Instructor: Lillian Zier Martell (she/her)
Email: lillian-martell@uiowa.edu
Phone: 319-335-5961
Office location and drop-in hours: W343 AJB, 12:20-1:20 p.m. Mondays, 9-10:30 a.m. and 12:30-1 p.m. Wednesdays, and by appointment.
SJMC DEO: David Ryfe, david-ryfe@uiowa.edu Office: E305 AJB, Phone: 335-3486

General Catalog Course description: Project journalism; extended magazine pieces, explanatory/investigative journalism, series for newspapers, or task-force projects by entire class on a major issue, with goal of publication.

Students will complete several projects focused on the health and fitness industry that advance their professional storytelling skills. They will produce at least one major project that will be pitched to a professional publication or organization. Students will be given wide latitude to design this project in conjunction with the professional organization(s) they hope to work with. Examples of these major projects could include a multimedia story, in-depth feature writing, in-depth explanatory or investigative journalism, or a strategic communications project.

Advanced Topics in Writing/Storytelling is a 3-credit-hour course for upper-level students. The prerequisites for this course are JMC:3400 or JMC:3405 or JMC:3410 or JMC:3411 or JMC:3412 or JMC:3413 or JMC:3414 or JMC:3415 or JMC:3420 or JMC:3425 or JMC:3430 or JMC:3435 or JMC:3440 or JMC:3445 or JMC:3460 or JMC:3470 or JMC:3490.

Required reading:
- Newspaper, magazine and website articles assigned throughout the semester and posted on ICON.
- The Associated Press Stylebook (2019)
  https://www-apstylebook-com.proxy.lib.uiowa.edu/uiowa_edu/

The Associated Press Stylebook may be purchased in print, or the online version may be used. Students also will have access to a shared online account for the AP Stylebook through the link noted above. Other readings will be posted on ICON. Assigned readings should be completed before the related class sessions.

Most stories assigned for reading will be posted in the Announcements section of ICON before 5 p.m. the day before classes meet. However, students should check ICON at 10:30 a.m. on the day of classes see if any breaking news stories have been posted. The instructor will seek to limit these morning updates to stories that are good examples of health, fitness or environmental reporting, or breaking news of critical importance that warrants discussion.
Students may seek full online access to The New York Times by registering at http://AccessNYT.com. When available, passes are renewable every 24 hours. The Associated Press news app can be downloaded free.

SJMC Learning Outcomes

The School of Journalism and Mass Communication is committed to your academic and professional success. In line with this commitment, we have identified particular learning outcomes that every student should obtain by the time they earn a JMC degree. We regularly assess the curriculum to determine whether students are achieving these outcomes. This course contributes to these learning outcomes by helping you develop the abilities to access, analyze, evaluate, and create media messages across multiple media domains and to communicate effectively with the highest, professionally accepted standards in all work. Achieving these outcomes means:

- You will demonstrate an ability to anticipate and recognize ethical issues when they arise and to reason through them taking multiple perspectives and contexts into account.
- You will develop critical thinking skills to analyze and interpret media messages through an understanding of media practices and institutions.
- You will learn how to create and disseminate media messages in various forms.
- You will demonstrate the ability to gather factual story elements, and to evaluate and express them in logical, narrative forms for multiple media and audiences.
- You will display the ability to access and analyze data, report facts accurately, research and edit information responsibly and in a manner commensurate with professional standards.
- You will demonstrate the ability to apply above concepts in a manner that is sensitive to audiences across all media.
- You will demonstrate an ability to work with members of diverse groups to engage publicly over issues of community interest.

Course-specific objectives:

By the end of this course students will demonstrate a professional level of:

- Journalistic writing
- Research and information gathering
- News judgment
- Ethical and professional conduct in the practice of journalism or strategic communication
- Appreciation for journalism’s role in democracy and society
- Ability to pitch stories or projects to professional organizations
- Ability to meet deadlines

Course requirements: All assignments are designed to support the learning objectives listed above.

- Major assignments: Students will complete three major assignments: an issue story, a personality profile, and an in-depth feature or enterprise story. Students may choose the format, and any one or all three can be completed as a strategic communications piece
produced for an outside organization. Rubrics will be used to grade each of the major assignments, and students will choose the order in which they do each assignment but must meet the following deadlines: Feb. 17, March 30 and April 20. Points for the major assignments will total 600.

