructor, I am considered a Responsible Campus Partner (“RCP”) under Loyola’s Comprehensive Policy and Procedures for Addressing Discrimination, Sexual Misconduct, and Retaliation (located at [www.luc.edu/equity](http://www.luc.edu/equity)). While my goal is for you to be able to share information related to your life experiences through discussion and written work, I want to be transparent that as a RCP I am required to report certain disclosures of sexual misconduct (such as sexual assault, sexual harassment, intimate partner and/or domestic violence, and/or stalking) to the University’s Title IX Coordinator.

As an instructor, I also have a mandatory obligation under Illinois law to report disclosures of or suspected instances of child abuse or neglect (<https://www.luc.edu/hr/legal-notices/mandatedreportingofchildabuseandneglect/>).

The purpose of these reporting requirements is for the University to inform students who have experienced sexual/gender-based violence of available resources and support. Such a report will not generate a report to law enforcement (no student will ever be forced to file a report with the police). Furthermore, the University’s resources and supports are available to all students even if a student chooses that they do not want any other action taken. Please note that in certain situations, based on the nature of the disclosure, the University may need to take additional action to ensure the safety of the University community. If you have any questions about this policy, you may contact the Office for Equity & Compliance at [equity@luc.edu](mailto:equity@luc.edu) or 773-508-7766.

If you wish to speak with a confidential resource regarding gender-based violence, I encourage you to call The Line at 773-494-3810. The Line is staffed by confidential advocates from 8:30am-5pm M-F and 24 hours on the weekend when school is in session. Advocates can provide support, talk through your options (medical, legal, LUC reporting, safety planning, etc.), and connect you with additional resources as needed. More information can be found at [luc.edu/coalition](http://luc.edu/coalition) or [luc.edu/wellness](http://luc.edu/wellness).

## **Student Diversity, Equity and Inclusion**

As Loyola's mission statement holds, "We are Chicago's Jesuit, Catholic University—a diverse community seeking God in all things." Together, as a community rich in diversity, we are called to "expand knowledge in the service of humanity through learning, justice and faith."

Recognizing and appreciating the diverse collection of identities, experiences, perspectives, and abilities of the students, faculty, staff, and community partners with whom we collaborate, the School of Communication commits itself to enriching academic experiences through the advancement of diversity, equity, inclusion, anti-racist, and anti-oppressive practices.

## **Managing Life Crises and Finding Support**

Should you encounter an unexpected crisis during the semester (e.g., securing food or housing, addressing mental health concerns, managing a financial crisis, and/or dealing with a family emergency, etc.), I strongly encourage you to contact the Office of the Dean of Students by submitting a CARE referral ([LUC.edu/csaa](https://luc.edu/csaa)) for yourself or a peer in need of support. To learn more about the Office of the Dean of Students, please find their websites here: [LUC.edu/dos](https://luc.edu/dos) or [LUC.edu/csaa](https://luc.edu/csaa); phone number 773-508-8840, email [deanofstudents@luc.edu](mailto:deanofstudents@luc.edu)

## **Schedule**

Investigative reporting is full of unexpected twists and turns. As such, this schedule may change.

Major deadlines are outlined below. Additional work may be assigned. Although it's not explicitly spelled out as homework, you will need to be doggedly reporting out your investigative story throughout the semester.

### **Week One - August 28**

Course overview and expectations; Finding investigative story ideas

### **Week Two - September 4**

Labor Day: NO CLASS

**Week Three** - *September 11*

Gathering documents; FOIA

**Story pitches due**

**Week Four** - *September 18*

Human sources

**FOIA request due**

**Week Five** - *September 25*

Working with data

**Week Six** - *October 2*

Data Part II

**Reporting memo due**

**Week Seven** - *October 9*

Mid-Semester Break: NO CLASS

**Week Eight** - *October 16*

One-on-one conferences

**Week Nine** - *October 23*

Writing a compelling investigation

**Week Ten** - *October 30*

Bullet-proofing your work

**Week Eleven** - *November 6*

Ethics of Investigative Reporting

**Draft due**

**Week Twelve** - *November 13*

One-on-one conferences

**Week Thirteen** - *November 20*

Public affairs spotlight: Police & courts

Thanksgiving break: *November 22-25*

**Week Fourteen** - *November 27*

Public affairs spotlight: Property taxes & real estate records

**Week Fifteen** - *December 4*

Public affairs spotlight: Businesses & non-profits  
**Story due**

**Final Examination** - TBD  
**Retrospective due**