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JRNL 473.03: International Reporting

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JRNL 473 International Reporting

Meets Mondays and Wednesdays, 11:10 a.m. to 12:30 p.m., in DAH 301

Instructor

Prof. Henriette Lowisch

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Office Hours

Mondays, 1:30 to 3:30 p.m.

Thursdays, 10 a.m. to noon

And by appointment

Course Objective

This course introduces advanced journalism students to the opportunities and challenges of international reporting. It will acquaint you with the practical difficulties that arise from working in unfamiliar environments. Cultural differences, access to sources, propaganda and language barriers are issues to be examined, as are logistics and safety. The course will also survey how today's media organizations cover foreign news and identify new and alternative platforms for international stories.

Course Topics

Here's an outline of the areas this course will cover:

A History of Foreign Correspondence

- From the early travelers through the Golden Age to today's bloggers and tweeters.

Changing Perspectives

- How media outlets in the U.S. cover international news, compared to websites, newspapers, radio and TV stations in other countries.

Who Reports the World

- Contemporary foreign correspondents and their work environment.
- The business of international news coverage.
- The role of news agencies, satellite television and the Internet.
- How social media are changing ways of reporting and consuming international news.

Lost in Translation

- Bridging the communication divide.
- Which languages are spoken where.
- Working with a translator.
- Special challenges for women journalists in traditionalist countries.
- Identifying your (re)sources, and using them wisely.

- Access to local governments and the "man on the street."
- Reliability and role of local media and social networks.

Logistics

- Visa questions.
- Technical infrastructure.
- Transportation.
- Communicating with newsrooms, editors and audiences.

Reporting War

- Change and continuity.
- Special mental and physical preparation.
- Independence vs. safety.

Reporting Diplomacy

- International conferences and negotiations.
- Finding and using sources.
- Keeping abreast of developments.
- How to avoid insider coverage.

Finding and Selling Stories

- Creating your niche with business, entertainment, science and environmental stories.
- Benefits and limits of having read up on your subject.
- Learning from and standing up to veteran news people.
- Selling your angle while avoiding clichés.
- Crowd sourcing and crowd funding.

The Do's and Don'ts of International Reporting

- A shortlist of what to do and what to avoid when reporting from abroad.

Course Structure

Class Time

Expect short lectures, followed by discussion, as well as in-class exercises and occasional Skype talks. Mondays will typically feature a news quiz or an in-class exercise. Wednesdays will typically be devoted to mini-lectures, student presentations, pitch sessions and guest speaker appearances.

Follow the News

The Economist will be your required reading for the semester. Sign up for your own subscription at economist.com; student rates are as low as \$1.50 / week.

In addition, please join the Facebook group [Montana Reporters Abroad](#), a forum for former J-School students and other Montanans involved in international reporting.

In the first half of the semester, I will assign readings and quiz you on them each week. In the second half of the semester, you will select your own articles and share annotated links on Facebook.

Alternative Media Survey

In recent years, U.S. mainstream media organizations have cut back on foreign reporting. Alternative

platforms and digital-only news outlets are picking up the slack. One of the goals of this course will be to identify and evaluate alternative sources for foreign news, from the perspective of the audience as well as from the perspective of international reporters looking to publish their work. In this effort, we will likely collaborate with students of Freie Universitaet Berlin led by [Prof. Carola Richter](http://www.polsoz.fu-berlin.de/en/kommwiss/arbeitsstellen/internationale_kommunikation/mitarbeiter_innen/crichter/) (http://www.polsoz.fu-berlin.de/en/kommwiss/arbeitsstellen/internationale_kommunikation/mitarbeiter_innen/crichter/)

Final Project Options

You have two options for your final project for this course. They require equal amounts of dedication and hard work. Both are fun, practical ways to learn about international reporting. Choose by Feb. 2.

Option 1: Media Research

This option is somewhat frontloaded, as it involves presenting the results of the Alternative Media Survey at the UMCUR conference on Apr. 17. As a team, you will research sources and publishing platforms for international news that have emerged in the past 10 years. You will systematically analyze content; describe formats; investigative business models; interview editors and contributors; write a conference abstract, and prepare materials for a poster as well as a digital presentation. I will be there to help you with rubrics, editing, distribution of tasks, etc.

If you choose Option 1, find an alternative international news outlet and name it in class on Feb. 2.

Option 2: Trip File

This option involves assembling an online trip file for a foreign reporting mission you're planning in the next 12 months. You will select and research a destination; find and interview a local person from that region; read and review a book; develop and pitch story ideas, and create and populate a blog. Your file will establish your credentials as a freelancer and demonstrate the merit of your reporting project. The final product is due May 11 at 5 p.m. You will receive a rubric by the second week of class.

If you choose Option 2, pick a workable destination and propose it in class on Feb. 2.

Study Abroad Opportunities

The J-School is currently developing study abroad opportunities that might or might not come to fruition by summer of 2015. Please indicate if you'd be interested. I will keep you posted, and will likely call on you for help if things become more concrete.

Professionalism

To learn is your responsibility. It is imperative that you follow all instructions closely and completely. Otherwise, you risk squandering the opportunities this course affords.

- Adhere to all deadlines and closely follow instructions for assignments.
- Don't be late. Class doesn't start at 11:11 a.m. It starts at 11:10 a.m.
- Notify me in advance if you are ill or need to miss a class for other valid reasons.
- You get one free absence, as long as you notify me in advance.
- Mute your electronic devices and use them for class-related activity only.
- To act professionally at all times will positively affect your final grade.
- Unexcused absences and late shows will negatively affect your final grade.
- Missing one third of classes will automatically result in failing the course.

Grading

- Final project: 35 percent
- Quizzes: 20 percent
- Homework assignments: 15 percent
- In-class exercises: 15 percent
- Discussion: 15 percent

Learning Outcomes

By the end of the semester, you will:

- Develop your ability to communicate across cultural differences.
- Become current in developments and events occurring around the globe.
- Know the structure and functioning of the global media system.
- Familiarize yourself with technologies used in international reporting.
- Hone your ability to develop and pitch story ideas.
- Explore how to finance a free-lance reporting trip abroad.
- Make valuable cross-cultural and international connections.
- Be ready to venture abroad as a journalist, not a tourist.

Graduate Increment

Option 1

Lead research team and facilitate transatlantic communication.

Option 2

Complete each task on accelerated schedule and present results to the class.

Academic Honesty

All students must practice academic honesty. Academic misconduct is subject to an academic penalty by the course instructor and/or a disciplinary sanction by the University. All students need to be familiar with the [Student Conduct Code](http://www.umt.edu/vpsa/policies/student_conduct.php) (http://www.umt.edu/vpsa/policies/student_conduct.php).

Same Work for Multiple Classes in J-School

You may not submit for this course any assignment that has previously or will be concurrently submitted for another class, unless you receive prior approval from the professor for this course. To do so without permission will result in an "F" for the assignment, and could result in an "F" for the course.

Accommodation for Students with Disabilities

This course is accessible to otherwise qualified students with disabilities. The syllabus and grading will be done through Moodle. To request reasonable program modifications, please consult with the instructor. [Disability Services for Students](http://life.umt.edu/dss) (<http://life.umt.edu/dss>) will assist in the accommodation process.