

# Graduate Symposium in Journalism

JO 700 Fall 2023

Professor  
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New York Times reporters **Meghan Twohey** (left) and **Jodi Kantor** (middle) with television host **Stephen Colbert**

## About this course

**T**his symposium is required for first-semester graduate students in journalism. The goal is to enrich the first semester curriculum by presenting a variety of topics relevant to the field, presented by interesting speakers who are experts in the subject matter. Attendance is mandatory.

Fifty percent of the grade will be based on two short papers inspired by our required books, your class participation and your preparedness for our guest speakers. The remainder of the grade will be from a paper or project on a subject of your choosing. Details to follow. Poor attendance, disruptive talking, dancing in class and making rude noises will diminish your grade.

We have two required books and one (David Carr) highly recommended:

- David Carr, *The Night of the Gun* (Simon and Schuster, 2008)
- Erin Lee Carr, *All That You Leave Behind* (Random House, 2019)
- Jodi Kantor and Megan Twohey, *She Said* (Penguin, 2019)

Daily reading of *The New York Times*, *The Boston Globe* and other news sites is expected.

One last thing: we insist that you have fun.

# Your project

**Y**ou will create a project and *perhaps* make a brief presentation in our last class period, which is when the project is due. These presentations do not have to be elaborate productions with Power Point or Keynote slide shows, but you are welcome to go that way if you wish.

Some of you will produce websites as your project. Some might do a podcast episode or a short film. Some may wish to do something traditional – a paper.

If you want to write a paper, the body of your paper--exclusive of bibliography and endnotes--should run no less than eight double-spaced, typewritten pages, and no more than 15. The papers should be well-written, technically perfect and thoroughly documented.

We will discuss the content and form of these projects early in the semester, but you will be encouraged to “adopt” a journalist and shape your project about that person and their contributions to the field. You may also use this assignment to create a prospectus or a working plan for your professional project, which is due the last semester of your program. We encourage you to get started. You can also focus on an issue rather than an individual. The choice is entirely up to you.

Here are answers to questions you haven't yet asked, almost entirely related to the idea of writing a paper::

**1. Style.** Consistency is what matters most to me. Historical papers generally follow the style outlined in *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses and Dissertations* by Kate Turabian. This is a recommended text. But as long as you are consistent and give me bibliographical information, I will be happy.

**2. Citations.** Follow the simple practice of indicating a citation with a superior



Journalist **Jessica Rinaldi** of the *Boston Globe* won the 2016 Pulitzer Prize for Feature Photography and was also a finalist that year – to herself. She will discuss the commitment required to be a visual storyteller.

number. Then, put all your notes at the end. o go insane. I prefer that book citations follow the format under the required-texts section of this syllabus. Cite interviews with a superior number and include all relevant information in the endnote. Thus: 47. *Edna Buchanan, telephone interview, October 8, 2023.*

**3. Page Numbering.** Some lunatics apparently think if they don't number the pages I won't notice that they did not make the minimum length. I can count. But make it easy on me. Don't include a lot of blank paper to make your paper fatter. It will make me think that your paper is flimsy. It's a waste, too.

**4. Title Page.** Put this sort of stuff on the cover: Title of paper, your name, course number (JO 700: Graduate Symposium in Journalism) and the date (Fall Semester, 2023).

**5. Errors.** Errors of fact seriously damage your grade. Spelling and grammar errors

also will hurt. Typographical errors will be considered spelling errors. Edit carefully.

**6. Revision.** I may ask you to revise your paper. This will not affect the grade. But I will not *record your grade* -- give you credit for the work -- unless you turn in a revision if one is requested.

**7. Report Covers.** I hate those flimsy little plastic things. I usually throw them away. Paper covers and other fancy forms of presentation are mere annoyances. Save your money. Just staple or paper clip the pages together. And don't come to class the day that paper is to be turned in expecting me to have a stapler. You think I carry one in my back pocket? Get real.

**8. General Quality.** One last, vital thing: Do not think of this as "another boring term paper." You are a student in a college of communication. You are supposed to be a writer. I will be judging your paper as a piece of writing. It must be interesting. It should read like a good magazine article.

# Learning objectives

Students will:

- Develop an awareness and appreciation of the foundations of journalism in a free society
- Develop an awareness of the issues facing journalism today
- Develop an understanding of the importance of journalism in its various forms and across platforms
- Develop an appreciation of excellent journalism by taking a deep dive into a couple of major works in the field
- Develop a project conceived and executed in consultation with the instructor.