- **Business writing:** Students will write a consumer review of a health or fitness club or a profile of an area business or nonprofit in the health, environmental or fitness industry. The story will be accompanied by still photography or short b-roll video. It may be turned in any time after the presentation on review writing (Feb. 10-12) but is due no later than 11 a.m. May 4. This assignment will be worth 100 points, and businesses/nonprofits will be assigned on a first-come, first-serve basis.

- **Professional engagement:** Students will pitch at least one of their major stories or a project to a professional off-campus publication or organization. For full credit, a story or project must be accepted for use by an off-campus organization. The first pitch must be made before Feb. 24. Note that it may take multiple pitches to receive a response and acceptance. Aside from making a first pitch by Feb. 24, no official deadlines will be set for follow-up pitches. It will be the student’s responsibility to continue reaching out to publications or clients until the student receives a response. Pitching a project and receiving acceptance from a professional venue will be worth 100 points.

- **Class attendance and participation:** The class meets 29 times during the semester. Students will have three “free” absences. The free absence policy will cover minor illnesses that do not require a doctor’s visit, funerals, family emergencies, etc. Students may use these absences any way they want, but they are strongly advised to save a couple of the freebies for later in the semester in case of an unexpected need to miss class. The one exception involves class speakers; freebies cannot be used for speakers, who will be announced in advance.

  Although students are not required to have a reason for three absences, as a professional courtesy they should notify the instructor before class if they will miss. After using their three free absences, students must obtain a doctor’s note or a note from an official source to receive an excused absence.

  Attendance for 26 class periods will be worth 4 points. Students will receive 1 point for arriving on time and 1 point for staying the entire class period or until work is finished. During many class sessions, discussion will be emphasized, and students will earn up to 2 points for engaging in class discussions and activities. Discussions often will be based on readings posted on ICON. If a lack of discussion shows that students are not reading the stories, the instructor will initiate reading quizzes. Attendance and participation are worth 100 points for the semester.

- **Seven in-class exercises** will be collected randomly during the semester and will be worth 10 points each for a total of 70 points for the semester.

  If a speaker is scheduled, class attendance will be required. Attendance that day will count as one of the 10-point, in-class assignments, and students will only receive the full 10 points if they arrive in class on time, pay attention and engage with the speaker. Students cannot use a “freebie” absence for a scheduled speaker and can only make up
the 10 points if they have an excused absence as outlined below in the “missed assignment policy” section.

Students will peer edit the three major assignments. Each editing session will be worth 10 points to be awarded based on the editor’s efforts to assist the writer in completing stories worthy of publication. Editing for the semester will total 30 points.

One opportunity for 10 points extra credit is available. Students may attend the Media Literacy & Voting Workshop to receive the 10 points. The workshop is from 3-4 p.m. Jan. 24 in PBB. Registration is required for the free workshop. See the flyer posted under “Course documents” on ICON.

Summary of points:
Major assignments: 600 points (60%)
Consumer review or business/nonprofit profile: 100 points (10%)
Professional engagement; pitch and professional acceptance: 100 points (10%)
Attendance and participation: 100 points (10%)
In-class exercises, editing and guest speakers: 100 points (10%)
Total: 1,000 points

Academic honesty and grading: Professional communication is fact-based. Aside from selected mock assignments given by the instructor, students’ work will be original and factual. The instructor may check sources used by students to ensure the sources had been contacted and were quoted accurately. Plagiarism and fabrication are treated with the utmost seriousness in professional workplaces and will be regarded the same way for this course. Any student who plagiarizes or fabricates information will receive a “zero” on the assignment and will be reported to the college for further disciplinary action. See the paragraph on Academic Honesty in the final section of the syllabus for more information. In addition, collaboration is not permitted unless the instructor gives specific assignments that require teamwork. In situations where students are covering the same event or issue, they must work independently and may not share notes, recordings, or any other material or information related to that assignment. Students who engage in collaboration will receive a “zero” on the assignment.

Students also must produce all notes or recordings upon request. Students must not interview relatives or friends, and instructors may randomly check with sources to inquire about their relationship to the student journalist. The use of relatives or friends as sources is considered an unethical conflict of interest in the field of journalism and will reflect negatively in the student’s grade for that assignment.

All stories must be submitted for grading before they are submitted for publication. Submitting the story for publication before submitting it for class may result in a zero on that assignment. Students who are staff members for the Daily Iowan, DITV, or any other organization cannot submit stories they are doing for their employer as an assignment for this class. They can submit stories for this class to organizations they do not work for, but it is the student’s responsibility to ensure they are not engaging in activity prohibited by their employer.

