



**School of Communication and Media**  
**Norman J. Radow College of Humanities and Social Sciences**  
**JOUR 4300: Reporting on Government and Politics**  
**Spring 2023**

**Course Information**

Meeting Times: Wednesdays in person 12:30 p.m.-3:15 p.m.

Instructional Method: In person

Location: Kennesaw State University Center for Sustainable Journalism at 1200 Chastain Road, MD 00310, Chastain Point Building 300, Suite 310, in Kennesaw

**Instructors Information**

Shannon McCaffrey

Preferred Method of Communication: Try me first through Slack or at [shannon.mccaffrey@freshtakegeorgia.org](mailto:shannon.mccaffrey@freshtakegeorgia.org)

Office: 404-520-4959

Jeremy Redmon

Preferred Method of Communication: Try me first through Slack or at [jeremy.redmon@kennesaw.edu](mailto:jeremy.redmon@kennesaw.edu)

Office: 404-526-2094

In-person meetings on campus or phone calls by appointment. We want to help you succeed. So please don't hesitate to contact us, if you need assistance.

**Course Description**

[Fresh Take Georgia](#) is unlike any other class you have taken. Think of it more as an internship. You will be reporting and writing articles that will be edited by professionals. The aim of this course is for your work to be published, not only on Fresh Take Georgia's website but potentially by one of our news media partners. The work you do in this course could help you build a portfolio for getting a job in journalism after you graduate. The course will focus this spring semester on Georgia's state Legislature, government

and politics, though there may be opportunities to report on other subjects. Hands-on experience is a key feature of this course. And you will read and meet some of the top professionals in the business.

### **Prerequisite**

JOUR 3330 News Reporting and Writing

### **Required Textbooks**

The Associated Press Stylebook 56<sup>th</sup> Edition, which is available for free at KSU's library and online through the KSU's Center for Sustainable Journalism.

"Flipped: How Georgia Turned Purple and Broke the Monopoly on Republican Power," by Greg Bluestein in print (new or used) or in digital format.

### **Additional Required Reading**

The AJC's 2023 Georgia Legislative Preview. Find it in D2L.

### **Recommended Reading**

Keeping up with the news is essential for journalists. We strongly urge you to read The Atlanta Journal-Constitution, including the newspaper's weekday political blog, [The Jolt](#); The New York Times; and The Washington Post daily in print or online as well as The New Yorker and The Atlantic magazines. And we recommend you listen to National Public Radio and news podcasts, including The AJC's [Politically Georgia](#), and read as much nonfiction that you can get your hands on. Staying on top of current events and trends is essential for professionals in this industry.

### **Required Equipment**

A laptop equipped with internet access, Excel, PowerPoint and Microsoft Word, or some other word processing program that can save in Word format, and a web camera with a microphone. We may be doing in-class assignments, so please bring your laptop to every class. We are requiring web cameras so that we may meet remotely, in case we need to do that for any reason.

### **Learning Outcomes**

- Pitch distinctive news stories for a statewide audience.
- Research, report and write articles suitable for publication by Fresh Take Georgia and its partners.

- Develop sources via interviews, public records, data analysis and immersive field reporting to craft ethical, attributable, fact-based journalism narratives and news stories.
- Work in a professional newsroom environment, from pitch to publication, and confidently approach subjects, stories and events representing a professional news organization.
- Build a body of published clips and a network of professional contacts designed to help obtain internships and professional positions after graduation.

### **Help**

We care about your learning and your progress in our course. Do not wait until the last minute to seek help. Please reach out to us during the semester to check in about your grades, understanding of the material and any other questions you may have about the course and assignments. Let us know how we might assist you as you complete your coursework. Before KSU's March 14 deadline to withdraw without academic penalty, you should set a time to meet with one of us in person or by phone to discuss your performance in this class.

### **Withdrawing**

If you cannot keep up with the class and do not want to get an "F," you should withdraw from the course before KSU's deadline of March 14. Students are solely responsible for their enrollment status in a class; nonattendance does not constitute a withdrawal. You are responsible for determining your enrollment status in all classes to protect your financial aid. Not attending a class for which you are registered is not the same as withdrawing from the course. You must complete an online withdrawal to be removed from a course. If you stop attending class but do not complete an online withdrawal before the last day to drop without academic penalty, you will receive a grade of WF, which counts as an F in calculating your grade point average and counts as a completed course for determining your financial aid award.

