

**CSULB College of Liberal Arts
Department of Journalism & Public Relations**

SYLLABUS v.2

(updated Aug. 22 with Beachboard LMS details and a new link to the student technology program)

**JOUR 411_01_8765:
Open Data and Democracy**

Fall 2022

Mon-Wed 9:30-10:45 pm

LA3 204

Final exam:

FRIDAY Dec. 16; 8 AM

Instructor:

Christopher Knap

Christopher.knap@csulb.edu

OFFICE HOURS:

- 10:45-11:45 Tues/Thursday

LOCATION:

- LA4 206F

Course Description:

Prerequisites:

- Upper division standing
- GE Foundation requirements.

Students will explore the theoretical foundations of the First Amendment including the function and purpose of journalism, the promise (and problems) created by a free press, the role of open government in democracies, the history of citizen journalism, and the growing opportunities to be informed and engaged citizens in the 21st century. Students will become familiar with mathematical and statistical concepts regularly utilized by data analysts and in computer-assisted reporting. Concepts covered will include mean, median and modes, plus rates, ratios and percentages. Students will review and practice the quantitative reasoning behind these concepts and learn how to analyze, synthesize and present data to support a news story or citizen action campaign.

Required and optional course materials:

- **REQUIRED: Data for Journalists: A Practical Guide for Computer-Assisted Reporting**, Brant Houston, Routledge Press, Fifth Edition, 2019. (NOTES: This is revered as a bible by the National Institute of Computer Assisted Reporting (NICAR). Many class assignments and lectures are based on information in this book.)
- **REQUIRED: Death in Mud Lick: A Coal Country fight against the drug companies that delivered the opioid epidemic**, Eric Eyre, Scribner, 2020. (NOTES: This new, non-fiction book reads as if it was written just for students in this class. An embattled reporter for a small newspaper fights corrupt politicians and powerful corporations to obtain secret public records that detail the unconscionable profiteering by drug companies who created an opioid epidemic in small Appalachian towns. This is only \$21 on Amazon; \$15 on Kindle.)
- **OPTIONAL: Associated Press Stylebook** (NOTES: This is the bible for both newspaper and public relations style and is highly recommended. Any year since 2020 is acceptable and loaner copies are available in the Journalism reading room. An online version is available for free on the University Library portal.)

Student Learning Outcomes

Students who complete JOUR 411 should be able to:

Explain the importance of open government, public records, and an informed and engaged citizenry in democracies.

Discuss the role of “muckrakers,” news media professionals, and citizen journalists in historical and contemporary contexts.

Identify and access city, state and federal databases, as well as other data sources available to the public and utilize analytical tools to examine and summarize them.

Apply quantitative reasoning concepts to the analysis of data and to inform analyses of government and other open datasets.

Create a civic action program, journalism project or public awareness campaign based on the findings of an in depth analysis of an open data source.

Background and welcome:

My colleagues and I at the Department of Journalism and Public Relations are pleased to offer this new class, which was designed by your instructor and taught for the first time in the fall of 2019. Designed in consultation with groundbreaking journalists from the National Institute of Computer Assisted Reporting, this class is aimed not just at journalists but any Upper Division student looking to explore the historical roots and modern foundations of investigative journalism and to satisfy their GE Category B4 requirement (Mathematics and Quantitative Reasoning) at the same time.

"Democracy dies in darkness," the new motto of the Washington Post, reflects an old theory about the interconnectedness between democracy, a free and investigative press and an informed citizenry. The role of the press in democracy is to shine light on those in power to ensure representative government is indeed of the people, by the people, and for the people. This theory of "watchdog journalism" is grounded in the position that journalists must expose corruption and incompetence to affect positive change in society.

It's also important to know that the U.S. Constitution does not differentiate between journalists and ordinary citizens. That is, every citizen has the same right to open government proceedings and records as every journalist, and every bit as much right to steer the direction of democracy.

In this class students will explore the theoretical foundations of the First Amendment including the purpose and role of journalism, the promise (and problems) created by a free press and the role of open government records in democracies. We'll look at the history of citizen journalism in the United States as well as the growing influence of data analysis in the journalism and civic activism of the 21st century.

Most of the data we explore will have been assembled by government employees and released under public records laws.

Students will become familiar with mathematical and statistical concepts regularly utilized by data journalists and featured in news stories. Concepts covered will include fractions, rates, ratios and percentages plus three kinds of averages. Students will review and practice the quantitative reasoning behind these concepts and use them to analyze data sets. Students will practice obtaining and analyzing public data and utilize their own analysis to create a news story or citizen action campaign.

