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Action-Date: _____

## CURRICULUM PROPOSAL COVER SHEET
University-Wide Undergraduate Curriculum Committee

I. **CONTACT**

Contact Person___Stanford G. Mukasa_____ Phone___x3097____

Department___Journalism_____

II. **PROPOSAL TYPE (Check All Appropriate Lines)**

_____ **COURSE** _____
                              Suggested 20 character title

____ New Course* _____
                              Course Number and Full Title

__X__ Course Revision    JN 446 -- Research Methods in Journalism_____
                              Course Number and Full Title

____ Liberal Studies Approval + _____
     for new or existing course         Course Number and Full Title

____ Course Deletion _____
                              Course Number and Full Title

__X__ Number and/or Title Change __JN446-Research Methods in Journalism__
                                   Old Number and/or Full Old Title

_____
New Number and/or Full New Title

____ Course or Catalog Description Change _____
                                        Course Number and Full Title

_____ **PROGRAM:**    ____ Major    ____ Minor    ____ Track.

____ New Program * _____
                              Program Name

____ Program Revision* _____
                              Program Name

____ Program Deletion* _____
                              Program Name

____ Title Change _____
                              Old Program Name

_____
New Program Name

III. **Approvals** (signatures and date)

_S. Mukasa_ 4/26                    _Hilma_ 5/7/96
Department Curriculum Committee     Department Chair

_[signature]_ 8/20/96              _[signature]_ 8/20/96
College Curriculum Committee        College Dean

_____
+Director of Liberal Studies (where applicable)    *Provost (where applicable)

# COURSE REVISION

## I    CATALOG DESCRIPTION

**JN446 Research Methods in Journalism**        **3 credits**
                                      **3 lecture hours**
                                      **(3c-01-3sh)**

Prerequisite: JN328 News Reporting or senior standing or instructor's permission

JN446 will explore theoretical and practical issues in information gathering, with emphasis on data analysis and computer-assisted reporting for public affairs journalism. Students will apply scientific methods in news reporting and analyze the effects of precision journalism on society.

## II    COURSE OBJECTIVES

Students will gain skills in the following areas:

1. search strategies for information gathering: planning and executing the search for information, developing data from the information, learning techniques of various sources, especially electronic ones.

2. precision journalism, the application of scientific techniques (particularly data analysis, statistics, survey research and polling) to news reporting.

3. computer-assisted reporting, largely analysis of government records in electronic form.

4. spreadsheets, relational database analysis, downloading on-line data and searching and accessing information and data, scientific methods of polling.

5. understanding the techniques for developing the longer news story, including the team approach

6. becoming acquainted with the logistics of executing the longer piece--economics, politics and philosophies of the newsroom

7. exploring fact-gathering methods for going beyond the who, what, when and where to the why and the how.

8. becoming sensitized to the consequences of news stories as they affect individuals and society.

## III.    READING MATERIALS

Meyer, Philip    New Precision Journalism, Indiana University Press, Bloomington, 1991

Weinberg, Steve    The Reporter's handbook.; An investigator guide to Documents and Techniques, Martin's Press. Second Edition 1996

----    Internet user's guide

John R. Levine and Carol Baroudi    Internet for Dummies,.IDG Books California 1993

Hoffman,Paul E    Netscape and World Wide Web for Dummies, IDG Books..1995

Brant Houston    Computer-assisted reporting,,St. Martin's Press. 1996

Ward, Jean and A. Hansen,    Search strategies in mass communication, Longman, New York, second edition, 1993.

## IV.    COURSE OUTLINE

### WEEK 1
### INTRODUCTION : OVERVIEW OF SCIENTIFIC METHODS IN JOURNALISM

Students will be introduced to the scientific aspects of gathering and analyzing information, the rationale, and historical background.

