

J202 Spring 2012

Culver

Assignment: Individual Story (IS)

Week 2

Our Goal: Develop skills in gathering information, writing a cohesive, informative piece and producing multimedia.

Your Task: Complete individual steps toward the goal of developing a single story and companion multimedia on a topic of your choice.

Specifics:

- generate an idea about a story you want to tell, somehow related to the UW campus community and pitch that story idea
- you may choose an issue-based story (such as the example that follows) or a personality profile, painting a compelling portrait of a person (not a mere history or biography of a life)
- submit a proposed source list, including previously published pieces, documentary sources and interview subjects
- gather information from documentary sources and supply information in two alternative story forms
- interview one of your subjects, write a 1.5-page story from that interview only and submit your interview notes
- complete remaining interviews and research and submit a draft of a three-page story weaving together documentary and interview sources
- create and submit multimedia companions to your story
- revise completed pieces based on graded feedback
- create a website for the final draft of your story and multimedia companions
- all stories must be fact-based, not opinion pieces, as the goal is to inform, not persuade

Deadlines: All segments are due at the start of lecture in the week listed unless otherwise noted

- Story pitch: Week 3 (revision after review of idea with Katy)
- Source list: Week 6
- Alternative story forms sourced from documents only (minimum of three sources): Week 7
- Story from first interview only (1.5 pages) submitted with full set of notes and rough outline of final story, identifying angle and order of information: Week 8
- Print layout of interview-only story in magazine format (1 page): Lab 2, Week 9
- Full story draft (three pages): Week 10
- Audio story (90 seconds to 2 minutes): Lab 2, Week 10
- Audio slideshow (90 seconds to 2 minutes): Week 11
- Final story and all multimedia posted to website: Week 12

Grade: This assignment is Segment C in your final grade. Each assignment has specific elements, such as citations or lists of story angles and communication values. **Stories submitted without source lists will result in a deduction of 20 points.**

The grades will be weighted:

- Documents-only Alt Story Forms: 10%
- Interview story: 10%
- Print layout: 10%
- Audio Story: 10%
- Draft: 10%
- Audio slideshow: 10%
- Final story: 30%
- Final Website: 10%

(Your lowest grade is automatically dropped, except for the story draft, final story and final site.)

Assignments:

1. Pitch Memo

The purpose of the pitch memo is to detail the story you would like to tell. It's useful in helping you refine your idea into something specific and engaging, and it's key for us in helping you steer clear of weak or overused ideas.

Before pitching a story, **you must interview at least one person you do not know and supply that person's contact information on the pitch.** These interviews are key to generating ideas because let's face it, we want to report on stories because we don't already know everything. Move beyond the knowledge you already have. Ask a professor or bartender or guy at the bus stop what's interesting or what stories deserve to be told.

If you are pitching a personality profile, your memo must include why that person is **compelling**. Do not say you want to profile Jane Doe. Instead, tell us exactly why Jane would be interesting, such as she fled from an abusive relationship or served in the Army in Iraq. You may not profile anyone you know well, such as a roommate or relative.

Example:

Katy Culver
J202 Spring 2012
Individual Story Pitch Memo

Audience: Students, faculty and staff in the UW campus community

Goal: Inform people about how the university reports crimes committed by students.

Communication values: Proximity, conflict, impact

Contact interviewed: Jane Realperson, UW-Madison sociology professor who studies criminology,
jrealperson@wisc.edu

Story idea: College students have privacy rights that prevent the university from disclosing some information about them, such as transcripts or academic probation. This becomes an interesting issue in cases when high-profile students, such as athletes or members of student government, get into trouble. I would like to look into how and when the university can make public statements about crimes committed by students and what the implications of these rules are for safety on campus.

Please note: we get lots of story ideas on drinking, parking on campus and UW athletics. You'll meet with extra skepticism if you're hitting on these well-worn areas. Remember that a key element of this assignment is communication values. Before honing your pitch, ask yourself whether you're proposing a story that is *new* or has a particular *impact*. You want to stay away from anything that has a been-there-done-that feel to it.

For instance, lots of people carp about parking shortages on campus. It's tough to find anything new in those complaints. But one semester, a J202-er wrote a story on how some students were abusing disabled parking by getting bogus doctor's notes and using them to get Wisconsin disabled parking stickers when they had no disability at all. It was an innovative angle on an age-old story and earned high marks.

We will not allow personality profiles of: Barry Alvarez, Bo Ryan, Bret Bielema, Mike Leckrone, the piccolo guy on State Street. We also don't allow duplicate story topics. First pitch wins.

2. Source List

The purpose of the source list is to get you thinking early about how you will gather information to sufficiently inform your audience. This is one of the toughest things for developing media writers to master.