Basic course modules:

Weeks	Module:	Activities	Assessments
1-4	Theoretical frameworks: The First Amendment; historic role of citizen journalists. Investigating powerful interests. Using data to power stories. Finding data online. Public	Ten Noteworthy Moments. My Lai Massacre. DfJ: Chapt 1,2. Death in Mud Lick (Part 1). Films:	Paper: Three news stories based on data analysis. Quiz 1: The role of citizen activists in

	records laws.	Watergate, Big Tobacco. File a CPRA.	democracy. Paper: Your CPRA
5-8	Math and data: Quantitative reasoning concepts. Sorting and analyzing data. Mean, median and mode. Rates and ratios. Basic formulas. Identifying trends and outliers	Sorting data: Crime in cities. Crime on campus. Reading: DfJ Chapters 4,5. Mud Lick (Part II)	Quiz #2 Math for Data: Data Assignments 1-3
9-12	Finding stories in data. Cleaning data. Pivot tables. Finding human sources. Social action campaigns: Heal the Bay; US PIRG: Used cars. Intro to Mapping. LA Times Homicide Project.	Reading: Mud Lick (Part III). DfJ Chaps 10, 11. Heal the Bay: Beach Report Card. USPIRG: Used car dangers. Basic mapping.	Reading: Appendix A. Quiz #3: Telling stories with Data. Paper: My CPRA Result.
13-16	Summarizing data, constructing a narrative and presenting a data story to the public. Ethics in Journalism and Data.	Reading: Mud Lick (Part IV). Class workshop: Assembling your final project	FINAL Quiz #4: Final Project due

Grading structure for this course:

Assignment	Value
Homework Papers (as assigned in class) (5x20)	100
Scheduled Quizzes (4 x 25)	100
Data Access and Spreadsheet Assignments (5 x 20)	100
Data analysis project	100
Attendance and Participation	100
TOTAL	500

Individual Data Analysis Project:

Students will choose a public data set, develop a hypothesis, then analyze the data to prove or disprove the hypothesis. Students must produce a 3-5 page paper describing the findings in a brief narrative and charting and/or mapping the findings as they would for a news story or civic action campaign. **NOTE: The final project is designed to show how much you learned in this class, and is worth 1/5 of your grade, so do not give it short shrift! There will be extensive lectures and workshops in the final weeks of class helping you to shape your project. Due in Dropbox at the date and time of FINAL; Friday, Dec. 16 @8 AM; Dropbox closes at 10 AM).**

TOOLS AND TECHNOLOGY

- CSULB is currently undergoing a transition from BeachBoard, its legacy learning management system (LMS), to Canvas, the LMS used by many community colleges, high schools and CSU Bakersfield. This class will continue to be taught using BeachBoard through the end of 2022.
- We will be working in **Microsoft Excel** for most of the semester (after a few weeks of introduction) so you will need a laptop or PC that can download and use it. A phone or tablet will not have enough computing power for this class. If your computer doesn't come with Microsoft Excel you can download it for free through Beachboard's Software Depot. **Microsoft Word**, which is the required application for many of the homework assignments, is similarly available for free. (Microsoft Office 365).
- If you do not have access to a laptop or reliable internet you can borrow a laptop and/or portable internet hotspot from the Technology Loan Program. Apply for that here: <https://www.csulb.edu/student-affairs/csuccess>
- ***NB: DO NOT USE Apple's Numbers or Pages software as they are not well-supported by Beachboard. Assignments submitted in Numbers or Pages will not be graded!***
- There are four quizzes in this class and they will be administered in class using the online quiz tool on Beachboard. For this almost any device that can access Beachboard will work but a laptop is recommended.

LATE WORK POLICY: Please keep careful track of assignment deadlines. Homework dropboxes and quiz tools all have a built-in grace period. ***NB: Once the Dropbox or Quiz closes no late work will be accepted; emailed work is never accepted in this class.*** This may seem strict but it is fair to all students and exempts the instructor from having to rule up or down on a litany of excuses.

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GRADING RUBRIC: CLASS PARTICIPATION	
A	Displays all of the following behaviors: Always on time and in class. Pays attention to lectures and class presentations. Asks thoughtful questions. Offers thoughtful answers. Participates well with his/her group. A delight to have in the class.
B	Displays most of the above behaviors but slips on one or more criteria, such as missing more than two classes or reluctant participation in class or group discussions. Perhaps attention is poor and doesn't follow lecture.

C	Often misses class or disrupts by arriving late. Does not participate in class or group discussions. Attention is poor, e.g. does not know the question when called upon during a lecture. Or, repeatedly leaves class early for unexplained reasons.
D	Frequently misses class or arrives late. Does not participate in class or group discussions. Never volunteers answers. When asked, does not know what the question was. May exhibit disruptive behaviors.
F	Attendance behaviors are very poor....almost never seen in class. When present is disengaged. Frequently engages in disruptive behavior. (No one has ever gotten an F...but it's possible.)