### WEEK 2-7
### CONCEPTS AND TERMS USED, AND THEIR PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS, IN RESEARCH METHODS IN JOURNALISM

Students will learn about search strategies for information gathering; precision journalism and computer-assisted reporting. Specifically , Internet searches, use of various search engines, retrieving data and information. Students will learn about the basic tools, on-line research basics and examples of CAR stories written by investigative reporters. A discussion on possible projects students may want to pursue. Students will be advised to select projects and data from their home counties/states.

### PRIZE-WINNING STORY EXPLORATION

Class discussion. Each student will be assigned a recent prize-winning story (either PNPA or Golden Quill) to research.

### WEEK 8-9
### SPREADSHEETS AND DATABASES

Introduction to database managers. Students will learn how to use spreadsheets and databases to analyze information and data. Excel and Access/FoxPro and other spreadsheets will be used.

### WEEK 9-10
### POLL, STATISTICAL AND FINANCIAL REPORTING

Students will learn how to write news stories based on poll data, statistics and the financial world, especially reporting their local government budgets.

## WEEK 11-12
## SOURCES AND SEARCHES
Students will learn
- to identify news contacts, such as experts in various fields on whom they can call for a reaction to a developing story, e.g. a toxic spill in community, disasters, etc.
- the Internet to search for information as well as monitor discussion lists.
- how to access government records, congressional information from which they can write stories about consumer education, their senators/congresspersons, and other information relevant to a local story

## WEEK 13 - 15
## THE INFORMATION SUPERHIGHWAY AND ITS SOCIAL IMPLICATIONS : THE ROLE OF A JOURNALIST
Students will retrieve information about the information superhighway and discuss its implications in their home communities.

### PROJECT ASSIGNMENTS, REVISION AND CLASS DISCUSSION
Students will work on their projects, consult with, or be individually supervised by, the instructor. Students will have an opportunity to present to class interim results of their projects

## V. EVALUATION METHODS

**The final course grade will be determined as follows**

### 1. QUIZZES                                                                 5 PERCENT
Quizzes will be given throughout the semester. These will be mostly in form of T/F, identification, matching and definition of terms.

### 2. INTERNET DISCUSSIONS AND CLASS PARTICIPATION                            5 PERCENT
Students will monitor Internet discussions on a variety of journalism-related topics and make short informal presentations in class

### 3. PRACTICAL ASSIGNMENTS                                                   30 PERCENT
Students will use data (supplied or retrieved from the Internet) to write short stories. Data will range from demographic information, voter registration trends, employment, etc. Students will use spreadsheet to analyze data .

### 4. PRIZE-WINNING STORIES                                                   10 PERCENT
Each student will be assigned a recent prize-winning story (either PNPA or Golden Quill) to research. Students will contact the reporters, editors and publishers who worked on/were responsible for this story and find out how they became interested in the story, major successes, any surprises in doing the story, the composing process, the editing process, any risks involved in its publication -- in other words, the story behind the story. The student will keep a log on the research, recording dates, times, people interviewed and how the interview was conducted -- phone or in person. The log will also record key information obtained from each person and the student's reaction to that information. All students will read each story and have prepared three written questions to ask the student presenting the information. These questions will be collected on the day of presentation as will the log of the student presenter.

### 5. LOCAL GOVERNMENT BUDGET                                                 10 PERCENT
Students will use spread sheets to analyze local government budgets and write news stories

## 6. SOURCES AND SEARCHES                                            10 PERCENT
Student will use the Internet and library resources to search for information about individuals, countries, places and write short news articles

## 7. TERM PROJECT                                                    30 PERCENT
Students will work in groups of two to research and write a term project. The project will test their skills to research for data and information, poll members of the public as well as use spreadsheets and databases to analyze the information and data. A list of ideas for a term projects will be supplied, although the students are encouraged to come up with their own ideas preferrably from their home communities/states. Project development discussions will take place early during and continue throughout the semester.

