

Investigative Journalism

Fall 2021 - Carroll 253 & Remote

Class Zoom site https://unc.zoom.us/j/92893466154

COURSE POLICIES & SYLLABUS

Instructor: Stephen M Stock (he/him/his)

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Website: <u>www.stephenstock.tv</u>

Facebook: https://www.facebook.com/StephenStockTV/

Twitter: https://twitter.com/StephenStockTV

Instagram: https://www.instagram.com/stephenstocktv/

Class: https://unc.zoom.us/j/92893466154

Also, I'll be teaching in person on campus on the following dates:

August 23 and 30^{th} and October 11, 2021

Office Hours: By Appointment - Wednesday 10am-lpm

https://unc.zoom.us/my/stock.mejo390

If students wish to sign up for other office hours to discuss issues or their projects, please contact me directly, allowing at least 48 hours weekdays advance notice.



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Class ZOOM Site: https://unc.zoom.us/j/92893466154

Course Overview

I'm teaching what I know. This course will teach students how to dig up, create and deliver an investigative story using accepted current professional journalistic skills and techniques — skills that I've learned during 38 years in professional journalism. The course is designed to teach various investigative methods, including human source development and interviewing, court and police record acquisition, use of public records and open meetings laws, the ability to file a FOIA, conducting Internet research and becoming proficient in data downloading and analysis.

This class will operate as if it is a working newsroom.

Our discussions and class framework will be designed after a real, professional newsroom where all students are members of editorial meetings and their input and participation is welcomed and expected.

Good reporters ask questions — lots of questions. I expect you to participate fully. I want you to ask questions, to push back, to be curious and for us to learn together. Class participation will be graded each class and will contribute to 20% of your final grade.

By the end of the semester, students will be expected to complete and turn in an investigative project as a final exam. All students should become members of the professional organization <u>Investigative</u>, <u>Reporters and Editors</u> (IRE).



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Class Time & Place: Ilam-1:45pm Eastern - 8am-10:45am Pacific

REMOTE on ZOOM – (3 classes I will be on campus)

ZOOM: https://unc.zoom.us/j/92893466154

<u>I will be on campus teaching in person (with remote available as well) on August 23 & 30th and October IIth</u>

Class Every Monday (except Labor Day)

August 23rd - November 29th

14 class sessions (no class on Monday, September 6th)

10 Grading Opportunities/Projects/Quizzes

1.	Class participation – every class (15 points max)	(20% of final grade)
2.	Quiz on Writing for Story – due on September 13 (class 3)	(5% of final grade)
3.	File 2 written FOIAs – due September 20 (class 4)	(5% of final grade)
4.	Story Pitches and Assignments – due October 4 th (class 6)	(5% of final grade)
5.	List of Sources – due on October 25 (class 9)	(5% of final grade)
6.	Story Project Outline – due November 1 (class 10)	(10% of final grade)
7.	Obtain Court Record – due November 8 (class 11)	(5% of final grade)
8.	Attend Public Meeting – due November 15 (class 12)	(5% of final grade)
9.	Rough Draft of Project – due November 22 (class 13)	(10% of final grade)
10.	Final Exam is Final Project/Story – due December 6 th	(30% of final grade)



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GOALS - By the end of this class you will:

- Create an Investigative Story Final Project good enough to be published
- File at least two Freedom of Information Act Requests (FOIA)
- Go to Courthouse and find and get copy of a court file
- Attend one public meeting and come away with two story ideas (can attend a public meeting online)
- Learn how to pitch stories
- Learn how to develop a three-word pitch and story focus
- Get court records and operate PACER
- Interview human sources
- Hold one accountability interview
- Download data from Internet
- Work with spreadsheet and find two facts in data
- Become a student member of IRE
- Learn to think critically
- Maybe be published
- Maybe win an award



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Required:

All students should sign up and become members of IRE. Sign up <u>www.ire.org</u> IRE membership Cost is \$25. If the cost presents a challenge, please see me after class or off-line. Participate. Ask questions. Good reporters ask lots of questions. All students must participate in class and should have their computer cameras on.

