

# J409 Practicum: Catalyst Production Workshop

University of Oregon School of Journalism and Communication, CRN 36517  
Spring 2018. Tuesdays and Thursdays, 2 p.m.—3:50 p.m. 307 Allen.

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This course will show you how to report, finish and publish works of journalism that combine investigative reporting techniques with solutions journalism.

Investigative reporting reveals social problems and holds people in power accountable. Solutions journalism is a rigorous and fact-driven approach to reporting credible solutions to societal problems. Standing alone, investigative journalism can sometimes leave citizens unsure about how to respond. Solutions journalism can help bridge that gap through stories that can engage readers, build trust and make our communities better places in which to live.

This course is named for the **Catalyst Journalism Project**, a University of Oregon School of Journalism and Communication initiative to combine solutions journalism and investigative reporting. The project was founded by its co-directors: Associate Professor Nicole Dahmen, Instructor Kathryn Thier and Assistant Professor Brent Walth.

**COURSE OBJECTIVES.** By the end of this course, you will know how to:

- Identify, describe and analyze the qualities unique to investigative reporting and to solutions journalism.
- Combine investigative reporting and solutions journalism, allowing one to complement, leverage and strengthen the other.
- Use your reporting skills — especially solutions journalism methods and investigative techniques — to shine a light on civic and social problems.
- Pursue ways that solutions journalism can contribute to the public debate about the role of journalism and the journalist in a democratic society.
- Use investigative methods to explain why problems exist, and then hold accountable people in authority who can help bring about change.
- Combine investigative and solutions methods to develop, report and tell a publication-ready story of civic importance.

## THE WORK

- **The Course Project:** A work of journalism combining investigative reporting and solutions journalism, intended for publication in a general-interest news outlet. Students will work in teams and may use any combination of media to tell the story. **(50 % of final grade)**
- **Story Development and Progress Reports:** The initial story pitch for the project, regular status report memos, and a midpoint draft of the final project. **(40 % of final grade)**
- **Class Participation.** **(10 % of final grade)**

## GRADES

The course work is worth 1,000 points. Kathryn and Brent together will award the points. Here's how those points break down.

- ✓ **Story pitch, 100 points.** Each team will turn in a story pitch and present it to the class.
- ✓ **Weekly memos, 30-60 points each.** Progress reports on your team's project.
- ✓ **Final story, 500 points.** We will assess your final story based on how close it is to being ready for publication. If the story:
  - Meets or exceeds expectations, it will receive 500 points.
  - Requires modest but meaningful improvement before publication, 450 points.
  - Requires a moderate amount of improvement before publication, 400 points.
  - Requires a significant amount of improvement before publication, 350 points.
  - Lacks basic reporting or storytelling elements. 300 points or below.
- ✓ **Class participation, 100 points.** We will spot you these points, but you will lose them for unexcused absences, or a failure to participate in conferences or project work.

**Grading scale.** We will award final grades based on this scale:

A = More than 900 points

B = 801 to 900 points

C = 701 to 800 points

D = 601 to 700 points

F = 600 points or below.

**CLASS SESSIONS.** The class will also hold a weekly news meeting to discuss reporting strategies and progress for the various reporting projects. Attendance is mandatory for the meetings. The balance of class time will be dedicated to conferences with instructors for strategy and coaching sessions, and to edit and produce the final projects.

## TEXTS

This course has no required texts. Occasionally, we will ask you to read specific investigative or solutions stories to help guide your reporting project. We recommend you visit the websites for the **Solutions Journalism Network** and **Investigative Reporters and Editors**.

**Solutions Journalism Network.** [www.solutionsjournalism.org](http://www.solutionsjournalism.org). We recommend you review what makes for a solutions journalism story in the Solutions Journalism Toolkit and look at story examples in the Solutions Story Tracker [storytracker.solutionsjournalism.org](http://storytracker.solutionsjournalism.org).

**Investigative Reporters and Editors.** [www.ire.org](http://www.ire.org). Tip sheets by topic, how-to articles, and award-winning examples of investigative work. Some content requires a \$25/year membership. It's worth it.

## Calendar, Schedule and Deadlines

On Tuesdays, the class will convene as a group for a news meeting to discuss story progress, challenges and strategies. On Tuesdays and Thursdays, Kathryn and Brent will meet with teams for coaching and editing. Teams will use a sign-up schedule to guarantee meeting times with instructors. We may also host guest speakers and other events. This schedule is subject to change.

Week	Date	Schedule		Date	Schedule	DEADLINE
1	Tuesday, April 3	<b>Introductions</b> to the course, the mission and each other.		Thursday, April 5	Team conferences with Kathryn and Brent.	<b>Team Story Pitch.</b> Sunday, April 8
2	Tuesday, April 10	<b>Story Pitch:</b> Teams present story ideas & reporting strategies.		Thursday, April 12	Coaching, editing and conferences.	<b>Team Memo No. 1.</b> Sunday, April 15
3	Tuesday, April 17	News meeting. Coaching, editing and conferences.		Thursday, April 19	<b>Guest Speaker:</b> David Bornstein, co-founder, Solutions Journalism Network.	<b>Team Memo No. 2.</b> Sunday, April 22
4	Tuesday, April 24	News meeting. Coaching, editing and conferences.		Thursday, April 26	Coaching, editing and conferences.	<b>Team Memo No. 3.</b> Sunday, April 29
5	Tuesday, May 1	News meeting. Coaching, editing and conferences.		Thursday, May 3	Coaching, editing and conferences.	<b>Team Memo No. 4.</b> Sunday, May 6. ----- <b>Team presentations:</b> progress reports. Tuesday, May 8.
6	Tuesday, May 8	<b>Team presentations:</b> Progress reports.		Thursday, May 10	Coaching, editing and conferences.	<b>Team Memo No. 5.</b> Sunday, May 13
7	Tuesday, May 15	News meeting. Coaching, editing and conferences.		Thursday, May 17	Coaching, editing and conferences.	<b>Team Memo No. 6.</b> Sunday, May 20
8	Tuesday, May 22	<b>Independent work.</b> No class meeting.		Thursday, May 24	Coaching, editing and conferences.	<b>Team Memo No. 7.</b> Sunday, May 27
9	Tuesday, May 29	<b>Independent work.</b> No class meeting.		Thursday, May 31	Coaching, editing and conferences.	<b>Presentation:</b> In class, Tuesday June 5.
10	Tuesday, June 5	<b>Teams present final stories.</b>		Thursday, June 7	Coaching, editing and conferences.	<b>Final Story Due:</b> Sunday, June 10.