**GRADING SCALE     90-100=A    80-89 = B    70-79=C   60-69=D   BELOW   60=F**

# APPENDIX:  EXAMPLES OF CAR PROJECT ASSIGNMENTS

- Ever wonder if the neighborhoods receiving Community Development Block  Grants really need the money? To find out, analyze Census income data for  the census tracts that  include neighborhoods receiving CDBG funds.

- Use a spreadsheet to sort and rank salaries for state, county or local  workers. Who gets paid the most? Who gets paid the least? Did a ditch digger  for public works make more than the mayor because of overtime? Take a look at  job descriptions. Does your state or town have an employee doing an unusual job?

- Use a spreadsheet to sort property value data and do a story about who  owns the top 10 or 20 most expensive homes in the area.

- Analyze data from gun permit applications over a period of time to look  for trends. Are more women than ever applying to own guns? Are younger or  older people applying  more? Compare permit application dates with dates of  major crime sprees or  highly publicized crimes in your area or in the nation. Do gun permit  applications go up then?

- Create a database documenting every homicide in your town or region.  Include vital statistics on the victims and the suspects and data on the  weapons used, the times and places of the killings, whether gangs or drugs  were involved, etc. Then do a piece on  murder trends.

- If you are in a state where assessed property values theoretically  reflect market values, take a look at how the short or long time between  property valuations can benefit some and cost others dearly. Compare the  prices of properties sold to the assessed value of that  property using census tracts or other geographical  divisions.

- Cross-check local privilege licenses (like those required for gun  dealerships or day care centers) with state or federal licenses to find  those operating without the proper local paperwork and how much it's costing  the municipality in lost revenues.

- Use the U.S. Census income data to map out a story pinpointing the  richest and poorest neighborhoods in town and determine in per capita how  much each is getting in  city services.

- Look at annual property appraisals to see where values are going up and  down in your town or region. Use a spreadsheet for calculating, sorting and  ranking.

- Analyze the campaign finance data for local politicians to see who is  influencing these decision-makers and why.

- Test students' geographic knowledge. With the cooperation of school  districts, give students in your area a blank map of the United States and  have them name the states. Then input the test results, students' grades,  gender, etc. into a database and analyze. What state do kids know best? What state is least known? What are some of the  weird answers you got?

- Use a spreadsheet to compare water rates from various cities and towns.  Some have high fixed rates and low volume charges that favor big water users.  Others have low fixed rates and large volume charges favoring water  conservation.

- Get state, county and local figures on recycling rates in the  communities around you and using a spreadsheet to compare them, sort them and  rank them. Also look for indications of what recycling methods work best and  how different programs can produce  results that make a city look good or look bad.

- Dump marriage license data into the computer and do a story on the most popular and least popular days to get married in your area. Talk to some couples who got married on those days and ask them why they chose that date.

- Use tax records, phone books and other sources to find out where banks have their branches. Are they reluctant to locate in minority areas? Punch your data into Atlas, MapInfo or another computer-based mapping program to produce a map that will make the point.

- Study Home Mortgage Disclosure Act data to look for geographical redlining or disproportionately high denial rates for minority mortgage applicants.

- Get disciplinary data from your school districts - how many suspensions, detentions, expulsions, etc. Make sure the data includes the student's age, grade, gender and race, as well as why they were disciplined. Look for inconsistent applications of discipline. Do males get expelled more frequently than females for the same offenses? Are minority students more harshly treated?

- Take a look at city building inspection records to see which developers or landlords most often run afoul of city codes.

- Get road planners' maps with traffic-load ratings on them for major roads in your area. Then use a spreadsheet to sort and rank the roads and do a story and map showing the best commute routes in the region.

- Analyze tax records to find out who isn't paying up. Maybe it's a council member, or the president of the school board, or another prominent figure.

- Take a look at property tax records to track the decline in property values in less affluent areas of town and whether there is a lot of absentee ownership in those neighborhoods. You can use the same data to create a map of those areas.