Required Texts:

Writing for Story

by Jon Franklin

The Investigative Reporter's Handbook

by Brant Houston and Mark Horvit

Both books are available at the UNC Student Bookstore and on Amazon

(See me if there are any issues)

Recommended but not required texts:

Data Literacy: A User's Guide

by David Herzog

Computer-Assisted Reporting — Fourth Edition

by Brant Houston

Perversion of Justice

by Julie K. Brown (2018 Polk Award winner at *The Miami Herald*)

Five Days at Memorial

by Sheri Fink (2010 Pulitzer Prize winner at *The New York Times*)

Aim for the Heart

by Al Tompkins



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COURSE ASSESSMENTS & GRADE SCALE

This course will involve a total of 10 opportunities to achieve a grade. You will be graded on participation, one quiz, several progress assessments/tasks, story outlines, story pitches and a final investigative project.

The final grade (1025 max points) will be weighted with certain achievements carrying more weight and percentage of the final grade than others. The percentage of the final grade will be composed as follows:

Final Project (due Dec 6, 2021): 30% (maximum 300 points)
Participation (including joining IRE): 20% (maximum 225 points)

(15 points for each of 14 classes for a maximum of 210 points; plus 15 points for joining IRE)

• Quiz on Writing for Story (Sept 13, 2021): 5% (maximum 50 points) File 2 FOIA's (due Sept. 20, 2021) 5% (maximum 50 points) • Project Story Pitch (due Oct. 4, 2021) 5% (maximum 50 points) • Project Source List (due Oct. 25, 2021) 5% (maximum 50 points) • Project Outline (due Nov. 1, 2021): 10% (maximum 100 points) • Obtain Court Filings (due Nov. 8, 2021) 5% (maximum 50 points) • Attend Public Meeting (due Nov. 15, 2021) 5% (maximum 50 points) • Rough Draft of Project (due Nov. 22, 2021) 10% (maximum 100 points)



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A total maximum of 1000 points can be achieved which is top score (with the exception of class participation where you can earn 25 more points.)

The FINAL Grade Scale will be as follows:

A = 941-1000 points

A- =900-940 points

B + = 870 - 899 points

B =840-869 points

B - 800 - 839 points

C+ =770-799 points

C = 740-769 points

C = 700 - 739 points

D+ =670-699 points

D =620-669 points

F =619-0 points



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REMOTE VIRTUAL LEARNING — ZOOM ETIQUETTE

Since this is a remote class where we will regularly meet on Zoom, we need to support each other and be fully present just as if we're in a newsroom during an editorial meeting. Therefore, I think Dr. Amanda Reid in her "Introduction to Media Law" class Syllabus had it just right when she said:

"Although the norms of Zoom etiquette are still evolving, the default expectation is that you will mute your audio and turn on your video. Your video camera may be briefly turned off in exigent circumstances. If there is a compelling reason why your camera cannot regularly be turned on, please get in touch with me to discuss."

I will adopt the same policy as Dr. Reid for this class.

Remember you will earn points every class merely by participating. Lack of participation will result in deduction of points awarded for each class meeting and will impact your overall grade.

Consider attendance for this class to be as if you're reporting to work in a newsroom. You would expect to be present at work. You're expected to be present and on-camera every class. Missed virtual classes is just like missing work — your class grade (instead of your pay) will be impacted.

If there is a compelling reason why your camera cannot regularly be turned on, please contact me off-line to discuss. But we're all going to be part of a team that works and learns together. Your participation (or lack of it) will impact every class.

If you have questions during the lecture or discussion, feel free to use the Zoom icon or raise your hand on camera. Be patient with me as I try to watch all of you during the class discussion.

Be ready to discuss and join in conversation every class as if you're in a newsroom editorial meeting where there are no wrong answers or perspectives. If you wish to discuss or ask questions of me after class, please send me an e-mail or a note in the Zoom chat feature.

Also remember, I will be teaching this class in person on August 23, 2021, August 30, 2021 and October 11, 2021. You are encouraged to attend in person. However, there will be live streaming of video and audio from the classroom at Carroll Hall for those unable to attend or do not wish to attend in person. If you cannot or do not wish to attend those three classes in person you must attend virtually via Zoom.