### **Attendance and Class Participation**

You are required to attend every class. We will take attendance at the beginning of each class, so please show up on time. Missing class, showing up late or leaving early will negatively affect your grades in this course, as everything we cover builds on what we have learned previously. Put away your phones and laptops during our discussions. Listen intently and ask lots of good questions. Journalism involves more than putting

words on a page. Be thoughtful and don't be afraid to share your ideas or comments with the class. You can learn a lot this way and it will make you a better writer. Also, keep an open mind during class discussions and be gentle with each other when you discuss each other's work.

### **Goals**

You will write up to a half of a single-spaced page describing your goals for this course. This will count for 5% of your grade. We will cover expectations for this assignment during our first meeting on Jan. 11. It will be due before class on Jan. 18.

### **Flash Nonfiction Writing Assignment**

You will write a first-person nonfiction story of up to 100 words. This assignment will focus on writing narratively and vividly and with brevity and will count for 5% of your grade. We will cover expectations for this assignment on Jan. 18. It will be due before class on Jan. 25.

### **Professionalism**

You will work in a professional newsroom, so you will be assessed based on your professionalism in this course. Do not miss, show up late or leave early from our scheduled classes. Be engaged and actively participate in our meetings in a professional manner. We recommend you dress in business casual attire as you will likely meet with sources and guest speakers in person or online. Respond as quickly as possible when we attempt to communicate with you, as much of what we do in journalism is driven by deadlines. Importantly, be coachable. That means listen, accept constructive criticism and be ready to grow from it. Treat us, your classmates and your sources with respect. All of this will count for 10% of your grade.

### **Current Events Presentations**

This assignment is designed to get you reading, watching or listening to journalism about the subjects we will be covering in this course. It is also meant to help prepare you for your other assignments in this course. Each of you will brief the class on a recent and substantial news article, podcast or television segment about government or politics that is published within a week of your presentation. You will also turn in a brief written report for your presentation. This assignment will count for 10% of your final grade. We will announce the schedule for your presentations and cover expectations for this assignment near the beginning of this semester.

### **Reading Response**

You will write a response to “Flipped” of up to one single-spaced page, using what you have learned in this course. This assignment will count for 10% of your final grade. It will be due before our class on March 15. We will cover expectations for this assignment before it is due.

### **Reporting Memos**

You will write two reporting memos of no more than a half a single-space page each. Use them to update us on the status of your writing assignments. These memos are designed to help us help you with your progress. We will discuss them during our class meetings. Each will each count for 5% for a total of 10% of your final grade. They will be due before our classes on Feb. 22 and March 29. We will cover expectations for these assignments before they are due.

### **Pitches**

You will develop and pitch at least four story ideas this semester. Each pitch should not be longer than half a single-spaced page. Combined, your pitches will count for a total of 20% of your final grade. Two of your pitches will be due before class on Feb. 8 and the other two will be due before class on March 15. We will cover expectations for these pitches before they are due.

### **Writing Assignments**

You will write at least two articles based on your pitches during this semester, though you should aim for more. Combined, these articles will count for a total of 30% of your final grade, whether they are published or not on Fresh Take Georgia’s website or with one of our partners. We will individually approve these pieces and set deadlines and other expectations with you for them as well as related photos before they are due.

### **Grading**

We will review your work as if we were your editors at a mainstream newspaper or magazine. We will adhere to Associated Press style in this course and apply professional guidelines and standards by editors in accepting or rejecting your pitches for your writing assignments. The following will lower your grade significantly:

- 1) Plagiarism
- 2) Libel
- 3) Factual errors

- 4) Grammatical and spelling mistakes
- 5) AP style errors

### **Final Grade**

This is how your final grade will break down:

Goals	5%
Flash Nonfiction	5%
Professionalism	10%
Current Events Presentation	10%
Reading Response	10%
Reporting Memos	10%
Pitches	20%
Writing Assignments	30%

### **Grading System**

90-100%	A
80-89%	B
70-79%	C
60-69%	D
0-59%	F

### **Late Work**

All work must be turned in through D2L by the deadlines set by us or it will be considered late. Writing under deadline pressure is an important part of learning to be a journalist. For every class you turn in an assignment late, we will lower your grade for that assignment by 11 percentage points. We will not accept late assignments after April 26 and we are not offering extra credit.

### **Preparing Your Papers**

You must prepare your work for this class on a computer and single-space it. Put your name, date and title of the assignment at the top of the page. Start each paragraph by indenting five spaces. All work must be submitted to us before the deadlines we set or it will be considered late. Submit all your work to us in attachments in Microsoft Word format through D2L, unless we instruct you to do otherwise.

