

Environmental Reporting

CAS 1990 –Section E, CRN 96206 (Richard Watts)

Contact Richard at rwatts@uvm.edu or 802-373-1131

Goals:

- *Become better writers and reporters*
- *Know more about environmental issues with a focus on transportation*
- *Know more about how decisions are made and the role of the media in a democracy*

Approach: The best way to learn is by doing. Here we will dive into environmental reporting, with a particular focus on transportation. Students will write and produce stories that can be published with media partners through the Community News Service.

Grading

Class participation	15%
Class stories (13 assigned complete 11)	85%

Stories are assigned on Thursday and due the following Thursday – before class starts. 13 are assigned, 11 must be completed on deadline. Published stories receive an automatic A. (Stories can be audio, video, photo just have to meet deadline and expectations. It is possible longer/more complicated stories count as two or that students will work in teams. The bottom line is you learn by doing and we aspire to produce work that gets published).

Attendance is required, unless a pre-approved absence or note from the Dean's Office. Cell phones are not permitted in class. Laptop use not permitted in class (except when allowed).

Class stories are graded based on:

- 1) Clarity and organization of the writing (including typos),
- 2) Quality of content
- 3) Creativity and originality

Wk 1 & Wk 2 (Aug 28, Sept 4)

News Fundamentals + Intro: We will tackle the fundamental questions around news judgment, what a reporter's role is and other foundational topics. What is news? How do we judge if a story is newsworthy? What is the role of a reporter in society?

Justin Trombly: Sept 5 (elements of a story)

Jack Hanson: Sept 7 (why transportation matters)

Assignment 1: Legislative interview, due Sept 7

Assignment 2: Jack Hanson and sustainable transportation, due Sept 14

Wk 3 & Wk 4 (Sept 11, Sept 18)

Interview and Research Techniques: This lesson explores the most important tool in a reporter's toolbox: The interview. How does a reporter conduct a successful interview? How does a reporter conduct comprehensive research to make sure a story is on solid footing?

Walking field trip: Sept 14 (dress appropriately)

Cycling field trip: Sept 21 (Alternative options provided)

Assignment 3: Due Sept 21

Assignment 4: Due Sept 28

Wk 5 & Wk 6 (Sept 18, Sept 25)

Writing: How does a reporter craft a story once their reporting is finished? What are some major differences between news writing and other writing? What are some examples of strong news writing?

Transit field trip: Sept 28

Assignment 5: Due Oct 5

Assignment 6: Due Oct 12

Wk 7 & Wk 8 (Oct 2 and Oct 9)

Ethics + Law: This lesson looks at how to conduct yourself as an ethical reporter and goes over some best practices. What does it mean to be an ethical journalist? How has journalism ethics changed through the years? What legal rights do we have, and what are the limits of those rights?

Assignment 7: Due Oct 19

Assignment 8: Due Oct 26

Wk 9 & Wk 10 (Oct 16 and 23)

News Photography + Art: We'll look at how to successfully capture strong news photos, and how to choose "art" — a reporter's term for a visual element accompanying an article. What makes a strong photo? How do you take a strong photo with limited equipment, usually just a cell phone?

Assignment 9: Due Nov 2

Assignment 10: Due Nov. 9

Wk 11 & Wk 12 (Oct 30 and Nov. 6)

Working a beat: Learning to become a beat reporter is one of the most tried-and-true methods of coming up with strong stories. This lesson will explore tactics and skills necessary to own a beat in your town. What is a beat? How does a reporter find news off a beat? How do you develop official and unofficial sources? How do you decide what are the best stories off a beat? How do you go from idea to pitch?

Assignment 11: Due Nov. 16

Assignment 12: Due Nov 30

WK 13 & Wk 14 (Nov. 13 and Nov 27 – note TGiving Break Wk of Nov 20)

Community News and Democracy & final class work: A thriving democracy relies on an informed and engaged electorate. Local news, in particular, is essential to civic engagement, trust, voter participation, and community vitality. Now more than ever, it can be a critical tool to help combat misinformation and polarization.

Assignment 13: Due Dec. 7

Revisions are allowed to receive full credit or to meet publishing requirements, with the permission of the instructor.