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ATTENDANCE:

University Policy:

No right or privilege exists that permits a student to be absent from any class meetings, except for these University Approved Absences:

- 1. Authorized University activities
- 2. Disability/religious observance/pregnancy, as required by law and approved by <u>Accessibility Resources and Service</u> and/or the <u>Equal Opportunity and Compliance</u> Office (EOC)
- 3. Significant health condition and/or personal/family emergency as approved by the Office of the Dean of Students, Gender Violence Service Coordinators, and/or the Equal Opportunity and Compliance Office (EOC).

Class Policy:

Instructors may work with students to meet attendance needs that do not fall within University approved absences. For situations when an absence is not University approved (e.g., a job interview or club activity), instructors determine their own approach to missed classes and make-up assessments and assignments. Please provide your approach on the course syllabus. Please communicate with me early about potential absences. Please be aware that you are bound by the Honor Code when making a request for a University approved absence. (source: http://catalog.unc.edu/policies-procedures/attendance-grading-examination/)

HONOR CODE:

I expect that each student will conduct himself or herself within the guidelines of the University honor system (http://honor.unc.edu). All academic work should be done with the high levels of honesty and integrity that this University demands. You are expected to produce your own work in this class. If you have any questions about your responsibility or your instructor's responsibility as a faculty member under the Honor Code, please see the course instructor or Senior Associate Dean C. A. Tuggle, or you may speak with a representative of the Student Attorney Office or the Office of the Dean of Students.

Syllabus Changes

The professor reserves the right to make changes to the syllabus, including project due dates and test dates. These changes will be announced as early as possible.



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ARS

The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill facilitates the implementation of reasonable accommodations, including resources and services, for students with disabilities, chronic medical conditions, a temporary disability or pregnancy complications resulting in barriers to fully accessing University courses, programs and activities.

Accommodations are determined through the Office of Accessibility Resources and Service (ARS) for individuals with documented qualifying disabilities in accordance with applicable state and federal laws. See the ARS Website for contact information: https://ars.unc.edu or email ars@unc.edu.

(source: https://ars.unc.edu/faculty-staff/syllabus-statement)

Counseling and Psychological Services

CAPS is strongly committed to addressing the mental health needs of a diverse student body through timely access to consultation and connection to clinically appropriate services, whether for short or long-term needs. Go to their website: https://caps.unc.edu/ or visit their facilities on the third floor of the Campus Health Services building for a walk-in evaluation to learn more.

TITLE IX

Any student who is impacted by discrimination, harassment, interpersonal (relationship) violence, sexual violence, sexual exploitation, or stalking is encouraged to seek resources on campus or in the community. Reports can be made online to the EOC at https://eoc.unc.edu/report-an-incident/. Please contact the University's Title IX Coordinator (Elizabeth Hall, interim – titleixcoordinator@unc.edu), Report and Response Coordinators in the Equal Opportunity and Compliance Office (reportandresponse@unc.edu), Counseling and Psychological Services (confidential), or the Gender Violence Services Coordinators (gvsc@unc.edu; confidential) to discuss your specific needs. Additional resources are available at safe.unc.edu.



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POLICY ON NON-DISCRIMINATION

The University is committed to providing an inclusive and welcoming environment for all members of our community and to ensuring that educational and employment decisions are based on individuals' abilities and qualifications. Consistent with this principle and applicable laws, the University's Policy Statement on Non-Discrimination offers access to its educational programs and activities as well as employment terms and conditions without respect to race, color, gender, national origin, age, religion, creed, genetic information, disability, veteran's status, sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression. Such a policy ensures that only relevant factors are considered, and that equitable and consistent standards of conduct and performance are applied.

If you are experiencing harassment or discrimination, you can seek assistance and file a report through the Report and Response Coordinators (see contact info at safe.unc.edu) or the Equal Opportunity and Compliance Office, or online to the EOC at https://eoc.unc.edu/report-an-incident/

DIVERSITY STATEMENT

I strive to make this classroom an inclusive space for all students. Please let me know if there is anything I can do to improve; I appreciate any suggestions. More broadly, our school has adopted diversity and inclusion mission and vision statements with accompanying goals. These complement the University policy on prohibiting harassment and discrimination. In summary, UNC is committed to providing an inclusive and welcoming environment for all members of our community and does not discriminate in offering access to its educational programs and activities on the basis of age, gender, race, color, national origin, religion, creed, disability, veteran's status, sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression. The Dean of Students (Suite 1106, Student Academic Services Building, CB# 5100, 450 Ridge Road, Chapel Hill, NC 27599-5100 or [919] 966-4042) has been designated to handle inquiries regarding the University's nondiscrimination policies.

