

Fresh Take Florida operating guidelines and principles

Updated: April 2023

Welcome to Fresh Take Florida, founded in 2018 under former CJC Dean Diane McFarlin, who called the program one of the most significant offerings in the history of the college. We will challenge you to deeply report and produce significant, impactful content – ideally of statewide interest. Your payoff will be high-quality, impressive clips for your portfolios, and ideally some terrific bylines in Florida’s largest news publications and lots of professional exposure that leads to internships and jobs.

Be prepared to work hard and challenge yourself. This is the deep end of the pool.

Our students’ work is regularly published by The Associated Press, CNN, Florida Politics, Miami Herald, Tampa Bay Times, Sun Sentinel, Orlando Sentinel, Palm Beach Post and others. We have had bylines from Bulgaria to Bradenton, from the San Francisco Chronicle and Chicago Tribune to the Raleigh News & Observer. There are no guarantees our work will be published if our content isn’t suitably professional, distinctive and compelling.

Your exposure to editors working in professional newsrooms can infinitely boost your employment chances. Our alumni have worked at the New York Times, Washington Post, AP, CNN, Los Angeles Times, USA Today properties and elsewhere.

Your instructors are Profs. Ted Bridis and Gregg Birnbaum, with assistance from Brandon Meyer, Ethan Magoc and Ryan Vasquez. Dean Hub Brown effectively serves as our publisher, and we occasionally consult him and journalism department chairman Ted Spiker about our coverage.

What content do we emphasize? Philosophy of ‘news we break,’ not breaking news:

The most important factor for your success in our program is understanding what makes a particular content pitch worthy of Fresh Take Florida. The simplest explanation is in our name: We want to provide a *fresh take* on important news. That means we look for distinctive but compelling topics, told in an unusual way or through a surprising lens. One metaphor: Let’s not fish in the same pond as everyone else.

Our program is built – but not exclusively – around reporting important matters of public policy in Florida through coverage of the governor and executive branch, Legislature and courts. Our focus is covering the impacts on real people of these policies.

A hallmark of our content is that it is accurate, deeply reported with reliance on public records, and assiduously objective. One goal is to expand coverage of under-represented populations and issues facing them.

A typical story may take several days to several weeks to produce. It is important strategically to be working on multiple assignments simultaneously during the semester.

With few exceptions, our content leans toward enterprise or evergreen stories, rather than breaking news that must be reported on urgent deadlines. In other words, we prefer to focus on **news we break**, rather than breaking news.

This offers newsrooms maximum flexibility – regardless when we offer it to them – to publish our content when it makes sense for them. Also, this lends itself better to the busy schedules of students and faculty in the college, where we are often pulled in different directions with competing academic or professional responsibilities, and academic schedules that leave us with uneven staffing between semesters or during summer, spring or winter breaks.

Also, because we have no traditional content-management system, it can be difficult once we distribute content statewide to update it continually with late-breaking developments (eg, we would need to email to editors an entirely new version of the story several times over the day).

With limited staff, we are not a news service of record in Florida, meaning we are not obligated to report every major news story or development. We can be selective.

The exception to Fresh Take publishing breaking news is, students who want to demonstrate to prospective hiring editors they can report and write on deadline will have opportunities to do this. Also, there may be some breaking news developments that we are uniquely positioned to cover quickly and thoroughly. There also are occasions when an editor at the Miami Herald, for example, may call and ask specifically that one of our Fresh Take students cover a breaking story in northern Florida that would be published under the student's byline in the Herald.

Experience shows us that enterprise coverage about iconic, Florida-related topics sells very well across news organizations, especially out of state: beaches, alligators, manatees, sharks, cruise industry, citrus industry, space launches, Disney, hurricanes, the Everglades, the Gulf, stone crabs, Florida's sports teams, etc. Sports stories – not games coverage – are hugely popular.

As a general rule, we do not necessarily cover the City of Gainesville, Alachua County or the University of Florida, except on merits. The university, of course, is the state's flagship higher educational institution, and there are huge numbers of interested alumni (and sports fans), so some coverage of significant developments is inevitable. When we cover policy issues of higher education, we try to include University of Miami, Florida State, University of Central Florida and other major colleges and universities.

Most pieces of our written content are less than 1,000 words. We can publish longer stories, but anything beyond 1,300 words would generally require us also to produce an alternative, abridged version for publication in newspaper print editions. The AP – one of our most important distribution outlets – rarely publishes a news article longer than 750 words.

The most important way to familiarize yourself with the types of content we produce is to look at what we have previously published. You can see the content we've produced in the past [here](#).

Who is our audience?

The best content will be compelling to the broadest audience possible across Florida's 67 counties, from the Panhandle to the Keys. Remember that our objective is to have content you produce published in as many major media markets as possible, by as many publications or broadcasters. Many of these newsrooms regularly hire UF students or graduates for internships or jobs. When we perform well, with the right stories, your Fresh Take content will be seen by *millions* of readers, viewers or listeners. It might even be published nationally or internationally.

If there is a news organization – or a region of the state – you are targeting for an internship or employment, please let us know.