Your sources must be:

- relevant to the piece
- accessible on campus
- unfamiliar to you (no interviewing moms or roommates)

You are required to submit a list that includes

- at least three secondary-source previously published pieces (background research from newspapers, magazines, etc.), list specific citations but do not attach copies
- at least three primary-source documents (information that has not been already digested by another reporter) plus one to two sentences describing each document's specific relevance to your topic
- at least three interview subjects (specific real people, not simply "a researcher who looks at ...") and the relevant themes you plan to explore when interviewing them

Example:

Katy Culver

J202 Spring 2012

Individual Story Source List

Approved story idea: Investigate how student privacy rights affect reporting on crimes committed by students and the implications for campus safety.

Secondary sources: previously published pieces

1. Brown wants student-privacy limits

The Columbus Dispatch (Ohio), June 17, 2009 Wednesday, NEWS; Pg. 01B, 676 words, Jill Riepenhoff and Todd Jones, THE COLUMBUS DISPATCH

2. Doyle creates task force to improve safety on college campuses

The Associated Press State & Local Wire, May 2, 2007 Wednesday 9:17 PM GMT, STATE AND REGIONAL, 511 words, By CARRIE ANTLFINGER, Associated Press Writer

3. Judge Orders University to Turn Over Crime Records

The Chronicle of Higher Education, February 27, 2004, Friday, STUDENTS; Pg. 1, 1229 words, ERIC HOOVER

Primary sources

- UW-Madison brochure detailing student privacy rights, http://registrar.wisc.edu/student_privacy_%20rights_and_responsibilities_ferpa.htm.
- UW-Madison campus safety report <http://students.wisc.edu/pdf/campus%20safety/Campus%20Safety%20Report%202008-09.pdf>.
- Balancing Student Privacy, Campus Security, and Public Safety: Issues for Campus Leaders. American Association of State Colleges and Universities, http://www.congressweb.com/aascu/docfiles/08_perspectives.pdf.

Remember that not all sources are credible. You must identify sources that provide sound information. One way to check their veracity is to gauge how many and what kind of other sources – including news media – have cited the information found.

Interview subjects

- Susan Riseling, UW-Madison police chief, 262-4527, riseling@wisc.edu
themes to discuss: nature of crime on and off campus, rules for disclosure, recent cases
- Joel DeSpain, Madison Police Department Public Information Officer, (608) 266-4275
theme to discuss: nature of crime on and off campus, relationship with university, recent cases
- Lori Berquam, UW-Madison dean of students, lberquam@odos.wisc.edu
themes to discuss: conflict between student privacy and reporting on crimes committed by students, university policies, recent cases

3. Documents-only alternative story forms

The purpose of these pieces is to get you to focus on gathering information from primary and secondary documentary sources and relaying it to your audience in different ways. You almost certainly will have to consult

more documents than the three you cited in your source list, but those documents are a good place to start. You are required to use a minimum of three sources in your stories. **Single-source stories will earn a grade of 0.**

Choose two alternative story forms from the options below and complete them for your topic. If you do not have enough information for two without becoming redundant, you need to gather more information. The goal here is to provide the most interesting information you can, given the options. Simply turning in a list of facts from your documents will earn a failing grade.

You must do **original work** on these, rather than copying tables or graphics from a previously published piece. Online resources for creating these kinds of forms will be posted to our course Website. You will turn in printed copies of your pieces and the sources from which you drew information. You'll also upload electronic files to our **Course Sites server**. Go to [caan/Course Sites/2011-12/spring/j202/labname_is](#) and create a folder named `lastname_firstname`. So if I were doing the assignment and I were in Mitchell's lab, my pages would be in [caan/Course Sites/2011-12/spring/j202/bard_is/culver_katy](#). Copy your pieces to this folder.

Head your typed copy with your approved story angle and a list of the specific communication values your pieces fulfill (e.g., proximity, conflict, etc.).

Possible story forms:

- Q&A: common questions about your topic and succinct answers – minimum of 5 (e.g., Q&A about the legal process when a student commits a crime on vs. off campus)
- Infographic: charts or graphics illustrating important points or data related to your topic – minimum of three (e.g., statistics on campus crime)
- Timeline: plot key dates or developments on a timeline, emphasizing growth or change of an issue over time – minimum of 10 entries (e.g., a timeline showing key legislative and legal actions in student privacy rights)
- How-to: if your topic involves something readers can do, provide a step-by-step instruction set – minimum of five steps (e.g., a guide for student journalists to request release of campus crime records)
- Map: plot locations of events related to your issue – minimum of 20 (e.g., map of all incidences of a particular crime in the campus area)
- By-the-numbers: list of essential or illuminating statistics – minimum of 10 (e.g., violent and non-violent crimes in the campus area by time or statistics of crime commission by time of day)

You are required to meet with the Lead TA with your graded alt story forms. That TA will give you additional feedback for required revisions for your final website.

4. Story from first interview only and interview notes

The purpose of this segment of the individual story is to get you acquainted with interviewing, a difficult skill for new media writers to develop. To help you, we're taking it in simple, broken-down steps. You will conduct an interview with a single subject for your story, usually choosing the person you see as most critical to your piece. You'll then write a 1.5-page story to help you translate the interview, which can be something of a rambling conversation, into a cohesive, structured story that relates information thematically and effectively.