### **Note-taking/Intellectual Property**

The lectures we provide in this course are our property and the property of Kennesaw State University. They may not be electronically recorded without our prior permission (and that of any guest speaker). No teaching materials we provide, including class notes, may be reproduced or distributed in any form or by any means or stored in a database or retrieval system, without our permission. Unless we state otherwise in class, please do not take pictures of our PowerPoint slides or other visual aids. That's not good note-taking and it infringes on intellectual property rights.

### **KSU Campus Emergencies and Closings**

If you haven't already done so, please update Owl Express with your phone number and email address to receive notifications about emergencies and weather-related situations through KSU Alert. You can also check Kennesaw.edu for weather-related closings and cancellations. It is possible our class will meet online, if the campus is closed for any reason.

### **Children on Campus**

The university cannot accommodate children of employees and students on campus during normal operating hours, according to the [KSU Employee Handbook](#).

### **Classroom Behavior**

Be on time for class and plan on meeting for the entire class period. Put away your phones and laptops during our discussions. Be polite. Respect your classmates and us. For more about the university's related policies, see [KSU's Student Codes of Conduct](#).

### **Students with Special Needs**

If you have a specific physical, psychiatric, or learning disability and require special accommodations, please let us — or the Student Disability Services office — know early in the semester so that we can appropriately meet your learning needs. You will need to provide documentation of your disability to the Student Disability Services office, located in Kennesaw Hall Suite 1205 — reach the office at 470-578-2666 — to obtain a list of approved accommodations.

### **Ethics**

Every KSU student is responsible for upholding the provisions of the [Student Codes of Conduct](#). Section 5C of the code addresses the university's policy on academic honesty, including provisions regarding plagiarism and cheating. The work you submit for this course must be your own and it must be original. Fabricating material, plagiarizing

yourself or using others' work without attribution is unacceptable. This behavior will substantially affect your grades in this course and your name will be turned in to university officials. In the journalism industry, reporters who have been caught doing these things have been fired from respected news organizations. Incidents of alleged academic misconduct will be handled through the established procedures of the Department of Student Conduct and Academic Integrity, which could include either an "informal" resolution by a faculty member, resulting in a grade adjustment, or a formal hearing procedure. Such hearings might subject a student to the code's minimum one-semester suspension requirement.

### **Admissions & Advising**

If you want to discuss possible careers or graduate school, our faculty members are available to guide you. For help, please see your advisor in the [RCHSS Undergraduate Advising Center](#).

### **Coronavirus Pandemic Information**

#### **Vaccines**

COVID-19 vaccines are a critical tool in "Protecting the Nest." If you have not already, you are strongly encouraged to get vaccinated immediately to advance the health and safety of our campus community. As an enrolled KSU student, you are eligible to receive the vaccine at no cost. Please call (470) 578-6644 to schedule your vaccination appointment or you may walk into one of our student health clinics.

#### **Masks**

Based on guidance from the University System of Georgia, all vaccinated and unvaccinated individuals are encouraged to wear a face covering while inside campus facilities. Unvaccinated individuals are also strongly encouraged to continue to socially distance while inside campus facilities, when possible.

#### **Staying Home When Sick**

If you are feeling ill, please stay home and contact your health professional. In addition, please email us both to say you are missing class due to illness. Signs of COVID-19 illness include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Cough
- Fever of 100.4 or higher
- Runny nose or new sinus congestion
- Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing



- Chills
- Sore Throat
- New loss of taste and smell

For more information regarding COVID-19, including testing, vaccines, extended illness procedures and accommodations, see KSU's official [Covid-19 website](#).

### **Shifting Modalities**

This course is designed to happen 100% in person. But KSU may shift the method of course delivery at any time during the semester in compliance with University System of Georgia health and safety guidelines. In this case, alternate teaching modalities that may be adopted include hybrid, hyflex, synchronous online or asynchronous online instruction.

### **Schedule (Subject to change)**

#### **Week 1: Getting to Know Each Other and the Rules of the Road**

##### **Wednesday, Jan. 11**

Student and instructor introductions

Course/syllabus overview

Discussion about how Fresh Take Georgia works

Reporting and writing refresher and lecture about reading for story ideas

Preview of the 2023 Georgia legislative session

Overview of expectations for your goals and current events assignments. Current events presentation schedule announced.

Read our course syllabus and the AJC's 2023 Georgia Legislative Preview (both are in D2L) and turn in your goals assignment before next class.

