News Narrative Design III, Fall 2017

**Course Description:** News, Narrative and Design III concludes the course series for Journalism + Design with a semester-long look at an approach to reporting that combines design processes, systems thinking and investigative rigor: Solutions Journalism.

Solutions Journalism a term for stories that focus on responses to social problems and how those responses work.

For many journalists and citizens, the principle role of journalism is to expose wrongdoing. **Journalists must be rigorous in holding the powerful to account.** Investigative work typically focuses on unearthing problems -- unmasking corporate corruption, for example, or tracking patterns of racial discrimination, the impact of climate change on communities.

But solutions journalism takes as its starting point that, for journalists to tell the “whole story,” we have to include rigorous reporting on the ways people have tried to address these intractable problems, as well as the problems themselves. It is skeptical of those solutions, and interrogates them critically and fearlessly. We are not writing puff-pieces, advocacy or uncritical stories. We are not writing “feel-good” press release-type stories for organizations doing “good work.”

From the Solutions Journalism mission statement: “**We seek to rebalance the news, so that every day people are exposed to stories that help them understand problems and challenges, and stories that show potential ways to respond.**”

In a more tactical way, I hope this class will also prepare you for the senior capstone. You may use this class to explore topics and story threads that you can pursue more deeply in the final capstone class.

**FORMS:**

This class builds on these core concepts of the Journalism + Design program.

1. Skepticism and Empathy (Speaking with community, identifying and questioning assumptions)
2. Brainstorm and Synthesis (Research, reporting and drafting)
3. Iteration + Critique (Being edited, re-working your projects)

NNDII is a prerequisite for this class.
Course Requirements:

1. **Read the news everyday.** News can come from legacy media like the NYT and the WSJ, broadcast outlets like NPR, CNN or ESPN, or digital first outlets like Buzzfeed and Vox, among others. *Note: Snapchat, Facebook and Apple News are not news outlets. You may read news stories on these platforms, but be sure you know the outlet that fed the content to these platforms. Be prepared to submit 3 weekly news quiz questions -- we will have a quiz every Monday morning.* This counts as part of your participation grade.

Some suggested resources for news:

- **Politico’s Morning Media Newsletter** -- terrific sources for the backstory on major news stories and events.

- **A Google Doc of Newsletters about the News**

- Rachel Schallom’s **Best in Visual Storytelling**

*If you have other resources for finding great stories, please share them with the class*

2. **Media Criticism:** You will write one, 300-800 word piece, one “email newsletter” and one tweet-storm (min 12 tweets-max 24 tweets) of media criticism. These will be your opportunity to develop a productive critique of today’s journalism, with a discussion of solutions for how you think things should be done differently.

3. **Data Assignments.** We are extremely lucky to have the excellent Coulter Jones assigned to our class as a data embed. His sessions will guide you more deeply into the use of data as a journalist. He will give you assignments on which you’ll be graded. He’ll also be available to help identify data sources for your reporting.

4. **A reporting portfolio.** Using Google docs, keep a running document tracking all of your research and reporting. **Think of this as your reporting journal.** It should include notes you take during interviews, photos you take on the street, contact information you gather while meeting with people, inspirational art you see that drives you to be interested in a subject, a research study, data set or news article that provided context for your work. You will be required to turn in this portfolio throughout the semester, **and it is an important part of your final grade. You can also use this as a source-list and resource repository for your capstone.**

5. **A reporting board.** With the guidance of our design embed, you will create a visual document that shows the progression of your reporting. This will, in turn, guide your decision about what form your final project will take (video, podcast, slideshow, longform text, etc.)
6. One solutions-focused story that will be iteratively designed over the course of the semester. You will be graded on your willingness to experiment and to pivot, as well as the thoroughness of your reporting.

Grades: Grades will be based on attendance, participation in class and fulfillment of requirements (including being present, as described above). They will also be based on improvement, hard work, and willingness to learn. A good grade requires pushing yourself, and stepping outside your comfort zone. There are no inflated grades. A grade of C is for so-so work, a B for good work, and an A- for strong work. An A is for truly outstanding work. If you want an A in this class, please speak to me at the beginning of the semester.

Grade calculation:

- Class Participation (News quiz questions, attending and being present in class, contributing to class discussion by speaking in class or via Canvas, offering constructive assessments of your work and that of your colleagues): 25%
- Media analysis assignments (newsletter, media critique, tweetstorm): 25%
- Data assignments: 25%
- Story reporting and design process: 25%

Attendance Policy

- Students will lose a half grade for each unexcused absence.
- After 4 unexcused absences, you automatically fail the class.
- Lateness (more than 15 minutes without reasonable explanation) will be considered an absence.
- Absences are excused either by providing a doctor’s note or approval by the professor in consultation with the chair of the department beforehand. Students may not be excused from class by any other office in the college. I require 24 hours advance notice -- prior to 8 a.m. the Sunday before class -- for approved absences (family emergencies, unchangeable obligations, etc.)
- At the Program's direction, I will keep a written attendance record.

Weeks One through 5: Diving into reporting

Week One -- August 28
Pass the Clap, Mind-Mapping, Media Analysis, Introduction to Solutions Journalism

Week 2 -- September 4
No Class

Week 3 -- September 11
How to report a solutions story -- sources, approaches, pitfalls

**Week 4 -- September 18**
Guest: Coulter Jones. Data, Part 1

**Week 5 -- September 25**
Guest: Liza Gross, The Solutions Journalism Network

**Weeks 6 through 9: Designing your stories/Exploring new forms**

**Week 6 -- October 2**
Guest: Design Embed -- Quoctrung Bui, the NYT
Mapping your stories, making reporting visible

**Week 7 -- October 9**
Guest: Design Embed -- Quoctrung Bui, the NYT
Free speech, the first amendment and online discourse

**Week 8 -- October 16**
Guest: Design Embed -- Quoctrung Bui, the NYT
Mapping your stories
Curriculum disruption: Racism, hate speech and diversity in newsrooms

**Week 9 -- October 23**
Guest: Design Embed -- Quoctrung Bui, the NYT
Due: The “Howdunnit” story structure
Topic: So Silicon Valley took over journalism. What’s next?

**Week 10 - 13: Digging into Data/Developing Your Media Critique**

**Week 10 -- October 30**
Due: First draft of solutions story
Guest: Data embed -- Coulter Jones, Part 2

**Week 11 -- November 6**
Coulter Jones, Part 3

*Guest: Rachel Shallom, Newsletters and Design*

**Week 12 -- November 13**

*Due: Newsletter #1*

Guest: Allison Morrow, Senior Editor, CNN -- Snapchat

What’s a tweetstorm

**Week 13 -- November 20**

*Due: Tweetstorm #1*

*Solutions Journalism -- Liza Gross*

**Week 14 - 17: Report, Critique, Iterate**

**Week 14 -- November 27**

*Due: Newsletter #2*

One-on-one sessions with Allison

**Week 15 -- December 4**

Adrian Chen -- Moderation

**Week 16 -- December 11**

*Due: Final Draft*