



conveying information is central to success. That may be almost everyone. Think of the seminar as a class to improve your methods for obtaining, skeptically evaluating and assessing information, and then writing it up for others to read – be it a newspaper article, a scientific paper, a speech, an appearance in court, or an annual report for shareholders.

Students will read specific articles and books to discuss in class and analyze in three one-page papers.

I will meet with students individually during the term in order to provide evaluations, assistance on reporting, writing or the final project, and, if sought, career guidance. Teaching a formal course continues to be a learning experience for me, and I hope to get strong feedback from the students as the course proceeds on what is valuable to them – the readings, writing assignments, and class discussion. Some assignments may change based on student reactions and feedback, or in response to our volatile news environment.

Emily Shire, (emily.shire@yale.edu ) who is in her second year at the law school and who took the seminar last year will be the Teaching Assistant. Emily also has six years of previous journalism experience.

Evelyn Duffy, (evelynmduffy@gmail.com) my full-time assistant who has worked on my last five books, will help me with the class, assignments or logistical and any other issues. Don't hesitate to contact Emily or Evelyn with any questions or ideas.

Individual students or perhaps as a team of two will also be asked to lead portions of the class discussion.

## **Grading**

### Profile:

Twenty percent of the final grade will be based on a 2,000-word profile of another person in the seminar (selected by me) that each student will be assigned to write. This requires intensive reporting and writing in the first weeks of the class. In past seminars, most students have found the experience very enlightening.

These profiles should be based in large part on interviews with at least 10 people (parents, relatives, friends, colleagues, and most importantly the person who is

the subject of the profile).

Each student will also be required to rewrite his or her profile. Editing is an essential aspect of the course. I expect students to think about what they do well and where they can improve. Think of your first draft as a space to be creative. So be bold. You will have to rewrite anyway.

The profile is due on **Tuesday, February 5, 2017**, your critique of the profile written about you is due **Tuesday, February 12**, and your rewrite is due **Sunday, February 24**. The profile and rewrite will account for 20 percent of the final grade.

Short papers:

Ten percent of the final grade will be based on three one-page papers based on the readings. These papers are designed to focus thinking and will be used to stimulate class discussion. They should be kept to one printed page.

Because the class meets only once a week, short papers will generally be due several days prior to class. **Please consult the syllabus carefully for due dates and utilize the checklist on the final page.**

The Large reporting project is the core of the class:

Fifty percent of the final grade will be based on a large-scale reporting/writing project. An initial outline drawn from office-hours consultations and a draft of the first 200-250 words must be sent to me and shared with the class via email for constructive criticism and ideas on **Friday, March 8**. The final paper is due two months later on **Wednesday, May 8**.

Selecting a subject is critical, and I will help as much as possible. It is important to get an early start on the project. For reference, I urge each student to start writing before the reporting is finished. The draft shows where there might be holes and helps organize and develop a rigorous reporting plan. Each student will undertake and complete this reporting/writing project (3,500 to 5,000 words). It should examine and assess a Yale, city, or state government program, a department, local business, or event. Subjects should be cleared with me in advance. There are holes and weaknesses at Yale and in New Haven, or elsewhere in Connecticut. Identify one and dig deeply into it. Find something in academic life,

the administration, a program, or the university's strategy and focus on it. The key is reporting on the real world - get out of the library and off the internet.

Reporting will include interviewing human sources who witnessed or participated in events, visiting the scene of the story if possible, and researching from original documents, newspapers and books. In the past few years, many students' papers have later been published in Yale or New Haven publications. See:

Amelia Nierenberg's *The Perimeter* in *The New Journal*;

Jake Leffew's *Keep the Body, Take the Mind* in the *Yale Daily News*;

Madeleine Colbert's *Prisons Outside of Prison* series in *The Politic*;

Eric Stern's *The Need For Speed* in *The Yale Daily News*;

Tyler Foggatt's *How Generous is Generous Enough?* in *The Yale Daily News*;

Fiona Lowenstein's *The Edge of Sisterhood* in *The New Journal*.

#### Participation:

Twenty percent of the final grade will be based on attendance and active seminar participation -obviously vital elements in a discussion course. Each student should read *The Washington Post* online (anyone with an email address ending in .edu may and should create a free online account) and other newspapers, outlets, Facebook, Twitter, or blogs of your choice for at least 30 minutes a day. We will discuss the central news of the day or week - not just the substance of coverage but what you like or don't like in the various accounts - during each seminar session. I want to learn where you get your news and what you find useful (and what you find less useful).

#### **Application**

The seminar is open to all sophomores, juniors, seniors, and graduate students (with department approval). The application will consist of two parts. The first should be a personal statement explaining your interest in the course, your Yale class year, any previous writing courses, your main extra-curricular activities, and any journalism or work

experience.