# Grading

**Y**ou will write short (5-7 page) essay-reviews of *All That You Leave Behind*, *Devil in the Grove* and *Chasing the Truth*. Your research paper (or project) is of greater length and depth. This is to be determined in conversation with the instructor.

Work that it is of professional quality – meaning that it is ready for publication or presentation with only the minimum of editing – earns the student an A-grade.

Work that needs revision or that has significant stylistic errors earns the student a B-grade.

Work that needs a great deal of revision and which has significant errors earns the student a C or D-grade.

Work that contains errors or fact or severe errors in presentation is considered failing work and earns the student an F-grade.

# Schedule

## Part I: Just Us

SEP	11	<b>Introduction</b>
SEP	18	<b>Some Stuff About Storytelling</b> Everything but the kitchen sink
SEP	25	<b>Tools of Language</b> We offer a suppository for your mind
OCT	02	<b>Journalism in American Society</b> We discuss <i>She Said</i> by Jodi Kantor and Megan Twohey and the paper is due
OCT	10	<b>Professional Connections *</b> Networking seminar sponsored by the Career Resource Center
OCT	16	<b>Storytelling in Society</b> The history of this country is the history of journalism
OCT	23	<b>Trials of the Media</b> The Gawker case and the story of the <i>Las Vegas Review Journal</i>
OCT	30	<b>What it Means to Be a Journalist</b> We discuss <i>All That You Leave Behind</i> by Erin Lee Carr and the paper is due

## Part II: We Welcome Company

NOV	06	<b>Investigative Reporting</b> Guest: Shannon Dooling, BU
NOV	13	<b>Podcasting</b> Guest: Andrea Asuaje, Rococo Punch
NOV	20	<b>The Magic Medium</b> Guest: Phillip Martin, GBH
NOV	27	<b>Stories Without Words</b> Guest: Jessica Rinaldi, <i>Boston Globe</i>
DEC	04	<b>Social Impact Communication</b> Guest: Meghan Irons, BU And your project is due
DEC	11	<b>Graduate Showcase</b>

(\*) This class meets on Tuesday due to the Monday schedule.

Schedule adjustments may be made and will be announced via email.

## Be good

The code of academic conduct can be found at: <http://www.bu.edu/academics/resources/academic-conduct-code/>

There, you will note that: "Academic misconduct is conduct by which a student misrepresents his or her academic accomplishments, or impedes other students' opportunities of being judged fairly for their academic work. Knowingly allowing others to represent your work as their own is as serious an offense as submitting another's work as your own."

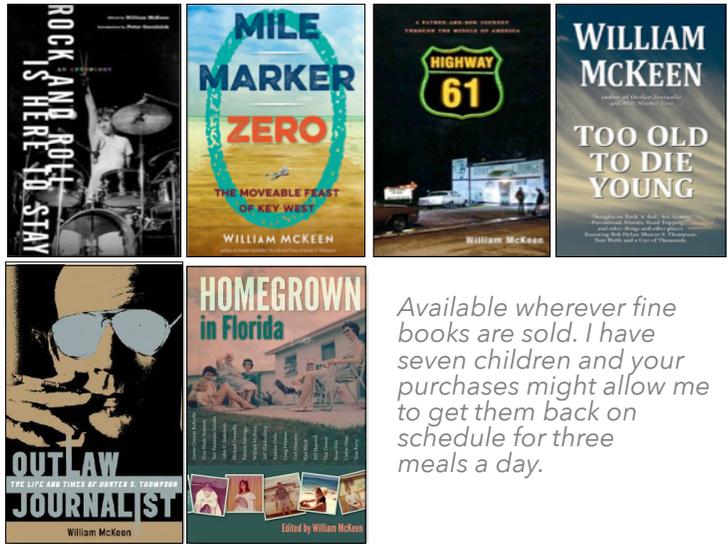
## Instructor biography

I worked for newspapers and magazines before starting my teaching career. My first job, at *The Courier-Tribune* in Bloomington, Ind., lasted until that fine little newspaper went out of business. I was at *The Palm Beach Post* briefly and then joined *The American Spectator*, then served two years at *The Saturday Evening Post*. While at the *Post*, I helped edit a couple of books, including an anthology called *The American Story*.