About your instructor:

Chris Knap is an investigative reporter, feature writer, editor and journalism instructor with 30 years of experience covering public and consumer affairs, business, legal issues and health. His byline has been published in more than a dozen newspapers, magazines and online news sites including The Charleston (W.Va.) Gazette, The Orange County Register, The San Francisco Chronicle, The Washington Post, Cosmopolitan Magazine and Southern California Public Radio (scpr.org). He was a part of a three-man reporting team at the Register that was a finalist for a Pulitzer Prize in Explanatory Reporting in 2004.

From 2006 to 2014 Knap was the Investigations Editor at the Orange County Register, where he supervised a team of investigative and political reporters who won awards and accolades from Investigative Reporters and Editors, California Newspaper Publishers Association, Associated Press News Editors and Society of American Business Editors and Writers.

From 2014 to 2015 Knap worked as a regional editor at Southern California Public Radio, where he edited radio and web stories on public affairs and occasionally appeared live on KPCC public affairs shows. You can read more about him on the Department of Journalism's faculty profile page at <http://www.cla.csulb.edu/departments/journalism/people/faculty/>.

Knap first taught Advanced Reporting and Investigative Reporting at CSULB in 2006 and 2007. He returned to CSULB in the Fall of 2015 and has since taught Media Law, Media Ethics, Advanced Reporting; Advanced Multimedia and this class, Data and Democracy.

Weekly Course outline, FALL 2022:

Note: This schedule is preliminary and may be updated or changed based on students' speed of learning, guest speakers, or other variables. This is v.1 dated Aug. 08. Any major changes will be announced in class and flagged on BeachBoard.

Week	Lecture Topics	Activities	Assessments
Week 1: Begins Monday Aug. 22	Course introduction and theoretical frameworks: The First Amendment. Historical role of citizen watchdogs in democracy.	Reading online: Ten Noteworthy Moments in investigative journalism.	None this week!
Week 2: Begins Monday Aug. 29	Investigating Power: Watergate and Big Tobacco. Investigative journalists (and citizen activists) adopt data analysis.	<u>Reading:</u> The Massacre at My Lai Data for Journalists, Chap. 1; Selected reading online: "Stop-and-frisk in a car" LAT; Bill Dedman: The color of money	None this week.
Week 3: Begins Monday Sept. 05 (NO CLASS Monday)	Finding data online: Census, campaign spending, crime. Public records laws	<u>Reading:</u> Police Checkpoints: Safety or Profit? Data for Journalists, DFJ Chap. 2: Finding data on the Internet	<u>Due online in Dropbox:</u> Assignment #1: Find two news stories based on data analysis.
Week 4: Begins Monday Sept. 12	State and Federal public records laws; requesting records and data.	<u>Reading:</u> Data for Journalists Chap 8: Getting data not online.	<u>Online Quiz #1:</u> (Wednesday) Theoretical concepts
Week 5: Begins Monday Sept. 19	Intro to Excel: Basic Formulas; Averages and Rates	<u>Reading:</u> Data for Journalists Chap. 4 and 5: Basic math for journalists. <u>Exercise:</u> Sorting crime data: Rates and ratios	<u>Due:</u> File a CPRA Request (Place copy in Dropbox)
Week 6: Begins Monday Sept. 26	Math and quantitative reasoning concepts: Basic formulas: Mean, median and mode. Discussion: Projects	Data Exercise: High School Expulsions.	Data Assignment #1: LA County Suspensions
Week 7:	Math and quantitative	<u>Reading:</u> Data for	Data assignment: Pivot:

Begins Monday October 03	reasoning concepts: Basic formulas. Intro to filtering. Pivot Tables.	Journalists Chap. 5: More math that matters. Data exercises: Bicycle Cards; Kamala in California	Kamala in California
Week 8: Begins Monday Oct. 10	Querying the data: Advanced pivot tables. Identifying trends and outliers. Intro to charts.	<u>Data exercise:</u> Column charts	<u>Online Quiz #2:</u> Math for data
Week 9: Begins Monday October 17	Cleaning data. Identifying trends and outliers. Developing research questions/topic areas to explore.	<u>Reading:</u> Data for Journalists, Chapter 10: Dirty data	
Week 10: Begins Monday October 24	Reporting and writing with data: Finding people to make the story real. Social action campaigns: US Public Interest Group, Common Cause and CREW	<u>Reading:</u> DfJ Chap 11: Reporting and writing with data	<u>Due in Dropbox:</u> <u>Homework Paper:</u> Civic action campaign that relies on data
Week 11: Begins Monday Oct. 31	Displaying data in accessible ways: Basic Data Maps.	<u>Reading:</u> Data for Journos: Appendix A: Mapping Google Fusion. LA Times Homicide Project. <u>Class exercise:</u> Basic mapping	<u>Homework:</u> Mapping LBPD Traffic Stops
Week 12: Begins Monday Nov. 07	Summarizing data analysis for the public.	<u>Quiz #3:</u> Reporting and writing with data.	<u>Due in class:</u> Report: What happened with my CPRA (FILE to DROPBOX and PRESENT)
Week 13: Begins Monday Nov. 14	Ethics in journalism and public relations. What we're looking for in your final projects.	Ethics in journalism and public relations. Putting it all together: Telling stories using data	