The second part should be a writing sample – an article that has been published anywhere or a paper you have submitted for a class. The application, which is available on the English Department website, should be submitted by noon on **December 5**. I encourage people who are writers or editors of campus publications to apply, but I also want students who have little or no experience with campus publications to apply as well.

### **Course Schedule**

**Note:** This schedule is not written in stone. There may be events that occur during the semester that are important news and lend themselves to short papers, analysis, and discussion during the seminar.

### **First class: Tuesday, January 15 Class theme: The State of Journalism**

In our first class we will delve into your questions about the state of journalism in 2018. I will attempt to summarize some principles and lessons from 48 years as a reporter and book author. We will also discuss your expectations for the seminar. Please be prepared to contribute your thoughts. I will attempt to provide some tips on organizing, writing and the role of brainstorming with others, roommates and other members in the seminar. The best journalism is often collaborative. I suggest we consider some of the following: Where do you get your news, and why? What makes an in-depth reporter?

What is it like to report on the current Trump administration? What is "fake news"? What does Trump mean when he calls the news media "the enemy of the people." What is going on here? Read the 8-page transcript of Trump's August 14, 2018 (transcript in course packet and audio on The Washington Post website) call to Woodward before the release of Fear to complain that he was not interviewed. Why do you think he called?

Consider the motto of the Washington Post: "Democracy Dies in Darkness." What does that mean to you?

**Assignment:** Class profile subjects will be assigned by me. They are due **Tuesday, February 5**. You must interview at least 10 people, including the subject.

**SECOND CLASS: Tuesday, January 22 Class theme: Watergate**

**To read for today:** All the President's Men (1974), Carl Bernstein and Bob Woodward. I will provide a copy to each student in the class. Evelyn will be in touch once the book is available for pickup in the English Department prior to the start of class. I urge as many students as possible read the book in December or early January during the break between semesters

**Option to watch for today:** Film, All the President's Men (1976) and film, Spotlight (2015), about the Boston Globe's expose of sexual abuse by Catholic priests.

**To write by Sunday, January 20 (2 days before class):** A one page paper on how the Watergate scandal might have been covered if it had occurred today in the internet/online era. Include a frank critique of the reporting methods described in the Watergate book. Email Emily, Evelyn, and myself your Watergate paper **by 11:00 p.m., Sunday, January 20.**

**To discuss in today's class:** We will discuss the Watergate reporting and your papers. We will also address the role of journalism, its strengths, weaknesses, and the impact of the internet in this new era.

**THIRD CLASS: Tuesday, January 29 Class theme: The profile**

**To read for today:** All of the following will be in the course packet: Lillian Ross, "How Do You Like It Now, Gentlemen?," *New Yorker*; Michael Finkel, "The Strange & Curious Tale of the Last True Hermit," *GQ*; Gay Talese, "The Loser" (course packet), *Esquire*; Larissa MacFarquhar, "Requiem for a Dream," *New Yorker*; and Zadie Smith, "Brothers From Another Mother," *New Yorker*. Please also read Simon Soros' profile of Ahmed Elbenni from last year's class, which is in the course packet, as well.

**Assignment for today:** Find another profile that you think highly of and share it with the rest of the class via email, including myself, Emily and Evelyn.

**To discuss in today's class:** We will discuss these examples and how to win the trust of your subject and other sources as well as how to report and structure a profile.

**FOURTH CLASS: Tuesday, February 5 Class theme:  
Emotional truth (guest instructor Elsa Walsh)**

Elsa Walsh, my wife and most recently a staff writer for *the New Yorker* and previously for *The Washington Post*, will be in New Haven to teach the class.

**To read for today:** From her book, *Divided Lives*, p. 9-25, 123-186, 261-279 (in course packet); *The Negotiator*, Elsa Walsh, *The New Yorker* (in course packet); *Strange Love*, Elsa Walsh, *The New Yorker* (in course packet); *A Woman's Quest for the 'Good Enough' Life*, Elsa Walsh, *The Washington Post* (in course packet).

**To write by February 3:** Write a one page paper commenting on the level of intimacy uncovered in each reading. Which reporting techniques and questions are most effective? Please email to me, Emily, Evelyn, and Elsa Walsh (elsa.walsh@gmail.com) **by 11:00 p.m. on Sunday, February 3**

**To discuss in today's class:** Please read the assigned readings thoroughly and be prepared for a robust discussion. How does reporting on emotional truth differ from reporting on government, business, culture or politics?

**Profiles are due by 11:00 p.m., Tuesday February 5.** Please send them via email to me, Emily, Evelyn, and the person you profiled (who will write a critique in response).

**Fifth Class: Tuesday, February 12 Class theme: Fear: Trump in the White House.**

**To read for today:** Copies of *Fear* will be provided. Please read as much of the book as possible, and come to class to discuss the method used, the content and the reception.

