

Course Syllabus

Investigative Reporting in the Digital Age

February 3- March 1, 2020

Introduction

Investigative reporting requires constant innovation and, increasingly, collaborations. This course will provide both beginner journalists and advanced investigators with great new tools to use. A team of four journalists with decades of experience in investigating everything from political corruption to environmental hazards to human rights atrocities will show off the latest tools for organizing collaborations, for digging deeper with digital tools, for tapping crowdsourcing to investigate and for tackling seemingly impossible stories.

Goals

In this course, you will learn a range of skills from how to develop your first investigative story ideas to how to refine a complicated action plan for an investigation that might take years or require a multinational team.

Objectives

Upon completion of this course, you will:

- Know how to go from conceiving a story idea to creating a plan for pursuing your investigation.
- Learn new tools to dive deeper
- Understand do's and don'ts for news collaborations
- Learn to better manage the various stages of a complex investigation, including confrontational interviews
- Master new techniques and tools, such as search engines, secure platforms and new data visualization programs.

Tools/Applications Required

This course only requires you to have access to an Internet connection and a web browser.

How the course works

First of all, note that this is an asynchronous course. That means there are no live events scheduled at specific times. You can log in to the course and complete activities at your own pace, at the times and days that are most convenient for you.

But there are still structures in place for the duration of the course. The material is organized into four weekly modules. Each module will be taught by one of the course instructors ([Lise Olsen](#), [Alejandra Xanic](#), [Lee Zurik](#), and [Denise Malan](#)) and will cover a different topic through videos, multimedia presentations, readings and discussion forums. There will be a quiz each week to test the knowledge you've gained through the course materials. The weekly quizzes, and weekly participation in the discussion forums, are the basic requirements for earning a certificate (NEED TO ADD LINK) of participation at the end of the course.

This course is very flexible, and if you fall behind, you have the entire length of the course to complete the materials. We do recommend you try to complete each of the following before the end of each week:

- Video lectures
- Readings and handouts/exercises
- Participation in discussion forums
- Quizzes covering concepts from video lectures and/or readings

The course is divided into four weekly modules

Introduction Module: Course Introduction

In the introductory module, you will get an overview of the course structure and meet the instructors.

Module 1: Investigative Reporting - from your first idea to highly complex probes

Instructor: [Lise Olsen](#), Investigative reporter & editor, The Texas Observer

In this module you will learn:

- How and where can you start investigating. Lies, contradictions and other investigative opportunities
- Great sources and best places to start digging
- Case studies: how to organize complex investigations of individuals, from a serial killer to a corrupt congressman.

Module 2: Transforming an idea into an investigative plan of action — solo or as part of a collaboration
Instructor: Alejandra Xanic, Pulitzer Prize-winning reporter and co-founder of Quinto Elemento Lab in Mexico City

In this module you will learn:

- What are the steps in an investigation (and how can you survive it all?)
- How to turn a rough idea into an investigative plan
- Case studies: how independent reporters investigated the case of Mexico's 2,000 hidden mass graves; inside the binational investigation of how U.S. giant Wal-mart violated Mexican laws.

Module 3: Investigating on video — from mastering the confrontational interview to tapping your audience for help

Instructor: Lee Zurik, Emmy-award winning broadcast journalist at Fox TV in New Orleans

In this module you will learn:

- Do's and don'ts for conducting confrontational interviews
- New opportunities for using social media and crowdsourcing to investigate corruption, to obtain information and investigate quickly (even in a mass disaster situation)

Module 4: The latest data journalism and dataviz tools to deepen your investigative work

Instructor: Denise Malan, senior training director for Investigative Reporters & Editors and data journalist

In this module you will learn:

- The importance of data in investigations and how to find data to deepen your reporting
- New options for securely sharing information with sources and collaboration partners
- Software and skills you need for your data journalism toolkit, including free data visualization tools to make your investigation more interactive (and generate more tips from readers)