



O.P. Jindal Global University
A Private University Promoting Public Service



COURSE TITLE: *The Art of Humane Storytelling in Media*

Course Instructor: Mr. Hanan Zaffar, Assistant Professor of Practice

Jindal Institute of Behavioral Sciences (JIBS)

3 Credit Course

SPRING SEMESTER 2026

Faculty Contact: Mr. Hanan Zaffar

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Office Hours: Monday: 10:00 am- 6:30 pm

Classroom: TBD

The information provided herein is by the Course Coordinator. The following information contains the official record of the details of the course.

PART I

Course Title:		
Course Code	BE-E-0118	
Course Duration	1 Semester	
No. of Credit Units	3	
Level	UG/PG	
Pre-Requisites	Nil	
Pre-Cursors	Nil	
Equivalent Courses	Nil	
Exclusive Courses	Nil	
Class Timing

PART II

Course Description:

The course offers an introduction to journalistic writing for print and digital media through a humanitarian lens yet devoid of behavioural biases. It intends at training students about multi-media storytelling techniques that are investigative, non-stereotypical and gender inclusive.

It introduces to the basics of print storytelling, from story ideation to pitching, writing, structuring, editing, and publishing for national and international media houses.

It also deals with understanding ethical conundrums writers and journalists face whilst reporting. The course also provides a sneak peek into digital and print newsrooms.

Learning Outcomes:

At the end of the course, the student should be able to:

- 1) Write human-interest stories, op-eds, advertorials, hard and soft features for media organizations.
- 2) Pitch relevant stories of different beats to editors of national and international media houses.
- 3) Understand media and communication theories and guidelines relevant to writing for media
- 4) Understand newsroom ecosystem and its working.

Course Format

The course focuses on teaching students the skills and techniques necessary to effectively communicate through various forms of media, including print and digital media. Teaching methods focus on active student learning through lectures, activities (group and individual) and visual storytelling consumption. Learning typically falls into two broad categories in the classes that includes pedagogical methods and self-learning through discussions, and hands-on writing assignments, such as creating news articles.

Empirical learning at Brain Behaviour Laboratory

In addition to classroom teaching, the students will be exposed to brain-behavior lab where they will be introduced to different instruments and equipment that would be used to study the factors that can influence the accuracy of eyewitness testimonies and hence the factuality of the reportages. Students would learn about conducting “eyewitness test” which would help them understand the importance of observation, memory, and accurate reporting. This exercise will not be related to a criminal investigation but instead focus on enhancing students' observational skills and critical thinking abilities which is important in writing long-form narrative-based stories.

Percentage breakdown of Grade:

70% Internal Exam
30% End Semester Exam (Closed book and timed)

Assignment 1: Story Pitching- 30%- Linked to learning outcomes 2 and 4

For this assignment students will be tasked with developing a pitch for a story that can be produced for a specific media platform— print or digital. The pitch should include a compelling story idea, a clear and concise summary of the story's key points, a description of the intended audience, and an explanation of why this story is important or timely. As part of the assignment, students will also be asked to provide feedback to their peers on their pitches and to reflect on their own process of developing and refining their story ideas. The goal of this assignment is to help students develop their skills in storytelling, audience analysis, and persuasive communication.

Assignment 2: Hard/ Feature story writing- 30% - Linked to Learning outcomes 1 and 3

For this assignment students will be tasked with researching and writing a news or feature story on a current event or issue of their choice. The story should be thoroughly researched and based on credible sources, and should incorporate elements of journalistic writing such as accuracy, fairness,

and clarity. Students will be expected to develop a clear angle or focus for their story, and to present the information in a compelling and engaging way. The goal of this assignment is to help students develop their skills in writing for various national and international media organizations.

Assignment 3: Continuous in-class experiential activities -10%- Linked to Learning Outcome 1,2,3 and 4

These activities will happen in each class that will help students to interact and talk to each other and encourage subsequent classroom interactions. These activities will encourage deeper thinking, critical thinking and communication skills.