**To discuss in today's class:** How does the reporting square with what might be going on the administration now in 2019? How does *Fear* compare with *All the President's Men*, in terms of the reporting style, the tone, and the different journalistic challenges?

**To write for today:** By 11:00 p.m. on February 12h, send a written critique to the person who wrote your profile, bearing in mind that they will use your constructive criticism when rewriting their profile. Please also copy Emily, Evelyn, and me **by 11:00 p.m. on February 12th.**

**Sixth Class: Tuesday, February 12 Class theme: Origins and impact of #MeToo reporting.**

**To read for today:** Please read the following, all of which will be in the course packet: Ronan Farrow, "From Aggressive Overtures to Sexual Assault: Harvey Weinstein's Accusers Tell Their Stories," *New Yorker*; Jodi Kantor & Megan Twohey, "Harvey Weinstein Paid Off Sexual Harassment Accusers for Decades," *New York Times*; Melena Ryzik, Cara Buckley & Jodi Kantor, "Louis C.K. Is Accused By 5 Women of Sexual Misconduct," *New York Times*; Adam B. Vary, "Actor Anthony Rapp: Kevin Spacey Made A Sexual Advance Toward Me When I Was 14," *BuzzFeed*; E. Alex Jung, "Man Comes Forward to Describe an Alleged Extended Sexual Relationship He Had at Age 14 With Kevin Spacey," *New York*.

**In addition, please read online: Norene Malone Amanda Demme, "'I'm No Longer Afraid': 35 Women Tell Their Stories About Being Assaulted by Bill Cosby, and the Culture That Wouldn't Listen," *New York*, <https://www.thecut.com/2015/07/bill-cosbys-accusers-speak-out.html>**

**Profile rewrites are due by 11:00 p.m. on Sunday, February 24.** Please email to me, Emily and Evelyn

**Seventh Class: Tuesday, February 26 Class theme: Profile rewrites**

**To discuss in today's class:** We will focus on discussing the profiles and your process of writing and rewriting them.

**Eighth Class: Tuesday, March 5 Class theme: In-depth reporting**

**To read for today:** Behind the Beautiful Forever, Katherine Boo, p. x-xxii, p. 3-16, and p. 247-254 (in course packet); Soldiers Face Neglect, Frustration at Army's Top Medical Facility, Dana Priest and Anne Hull, *The Washington Post* (in course packet); The Hotel Aftermath, Dana Priest and Anne Hull, *The Washington Post* (in course packet); CIA Holds Terror Suspects in Secret Prisons, Dana Priest, *The Washington Post* (in course packet); Foreign Network at Front of CIA's Terror Fight, Dana Priest, *The Washington Post* (in course packet).

**To discuss in today's class:** Why did these in-depth stories work? What were their weaknesses?



**Assignment:** No later than **Friday, March 8** (beginning of spring break), turn in via email an initial outline and a draft of the first 200-250 words (or more) of your final project, a report on your progress to date and your plan for finishing. This should incorporate information from the interviews you have conducted and research you have done up to this point as well as indicate what interviews and reporting you have left to do, and what your strategy is for completing the project. It should be based on your consultations with me in my office hours or by phone.

Please also send to the class via email for constructive criticism and ideas. You must turn these in at this point to receive full credit for the final project at the end of the course. Email to me, Emily, and Evelyn **by 11:00 p.m. on March 8.**

**No class: Tuesday, March 12 and Tuesday, March 19 (spring break)**

**Ninth class, March 26 Class theme: Covering The Supreme Court**

To read for today: *The Brethren*, Bob Woodward and Scott Armstrong, (the Nixon Tapes case), p. 1-5 and p. 343-421 (in course packet); "Money Unlimited," Jeffrey Toobin, *New Yorker* (in course packet); Emma Brown, "California Professor, Writer of Confidential Brett Kavanaugh Letter, Speaks Out About Her Allegation of Sexual Assault," *Washington Post* (in course packet); Brian Stelter, "Post Reporter Says Kavanaugh Accuser Was 'Terrified About Going Public,'" *CNN* (in course packet); Michael D. Shear, Nicholas Fandos and Michael S. Schmidt, "A Tumultuous 24 Hours: How Jeff Flake Delayed a Vote on Kavanaugh," *New York Times* (in course packet); Carl Hulse, "How Jeff Flake May Have Saved Republicans From Themselves," *New York Times* (in course packet).

**To discuss in today's class:** What was the reporting method used by Woodward and Armstrong? Was it appropriate and necessary? How does Toobin's piece, on the 2010 Citizens United v. FEC Supreme Court decision dealing with campaign expenditures by organizations, differ? Was the court's decision in Citizens United principled or political? How well did the media cover the Brett Kavanaugh confirmation? Did certain outlets or formats do so better than others? How does the Supreme Court's traditional role as an "apolitical" institution affect how it is covered—or, rather, how it should be covered?