In Florida, for example, be mindful of the following markets and publications that we service:

- Statewide: Associated Press, CNN, Florida Politics
- Florida Keys (Key West Citizen)
- South Florida's Gold Coast, including Miami and Fort Lauderdale (Miami Herald, Sun Sentinel, Palm Beach Post, Miami New Times, WPLG, Miami television and radio stations)
- Southwest Florida, including Naples, Fort Myers (Naples Daily News, News-Press of southwest Florida, WINK and other major broadcasters)
- Florida's Gulf Coast, including Tampa, St. Petersburg, Clearwater, Bradenton, Sarasota (Tampa Bay Times, Sarasota Herald-Tribune, Bradenton Herald, WTSP, WUSF and other major broadcasters)
- Central Florida, including Orlando (Orlando Sentinel, Lakeland Ledger, Orlando Weekly, major broadcasters)
- Florida's eastern Treasure Coast, including Daytona Beach, Melbourne (Florida Today, TC Palm, Daytona Beach News-Journal, First Coast News)
- North-central Florida, including Gainesville and Ocala (WUFT, Gainesville Sun, Ocala Star-Banner, Citrus County Chronicle, Villages Daily Sun)
- Northeast Florida, including Jacksonville, St. Augustine (Florida Times Union, St. Augustine Record, major broadcasters)
- Tallahassee plus the Panhandle, including Panama City, Pensacola (Tallahassee Democrat, WFSU, Pensacola News-Journal, Northwest Florida Daily News)

How content is proposed:

Students are encouraged to conduct preliminary reporting, research or interviews to develop their own pitches to discuss with instructors. **Content produced for course credit must be approved in advance by instructors; if you submit a draft that we have not approved you may not receive course credit.**

Occasionally, instructors will post a story proposal in our main Slack channel. These are always optional. To claim the pitch, reply in the same thread that you are interested in pursuing this reporting. The first student to claim the story will be responsible for it. *Please do not claim every story idea if you do not reasonably have time to pursue it.* If another student were interested in the same story, the student can negotiate to work on the project together, but it is entirely the choice of the student who claimed the story first.

Instructors will resolve any conflicts.

Mechanics of submitting your content to faculty to be edited:

After your story pitch has been approved, we write and edit our copy in Google Docs, using a template to ensure consistency.

To begin writing your story, open the read-only template [here](#) then click File/Make a Copy. Name your story something meaningful.

You are always welcome to share a lede or kicker or partial draft with an instructor for feedback, but please distinguish for instructors when you are submitting a completed draft for editing. We are always juggling multiple edits, and it isn't efficient to be asked to perform a full edit of a preliminary version of a story.

To submit your draft for a full edit, click the Share button in the upper right, get a link to the story with editing privileges and share that link in Slack with an instructor. If there is time sensitivity for a piece of content, please tell the instructor. If you share the content with a particular email address, please include my Google account, tbridis@gmail.com

If you submit your draft of a news article in another format – such as failing to use our *Fresh Take* template, or as a Word attachment that you email to one of the instructors, or in a Pages file – you may not receive course credit.

There is no guarantee an article will be published and distributed to our *Fresh Take* customers across Florida if it does not meet our standards, in the judgment of the instructors. Unpublished drafts still may receive course credit.

Red flags:

No matter how skilled or experienced the journalist, there will occasionally be times during the reporting or writing process – or after an article's publication – when problems or potential problems arise. Someone may say something threatening to you, or suggest that they might sue over an article. Someone may claim you have behaved unethically. Someone may demand to talk to your editor, professor or dean. Someone may say you published wrong facts or weren't fair.

That is why instructors are here for you. We have dealt with many such complaints over the years. Please alert instructors immediately to any such complaints as early as possible. It is vital that we can engage and evaluate any complaints early, so we can work with you to resolve any potential issues quickly. If you know that a story will strike a particular nerve before it's published, please tell us in advance.

We can't fix or prepare for it unless we know about it.

Reporting, writing guidelines:

Safety and security: Your safety and security are paramount and supersede the value of any content our program might produce. If you are interviewing or photographing a subject of our reporting in a private setting – such as the person's home or private office or isolated setting – you **must** inform an instructor before you leave. We may conduct a quick background check on your source and establish a security plan so that we know where you will be, when you would expect to be finished and when you will contact us to let us know you're safe. We may suggest that a classmate or instructor accompany you.

Bylines: We will publish whatever byline or photo credit you choose to use professionally. In the case where more than one student worked on reporting or writing, the first byline should reflect the student who did the majority of the work, or the most significant work. Instructors can mediate any disputes.

Datelines: Every story should include a dateline, which will reflect the physical location – usually the city – where the writer did the most significant reporting for the article. You must have been in a location during the reporting for the article to consider using it in a dateline. Datelines can distinguish and elevate reporting in your portfolio, to signal to readers that you were on the ground to conduct authentic journalism in distant locations beyond Gainesville. Remember that photographers are fully qualified journalists. When a class photographer visits a location to shoot images, consider relying on them to augment scene color or on-the-ground interviews in your print journalism and share a byline for the dateline.

AP Style: Since our content is published by so many news organizations, we will use AP Style in our content. The online version of the stylebook for UF students can be found [here](#). Please consult it regularly. We won't nitpick, but we expect that you have a general understanding of AP Style. This means that for legislative references, we will use the following on first reference (sometimes we may include a lawmaker's designation on second reference to avoid cluttering a lede).