*(*Please note that absenteeism on the day of assessment will not be entertained and no assessments shall be rescheduled.)*

Missed or Late Assessment Submission

All assessments are expected to be submitted on the scheduled day. In case of exceptional circumstances, the student can contact the course instructor and at their discretion (with or without penalty), the instructor may take a call on the concession that is granted. It is the students responsibility to double check that the correct file has been submitted. In case the incorrect or corrupted document is submitted for evaluation, it may result in a lower grade for the student.

Grading of Student Assessment

Letter Grade	Percentage of Marks	Grade Points	Interpretation
O	80 and above	8	Outstanding: Exceptional knowledge of the subject matter, thorough understanding of issues; ability to synthesize ideas, rules and principles and extraordinary critical and analytical ability.
A+	75 - 79	7.5	Excellent: Sound knowledge of the subject matter, thorough understanding of issues; ability to synthesize ideas, rules and principles and critical and analytical ability.
A	70 - 74	7	Very Good: Sound knowledge of the subject matter, excellent organizational capacity, ability to synthesize ideas, rules and principles, critically analyse existing material and originality in thinking and presentation.
A-	65 -69	6	Good: Good understanding of the subject matter, ability to identify issues and provide balanced solutions to problems and good critical and analytical skills.
B+	60 - 64	5	Fair: Average understanding of the subject matter, limited ability to identify issues and provide solutions to problems and reasonable critical and analytical skills.
B	55 - 59	4	Acceptable: Adequate knowledge of the subject matter to go to the next level of the study and reasonable critical and

			analytical skills.
B-	50 - 54	3	Marginal: Limited knowledge of the subject matter and irrelevant use of materials, and poor critical and analytical skills.
P1	45 - 49	2	Pass 1: Pass with Basic understanding of the subject matter.
P2	40 - 44	1	Pass 2: Pass with Rudimentary understanding of the subject matter.
F	Below 40	0	Fail: Poor comprehension of the subject matter; poor critical and analytical skills and marginal use of the relevant materials. Will require repeating the course.

Course Outline and Readings

Unit 1) Story writing and gathering techniques (Week 1-2)

Story ideation. Story mapping and brainstorming. Story pitching; Constituents of a pitch
 Working with editors. Stories on Solution journalism, Trauma Journalism.
 Writing a story: Structure and Components Header, Dek, Lede, Nutgraphs, Blurbs, Quotes
 Intro styles,
 Parsimony, brevity and avoiding cliches. Rules for quoting and avoiding plagiarism
 Interviewing: Types and Guidelines, Talking to Sources: Ethics
 Interviewing survivors of traumatic experiences and people from conflict zones
 Triangulation of Sources. Soviet Media Theory. Habituation by media.

Unit 2) Media Ethics and Conundrums (Week 3-5)

Understanding ethics in media. Conflict of Interest. Corporate-media ownerships and nexus.
 Privacy. Plagiarism. Sting operations and concept of “lying to get the truth”. Concept of self-censorship. How state censorship leads to self-censorship among journalists?
 Gate keeping and Agenda setting. Cognitive Dissonance Theory
 The publishing dilemma and Poverty Porn. The media parlance and the notion of ‘objectivity’
 Debating culture in newsrooms: Pros and cons. Focus on hyper-nationalism and xenophobia for greater audience reach.
 Social media journalism: Relevance and Problems
 Muted Group Theory. Halo effect

Unit 3) Story structuring and editing (Week 6-7)

Inverted Pyramid Style of Writing
Concept of 5Ws and 1 H in writing
Fact Checking (tools), copy editing and proof reading

Unit 4) Story types (Week 8-9)

Gonzo writing, Hard news, features, narrative non-fiction, interpretive reporting, investigative reporting
Column writing, opinion pieces, editorials, advertorials
Writing for beats: Politics, Sports, Business, Crime, Environment, Fashion, Food, Technology
Entertainment, Cinema
Feature writing techniques and structure. Types of features: News, Personality, Human interest, Historical, Cultural