## ACADEMIC AND PROFESSIONAL INTEGRITY

Plagiarism and fabrication are not tolerated in journalism or this course. Your work must be original, verifiable, clearly sourced and honest.

We expect students to understand and follow the UO Student Conduct Code, which defines **plagiarism** as “using the ideas or writings of another as one’s own. It includes, but is not limited to: (a) The use, by paraphrase or direct quotation, of the published or unpublished work of another person without full and clear acknowledgement; and (b) The unacknowledged use of materials prepared by another person or agency engaged in the selling of term papers or other academic materials.”

The UO Student Conduct Code defines **fabrication** as “the intentional use of information that the author has invented when the student states or implies otherwise, or the falsification of research or other findings with the intent to deceive.”

We also expect students to know and follow the Society of Professional Journalists Code of Ethics, which can be found at: <https://www.spj.org/pdf/spj-code-of-ethics.pdf>.

## DIVERSITY

The School of Journalism and Communication statement on Building and Maintaining a Diverse University Community: “The goal of building greater social, political, cultural, economic, and intellectual diversity among students and members of the faculty and staff as well as in our curriculum, public scholarship, and communities is central to the school’s mission: to prepare professional communicators, critical thinkers, and responsible citizens for a global society. The promotion and practice of freedom of expression and intellectual inquiry across an evolving media environment are integral to the school’s long and proud tradition of academic excellence. Discrimination of any kind, disrespect for others, or inequity in educational opportunity are unacceptable.”

## The UO COUNSELING CENTER

The following message comes from the UO Counseling Center:

“Your college experience is one of growth and learning. We all face a variety of challenges and obstacles in college and in life. You may come across moments that are not easy to talk about—struggling academically, navigating personal relationships, what it’s like to live with mental health concerns. It can seem like you are the only one dealing with these issues, but you are not alone. We have a team that cares deeply about your development and success. We are here to support you through the challenges and celebrate your successes.”

UO Counseling Center  
1590 E. 13<sup>th</sup> Avenue  
541.346.3227

## DISCRIMINATION AND HARASSMENT

The UO is committed to providing an environment free of all forms of prohibited discrimination and sexual harassment (sexual assault, domestic and dating violence, and gender or sex-based bullying and stalking). If you have experienced any form of gender or sex-based discrimination or harassment, know that help and support are available. UO has staff members trained to support survivors in navigating campus life, accessing health and counseling services, providing academic and housing accommodations, helping with legal protective orders, and more.

Any student who has experienced sexual assault, relationship violence, sex or gender-based bullying, stalking, and/or sexual harassment may seek resources and help at [safe.uoregon.edu](https://safe.uoregon.edu). To get help by phone, a student can also call either the UO's 24-hour hotline at 541-346-7244 [SAFE], or the non-confidential Title IX Coordinator at 541-346-8136. From the SAFE website, students may also connect to Callisto, a confidential, third-party reporting site that is not a part of the university.

Students experiencing any other form of prohibited discrimination or harassment can find information at [respect.uoregon.edu](https://respect.uoregon.edu) or [aao.uoregon.edu](https://aao.uoregon.edu) or contact the non-confidential AAEO office at 541-346-3123 or the Dean of Students Office at 541-346-3216 for help. As UO policy has different reporting requirements based on the nature of the reported harassment or discrimination, additional information about reporting requirements for discrimination or harassment unrelated to sexual assault, relationship violence, sex or gender based bullying, stalking, and/or sexual harassment is available at [Discrimination & Harassment](#).

Specific details about confidentiality of information and reporting obligations of employees can be found at [titleix.uoregon.edu](https://titleix.uoregon.edu).

## ACCESSIBILITY

Please notify us if there are any aspects of this class that are raising barriers to your participation. If you have a documented disability or medical condition that might affect your work, please have the UO Accessible Education Center contact your instructors as soon as possible. *We cannot provide you accommodations without first hearing from that office.* Please see us right away if disability or medical condition will require special arrangements in the event of an emergency.

## CONFLICT RESOLUTION

Several options are available to you to resolve conflicts that occur based on the course. Please bring the conflict to your instructors. If you can't reach resolution, please take your issue (in this order) to Senior Associate Dean Leslie Steeves and Dean Juan-Carlos Molleda. Outside the School of Journalism and Communication, you can contact the UO Bias Response Team (541-346-1139), Conflict Resolutions Services (541-346-0617), or Affirmative Action and Equal Opportunity office (541-346-3123).