Gov. Ron DeSantis
House Speaker Chris Sprowls, R-Clearwater,
Sen. Keith Perry, R-Gainesville,
Rep. Kat Cammack, R-Fla.,

For state legislators, use the city or town listed in their district address in their LobbyTools profile.

We do not use honorifics on second or subsequent references: *DeSantis*, not *Gov. DeSantis*.

When you cite someone in your story (other than a lawmaker or the governor, for example), include their name, age and the town where they live, to help distinguish them from others with similar names and alert newsroom editors whether this is a person who lives in their coverage area (and therefore the article may be more relevant to their readers). If their occupation is relevant, include that, too. For example: "*Ted Bridis, 54, of Gainesville.*" You don't need to clutter the lede with such details if you mention someone by name in the first paragraph but somewhere high in the story you should include such identifiers.

Bill references: A bill's designated number, such as HB 1515, is effectively meaningless to nearly all readers so there is no need to include the bill number in our stories. The same numbers are reused year over year, so "HB 1" for 2021 will refer to an entirely different piece of legislation than in 2022. Additionally, most bills do not have a formal title, and even for those that do the title may be political rhetoric, which we should avoid using without attribution and explanation. However, it is a reader service to link to the bill information on the Legislature's websites. If you link to legislative records, please link to the publicly accessible versions on myfloridahouse.gov or flsenate.gov, rather than versions on the LobbyTools service.

Source material: To enhance our credibility with readers, we will routinely link to original source documents, such as court rulings, public records or bill text. We have a college DocumentCloud account where we can post and annotate such documents.

Crediting other news organizations: We generally credit other news organizations when they have initially and exclusively broken a significant story: *as first reported Jan. 22 by the Miami Herald*. We do not generally credit other news organizations with incremental developments. We are not writing term papers. If someone else has reported a fact, you should verify it yourself so you can include it in your own reporting. It's always a last resort to include a quote or information from an official source, such as a lawmaker, from another news organization's copy. Given our extended deadlines, you should be able to take time to match the information yourself.

Confidential sources: We generally do not cite material provided by people speaking on condition of anonymity, except in unusual circumstances. Our AP agreement explicitly bans that news service from publishing any of our content that uses confidential sources. However, in those very rare cases, the following conditions apply:

- An instructor must approve in each case.
- The instructor must know the identity of the confidential source.
- The source must be credible and have first-hand knowledge of the information.
- The information must be factual, not opinion.

- The information must be confirmed by at least one other source.
- We must explain to readers why the source couldn't provide the information by name.

Following up: When you produce significant content about a matter, such as a proposed bill or a court case, you are expected to follow *major* developments on the same matters and report on significant updates. Depending on the weight of the follow-up reporting, this may or may not count for course credit as a separate piece of content, but editors want to see that we are diligently tracking our own reporting. Instructors will decide.

Financial costs:

If you need to pay for public records or travel associated with this course, we have some money available for this. All travel expenses must be pre-approved by instructors. For public records, you can pay immediately and we can reimburse you, which will take a few weeks for you to receive a check, or we can pay for records directly, which may take seven to 10 days.

Resources to help with this program:

You will be provided with an account for the premium service LobbyTools and trained during the first weeks of the course how to use it. Our representatives at LobbyTools are available to answer questions.

You will be provided with a freshtakeflorida.com email address that you may optionally use for your reporting until the end of the semester.

Florida Politico Playbook: <https://www.politico.com/newsletters/floridaplaybook>

Florida Politics Sunrise podcast (active during spring): <https://floridapolitics.com/podcasts/>

LobbyTools Morning Edition roundup each morning:
https://apps.lobbytools.com/tools/n.cfm?a=morning_edition

Miami Herald Politics & Policy newsletter:
<https://www.miamiherald.com/site-services/newsletters/politics-policy-in-sunshine-state>

City & State newsletter:
<https://www.cityandstatefl.com/newsletters/?oref=csfl-nav>

Axios Miami & Tampa newsletters:
<https://www.axios.com/local/miami> <https://www.axios.com/local/tampa-bay>

Subscribe to The Point: <https://www.wuft.org/the-point/>

Florida Channel: <https://thefloridachannel.org/>

This streams an incredible amount of content out of Tallahassee, including most of the governor's press conferences, and many legislative hearings when the session begins. You can view the stream on the web, or download the app for your iPhone or your Roku device.

Search engine for Florida registered voters: <https://fladata.com/home/elections/>

Search news articles: <https://login.lp.hscl.ufl.edu/login?URL=http://www.nexisuni.com>

Corrections:

When we publish a factual mistake, we will correct it transparently and quickly. Because we have no content-management system, this will require us to re-send a corrected copy of the story to every news outlet in Florida noting the correction. Fact errors damage our credibility and reputation, and negatively affect your grade for the course.

How to cover legislation, regulations:

When you are writing about proposed legislation, please consider the following:

- Recognize that more than 3,400 bills are filed annually. Only about 300 will ever become law each year.
- Has the bill, or one like it, been introduced in earlier legislative sessions? What was the outcome? What has changed since then?
- Has a similar or identical bill been introduced in the other chamber?
- What is the track record of the lawmaker introducing the measure? How successful have their other bills been?
- If the bill is introduced by a Democrat, are there any Republican co-sponsors? What signs indicate there is bipartisan support?
- How does the subject of the bill reflect the governor's public policy stances?
- Who is registered to lobby on the bill so far? Are there groups you would expect to lobby who aren't registered?
- Has there been one or more staff analyses performed on the bill?
- Have similar measures been considered or enacted in other states?