In the interview, take copious and careful notes. Record all interviews on audio for use in your audio story and audio slideshow, but always assume that you don't have that backup, so your notes can stand alone (you wouldn't believe how often recorders fail or how tight deadlines rob you of the time to re-listen).

Type up your interview notes, including as many verbatim quotes as you can. Transcribing the audio file will be helpful, especially because you'll be coming back to these notes later. Attach all these typed notes to the story you turn in, so your TA can better understand what you've chosen to use and omit.

Write a 1.5-page story, incorporating only the information you gleaned from your interview. Again, remember that all good pieces flow from good leads. You should feel free to experiment with feature leads here.

You'll also use this step to learn when to use direct quotes and when to paraphrase. So much of what people say isn't worth quoting directly. You need to concentrate on turns of phrase that are particularly pithy or compelling.

Head your typed copy with your approved story angle and a list of the specific communication values your story fulfills (e.g., proximity, conflict, etc.).

You also are required this week to turn in a draft outline of where you think your final story will be going. This simple outline should list the specific angle and the order of information you believe you will use. You should highlight any missing information and the sources you'll seek to get it. Your TA will review this and let you know about any problems.

5. Print layout

Use your interview story as the text for a magazine-style layout. Use images, headlines, cutlines and other elements to design and produce a cohesive page. The newsletters produced in your training in print layout software can give you ideas, but you also should look to printed magazines for inspiration. Turn a hard copy in to your TA and save a PDF in your IS folder on the server.

6. Full story draft

After completing your interview story, move on and finish all your other interviews and gather any remaining information you need to tell a complete story on your subject. Then write a three-page draft of your final story.

This draft should weave together documentary and interview sources, making use of direct quotes and paraphrasing from interviews. It's uncommon to quote directly from documentary sources. Information from previously published pieces should not be included unless: the information is critical, you can't get it on your own and you cite the original source.

The piece can have either a straight or feature lead though the latter may be more common. It must have a clear structure, allowing the reader to move from one fact to the next logically.

Head your typed copy with your approved story angle and a list of the specific communication values your story fulfills (e.g., proximity, conflict, etc.).

7. Audio story

Use audio editing software to produce a 90-second to two-minute audio story on your topic. The piece is an audio sidebar, fleshing out some angle of the piece you find interesting but are not addressing in the text version. Turn a hard copy of your script in to your TA and save an mp3 file in your IS folder on the server.

Do not fall into the trap of simply retelling your text story in audio. Think about a distinct angle and how audio can bring to life something that might not have come through in text. Use the medium for all it is worth. For instance, let's say my reporting uncovered that the crime students are most often accused of is acquaintance rape. An audio piece would be a particularly powerful way to tell one victim's story. She may not even be part of my main story, but her experience is certainly related to my topic overall.

8. Audio slideshow

Develop a package bringing together text (spoken or via captions), images and sound (either bites or your voiceover) that directly relates to your story or a piece of it. You may use existing images or take your own pictures. For a sample of an interesting slideshow, check out the links on the materials section of our 202 Website. You must upload your slideshow to the server and turn in a single sheet listing:

- audience
- goal
- communication values
- specific angle of slideshow

Again, this slideshow is not a rehash of either your text story or audio piece. Think of your audience. Who would want to watch a slideshow that merely retells something they've already read or heard? For my story on student privacy vs. disclosing the true nature of crime on campus, I might choose a slideshow angle covering how safe students feel. I could interview a variety of students on the topic and seek images that illustrate the points they're

making. If an interviewee says he feels most insecure when fights erupt at bar time, I could go out and take some pictures at 2 a.m. on State Street.

Optional video: If you'd like experience with video beyond the training and group project you do in lab, you are welcome to complete a two-minute video package. At least half the visuals in the package must be your original work.

9. Final draft and multimedia posted to Web

This last step takes you to completion and whoa, will you feel good. You'll take all your work and post it online in a new WordPress site you create under the same account as your participation/engagement site. Again, if you have an interest in or affinity for Web editing, you should feel free to take the posting a step further or if you have a yen for other work, you may add that too. But we'll be grading only on the requirements.

Required elements of final package:

- a WordPress site of at least three pages with linked navigation between them
- final rewrite of your story (worth 20 percent on its own)
- final versions of your alternative story forms, print layout, audio story and audio slideshow
- headlines, cutlines and bylines
- minimum of three images fitting your content
- minimum of two WordPress widgets (such as a Twitter feed of a hashtag related to your topic)

For all IS assignments involving technology, a tutorial is posted to our course Website. You can read through it but it's also a searchable PDF if you want to search for, say, "time shift" in Audacity.

In hard copy at lecture Week 12, you need to turn in:

- final version of your story, double-spaced (do not exceed three pages, as your TA won't read past three) – must include a minimum of four attributed sources (a mix of live and documentary)
- draft version of your story with TA comments
- a typed sheet listing
 - your sources with emails and phone numbers, so your TA can fact-check your final piece
 - citations of documentary sources used