MASK USE

All enrolled students are required to wear a mask covering your mouth and nose at all times in our physical classroom. This requirement is to protect our educational community -- your classmates and me – as we learn together. If you choose not to wear a mask, or wear it improperly, I will ask you to leave immediately, and I will submit a report to the Office of Student Conduct. At that point you will be disenrolled from this course for the protection of our educational community. Students who have an authorized accommodation from Accessibility Resources and Service have an exception. For additional information, see https://carolinatogether.unc.edu/university-guidelines-for-facemasks/



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COURSE SYLLABUS

ZOOM: https://unc.zoom.us/j/92893466154

- <u>Class 1</u> (Aug 23, 2021) *Stephen Stock teaches in person* CA 253 Introduction & Define Investigative Journalism
 - O What makes for an investigative story?
 - o Are all journalistic stories investigative?
 - O What elements make up an investigative story?
 - o Does it uncover something no one has reported before?
 - Copy ideas but not original content and/or writing
 - a. How do you structure an investigation/story?
 - b. Three words
 - c. Keep it simple
 - d. Keep it focused
 - e. Don't ask broad, big picture questions
 - f. Focus on specific question to be answered
 - g. Identify stakeholders
 - Watch some stories to identify those that are investigative
- Assignments for rest of semester: write two FOIA's and send them to appropriate agencies (due Sept. 20); story pitch for project (due Oct. 4); go to courthouse get filings (due Nov. 8); attend a public meeting and come back with two story ideas (due Nov. 15); turn a list of sources for you project (due Oct. 25); turn in outline of your project (due Nov. 1); turn in rough draft of your final project (due Nov. 22); final project (due Dec. 6)
- Homework assignment research background of Stephen Stock and READ The Deadly Choices at Memorial by Sheri Fink

https://www.nytimes.com/2009/09/13/magazine/13letters-t-THEDEADLYCHO LETTERS.html https://www.propublica.org/article/the-deadly-choices-at-memorial-826

- Read Investigative Reporter's Handbook Preface and Chapter 1
- ❖ Read Writing for Story Preface and Chapters 1 and 4... quiz on Preface through Chapter 4 is on Sept. 13
- Start thinking of what project you want to do for your final project; come up with two story pitches for next class
- Class 2 (Aug. 30, 2021) Stephen Stock teaches in person CA 253
 Reading and watching award-winning investigative journalism
 - Students report in what they found by backgrounding Stephen Stock
 - Deconstruct *The Deadly Choices at Memorial* several investigative stories both print and TV
 - a. Identify sources in the stories
 - b. Identify data in the stories
 - c. Identify field reporting in the stories
 - d. Identify interviews and techniques in the stories
 - e. Identify stakeholders in the stories
 - f. What makes this an investigative story?
 - g. Is there someone to be held accountable?
 - o Deconstruct other investigative stories
 - a. Stephen Stock stories; maybe the water bill backup http://nbcbay.com/JHkHH0p
 - b. Kimberly King https://wlos.com/news/local/dont-eat-the-fish-scientist-says-broad-river-being-poisoned-by-american-zinc
 - c. Daralene Jones https://youtu.be/GdeUgT8mgcs
 - d. AJ Lagoe
 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=emU1Lj1xeu4
 - e. Charlie LeDuff
 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7EcrEO4Jrhk
 - Discuss story pitches and potential ideas
 - Sourcing beginning discussion
 - a. List different types of sources
 - Human

- o Public
- Private
- On the record
- Background
- Off the record
- Records
 - Public government records
 - Court records
 - Private company records
- Data
- Reminder of quiz next class Sept. 13 on Writing for Story by Jon Franklin; read only Preface through Chapter 4
- Think of two stories you want to pursue (first ideas for pitches)
- <u>Class 3</u> (Sept. 13) All remote https://unc.zoom.us/j/92893466154
 Finding & Developing Sources Using Public Records
 - Quiz on Writing for Story by Jon Franklin (for grade)
 - Discussion of keys to writing good journalism
 - The secret to compelling storytelling
 - Quick discussion on story pitches
 - Government Records
 - a. Open Meetings laws
 - b. Open Records laws
 - c. Filing a FOIA (Freedom of Information Act Request)
 - What is a FOIA?
 - What is NC Chapter 132?
 - Where do I file?
 - Who can file a FOIA?
 - What does a FOIA cover?
 - What does a FOIA not cover?
 - What's the difference between Federal FOIA and state FOIA?
 - How do I file a FOIA?
 - Internet resources
 - Web sites on FOIA