Contacting lawmakers:

Like other professional journalists, we have mixed success contacting Florida legislators for interviews. Some are responsive to phone calls or emails asking for interviews. Others not so much.

Here are some best practices:

Use the biographical profiles in our LobbyTools account to find contact information for each lawmaker *and* their staff members:

<https://apps.lobbytools.com/tools/t.cfm?a=legislators&chamber=0>

If you're emailing a lawmaker to ask for an interview, be sure to send a copy to any aides, especially ones identified as schedulers. Be sure in the email to identify yourself as a journalist for Fresh Take Florida, include your contact information, describe exactly the reporting you are doing and how much time you may require, and explain that our content is distributed to news organizations across Florida. If one or more of our publishing partners is in their home district, be sure to note that this story will be provided to those newsrooms. Lawmakers should know that their particular constituents may be readers of this reporting that might mention them. In case they are unfamiliar with our content, tell them they can review our past coverage at www.freshtakeflorida.com.

If a lawmaker isn't returning a phone message or email, and if you need alternative contact information, check their campaign documents for their most recent election at the Division of Elections tracking system: <https://dos.elections.myflorida.com/candidates/index.asp>

On their candidate oath and appointment of campaign treasurer documents, lawmakers must provide a phone number and email address. In our experience, many list their personal details here.

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Initial Filing of Form		Re-filing to Change: <input type="checkbox"/> Treasurer/Deputy <input type="checkbox"/> Depository <input type="checkbox"/> Office <input type="checkbox"/> Party	
2. Name of Candidate (in this order: First, Middle, Last) W. Keith Perry		3. Address (include post office box or street, city, state, zip code) 2505 NW 71st Pl Gainesville FL 32653	
4. Telephone (352) 371-8961	5. E-mail address KPerry@perryroofing.com		
6. Office sought (include district, circuit, group number) State Senator - District 8		7. If a candidate for a <u>nonpartisan</u> office, check if applicable: <input type="checkbox"/> My intent is to run as a Write-In candidate.	

In Florida, the job of a legislator is part time. Try calling lawmakers at their outside businesses. You can find companies associated with lawmakers by searching their annually filed personal financial disclosures – <http://public.ethics.state.fl.us/search.cfm> – or searching for lawmakers' names at the Division of Corporations registry – <https://dos.myflorida.com/sunbiz/search/>

Separately, you can check their voter registration records for a phone number and email address using our data lookup tool: <https://www.fladata.com/home/elections/voters.php>.

Voter Information

Driskell, Fentrice Denell	
County	HIL
Voter ID	113623934
Address	18934 PEBBLE LINKS CIR
Address	APT 103
City, State, ZIP	Tampa, FL 33647
Gender	Female
Race	Black
Date of Birth	1979-03-03
Registration Date	1996-06-17
Party Affiliation	DEM
Phone	(863) 8384954
Email Address	FENTRICE@GMAIL.COM

You can also find a legislator's home address and occasionally a phone number on any traffic tickets you can review in local circuit court filings:

https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/17VsLVnkIP9AKN-lydqwTM35fwNyrkFOFrosGrw9R_to/edit?usp=sharing

(U55U) *A2POK2E*

FLORIDA UNIFORM TRAFFIC CITATION A2POK2E CHECK DRIFT

COUNTY OF ALACHUA		<input type="checkbox"/> (1) F.H.P. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> (2) P.D. <input type="checkbox"/> (3) S.O. <input type="checkbox"/> (4) OTHER	
CITY (IF APPLICABLE) GAINESVILLE		AGENCY NAME GAINESVILLE POLICE	
		AGENCY N 34	
IN THE COURT DESIGNATED BELOW THE UNDERSIGNED CERTIFIES THAT HE/SHE HAS JUST AND REASONABLE GROUNDS TO BELIEVE AND DOES BELIEVE THAT ON			
COMPLAINT (RETAINED BY COURT)			
DAY OF WEEK	MONTH	DAY	YEAR
THURSDAY	10	30	2014
NAME (PRINT) FIRST		MIDDLE	LAST
YVONNE		HAYES	HINSON-RAWLS
STREET 1104 SE 13TH AVE <small>IF DIFFERENT THAN ONE ON DRIVER LICENSE "E" HERE</small>			
CITY GAINESVILLE		STATE FL	ZIP CODE 32641
TELEPHONE NUMBER	DATE OF BIRTH	YR	HAIR
	NO. 11 DAY 30 YEAR 1947	AGE B	SEX F HGT 503
DRIVER LICENSE NUMBER	STATE	CLASS	CDL LICENSE
H 5 2 5 9 6 8 4 7 9 3 0 0	FL	E	<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NO
YR. VEHICLE	MAKE	STYLE	COLOR
2014	MERZ	UT	BLK
VEHICLE LICENSE NO.	TRAILER TAG NO.	STATE	YEAR TAG EXPIRES
HJR7M		FL	2014
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			<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NO
			COMFANON CITATION NUMBER(S)
			<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NO
DID UNLAWFULLY COMMIT THE FOLLOWING OFFENSE. CHECK ONLY ONE OFFENSE EACH CITATION.			
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> UNLAWFUL SPEED 48 MPH SPEED APPLICABLE 35 MPH			
<input type="checkbox"/> INTERSTATE <input type="checkbox"/> SCHOOL ZONE <input type="checkbox"/> CONSTRUCTION WORKERS PRESENT			
SPEED MEASUREMENT DEVICE LASER (UX025522)			
<input type="checkbox"/> CARELESS DRIVING <input type="checkbox"/> CHILD RESTRAINT <input type="checkbox"/> EXPIRED DRIVER LICENSE			