**Tenth class, Tuesday, April 2: Interviewing the president**

**To read for today:** The transcript of the April 2, 2016 interview Robert Costa and I did with Donald Trump; "In a Revealing Interview, Trump Predicts a 'Massive Recession' but Intends to Eliminate the National Debt in 8 Years," Bob Woodward and Robert Costa, The Washington Post; the transcript of my July 10, 2010 interview with President Barack Obama and the memo with questions that I sent him in advance of the interview (all in course packet).

**To write for Sunday March 31:** A one page paper evaluating the quality of the interviews. Was the time with the subjects (Trump and Obama) well used? What should have been asked or probed further?

**To discuss in today's class:** We will pick apart the interviews and discuss how best to interview a president or top officials.

**Eleventh Class: Tuesday, April 9: Class theme: A Critique of Journalism**

**To read for today:** The Journalist & the Murderer, Parts 1 & 2, Janet Malcolm, The New Yorker (in course packet).

**To discuss in today's class:** What are your thoughts on Janet Malcolm? Was she right or wrong? Does this piece change how you view journalism? Should it?

**Twelfth Class, Tuesday, April 16 Class theme: Mistakes**

**To read for today:** Jimmy's World, Janet Cooke, The Washington Post (in course packet) and the Washington Post Ombudsman's Report by Bill Green (in course packet); A Rape on Campus, Sabrina Rubin Erdely, Rolling Stone (in course packet) and 'A Rape on Campus': What went wrong, The Columbia Journalism School CJS)report (in course packet).

**To discuss in today's class:** We will look at the reporting methods and mistakes in both Rolling Stone's piece and Jimmy's World, with an emphasis on both the practical and moral dimensions of mistakes and what you as a journalism student might do to avoid those kinds of mistakes in your own

reporting.

**Note:** If any student prefers not to do the Rolling Stone and CJS portion of the reading assignment, he or she may elect not to. We will be discussing the Rolling Stone piece for the first half hour of the class; any student who likes may arrive 30 minutes after the start of class and join us for the second portion of discussion without impact on their participation grade.

**Final class (13<sup>th</sup>), Tuesday, April 23 Class theme: Interrogate Woodward**

**To read for today:** All of the following are in the course packet: Jason DeParle "From Low-Level Aides to Power Wielders, Sources Shape Reporter's Books," *New York Times*; Alex S. Jones, "Bob Woodward, The Washington Post and His Many Books," *New York Times*; Felicity Barringer, "A New Story For 2 Rivals from the 70's," *New York Times*; Olivia Nuzzi, "Bob Woodward on the 'Best Obtainable Version of the Truth' About Trump," *New York*; the full biography at [www.bobwoodward.com/full-biography](http://www.bobwoodward.com/full-biography) and the Wikipedia entry on Bob Woodward.

**To watch for today (available on BobWoodward.com):** Video excerpts of Alex Butterfield and Bob Woodward interview; Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein's 2017 White House Correspondents' Dinner speeches; Bob Woodward's September 2018 episode for *The Daily* on New York Times website.

**To discuss in today's class:** Please use this class to raise any topic you would like about the course, the criticisms raised about me in the assigned articles or on Wikipedia, your final projects, The Washington Post, or journalism in general. What are the main challenges for journalists today? Please come prepared to discuss with constructive criticism to improve the class in the future.

**Assignment:** Complete your final projects by **11:00 p.m. on Wednesday, May 8.**

**Reading Period, April 27-May 3:** I will be available by email or phone throughout this period for questions or consultations about your final project. (As will Emily and Evelyn.)

**Final projects are due Wednesday, May 8.** This is the last day I can accept any written work. Please email Emily, Evelyn, and

me your final projects **no later than 11:00 p.m. on Wednesday, May 8.**

The following is the Checklist for the written assignments:

Send all written assignments to me, Emily and Evelyn via email by 11:00 p.m. on the date they are due unless otherwise noted.

**January 20 (Sunday):** 1-page paper on Watergate in the internet age.

**February 3 (Sunday):** 1-page paper on emotional truth. Email to

Elsa Walsh (elsa.walsh@gmail.com) in addition to me, Emily, and Evelyn.

**February 5:** Profiles are due.

**February 12:** Critiques of the profile done on you are due.

**February 24:** Profile rewrites are due.

**March 8 (beginning of spring break):** Initial outline and draft the first 200-250 words (or several pages) of your final project are due. Email to the rest of the class as well as me, Emily, and Evelyn. You must turn in an outline/initial draft to receive credit for the final project.

**March 31** ---A one page critique of Woodward's interviews with Trump and Obama.

**May 8:** Final projects are due.