Web based FOIA letter template

- Court Records
 - a. What's so important about court records?
 - b. How do I get them?
 - c. How do I read them?
- o PACER
- a. What is PACER?
- b. How do I use it?
- Homework assignment for grade filing two FOIA's (graded) PLUS have two more story pitches
- Class 4 (Sept. 20) All remote https://unc.zoom.us/j/92893466154
 - o Turn in FOIA's and make sure they are filed (graded)
 - Discuss two <u>additional</u> story pitches from each student
 Other sources of Information for Investigation
 - o Data
- a. Where do I find data?
- b. How do I make sense of data?
- c. Why use data?
- d. Internet
- Human Sources
 - a. On the record sources
 - b. Deep background sources
 - What is "off the record?" "deep background"? "background"?
- Accountability
 - a. Where do I find accountable people?
 - b. How do I interview them?
- Other sources
 - a. Research\Academic papers
 - b. Scientific papers
 - c. Others
- Homework assignment Read Associated Press Story Fruits of Labor by Margie Mason and Robin McDowell, editor Ron Nixon https://apnews.com/hub/fruits-of-labor

- Class 5 (Sept 27) All remote https://unc.zoom.us/j/92893466154
 - The Art of Pitching Stories; Refining Your Focus
 - Guest Lecture Appearance by Ron Nixon; Global Investigations Editor at The Associated Press
 - a. Advice from Ron Nixon
 - b. What should students focus on if they want to conduct investigative journalism?
 - c. How did Ron's team pull off the 2-year investigation *Fruits of Labor?*
 - d. What were the biggest challenges?
 - e. The biggest obstacles?
 - f. What kind of impact has the AP's work had?
 - Refining your story pitch
 - a. Discussion of focus; the three words
 - b. What makes a good investigative pitch and what to avoid
 - c. Students each discuss their ideas and pitch for the Final Project
 - d. Discussion in editorial meeting form about how to focus and refine pitch
- Homework Assignment final story pitches due next class
- Class 6 (Oct. 4) All remote https://unc.zoom.us/j/92893466154
- o Finalizing the Final Project Story Pitches
 - Individual story pitches to the entire class as in editorial meetings (graded)
 - Discussion of story pitches
 - o Focus
 - Other possibilities to pursue
 - List of stakeholders
 - Data to find
 - Issues to explore
 - Roadblocks
 - Strategies
 - What must be included in final project
 - Watch other stories to share if need be

- Assign final projects to each individual student
 - Discuss what's needed to proceed
 - Homework assignment: watch Lee Zurik's Inspecting the Inspectors https://www.fox8live.com/2020/02/18/zurik-city-inspectorsapproved-work-hard-rock-hotel-site-gps-shows-they-were-not-there/
 - Remind students of future homework due: source list (due Oct. 25), project outline (due Nov. 1); go to courthouse or PACER and get copies of court filings (due Nov. 8); public meeting (due Nov. 15)
- Class 7 (Oct. 11) Stephen Stock teaches in person CA 253 https://unc.zoom.us/j/92893466154
 - Enterprising and Finding Information They Want Secret
 - a. Guest Lecture Appearance by Lee Zurik; Director of National Investigations, Gray Television & Chief Investigative Reporter WVUE-TV
 - Advice from Lee Zurik
 - What should students focus on if they want to conduct investigative journalism?
 - How did Lee's team pull off their investigation Inspecting the Inspectors?
 - O What were the biggest challenges?
 - o The biggest obstacles?
 - O What kind of impact has the Lee's work had?
 - Finding Investigative Information online quickly and overcoming roadblocks in your project
 - o Discussion of challenges to finishing student Final Project
 - What else do you need?
 - Who do you need to talk to?
 - What holes are in your reporting?
 - Possible Real-time on-line exploration of what's available
 - Homework Read *Perversion of Justice* by Julie K Brown of The Miami Herald https://www.miamiherald.com/article220097825.html
 - Homework Assignment: source list (due Oct. 25), project outline (due Nov. 1); go to courthouse or PACER and get copies of court filings (due Nov. 8); attend public meeting (due Nov. 15)