Unit 5) Understanding Digital and Print Newsroom (Week 10-12)

Functions of newsroom. Duties and responsibilities of a Reporter, Editor and Commissioning editor.
Understanding PR, Publicity, Propaganda and Advertising.
Understanding Chomsky's five filters of media: Ownership; Advertising; Official sources; Flak;
Marginalizing dissent
Writing House journals and Press Releases. Covering Press Conferences, Exhibitions and Events
Understanding news and news values

Unit 6) Writing Guidelines Week 13-15)

Understanding the importance of style guides. Associated Press style guide for print reports.
Newspaper and magazine designs & layouts
Gender neutral language in reporting.

Readings

Friedlander, Jay & Lee, John (eds.). (2010). Feature writing for newspapers and magazines: The pursuit of excellence (7th Ed). London: Allyn & Bacon
Writing Feature Articles by Brendan Hennessy (Focal Press)
Editing for Print by Geoffrey Rogers (MacDonald Book 1993)

CLASSROOM POLICIES

Professional Conduct in Classroom

You are expected to arrive on time in the classroom and follow the classroom decorum. It is expected that you are punctual in class and be seated immediately within the first two minutes so that the class can start on time. Students arriving after a ten minute window from the designated start time will be refused entry/attendance. You are expected to participate in the classroom discussions, activities and presentation. Participation is essential in this class. You are also expected to be respectful when the instructor is teaching. Furthermore, you are welcomed to share your thoughts in the class but you are expected to do that respectfully and be welcoming of other perspectives in the class even if you disagree with the same.

Notes on Plagiarism

Plagiarism is not acceptable! Please refrain from copying and pasting paragraphs and sentences from your reading materials. This include copying someone's words, structure, grammar, ideas, thoughts, and phrases and passing them as your own. Too many quotes are not acceptable!

What is acceptable? Using one quote which is not more than 40 words with proper citation. Use citation! It's a must! Present the content you read from your reading materials in your own words! Think and critically analyse the content! The source should be always acknowledged in your written material and presentation. All papers in this class will be checked electronically for plagiarism.

Attendance Policy

Students are expected to attend all classes (100% attendance). A student who fails to attend a class is expected to inform the Course Instructor, orally or in writing, the reason for his or her absence. A minimum of 75% attendance is mandatory, failing which, student is not permitted to take the final exam or end term exam.

Safe Space Pledge

Some parts of this course may discuss a range of issues that might result in distress for some students. Discussions and images in the course might also provoke strong emotional responses. To make sure that all students collectively benefit from the course, and do not feel troubled due to either the contents of the course, or the conduct of the discussions, it is incumbent upon all within the classroom to pledge to maintain respect towards our peers. This does not mean that you need to feel restrained about what you feel and what you want to say. Conversely, this is about creating a safe space where everyone can speak and learn without inhibition and fear. This responsibility lies not only on students, but also the instructor.

Disability Support and Accommodation Requirements

JGU endeavors to make all its courses accessible to students. All students with a known disability needing academic accommodations are required to register with the Disability Support Committee dsc@jgu.edu.in. The Committee has so far identified the following conditions that could possibly hinder student's overall well-being. These include: physical and mobility related difficulties; visual

impairment; hearing impairment; medical conditions; specific learning difficulties e.g. dyslexia; mental health.

The Disability Support Committee maintains strict confidentiality in its discussions. The students should preferably register with the Committee in the first week of the semester as disability accommodation requires early planning. DSC will approve and coordinate all the disability related services such as appointment of academic mentors, specialized interventions and course related requirements such as accessible classrooms for lectures, tutorials and examinations.

All faculty members are required to refer students with any of the above-mentioned conditions to the Disability Support Committee for addressing disability-related accommodation requirements.

Centre for Wellness and Counseling Services:

Contact: Email ID: cwcs@jgu.edu.in

Mobile: +91 8396907312