If those options don't work, an instructor can provide a legislator's LexisNexis report, which often include possible phone numbers and email addresses, along with contact details for family members and business associates. For important coverage, physically go to a lawmaker's outside business or home for interviews subject to our instructors' rules about such visits. If deadlines permit, you can physically mail a letter to them asking for an interview.

When the Legislature is in session – or when committee hearings are taking place in the weeks before the session formally begins – it may be most successful to actually drive to Tallahassee and go to the lawmaker's office or attend a hearing they are attending. After any hearing, you can approach and interview a lawmaker. Or use the legislative schedules to find when lawmakers might be hosting a delegation meeting or a fundraiser, and make arrangements to visit them there. LobbyTools includes a useful online tool to find the physical location of a lawmaker when the Legislature is meeting, based on committee schedules and official calendars.

Recognize that House and Senate leadership and chairs of legislative committees are the toughest logistically – and generally the most reluctant – to interview, but these are often the most important for our reporting. It may be easiest to start with outreach to relevant Democrats, who are generally more willing to engage with journalists, and leverage those conversations to try to compel Republicans to talk to you (*eg, "Mister chairman, Democrats in interviews with us are saying this about your efforts and I wanted to be sure you have an opportunity to respond."*)

If you're asking a lawmaker about a particular bill, review the names of lobbyists who have registered to try to influence a piece of legislation and contact them to see whether they have talked to the lawmaker and what the lawmaker might have said about it:

<https://www.myfloridahouse.gov/LD/default.aspx>

For state lawmakers, you can also search for names of major, recent campaign donors who might be relevant and contact them to see whether they have talked to the lawmaker lately:
<https://dos.myflorida.com/elections/candidates-committees/campaign-finance/campaign-finance-database/>

Some important media contacts:

Gov. DeSantis press office
850-717-9282
media@eog.myflorida.com

Katie Betta, Senate president's office
betta.katherine@flsenate.gov
(850) 487-5229

House speaker's office (Republican leadership)
Andres Malave

Director of Communications
Office of the Speaker
Florida House of Representatives
Office: 305-632-3207
andres.malave@myfloridahouse.gov
(850) 488-1993
media@myfloridahouse.gov

Jossie Barroso
Communications Director
Senate Democratic Caucus
Florida Senate
Office: (850) 487-5611
Cell: (352) 362-3461
Barroso.Jossie@FLSenate.gov

Jackson Peel
Communications Director
House Democratic Office
Florida House of Representatives
Cell- 850-556-5495
Office- 850-717-5297
jackson.peel@myfloridahouse.gov

How to request government records:

Florida governor records requests: <https://eogforms.eog.myflorida.com/pages/PRRequest.aspx>

Florida House of Representatives records requests:
<https://www.myfloridahouse.gov/Sections/PublicGuide/PublicRequestForm.aspx>

Florida Senate records requests: <https://www.flsenate.gov/Reference/PublicRecords>

Our policies:

Please notify instructors immediately of any potential conflicts of interest in your past or current outside activities: Paid or unpaid work on behalf of political or social organizations or candidates, participation in marches, contributions to political or social causes. These may not disqualify you from coverage.

Please curate your social media accounts and recognize that critics may cite older posts to try to undermine your credibility as a journalist. You may consider tightening access controls on your accounts – use the block or mute features – to avoid trolls. Expressing political or strong public policy opinions or even musings about lawmakers on social media during the semester will not

affect your grade but may affect our decisions about whether to circulate content you produce to outside news organizations.

There are regularly invitations to be interviewed about your significant reporting on podcasts or broadcasts. Please discuss such invitations with instructors in advance, and remember that anything you say will reflect on the program and our college – but more importantly it will reflect on your professionalism and marketability as a future journalist. These can be important opportunities to amplify your good work and good professional experiences.

Students will occasionally field requests from WUFT broadcast and podcast producers to debrief them on their stories for a segment.

Plagiarism and fabulism (eg, inventing sources) are unacceptable and will result in immediate removal from the course. Additional sanctions are possible.

Since we are affiliated with WUFT, we abide by the ethics policy governing National Public Radio. You may read it here: <https://www.npr.org/ethics>

We also abide by the Code of Ethics for the Society of Professional Journalism:
<https://www.spj.org/ethicscode.asp>

Photo captions:

We will comply with AP Style on our photo captions. Here is the relevant section from AP's Stylebook:

The first sentence of nearly all AP captions follows a simple formula:

- *Describe in the present tense who is pictured and what is going on within the photo.*
- *Name the city and state (or country, if it was made outside the United States) where the image was made. For U.S. states, use the abbreviations in the "state names" section of the Stylebook.*
- *Provide the date the photo was made, including the day of the week if the photo was made within the past two weeks, and preceded by a comma. (e.g., Tuesday, Jan. 27, 2015).*

These three elements are mandatory and no caption is complete without all of them. Names should be listed in order, left to right, unless it is impossible for the caption to read normally otherwise. With multiple people identified within the caption, enough representations to placement are necessary so there is no confusion as to each subject's identity.