Week 14: Begins Monday Nov. 21 (No classes; FALL BREAK)	<u>No Classes: FALL BREAK</u>	<u>No Classes: FALL BREAK</u>	HAPPY THANKSGIVING!
Week 15: Begins Monday Nov. 28	Basic elements of the narrative.	<u>Monday:</u> Ethics in data reporting. <u>Wed:</u> Basic elements of the narrative.	
Week 16: Begins Monday Dec. 05 (LAST WEEK OF CLASSES)	Final project elements: About your presentation Class discussion: Troubleshooting project problems.	<u>Editing Workshop:</u> Assembling final projects. Optional: show your project draft.	
FINALS WEEK begins Monday Dec. 12	Final project due in Dropbox Friday Dec. 16 at 8 a.m. Dropbox closes at 10 am!	FINAL QUIZ is Friday Dec. 16; 8 a.m.	HAPPY HOLIDAYS!
	SEMESTER ENDS DEC. 23; Grades posted to Beachboard		

Department of Journalism Policies on Drops, Absences, Cheating and Disabilities

Seat in Class: An enrolled student may lose his/her seat in class if he/she misses the first class meeting without notifying the instructor. At the instructor's discretion, a student who attends the first class but not subsequent classes may also be dropped from the course.

Withdrawal from Class: Students may withdraw from a class from the third to the 12th week for "serious and compelling reasons." Normally these are defined as anything of importance that is beyond the control of the student. This includes, but is not necessarily limited to, death or serious illness in a student's immediate family or a documented change in a student's work schedule. Poor performance, tardiness and unexcused absences are not considered serious or compelling reasons beyond the student's control for purposes of withdrawing.

Absences from Class: Grades in a course may be adversely affected by absences, and students should read the class participation rubric attached here for more information. CSULB policy defines excused absences as (1) illness or injury to the student; (2) death, injury or serious illness of an immediate family member or the like; (3) religious reasons; (4) jury duty or government obligation; (5) CSULB-sanctioned or approved activities.

CSULB Cheating/Plagiarism/Fabrication Policy: CSULB takes issues of academic dishonesty very seriously. If you use any deceptive or dishonest method to complete an assignment, take an exam, or gain credit in a course in any other way, or if you help someone else to do so, you are guilty of cheating. Making something up, including quotes or a source's identity, constitutes fabrication. If you use someone else's ideas or work and represent it as your own without giving credit to the source, you are guilty of plagiarism. This does not apply if the ideas are recognized as common knowledge, or if you can show that you honestly developed the ideas through your own work.

Any instructor can show you the correct ways of citing your sources, and you should use quotation marks, footnotes or endnotes and bibliographic references to give credit to your sources according to the format recommended by your instructor. The Department of Journalism has a zero-tolerance policy in these areas, and any instance of academic dishonesty – including cheating, plagiarism and/or fabrication -- will result in your failing the assignment. In egregious cases, you may also be removed from class with a failing grade, removed from the College of Liberal Arts, or expelled from the university. BE HONEST in your reporting. It's not worth the risk!

Accommodation of students with disabilities: Students with disabilities who need assistance or accommodation to participate in or benefit from university programs, services, and/or activities should inform the instructor and then contact the Bob Murphy Access Center at SSC 114. Students needing support services or accommodations should contact the instructor of the course within the first week of class. In addition, students should establish their eligibility for assistance by contacting the BMAC Services Office at SSC 110 or 562-985-5401. Students are to provide to the instructor verification of their disability from the BMAC center. Typical accommodations available from Disabled Student Services, working with the journalism instructor, includes extended time for tests, test proctoring, private test rooms, note taking, Braille transcriptions, and referral for tutoring.

If the service offered is insufficient or inadequate, the student should confer with the instructor and the director of the BMAC center. If these efforts are unsuccessful, students have the option of directing their concerns to the Office of Equity and Diversity (University Student Union 301) at 562-985-8256. Responsibility for oversight and implementation of the Americans with Disabilities Act and the Rehabilitation Act has been delegated to the campus director for disability support and accommodation.