Since I started teaching, I've taken several short term jobs – sometimes in the summers, sometimes night work on the copy desk during the school year – on *The Norman (Okla.) Transcript*, *The Courier-Journal* (Louisville, Ky.), *The Tampa Bay Times* and *The Gainesville (Fla.) Sun*. I've written reviews and features for *The Orlando Sentinel*, *The Tampa Bay Times* and *The Boston Globe* fairly regularly since 1989. I'm also book editor for an alt weekly called *Creative Loafing*.

I earned a bachelor's in history and a master's in journalism from Indiana University, writing a historical survey of the portrayal of journalists in popular culture. I earned my Ph.D. in education from the University of Oklahoma, though that was largely a history degree. My major professor was a historian and my dissertation was a historical account of a riot at that university.

## Shameless plug



Available wherever fine books are sold. I have seven children and your purchases might allow me to get them back on schedule for three meals a day.

I have an interest in political reporting and for four years managed a news bureau at the Oklahoma capital, covering state government. I've also covered the Democratic and Republican national conventions, so this course has a political bent.

My semi-scholarly books are: *The American Story* (Curtis, 1975, edited with Starkey Flythe, Jr.), *The Beatles: A Bio-Bibliography* (Greenwood, 1989), *Hunter S. Thompson* (Twayne, 1991), *Bob Dylan: A Bio-Bibliography* (Greenwood, 1993), *Tom Wolfe* (Twayne, 1995), and *Literary Journalism: A Reader* (Wadsworth, 2000).

My mass-market books include:

- *Rock and Roll is Here to Stay* (W.W. Norton, 2000), is an anthology tracing the history of popular music.
- *Highway 61* (W.W. Norton, 2003) a memoir of a 6,000-mile road trip with my eldest son.
- *Outlaw Journalist* (W.W. Norton, 2008), my biography of Hunter S. Thompson.
- *Mile Marker Zero* (Crown Books, 2011), a narrative about the writers, artists, actors and musicians who found their artistic identities in Key West.
- *Homegrown in Florida* (University Press of Florida, 2012), a collection of stories about growing up in Florida.

- *Too Old to Die Young* (Dredger's Lane, 2015), a collection of articles, reviews, recipes and memoirs. Available only as an e-book.
- *Everybody Had An Ocean* (Chicago Review Press, 2017), a nonfiction narrative about the crossroads of music, murder and mayhem in 1960s Los Angeles

I have seven children – Sarah, a designer in New York; Graham, chief environmental officer for the Indiana University system; Mary, who works for non-profit in Chicago; Savannah, a nurse in the Boston metroplex; Jack, an artist in residence at my residence; Travis, a college student and baseball player in New Hampshire; and Charley, a college student in Oxford, Ohio. I also have five magnificent granddaughters, Mabel, Pearl, Rose, Myer and Vivienne. I'll be happy to share pictures.

Before coming to Boston University, I taught at Western Kentucky University for five years, the University of Oklahoma for four years, and the University of Florida for 24 years, the last dozen as department chairman. I served 13 years as chairman at BU for a grand total of 25 years in that job. I love being a full-time teacher again.

I sincerely hope you enjoy the course. From my side, I can tell you that teaching it is a privilege and a pleasure.

*Wm. McKeen*

## Words about journalism

### Favorite fancy-pants or funny quotes

The purpose of journalism is to irritate, infuriate and inform.

**Jess Lewis Gardner III**  
*student in the first class I ever taught*

The past actually happened, but history is only what somebody wrote down.

**A. Whitney Brown**  
*author and former writer and performer on 'Saturday Night Live'*

Ninety percent of journalism is saying "Lord Jim Dies" to people who didn't know Lord Jim was alive.

**G.K. Chesterton**  
*English novelist and essayist*

It is not death or torture or imprisonment that threatens us as American journalists. It is the trivialization of our industry.

**Ted Koppel**  
*formerly of ABC News*

The job of the newspaper is to comfort the afflicted and afflict the comfortable.

**Finley Peter Dunne**  
*early 20th century journalist*

The principal difference between a horse and a man is that you cannot rely on a horse to gather news.

**Mark Twain**  
*who needs no introduction*

I would be a journalist if for no other reason than I would rather drink with journalists than any other people on Earth.