Missed assignment policy: In-class assignments, quizzes and so forth cannot be made up unless the student is attending a University-excused activity or provides a doctor’s note verifying
illness. The instructor will not repeat lecture information or in-class announcements. Students who must be absent should arrange to get lecture and discussion notes from classmates. When students are absent for excused activities that are scheduled in advance, they must turn in assignments before the deadlines. Students who provide verification of illness may be allowed an extension on major projects without penalty until class time the Monday that follows the deadline. Students who miss class for an excused absence or a “freebie” may be given up to one week to make up in-class exercises. Students should be aware that absences will not be excused for minor illnesses, internships, outside job duties, etc. Because three “free” absences are allowed, other absences will rarely be excused, so plan accordingly. The “free” absences also cannot be used to extend deadlines on the out-of-class assignments, and they cannot be used for a class period when a speaker is scheduled.

**Accommodations:** Students who have documentation from Student Disability Services (SDS) for accommodations must present the documents and meet with the professor before the third week of classes. Simply emailing the forms to your TA and professor is not sufficient. For more information, please see the section titled Accommodations for Disabilities under The College of Liberal Arts and Sciences: Policies and Resources page at the end of the syllabus. If you have other health or personal circumstances (not covered by SDS) that might affect your ability to be successful in this course, please speak with the professor as soon as possible.

**Deadline policy:** The ability to meet deadlines is a critical skill in the communications industry and will be strictly enforced in this class. Students will begin losing points immediately after missing the assignment deadline and will lose a full letter grade for each 24-hour period that the assignment is turned in late. After five days, the assignment will not be accepted, and the student will receive a “zero” on that assignment.

**Grading:**

- A = 93 percent to 100 percent
- A- = 90 to 92 percent
- B+ = 87 percent to 89 percent
- B = 83 percent to 86 percent
- B- = 80 percent to 82 percent
- C+ = 77 percent to 79 percent
- C = 73 percent to 76 percent
- C- = 70 percent to 72 percent
- D = 60 percent to 69 percent
- F = 59 percent and below

Percentages will be rounded to the nearest whole number when grades are assigned at the end of the semester.
General expectations

- The goal of this course is for you to leave with professional-level skills, build your portfolio and expand your network with potential employers. While the course only requires one project to be pitched to a professional venue, I encourage you to pitch all your assignments either off campus or on.
- Because your goal is to publish, do not tell any source the assignment is being completed "just" for class. We will discuss how to approach sources and business contacts in the beginning stages of a project.
- Set aside plenty of time to complete projects. Most of the work on the major assignments will be done outside class. Some projects may require travel, in which case you will be responsible for the travel arrangements. When you are working with a professional organization, be prepared to meet on their terms and on their schedule, not yours.
- You have reached the advanced level of the SJMC program and should not need my approval for story ideas. Instead, this is part of the pitch process. Unless you are confident about the value of a project, you may want to pitch the idea first to potential publishers or clients. As the course instructor, I will serve in the capacity of an assignment editor or news producer and will help you develop ideas, find sources and produce the final story or package. Of course, I also grade the project after its completion, so it’s to your benefit to communicate with me throughout the process.
- As advanced students, you will not receive reminders about deadlines, class policies, or makeup work for missed classes or assignments. It is your responsibility to notify me about an excused absence or other issues and arrange to make up the work.
- For the major assignments, I will keep a running list on ICON of who is working on what. Although I will not ban you from a topic that someone else is already doing, I strongly advise you to select a different topic. This is because sources do not like to do repeated interviews, and it will be more difficult for you to find a publication venue if the story has already been done.
- For the review and profile assignment, you must find a business or nonprofit that no one else is writing about. These story ideas will be assigned on a first-come, first-serve basis, and I will keep that list on ICON.
- Do not interview relatives or friends for assignments. Professional communicators must talk with a diverse range of people in a wide variety of situations, and interviewing friends and relatives is an unethical conflict of interest.
- Likewise, do not select story ideas based on who you know. If you have any sort of affiliation with an organization, it is a conflict of interest to write about it. It may be acceptable to do a strategic communications project for an organization that you have ties to; however, it would be to your benefit to expand your network and learn how to build a relationship with a new client.
- The first draft of the major assignments must be submitted before class time on the due dates. This means that you as the writer have finished the story. It does not mean that you can turn in partially finished stories. The peer editors should receive your best effort on these dates. They, in turn, will give you their best effort. Although I will grade the final drafts, the story rubrics will include heavy deductions for first drafts that are not complete.
See the file on ICON in the module titled “Course documents” for information about equipment checkout.