Captions must give attribution for action not seen (e.g., the scene of accident where several people died, according to police).

The second sentence of the caption is used to give context to the news event or describe why the photo is significant. While a second sentence can be illuminating, it also has the potential to create problems and is often where errors can be found. A photo caption's second sentence should be carefully crafted to include information from the text wire story when appropriate or additional relevant observations from the photographer on scene. There are some instances when a second sentence is not needed. Many sports photos taken during a game or match, for example, do not require a second sentence; nor do photos from some ongoing news events.

Most captions should be no more than two concise sentences, while including the relevant information. Try to anticipate what information the reader will need.

THIS IS AN EXAMPLE OF THE STANDARD AP CAPTION:

German Chancellor Angela Merkel addresses the media during a joint news conference with Turkish Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoglu after a meeting at the chancellery in Berlin, Monday, Jan. 12, 2015. (AP Photo/Michael Sohn)

FOR HANDOUT PHOTOS (provided by outside sources other than members or subscribers, such as governments, companies or families):

In this Monday, Feb. 24, 2014, photo provided by the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms, officials examine the scene of a blast at the Kilgore Flares factory in Toone, Tenn. Hardeman County Sheriff John Doolen told WMC-TV on Monday night that Michael Chism, who was burned over 90 percent of his body in Saturday's blast, has died. (Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms via AP)

The caption should begin with In this photo provided by (or released by), followed by the name of the providing body.

PHOTO CAPTIONS

The name of the providing body is then repeated in the photo credit.

We do not use the word "handout" in the caption or photo credit.

ALL handout images from ANY source MUST, as a final step, be examined carefully in Photoshop by at least two editors on the handling regional photo desk. If there is any doubt about the integrity of a handout image, it should not be transmitted.

HANDOUT PHOTOS:

The use of handout photos requires the written permission of the copyright owner whenever possible. When it is not possible to contact the copyright owner, we may get written permission from the copyright owner's authorized agent, such as a family spokesperson.

Advice, reflections from former Fresh Take students:

- I learned more about the legislative process in this class than any other civics or history class I had previously taken at UF. All of that came from listening to other people's experiences, class lectures, and interviews. I found that I had a lot of holes in my knowledge from my previous classes, and I think Fresh Take helped me fill those. One thing I would recommend is to do stories that you are interested in. At the beginning of this class, I was struggling to get through story ideas or even just reach out to legislators. I was very intimidated by the whole process and did not feel qualified. I tried to do stories I was interested in and felt that I would do the best with those. Another thing I would recommend for someone taking this class is to really put your all into it. I overwhelmed myself with jobs outside of class and a heavy schedule, so I found myself embarrassed at times when my work did not match the work I knew I was capable of. I would really recommend for someone to tackle this class as their only big obligation of the semester. I have done well in my previous obligations, like internships or The Alligator, but I believe this class tested me most of all.*
- For most of my stories, I started looking at a proposed bill or some sort of document that ties back to a head figure. In most cases, this was a representative. After gathering context from that one person, I will ask them if they talked to anybody where x has affected them. Since we cover Florida stories, I try looking for additional sources out of Gainesville. This semester has been an eye-opening experience when it comes to reporting and crafting a story. I've learned that sometimes longer ledes are necessary and even if you have a more "feature-like" story, for Fresh Take's sake, you need to always find the news hook. That's what makes it catchy and then you can go into the details of everything. I also learned that sometimes your angle is a bit hidden, and you need to analyze every piece of information to find what really stands out. My best advice is to NOT start off with a longer piece. If you do, don't tell yourself to finish it first – 100% work on more than one at a time. My other piece of advice is to become familiar with reading bills and understanding who/ what they affect. Most importantly, approach your stories with, "why should people care about this?" and "what makes my story unique?"*
- This class taught me how to be a professional journalist. In terms of how to conduct work and finish stories, always be prepared. Have an idea of who is most important to call and follow up with, and make set of important key points or questions to discuss during interviews beforehand. When sources don't respond to the first call, try again, and again and again. I have found that people are more comfortable emailing than talking directly over the phone, so reach out in any way possible. Persistence oftentimes will show them that we mean business. When a source is being quiet, especially a government official, submit public records requests. Professor Bridis consistently throughout the course urged us to pitch our own story ideas, which I learned is very difficult but a key factor in being a journalist. LobbyTools is a beneficial resource when trying to find newsworthy topics to cover that the Florida legislature is discussing. It also helps to call advocacy groups around the state to get a better understanding of what certain communities are battling with. To leave with a last piece of advice, start brainstorming story ideas early on*

in the semester, and be on top of your first few stories. Sometimes a piece won't pan out, so it is important to have another angle or avenue to fall on.

