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JRNL 570.01: Covering Environmental & Resource Issues

Joseph L. Eaton

University of Montana - Missoula, joe.eaton@umontana.edu

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Journalism 570 Covering the Environment and Natural Resources

Meets Tuesdays and Thursdays, 11 a.m. – 12:20 p.m., in DAH 316

Instructor

Joe Eaton
Don Anderson Hall 409
Phone: (406) 243-6825
Joe.eaton@mso.umt.edu

Office Hours

Tuesdays and Thursdays, 12:30 p.m. to 2:30 p.m.
And by appointment

Course Objectives

This course applies the journalistic method to the coverage of environmental science and natural resources issues. Through lectures, workshops, exercises, instructor feedback, peer review and class discussion, you will explore the field, learn how to report and tell stories of innovation, research, risk, policymaking, conflict and change. As a reporter, you will develop story ideas, gather news, conduct interviews and work on deadline. You will pitch and submit stories to media outlets and develop your journalism portfolio.

Learning Outcomes

Successful students will:

- Produce news and features on environmental science and natural resource issues for a variety of publications
- Apply news values and ethical and professional standards
- Practice developing and pitching story ideas
- Know how to cultivate and interview sources
- Hone their writing and editing skills
- Publish a story in a professional news outlet
- Gain a deep understanding of the history and watchdog role of journalists
- Gain experience holding public figures, intuitions, businesses and organizations accountable
- Gain experience reporting pieces involving diverse cultures
- Gain experience filing public records requests
- Gain experience working with data, documents and insider information

Reporting

During the course of this class, you will pitch, report and write eight stories (maybe more, maybe less), with mounting levels of sophistication in terms of sources, news value, storytelling and format. You'll be on deadline, and I will hold you to real-world standards. I will edit and return them with detailed feedback. You may be required to submit rewrites.

Publication Requirement

To receive credit for this course, you must publish a story in a professional media outlet. If you do not, you will receive an incomplete for the class. You will have until the end of Spring Semester 2018 to fulfill the requirement and have the grade converted. If you do not you will be required to take the course next fall.

That said, you should aim to publish all of your stories. Now is the time to develop a great set of clips. You have two years here at UM to develop the portfolio that will get you a job (or not). Start today. All publishes work will receive 100 percent.

Classroom discussion is an essential part of this course. Attendance and active participation are essential to your grade. That means completing assigned reading and other homework before class. You are also expected to read and think like a journalist. If you are adequately conversant on the news, we'll enjoy excellent discussion. As for the participation grade, you'll lose 5 percentage points for every unexcused absence.

A note on paying attention in the Internet age. Active participation requires your complete attention. Traveling in the online world, unless you are actively working on a story, will harm our discussion and hinder your grade.

All writing for this class must be original. As stated in the University of Montana Student Conduct Code, you may not submit for this course any assignment that you have submitted or will submit for another class or publication unless you receive prior approval from me. To do so without permission will result in an F for the assignment and could result in an F for the course. You may not recycle pieces previously written for publication. You must be able to identify the sources of all information you use. Upon request, you must provide story notes and contact information for all sources.

Rules of integrity. Cheating will not be tolerated. 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.

Plagiarism. Submitted work **must** be entirely original; you may not copy or borrow phrasing or sentence structure, unless you attribute clearly. **If you are uncertain about what is or is not appropriate, ask me.** Submitting the work of someone else as your own is a serious violation of journalistic ethics and the University of Montana Student Conduct Code. An act of plagiarism will result in an F for the course and possible disciplinary sanction by the university.

A note on unnamed sources and granting sources anonymity. Unnamed sources are not allowed unless cleared with professor. In addition, writers will not change the names of sources for publication. Every story must include a list of sources with telephone numbers and email addresses. Nothing will be written “for class only.” You will report as if your stories will be published and should strive to make that happen. Treat sources accordingly.

Texts

The Art and Craft of Feature Writing, William E. Blundell

The AP Stylebook. No older than 2009. Online versions not acceptable. Learn it! Use it!

Readings

In addition, this course requires you to read like a journalist. You are expected to read at least one national newspaper (The New York Times, The Washington Post, The Wall Street Journal) as well as the Missoulian and the Kaimin. In addition, you must read national magazines including the New Yorker and The Atlantic, as well as magazines that cover science and natural resources including High Country News, Orion, National Geographic, Smithsonian, etc. Students should also familiarize themselves with daily environmental news gathered at the homepage of the Society of Environmental Journalists at sej.org. This is by no means an exhaustive list. Please read widely and bring great stories that you have found to our attention.

Grading

Stories/Pitches: 80 percent

Participation: 20 percent

Deadlines

Journalism is deadline-driven. A late assignment is a failed assignment. In rare instances involving documentable extenuating circumstances, such as hospitalization, I may grant an extension or, in the case of breaking news, make an alternative assignment.

Accommodation for Students with Disabilities

This course is accessible to otherwise qualified students with disabilities. 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.