#### **Week 2: Finding Stories**

##### **Wednesday, Jan. 18**

Current events presentations

Lesson about developing story ideas and doing advance reporting

Overview of your pitch assignments

Discussions about your goals

Lecture about writing narratively and vividly and with brevity

Expectations for your flash nonfictions assignment

Guest speaker Rick Hirsch, senior editor of talent development for McClatchy and the former managing editor of the Miami Herald

Turn in your flash nonfiction assignment and read Chapters 1-6 in “Flipped” before next class

### **Week 3: Gathering the Records**

**Wednesday, Jan. 25**

Current events presentations

Lesson about finding stories in Georgia’s state Legislature

Lecture about Georgia’s Open Records law and FOIA and using Excel

Flash nonfiction assignment readings

Discussion about Chapters 1-6 of “Flipped”

### **Week 4: Visiting the Gold Dome**

**Wednesday, Feb. 1**

Visit the state Capitol

Turn in your first two pitches before next class

### **Week 5: Pitch Presentations I**

**Wednesday, Feb. 8**

Current events presentations

Students discuss their pitches

Read Chapters 7-16 of “Flipped” before next class

### **Week 6: Cultivating and Interviewing Sources**

**Wednesday, Feb. 15**

Current events presentations

Students discuss the status of their pitches and writing assignments

Lecture about how to cultivate and interview sources

Lesson about reporting responsibly on trauma

Discussion about Chapters 7-16 of “Flipped”

Turn in your first reporting memo before next class

### **Week 7: The Writing that Happens in the Rewriting**

**Wednesday, Feb. 22**

Current events presentations

Students discuss the status of their writing assignments

Lecture about how to manage your time while reporting and writing

Lesson on self-care

Read Chapters 17-26 and the Epilogue of “Flipped” before next class

### **Week 8: Bulletproofing Your Work**

#### **Wednesday, March 1**

Current events presentations

Students discuss the status of their writing assignments

Lecture about journalism ethics and developing your own bulletproofing system

Guest speaker Shawn McIntosh, managing editor of The Atlanta Journal-Constitution

Discussion about Chapters 8-26 and the Epilogue of “Flipped”

Turn in your second set of two pitches and your reading response before next class

**March 6-March 12: No classes**

**March 14: Last day to withdraw without academic penalty**

### **Week 9: Pitching Your Work Part II**

#### **Wednesday, March 15**

Student pitch presentations

Students discuss the status of their writing assignments

Discussion about student reading responses

Guest speaker Lorra Lynch Jones, news director for WMAZ-TV in Macon

### **Week 10 Voting Rights**

#### **Wednesday, March 22**

Students discuss the status of their writing assignments

Lesson on how to effectively cover voting rights

Guest speaker Caitlin May, voting right staff attorney for the ACLU of Georgia

Turn in your second reporting memo before next class

### **Week 11 Giving Voice to the Voiceless**

#### **Wednesday, March 29**

Students discuss the status of their writing assignments

Lesson on how to responsibly write about vulnerable people served by the government

Guest speaker Andrea Armstrong, a law professor at the University of Loyola and the founder of [incarcerationtransparency.org](http://incarcerationtransparency.org)

### **Week 12 Watchdogging Government**

### **Wednesday, April 5**

Students discuss the status of their writing assignments

Lecture about how to watchdog government agencies

Lesson on reporting on taxation and government spending

Guest speaker James Salzer, assistant senior editor for The Atlanta Journal-Constitution

### **Week 13 Reporting on Political Campaigns**

#### **Wednesday, April 12**

Students discuss the status of their writing assignments

Lecture on how to report on political campaigns, campaign spending, political ads and election polls

Guest speaker Greg Bluestein, a political reporter for The Atlanta Journal-Constitution and the author of “Flipped”

### **Week 14 Misinformation and Political Extremism**

#### **Wednesday, April 19**

Students discuss the status of their writing assignments

Lecture on how to report on misinformation and political extremism

Lesson on how to stay safe while covering political violence

Guest speaker Tim Alberta, staff writer for The Atlantic

### **Week 15 Presenting Your Work**

#### **Wednesday, April 26**

Students discuss the results of their Writing Assignments

Saying Goodbye

### **Important Deadlines**

Jan. 18: Goals assignment and read the course syllabus and the AJC’s 2023 Georgia Legislative Preview.

Jan. 25: Flash nonfiction assignment and read Chapters 1-6 of “Flipped”

Feb. 8: First set of two pitches

Feb. 15: Read Chapters 7-16 of “Flipped”

Feb. 22: First reporting memo

March 1: Read Chapters 8-26 and the Epilogue of “Flipped”

March 15: Second set of two pitches and reading response

March 29: Second reporting memo