## JN446 RESEARCH METHODS IN JOURNALISM

| Summary of proposed revisions | |
|---|---|
| **JN446 Advanced Reporting** | **JN446 Research Methods in Journalism** |
| **I. Catalog Description**<br>Designed for the student seeking a career as a working journalist, this course refines basic reporting and deals with the more sophisticated techniques of coverage. (Offered as JN346 prior to 1994-95) | **I. Catalog Description**<br>JN446 will explore theoretical and practical issues in information gathering, with emphasis on data analysis and computer-assisted reporting for public affairs journalism. Students will apply scientific methods in news reporting and analyze the effects of precision journalism on society |

## II.Course Objectives

A sequel to JN328 News Reporting, Advanced Reporting will aid the student in : .

1. understanding the techniques for developing the longer news story, including the team approach

2. becoming acquainted with the logistics of executing the longer piece--economics, politics and philosophies of the newsroom

3. exploring fact-gathering methods for going beyond the who, what, when and where to the why and the how.

4. becoming sensitized to the consequences of news stories as they affect individuals and society.

## II.Course Objectives

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2. Precision journalism, the application of scientific techniques (particularly data analysis, statistics, survey research and polling) to news reporting.

3. Computer-assisted reporting, largely analysis of government records in electronic form.

4. Spreadsheets, relational database analysis, downloading on-line data and searching and accessing information and data, scientific methods of polling.

5. exploring fact-gathering methods for going beyond the who, what, when and where to the why and the how.

6. becoming sensitized to the consequences of news stories as they affect individuals and society.

7. understanding the techniques for developing the longer news story, including the team approach

8. becoming acquainted with the logistics of executing the longer piece--economics, politics and philosophies of the newsroom

**Rationale:**

JN446 Advanced Reporting is being revised as JN446 Research Methods in Journalism to strengthen, streamline and emphasize scientific methods in news reporting by taking advantage of the emerging computer networking technologies and the information superhighway. This is consistent with the ever-increasing demands in the journalism job market for journalists who are skilled not only in reporting news but also in using the new information technologies and other scientific methods of research.

JN446 Research Methods in Journalism
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JN346 Advanced Reporting
Fall 1993
Instructor: Dr. Pat Heilman

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Office Hours: MWF-8:30-9:00
TR   -8:30-9:30
M   -1:00-2:30

Course Objectives

A sequel to JN328 News Reporting, Advanced Reporting will aid the student in:

*understanding the techniques for developing the longer news story, including the team approach

*becoming acquainted with the logistics of executing the longer piece--economics, politics and philosophies of the newsroom

*exploring fact-gathering methods for going beyond the who, what, when and where to the why and the how

*becoming sensitized to the consequences of news stories as they affect individuals and society.

Texts

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Handouts

Assignments

1. Kristin's Story - Each student will read this article at his/her own pace, but reading must be completed by Sept. 23. Class discussions on the article will begin on that date. A particular question/area of concentration will be assigned to each student by the end of the second week of classes. Students will prepare a typed essay as well as be prepared to lead the class in the discussion on the assigned points. (20 points)

2. Document Search Assignment - Each student will be assigned a particular problem/piece of information to be found. These searches will require going beyond library research (although the library may be a good starting point for the assignment) to courthouse and public document searches. Each student will keep a personal diary of how and where they found the information, including any stumbling blocks encountered along the way. This diary should include date and time entries for each day the search was conducted. In addition, each student will prepare a one-to two-page typed summary of the answers to the question and the source(s) used to obtain those answers. This report must be duplicated for each member of the class. Students will be assigned a date for an oral presentation of results at which time the report should be distributed to the class. Due Oct. 7. (20 points)

3. Prize-winning Story Exploration - Each student will be assigned a recent prize-winning story (either PNPA or Golden Quill) to research. Students will contact the reporters, editors and publishers who worked on/were responsible for this story and find out how they became interested in the story, major successes, any surprises in doing the story, the composing process, the editing process, any risks involved in its publication -- in other words, the story behind the story. The student will keep a log on the research, recording dates, times, people interviewed and how the interview was conducted -- phone or in person. The log will also record key information obtained from each person and the student's reaction to that information. All students will read each story and have prepared three written questions to ask the student presenting the information. These questions will be collected on the day of presentation as will the log of the student presenter. Due Nov. 16. (20 points)

