

FLORIDA INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY
School of Communication + Journalism
SPANISH-LANGUAGE JOURNALISM MASTERS PROGRAM

MMC6950/MMC6951 PROFESSIONAL PROJECT SYLLABUS

COURSE DESCRIPTION

The professional project is designed to demonstrate the student's excellence in the area of investigative journalism.

This course provides further training in investigative reporting, teaching students how to go beyond the daily news coverage. The final project will emphasize problem solving in developing stories from conception to finished product.

The course is practical and, at the same time, directs students to think deeply and critically about the stories they will report, write, produce and publish in a multimedia platform.

The project must be completed within one semester.

OBJECTIVES

Students will use the skills they have learned during master's program course work by:

- Identifying story topics and formulate hypotheses for in depth investigation.
- Gathering information by using documents and databases, by interviewing and by doing in-depth field work.
- Writing compelling stories that cover not only the who, what, when and where, but also the why, the how and the "so what?"
- Using effective interviewing techniques.
- Developing a website to publish the project and engaging the audience through social media platforms.
- Demonstrating journalistic ethics, including public trust, truthfulness, fairness, integrity, independence and accountability.

MEASURABLE OUTCOMES

The final professional project will allow students to develop multiple aspects of their story by presenting an in depth report and an online project in a multimedia format. The students have the following options to present their project:

1. A 3000-words feature story, and a 2:30-minutes video package.
2. A 12-minutes video package and a 800-words story for print or digital

In addition, all students must include at least two of the interviews done for their feature story or video package (edited), one photo essay and one infographic or map that contains the story's data and statistics.

All the material should be posted online, using Wordpress or Wix platform.

METHOD:

Because each story will be different, this is a class in which the instructor's one to one coaching will be essential. Stories must have strong sourcing, disciplined attribution, context, and third-party commentaries.

Stories will be evaluated according to the following criteria:

Students should demonstrate that they:

- Can report a story ethically by producing a narrative story that it is well balanced and fair, and guided by the principles of freedom of speech
- Understand his/her role as media professional/applied the writing skills and strategies to keep the reader or viewer engaged
- Understand the relevance of diversity
- Can develop ideas in a truthful manner, with accuracy and fairness.
- Shows basic concepts of communication theories learned during his/her formation
- Shows creativity in finding experts, documents, and any other materials necessary to become an authority on the matter
- Applied how to extract vital information from public records or documents, to conduct productive interviews and ascertain the value of any other materials used in reporting and writing project
- Write correctly, free of any grammatical or spelling errors. The narrative story has proper sentence structure and contains the factual information and attribution to support their original story proposal
- Critically evaluated their professional projects for accuracy and clarity
- Made accurate use of statistics and correctly explained the implications of this data in the story
- Good use of multimedia elements to enhance the impact of the story

PRE-REQUISITE

Students will need to have fieldwork approved by the graduate committee. A Faculty Chair, a Faculty Committee Member, and an outside member will integrate the committee. The student must fill-out the "Professional Project Proposal Approval Form" included in this package together with the "Professional Project Description".

COURSE RULES

- Submit the "Professional Project Proposal Approval Form" before the "add/drop" period.
- Submit the "*hoja de ruta*" (story plan) before the "add /drop" period.
- Student should keep all computer files containing notes, interviews, stories and edited drafts until he/she presents and defends the professional project.
- The story plan must include at least 10 interviews.

- The student must contact the Chair of the Committee every 15 days to show the progress of his/her investigation,
- The students must submit their drafts according to the calendar.

SUGGESTED READINGS *

- Houston, Brant, *Investigative Reporter's Handbook: A Guide to Documents, Databases, and Techniques*, 5th Edition. Bedford/St. Martin's, 2008.
- Reyes, Gerardo, *Periodismo de Investigación*, Editorial Trillas, 2010
- Macleod, Don. *How to Find Out Anything: From Extreme Google Searches to Scouring Government Documents, a Guide to Uncover Anything About Everyone and Everything*, 2012.
- Woodward, Bob, and Bernstein, Carl, *All the President's Men*, 1974.

* These books are available in Amazon, others are available at the FIU library.

GRADE SCALE

A = 95 –100% (your work is good enough to be published as it is)

A- = 90 –94% (your work is good enough to be published but requires some editing)

B+ = 85 –89% (your work is good enough to be published but requires editing)

B = 80 –84% (your work requires a fair amount of editing)

C or less are unacceptable

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AGREEMENT

STUDENTS, PLEASE SIGN THE FOLLOWING FORM AND BRING IT TO THE OFFICE
OF PROF. _____

I HAVE READ AND UNDERSTOOD THE SYLLABUS FOR MMC6950 & MMC 6951
PROFESSIONAL PROJECT AND I WILL FOLLOW THE INSTRUCTIONS AND RULES ESTABLISH
ED BY THE MASTER'S PROGRAM PROFESSIONAL PROJECT COMMITTEE

:

Name: _____

Date: _____

Panther ID: _____

Signature:

FLORIDA INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY

**School of Communication + Journalism
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PROFESSIONAL PROJECT

PROPOSAL

APPROVAL FORM

Proposal submitted to the School of Communication + Journalism, Florida International University, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Master of Science in Mass Communication.

Student's Name: _____ Date Submitted: _____

Student's ID: _____

Title: _____

NOTE: If project is not completed within the semester, student will need to re-register for the project and assume failure for first attempt.

Student's Signature

Approved by the student's Professional Project Committee:

Faculty Chair

Date

Faculty Committee Member

Date

Outside/Faculty Member

Date

Department Approval:

Chair or designee

Date

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PROFESSIONAL PROJECT GRADING FORM

Student's Name: _____ Date Submitted: _____

Student's ID: _____

Title: _____

Approved by the student's Professional Project Committee:

Faculty Chair

Date

Faculty Committee Member

Date

Outside/Faculty Member

Date

Department Approval:

Chair

Date

FINAL GRADE: _____