Good writers are voracious readers. Set aside at least 30 minutes a day to read news stories beyond those assigned for class. Along with the New York Times, the Des Moines Register and the Daily Iowan, try Time magazine (time.com), cnn.com, and npr.org among others. Reading the professional publications will improve your writing skills and alert you to trends and issues that could be used for the major assignments in this class.

For those of you interested in multimedia, video stories can be found on most of the news sites listed above. Reading is the quickest way to gain knowledge, but to improve your video storytelling, analyze how these news organizations produce multimedia. Watch for innovation. Despite the newspaper industry’s troubles, the New York Times and Washington Post, in particular, continue to break ground with storytelling formats.

Check ICON and campus email before each class period for announcements. In case I am ill or otherwise incapacitated, I will make every effort to send an email the night before, but that may not always be possible. The best policy is to check email and ICON in the morning before coming to class. Chrome is the recommended browser for ICON.

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**Tentative course schedule:** The instructor may extend discussion of certain topics if needed for the students’ benefit or interject discussion of high-profile breaking news stories. Check ICON regularly for updates on assignments.

As noted previously, readings will be posted in the Announcements section of ICON by 5 p.m. the day before class meets unless there is breaking news. Check ICON at 10:30 the morning of class for updates. **The instructor may initiate reading quizzes at the beginning of classes if discussions fall short.**

Students will work with a peer editor in class on the dates that the first drafts of stories are due. Student editors should use a substantial portion of the class period to thoroughly edit the stories and help their peers prepare the stories for potential outside publication and grading by the instructor. **This process is subject to change if the class time is not used productively.** To ensure the process runs smoothly, the first drafts must represent writers’ best efforts, and the peer editors will help polish the stories to a professional level. If this system does not work effectively for a substantial number of students, deadlines for the first draft will be moved to the preceding Friday, and the instructor will implement a different procedure to ensure writers turn in complete first drafts.

See the grid below:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dates</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Assignments</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Week 1: Jan. 22</strong></td>
<td>Introductions, course overview and syllabus review. Start brainstorming story ideas.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Week 2: Jan. 27, 29</strong></td>
<td>Discuss <strong>interviewing</strong> and <strong>personality profiles</strong>. Review the Society of Professional Journalists’ Code of Ethics and the Public Relations Society of America’s Code of Ethics. More brainstorming.</td>
<td>Check ICON for reading assignments. Before class on Monday, read the SPJ Code of Ethics and the Public Relations Society of America’s Code of Ethics. Be sure to note areas in the ethics codes where you need clarification or want discussion.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Week 3: Feb. 3, 5</strong></td>
<td>Issue stories, Pitch writing. Editing procedures and expectations will be covered, including a review of the AP Stylebook.</td>
<td>Check ICON for reading assignments.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Week 4: Feb. 10, 12</strong></td>
<td>Review writing, Lead writing</td>
<td>Check ICON for reading assignments.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Week 5: Feb. 17, 19</strong></td>
<td>Business writing applied to health and fitness. Peer editing</td>
<td>Check ICON for reading assignments. First draft of Major Assignment No. 1 due by <strong>11 a.m. Monday, Feb. 17.</strong> Final draft of Assignment No. 1 due by <strong>11 a.m. Wednesday, Feb. 19.</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Week 6: Feb. 24, 26</strong></td>
<td>Trends and how-to stories. Review of story forms, such as the inverted pyramid, hourglass and various feature formats.</td>
<td>Check ICON for reading assignments. First pitch due by <strong>11 a.m. Monday, Feb. 24</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Week 7: March 2, 4</strong></td>
<td>Short- and long-form features</td>
<td>Check ICON for reading assignments.</td>
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<td><strong>Week 8: March 9, 11</strong></td>
<td>Alternative story forms: Q&amp;As, participatory journalism, vignettes, etc.</td>
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<td>Spring break</td>
<td>No class</td>
<td>No class</td>
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<td><strong>Week 9: March 23, 25</strong></td>
<td>Other types of stories, including but not limited to historical overviews, disaster coverage, and obituaries</td>
<td>Check ICON for reading assignments.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 10: March 30, April 1</td>
<td>Peer editing brainstorming</td>
<td>Check ICON for reading assignments. First draft of Major Assignment No. 2 due by 11 a.m. Monday, March 30. Final draft of Assignment No. 2 due by 11 a.m. Wednesday, April 1.</td>
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<td>Week 11: April 6, 8</td>
<td>Public records, open meetings Numbers and databases: Tracing the numbers</td>
<td>Check ICON for reading assignments.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 12: April 13, 15</td>
<td>Political writing and the influence on health care and the environment</td>
<td>Check ICON for reading assignments.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 13: April 20, 22</td>
<td>Blogs and other social media as journalism and strat comm tools</td>
<td>Check ICON for reading assignments. First draft of Major Assignment No. 3 due by 11 a.m. Monday, April 20. Final draft of Assignment No. 5 due by 11 a.m. Wednesday, April 22. Check ICON for reading assignments.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 14: April 27, 29</td>
<td>Catch-up week</td>
<td>Check ICON for reading assignments.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 15: May 4, 6</td>
<td>Share reviews and profiles of health-related businesses and nonprofits. Course wrap-up</td>
<td>Reviews and business profiles due by 11 a.m. Monday, May 4.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Finals Week</td>
<td></td>
<td>There is no final for this class.</td>
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**SJMC Social Media:**