- *What Fresh Take Florida has taught me – above all else – is how to speak to people who do not want to speak with me, as well as how to obtain information that is intentionally made difficult to access. I hope to continue cultivating these skills in my final semester. I wish I had been more mindful of my timing in this course. Had I submitted more requests for public records and interviews earlier on, I could likely have gotten more sources on the phone earlier on in the semester. We are so fortunate to live in a state where public records are (relatively) easily attainable, and that information holds true power in reporting stories holistically, accurately and mindfully. It is always best to make the most use of them as possible.*
- *If I could go back and do this semester over, I would've started off with better organization. When you told us to break the story down into a spreadsheet, it was like a light bulb went off. Being able to sort, organize and filter the facts of a story by a limitless number of variables made organizing a complex storyline infinitely easier. If I could go back, I'd be tracking every story through a spreadsheet. Fresh Take forced me to think much harder about my communication with people: Is the mode of communication potentially captured by public records requests? Does it matter if my communications are captured by a record request in this instance? Is the source exposed to under-oath legal testimony? It was also very helpful to communicate back-and-forth with lawyers/PIOs who were representing the subject(s) of our stories. Generating fact sheets, exhausting every method of communication with a source... all of this was extremely helpful as a learning experience. After Fresh Take, I wouldn't feel comfortable reporting any serious story without this kind of methodology (I'd probably cover a local arts fair without a spreadsheet, of course). But anything less now feels like a risk both to my own credibility and the credibility of whatever publication I'm writing for. It's all too easy to make a mistake as a journalist, and it only takes one mistake to wreck the life of a subject or wreck your own career.*
- *I would advise future newcomers of Fresh Take Florida to brush up on applied fact finding skills as the application of these lessons are key. Lobbyist search, government website navigation and FOIA requests were at the center of just about every story I did. Another great piece of advice is being on good terms with politician's schedulers as they will be your best bet in getting contact with senators and representatives. What I learned the most was how to take my reporting one step further. There were always good initial instincts but there was always more reporting to do that solidified stories and ultimately made them stronger when they reached newsrooms around Florida. My best advice is to keep multiple threads working so the five-story mark doesn't loom over your head as finals season approaches.*
- *One mistake I think I made in this class was not being as communicative with my peers. I had basically no interaction or collaboration with them. It's especially a shame because*

I know how talented and skilled they are. I definitely have a tendency to be more withdrawn when going through something difficult, so I would tell anyone just starting out in this class that that only makes things tougher, and that bouncing things off of professors and other students is a huge help. One thing I would also recommend is to reach out to anyone you know in the J-School who already took this class. For instance, before the semester I talked with Christopher Cann, who's now with the Tallahassee Democrat, about how he handled the class. Hearing how he looked for stories and kept himself on a schedule set my mind somewhat at ease heading into the semester. I knew that it would be very difficult, but doable. In regards to the structure of the class, I should've focused on coming up with a lot more story ideas at the beginning of the semester. Some stories can take a really long time, and a semester's only so long, so if you want to get some in-depth clips, you have to send those public records requests and do that preliminary research early on. One good thing about the class is that there are a ton of opportunities for quick stories. By starting your more in-depth stories early on and getting quick ones done as you go along, you can get to five quicker and not have to panic at the end.

- *LobbyTools was a great tool in helping me find stories and follow bills. I also learned the importance of reaching out to various contacts in case someone does not reply and to reach out via different communication methods. There are some sources that might not want to speak so it is important to reach out to many people and to not only email but also call and message sources on social media. In terms of advice moving forward, I think the organization and logistics of Fresh Take Florida are perfect as they are. I think there should be more communication amongst the students so we may help one another with looking for sources or any suggestions. I really like how we had freedom to explore and write on the topics we were interested in. I also appreciated the system in which some pitches were posted on the Slack channel as it helped in the process of starting a story.*
- *Working in the field with a reporter was always a far more enjoyable experience than any alternative. While I was able to produce photos I am proud of, I was not as confident when taking stills for a story that was already completed and only waiting on the visual element. Using this knowledge, I will jump at the opportunity later in my career to work with the writers in the newsroom and form working relationships with each reporter. A definite highlight of this semester has been working with Daron Dean as a photo editor. His leadership has been incredibly helpful in bettering my eye as a photographer. It was a relief to have a photo editor that could look through my takes and offer a second pair of eyes on choosing which photos stand out the most. I am also grateful for his ever-available brainstorm sessions while driving to a shoot or after-action conversations. I think visuals should be considered as critical to the reporting process as the writing itself and Daron is a great asset for helping all the photographers on the team.*
- *I have to admit I was extremely nervous before the start of the semester. Perhaps I was in way over my head. I didn't have a clue as to how I would cover something as*