4. Investigative Team Stories - Each team, paired by the instructor, will generate three story topics

(suggestions/models appear at end of syllabus) by Sept. 14. On that day, the story ideas will be discussed in class and narrowed to the final selections. Each team will begin research on a particular topic with a brief, typed synopsis of story scope, theme, methods(s) of information gathering, preliminary sources, and predicted outcome due Oct. 19. A sample synopsis is attached. Three conferences with each team will be scheduled. Class discussions on the stories are scheduled for Nov. 9 and Dec. 2. At the class discussions, each team will prepare a typed report on a specific problem and success with the story. The story is due on Dec. 9. Presentations of the stories will be given at the final exam period. (40 points)


Schedule

**September**

| | |
|---|---|
| 7 | The Reporter's Handbook, Chapters 1-3 |
| 9 | The Reporter's Handbook, Chapters 4-8 |
| 14 | Investigative Team Stories topics due |
| 16 | The Reporter's Handbook, Chapters 9-10 |
| 21 | Investigative Conference I (no class) |
| 23 | "Kristin's story," class discussion |
| 28 | "Kristin's story," class discussion |


**October**

| | |
|---|---|
| 5 | Investigative Conference I (no class) |
| 7 | Document Search reports/discussion |
| 12 | Document Search reports/discussion |
| 14 | Document Search reports/discussion |
| 19 | Synopsis due |
| 21 | The Reporter's Handbook, Chapters 11-12 |
| 26 | The Reporter's Handbook, Chapters 13-16 |
| 28 | Research day (no class) |


**November**

| | |
|---|---|
| 2 | Investigative Conference II (no class) |
| 4 | Investigative Conference II (no class) |
| 9 | Class Discussion I on investigative stories |
| 11 | Class Discussion I on investigative stories |
| 16 | Prize-winning stories reports and discussion |
| 23 | Investigative Conference III (no class) |
| 30 | Investigative Conference III (no class) |


**December**

| | |
|---|---|
| 2 | Class Discussion II on investigative stories |
| 7 | Team Consultants (by appt., no class) |
| 9 | Investigative Stories due in class |


**Final Exam Period:** Presentation/Discussion of Investigative Stories. Attendance required
Sat., Dec. 18, 12:30-2:30 p.m.

## Investigative Story

Students may choose topics which would require either campus or off-campus research and sources or a combination of both.  Some topic possibilities are:

> Enrollment increases/decreases in certain majors
>
> The Aging of Indiana County
>
> Racism/Sexism in the IUP classroom
>
> Permit Parking in Indiana Borough

## Sample Synopsis

Story topic:  Possible Merger of Indiana Borough and White Township

This story will examine the advantages and disadvantages of such a merger with an inclusion of a brief history of each municipality and the major differences in their political and economic structures.  We will also try to locate other such mergers within the Commonwealth which have been effected in recent years for a possible comparative analysis.

The story's theme will be the education of the populace of both municipalities away from the politics which will eventually infuse the situation.  A well-researched, well documented report will enable readers to make an informed choice on this voting issue.

Information will be obtained from documents in the County Courthouse on the incorporation of each municipality and from each of the municipal offices on the history/structure/political officials in each.  White Township supervisors and Indiana Borough council members, past and present, will be interviewed as well as the solicitors for each municipality.  Commercial developers, business owners in each municipality, and residents will be interviewed or possibly surveyed for their opinions.  An analysis of the different tax structures, if any, will be conducted as well as interviews with tax assessors to determine how this merger may affect the tax base.

We predict that the major points at issue will be zoning (exists in the Borough but not in White Township), tax base (higher taxes in Borough), community wealth (White Township is an area of residential and commercial growth), and community loyalty/history.