Follow SJMC on social media to stay in the loop about activities/events, scholarships, internships, awards, current students, alumni and more:

FACEBOOK:  [https://www.facebook.com/UISJMC/](https://www.facebook.com/UISJMC/)

INSTAGRAM:  [https://www.instagram.com/uiowa_sjmc/](https://www.instagram.com/uiowa_sjmc/)

TWITTER:  [https://twitter.com/UIOWA_SJMC](https://twitter.com/UIOWA_SJMC)

Absences and Attendance
Students are responsible for attending class and for contributing to the learning environment of a course. Students are also responsible for knowing their course absence policies, which will vary by instructor. All absence policies, however, must uphold the UI policy related to student illness, mandatory religious obligations, including Holy Day obligations, unavoidable circumstances, or University authorized activities (https://clas.uiowa.edu/students/handbook/attendance-absences). Students may use this absence form to aid communication; the instructor will decide if the absence is excused or unexcused (https://clas.uiowa.edu/sites/default/files/ABSENCE%20EXPLANATION%20FORM2019.pdf).

Academic Integrity
All undergraduates enrolled in courses offered by CLAS have, in essence, agreed to the College's Code of Academic Honesty. Misconduct is reported to the College, resulting in suspension or other sanctions, with sanctions communicated with the student through the UI email address (https://clas.uiowa.edu/students/handbook/academic-fraud-honor-code).

Accommodations for Disabilities
UI is committed to an educational experience that is accessible to all students. A student may request academic accommodations for a disability (such as mental health, attention, learning, vision, and physical or health-related condition) by registering with Student Disability Services (SDS). The student is then responsible for discussing specific accommodations with the instructor. More information is at https://sds.studentlife.uiowa.edu/.

Administrative Home of the Course
The College of Liberal Arts and Sciences (CLAS) is the administrative home of this course and governs its add/drop deadlines, the second-grade-only option, and related policies. Other colleges may have different policies. CLAS policies may be found here: https://clas.uiowa.edu/students/handbook.

Communication and the Required Use of UI Email
Students are responsible for official correspondences sent to the UI email address (uiowa.edu) and must use this address for all communication within UI (Operations Manual, III.15.2).

Complaints
Students with a complaint about an academic issue should first visit with the instructor or course supervisor and then with the Chair of the department or program offering the course; students may next bring the issue to the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences. For more information, see https://clas.uiowa.edu/students/handbook/student-rights-responsibilities.
Final Examination Policies
The final exam schedule is announced around the fifth week of classes; students are responsible for knowing the date, time, and place of a final exam. Students should not make travel plans until knowing this information. No exams of any kind are allowed the week before finals. Visit https://registrar.uiowa.edu/final-examination-scheduling-policies.

Nondiscrimination in the Classroom
UI is committed to making the classroom a respectful and inclusive space for all people irrespective of their gender, sexual, racial, religious or other identities. Toward this goal, students are invited to optionally share their preferred names and pronouns with their instructors and classmates. The University of Iowa prohibits discrimination and harassment against individuals on the basis of race, class, gender, sexual orientation, national origin, and other identity categories set forth in the University’s Human Rights policy. For more information, contact the Office of Equal Opportunity and Diversity (diversity.uiowa.edu).

Sexual Harassment
Sexual harassment subverts the mission of the University and threatens the well-being of students, faculty, and staff. All members of the UI community must uphold the UI mission and contribute to a safe environment that enhances learning. Incidents of sexual harassment must be reported immediately. For assistance, please see https://osmrc.uiowa.edu/.