

JRN 3014: COMPUTER ASSISTED REPORTING

PLNU • SPRING 2022

Wednesdays | 6PM to 8:45PM

FINAL EXAM: Wed., April 27, 2022 7:30 PM to 10PM

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Remote Office Hours by Appointment

COURSE DESCRIPTION

JRN 3014: Computer Assisted Reporting [3 units] introduces students to data and investigative journalism through hands-on laboratory work, including advanced public records, internet and deep-web research; public records requests; and statistical analysis using spreadsheets, databases and maps. Prerequisite(s): JRN 2050.)



EXPECTATIONS + OUTCOMES

This course invites you to improve their technological and research skills to thrive in 21st century journalism. You should be curious, eager and willing to think both creatively and analytically to solve problems. You will be introduced to forensic and investigative research, open records law, newsroom math, spreadsheets, database management and if time permits, mapping and/or coding for stories—topics and skills that are rare in traditional journalism programs and thus set you apart immediately from the pack. No advanced math, coding, or statistical knowledge is required to get started *today*. You may endure some growing pains or feel uncomfortable experimenting and learning by trial and error, but that is essential to both good journalism and personal growth. Journalism is constantly evolving, and if it seems easy, you may not be doing it right.

What you need to know and do to perform this advanced work, you will learn one step at a time with my expert and experienced guidance. By the end of the course, you will have two important types of stories added to your portfolio to help get you the best internships in San Diego and elsewhere: [1] a deep profile on an elected official using background research and [2] a campaign finance story using Excel and/or Access. For my part, I commit to offering you an engaging, safe, fun and rigorous course! #watchpupsforlife

COURSE TEXTS, SOFTWARE, RESOURCES + EQUIPMENT

- ✓ **[Required]** B. Houston. ***Data for Journalists***. 5th Ed. Kindle. 2018. ISBN 0815370407.
- ✓ **[Required]** Microsoft **Excel** (latest PC version; no substitutions)
- ✓ **[Required]** Functional **internet** connection, **microphone** and **camera** for Zoom meetings
- ✓ **[Suggested]** At least 15" **screen size** for main screen; preferably a second or device
- ✓ **[Suggested]** D. Cuillier and C. Davis. ***The Art of Access: Strategies for Acquiring Public Records***. 2nd Ed. Kindle. 2019. ISBN 1506380700.
- ✓ **[Extra Credit]** P. Modiano. *Dora Bruder* (FR, 1997, ISBN 9782070408481). *The Search Warrant* (UK ISBN 9781784876388). ***Dora Bruder*** (US Kindle ISBN 9780520214262).

GRADING PRACTICES + POLICIES

Grade Composition

Quizzes	25 %	In-Class Activities, Labs	10 %
Public Records Request	10 %	Final Exam	10 %
Bulletproofing Exercise	10 %	Participation/Attendance	10 %
Investigative Pitch	15 %	Extra Credit Potential	10%
Excel Pitch	10 %		

Grade Ranges

A 95-100%	B+ 87-89%	C+ 77-79%	D+ 67-69%
A- 90-94%	B 84-86%	C 74-76%	D 64-66%
	B- 80-83%	C- 70-73%	D- 60-63%

Attendance & Participation Policy

- **Regular attendance at all classes—remote or in-person**—is considered essential to optimum academic achievement. I will use tools to measure your attendance, participation and engagement in the course. **On-camera participation during Zoom meetings is required.**
- **Two [2] or more absences** may result in your de-enrollment without proper documentation from the DRC. **Three [3] or more absences** may result in you failing the course. Please communicate with me about any challenges that are impeding your attendance or participation, and we will be able to avoid a crisis.
- If you are absent and miss a quiz, group activities, or lab work, there are **no makeups**, and your scores for that day will be a zero unless you have a doctor's note or special exemption.
- **Further details** on PLNU's attendance policy is online: [PLNU Class Attendance Policy](#).

Extra Credit Policy

Extra credit counts only if you participate in class and turn in your regular assignments.

Extra credit is a grade enhancer, not a substitution for missed work. It offers some grace if you have a “bad” day, or if you want to keep improving on an already good effort (for those perfectionists out there!), but it won't solve catastrophic situations if you get behind in your work.

You can earn as much as a 10% boost overall between a number of extra credit opportunities. There's one catch: to be eligible for extra credit, you need to maintain at least a C average (74% or higher) in the course, and you can have no more than one [1] unexcused absence. I do not drop grades wholesale, but **I use several other strategies to determine the most generous calculation of your grade.** I am on your side and genuinely desire that you succeed and be proud of your work in this class this semester. Your honest effort and positive attitude may make all the difference when I consider these variables or if you are hovering between grades (e.g. B+/A- or B/B+).

Cheating

Don't test me. Now more than ever our profession and audiences crave the highest ethical and truth standards. Investigative and data journalism require even higher standards for accuracy and ethics. I have a **zero tolerance policy for cheating, plagiarism, or shortcuts that matches current professional standards and best practices.** Review our University Academic Honesty that outlines the myriad ways in which gaming the system is a very bad idea for you: [PLNU Academic Honesty Policies & Definitions](#). **Cheating of any type (even “accidental”) will result in the automatic failure of the assignment or quiz. A second occurrence will result in the automatic failure of the entire course.**

Academic Accommodations

If you have a diagnosed disability, please contact PLNU's Disability Resource Center (DRC) within the first two weeks of class to demonstrate need and to register for accommodation by phone at 619-849-2486 or by e-mail at DRC@pointloma.edu. See the DRC website for additional information: [Disability Resource Center](#).