**Hunter S. Thompson**  
*gonzo journalist*

Reporters aren't very bright as a general rule. I mean, most of us learn to write when we're kids. Then we go on to other things.

**Bobby Knight**  
*retired basketball coach*

History, despite its wrenching pain, cannot be unlived, but if faced with courage, need not be lived again.

**Maya Angelou,**  
*speaking at President Clinton's first inauguration*

Journalism keeps you planted in the earth.

**Ray Bradbury**  
*novelist and essayist*

I believe that music is another form of news. Music is another form of journalism to me so I have to cover all the areas with my album.

**Lil Wayne**  
*who needs no introduction*

Journalism is more addictive than crack cocaine.

**Dan Rather**  
*formerly of CBS News*

## Good Reading

Start to build a journalism library



**David Carr**  
Author of  
**The Night of the Gun**  
(Recommended)



**Erin Lee Carr**  
Author of  
**All That You Leave Behind**  
(Required)



**Jodi Kantor & Megan Twohey**  
Authors of  
**She Said**  
(Required)

## Some final words

**C**onsider this syllabus a contract. I've made some promises I intend to keep. By not dropping the class, I assume you accept the conditions. There are two guiding philosophers in my life: Elvis Presley (who said, "If this ceases to be fun, we will cease to do it.") and my dear, late mother (who said, "If we all liked the same thing, it would be a pretty dull world.") Those two great thinkers shape my approach to this course.

I hope this course deepens your interest in journalism and helps you understand its legacy. **WM**

# Six things to know

**1. Sexual misconduct.** Boston University is committed to fostering a safe, productive learning environment. Title IX and our school policy prohibit discrimination on the basis of sex, which regards sexual misconduct - including harassment, domestic and dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking. We understand that sexual violence can undermine students' academic success and we encourage students who have experienced some form of sexual misconduct to talk to someone about their experience, so they can get the support they need. Confidential support and academic advocacy resources can be found with the Center for Sexual Assault Response & Prevention (SARP) at <http://www.bu.edu/safety/sexual-misconduct/>.

**2. Equal opportunity.** BU has strict guidelines on classroom behavior and practices when it comes to treatment of students and guests on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, age, mental or physical disability, genetic information, military service, national origin, or due to marital, parental, or veteran status. Discrimination for any of these reasons is prohibited. Please refer to the [Equal Opportunity/Affirmative Action Policy](#) for more details.

**3. A positive classroom.** At your discretion, please alert me to anything related to preferred pronouns, preferred name or nickname, or any extenuating circumstances or trigger warnings (personal, medical, etc.) that might impact your classroom experience. I want to make sure you have the most positive experience in the classroom as possible. If work that gets shown in this class, professional or student-generated, offends you in anyway, please mention it in class or talk to us privately about it so that we can all learn from each other. This is not to say we will ever restrict freedom of speech or water down an aggressive or edgy idea, but we want to discuss anything that someone deems troublesome or offensive.

**4. Disability and access services.** If you are a student with a disability or believe you might have a disability that requires accommodations, please contact the [Office of Disability and Access Services](#) (DAS) at 617-353-3658 to coordinate any reasonable accommodation requests. DAS is located at 25 Buick Street, on the third floor.

**5. Student athletes.** All student-athletes should be provided with a sheet from Student-Athlete Support Services regarding absences throughout the semester. These sheets should be handed in as soon as possible to avoid potential conflicts and so arrangements can be made to provide for missed lecture notes, classwork, or discussion.

**6. Academic code of conduct.** All BU students are bound by the [Academic Conduct Code](#). Please review to ensure you are acting responsibly and ethically in regard to your academics.

## **Additional resources**

In addition to the resources listed above, please know that we are here to help you find the resources to help you get through stressful times.

### **Support services**

<https://www.bu.edu/com/resources/current-students/student-support/>

### **COM Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion**

<https://www.bu.edu/com/about-com/diversity-equity-inclusion/>

### **Newbury Center for First-Generation Students**

<http://bu.edu/newbury-center>

### **COM Writing Center**

<https://www.bu.edu/com/for-current-students/the-com-writing-center/>

### **Dean of Students office**

<https://www.bu.edu/dos/>

Note: Any student who is experiencing food or housing insecurity and believes this may affect their performance in the course is urged to contact the Dean of Students for support. In addition, please notify the professor if you are comfortable in doing so. This will enable us to provide any resources that we may possess.