complicated and important as the 2020 legislative session. I looked around at my classmates and it seemed I was the only nervous, jittery one. I wanted to share their excitement, but my anxiety trumped everything else I felt. The only question that swirled in my head was: "How the hell am I going to do this?" But that's why I signed up for Fresh Take Florida. I wanted to get out of the comfort zone. I felt ready to challenge myself again. And challenge myself I did. I grew more as a young journalist this semester than any other. The lesson learned here is to sign yourself up for things, even if you think you are severely underqualified for it. You'll learn and it'll make you a better reporter. I felt so uncomfortable sometimes when out reporting in this program. Especially when we met with the Tampa Bay Times and Miami Herald reporters in the capital who said this was their third session and they were just now figuring out how everything works. I immediately felt my stomach drop when I heard that. But once I started getting the hang of things, attending committee hearings and learning how to use LobbyTools, I felt much better and more prepared. I make this point to say that this is something that will stick with me as I progress toward a career in journalism. I'm OK, comfortable even, with feeling uncomfortable. Fresh Take Florida taught me that there's a certain amount of reading and research you need to do on your own before approaching an interview to make sure you are understanding the issue at hand as best as you can. Reading and researching is the only way to make yourself feel more comfortable with an unfamiliar assignment. I plan to do this in any and every future job I have for whatever is thrown at me. And I'll be forever grateful for the connections to sources and experts I've made connections with through my reporting that I will surely call on in the future. I have a difficult time coming up with my own story ideas. I don't know if that is just a result of my overall lack of self confidence, but the majority of my stories were not my ideas. I just reported and wrote them. As Professor Bridis said, this program was meant to teach us how to fish for ourselves and not just be handed the fish. I have the resources and notes and experience now to look for better story ideas for my future jobs, though this is something I know I'm not great at yet.

- *On the Florida Legislature's Opening Day one thought ran through my head: "I could stay here and do this all the time." A key skill I took away from this semester was finding and pitching my own story ideas. Reporting and learning about the Legislature was essential to that. I spent hours reading through bills on LobbyTools finding hidden story ideas — a skill I plan on taking with me wherever I end up.*
- *One of my first learning curves was speaking to legislators, and interviewing in a space with other journalists. From the lobbytools training session, it had been clear they could be hard to reach, and the best chance at talking to them was approaching them directly after a meeting. That brings me to my next lesson: stories don't always work out. And that's okay. During the semester, I had several stories that didn't pan out.*
- *Fresh Take Florida has been my best journalism experience so far in the CJC. I've been challenged, even beaten down at times, swamped by my own insecurities, life struggles and stress with school. But I've overcome it all and produced a handful of phenomenal*

clips that I know will help me get hired after graduating. The biggest three takeaways I have from this semester with the Fresh Take team are these: Network, network, network, care about and find interest in the stories you write and always get the primary source. It is so incredibly important to meet and talk to as many people as possible as a reporter. The more faces you know, the more stories you'll get and the easier time you'll have getting interviews. I'm so grateful for all my time spent at the capitol this spring. The parking fees and blistered feet were easily worth the handshakes, smiles and quotes I got in return. I have the confidence now to navigate a maze of legislative lingo, hold my own in a government press conference and know the right aide to call to secure an interview. As for crafting the best story, I've found that I write more compelling narratives when I find my subject more interesting. Because of this, I've done my best to find intrigue in each topic I explore, even if they seem dull at first. My hardest lesson learned, however, is something much less tangible, and if I'm being honest, I'm still working on it. I have to train myself to be assertive, strong and thick-skinned as a journalist. Those are three attributes I would never associate with myself otherwise, and it's incredibly difficult to flip that switch. Growing up, I was taught to never be bold or authoritative. Everyone else came first, and I was supposed to be flexible and go along with whatever anyone else wanted. Because of that, I associate assertiveness with disrespect. I'm so tuned in to how I affect others' moods that I take to heart any type of sass, criticism or insult. I think that negativity must be my fault and that I did something to deserve it. I can't explain how hard it is to retrain myself after years of being demure and a people-pleaser. I am working on it though! I'm consciously limiting how often I apologize and reminding myself that I'm responsible for keeping sources on track during interviews and that it's not rude to redirect them. What I have yet to overcome are the occasional mean-spirited messages reporters get from unhappy sources.

- *I've never taken on any type of political reporting, not even the University of Florida's student government. Simplifying complicated stories, whether it be about several bills or a person's entire life, is a daunting task. I re-learned the importance and skill of marrying detailed reporting with concise writing. I also grew used to rolling with the punches and pivoting a story angle. Sometimes news breaks while you're commuting to class or taking an exam. It's easy to get discouraged while reporting these types of stories, but I learned to adjust my angles while writing to keep the story timely and newsworthy. Lastly, I was reminded of the importance of back reading and fact-checking my work. Fact-checking takes time, and back reading stories while tired and unfocused is a bad idea. The Devil is always in the details, and I need to pay attention to pluck him out.*
- *Every day working as a part of Fresh Take Florida has been a learning experience. As with any job, there are good days and there are bad ones. Though in the world of journalism, the stakes can feel unbelievably high, it's always been important to me to keep calm and think about ways to improve myself. Becoming a member of Fresh Take was thrilling and intimidating. I was joining the ranks of the top writers, photographers and videographers in the CJC. There are days when you doubt yourself and feel a serious imposter syndrome. I often wished I could be doing more for the program.*

Looking back, I still wish I could have done even more. However, I don't have regrets about the work I did. A key lesson from working with Fresh Take: Talk with reporters. Oftentimes when you shoot for a news outlet, you'll be told when and where to go but not why. Daron Dean has been a great editor and always gave me way more context than I typically would get. Daron did not always know all the details, but we always had the contact info for the reporter on the story. And I think one of the most important things you should always do is reach out and ask for the gist of the story, who the reporter is talking to and if they have any ideas for the visuals they want. Sometimes the story is straightforward and does not need a fancy photo. Still, it never hurts to know the context. Otherwise it becomes much harder to know how to visually tell the story.