- Class 8 (Oct. 18) All remote https://unc.zoom.us/j/92893466154
- Discuss Perversion of Justice by Julie K Brown;
 - What elements did she find?
 - What sources did she use?
 - What's the 3-word pitch?
- a. Exploring IRE resources
- b. Data breakdown
- c. Breaking News presentation
 - 1. Online resources page
 - 2. Breaking news real live scenario
- Search Internet for data to download relevant to students' Final Project
- ❖ Homework source list is due next week on Oct. 25
- Read Chapters 5 and 6 Writing for Story
- * Read Al Tompkins *Aim for the Heart* Chapter 1 (handout)
- Remind students that they must get copies of court filings that would contribute to a story and turn them in by Nov. 8 for a grade.
- Class 9 (Oct 25) All remote https://unc.zoom.us/j/92893466154
- o Crafting an Investigative Story
 - a. Guest Lecture Appearance by **Al Tompkins**; Senior Faculty, The Poynter Institute for Media Studies
 - o How do I craft an investigative story?
 - Keys to good writing
 - Five motivators
 - What should students focus on if they want to conduct investigative journalism?
 - O What do I need to know to become a good writer?
 - O Why Journalism?
- O How do I craft an investigative story?
- Staying focused
- Writing for Story (three words)

- o Elements to include
- Elements to leave out
- Crafting a narrative
- Bullet-proofing the final project
- Turn in SOURCE LIST for grade
 - Discuss with class
 - O What else is needed?
 - O Who else is needed?
- Watch Cindy Galli ABC News project
 - Deconstruct project
- Homework Assignment: Outline of Final Project due next class (due Nov. 1 for a grade)
- ❖ Homework II Remind students that they must get copies of court filings that would contribute to a story and turn them (due Nov. 8 for a grade)
- ❖ Homework III Remind students they must attend a public meeting if they haven't done so already and come back with two story ideas (due Nov. 15 for a grade)
- Class 10 (Nov 1) All remote https://unc.zoom.us/j/92893466154
 - o Final Project Outline due (graded)
 - a. Challenges to Investigative Reporting, Getting Sued, Pushback from those you held accountable
 - a. Guest Lecture Appearance by **Cindy Galli**; Chief of Investigative Projects, ABC News
 - Advice from Cindy Galli
 - What should students focus on if they want to conduct investigative journalism?
 - How does Cindy's team work?
 - What are her biggest challenges?
 - Does she worry about being sued?
 - How do you bullet-proof your projects?
 - What minefields should students watch out for?
 - What kind of impact has the Cindy's work had?
- Discuss Final Project outlines
 - Editorial meeting where we all share
 - Challenges students are encountering

- How to overcome those obstacles
- Things to watch out for
- If student doesn't have accountability by now start planning for it
- Bullet-proofing the Final Project
- Class 11 (Nov. 8) All remote https://unc.zoom.us/j/92893466154

Turn in copies of court filings you made in court (graded)

- Court Records Review
 - a. Discuss what you found at courthouse
 - b. What roadblocks did you find?
 - c. What success did you have?
 - d. How were they helpful?
 - e. What stories could you turn based on these documents?
- Students begin to assemble Final Project
- <u>Class 12</u> (Nov. 15) All remote https://unc.zoom.us/j/92893466154
 - Turn in two story ideas you found by attending a public meeting anytime during the semester (graded)
- Class 13 (Nov. 22) All remote https://unc.zoom.us/j/92893466154
 - Final Project rough draft due (graded)
 - Class discussion of rough draft of each project
 - Watch other investigative pieces and deconstruct and break them down
- Class 14 (Nov. 29) https://unc.zoom.us/j/92893466154

Final Class

- Question and Answers
- Open Discussion of issues coming up with individual Final Projects and ways to get around roadblocks in order to complete final project
- Review investigative pieces to see how the students views have changed and what they've learned

• **FINAL EXAM (Dec. 6)** Final Exam Final Investigative Project due (grade) https://unc.zoom.us/j/92893466154