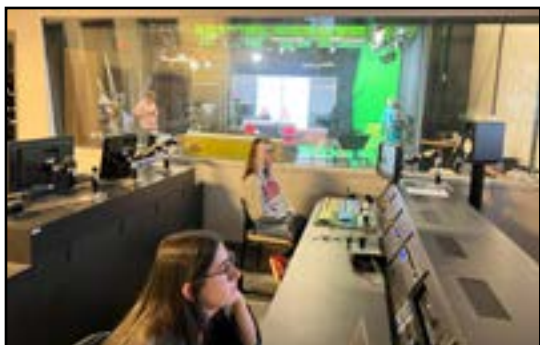




## Syllabus: Specialized Journalism & Portfolio class



Jessica Britton and Megan Hardy work CueScript and switching board at the RU School of Communication studios, Nov. 11, 2022. (Photo by Bill Kovarik)

### Class details, times & places:

COMS 404 - 481 Jan 17 – May 5, 2023 CRN: 21428 / CRN: 21433

T-Th 9:30 – 10:45; T-Th 11 - 12:15 Hemphill Hall Rm 1005

Or synchronous zoom T-Th at 9:30 & 11 depending on pandemic conditions

Students are informed of zoom sessions and links via university email

### Instructor:

Prof. William (Bill) Kovarik, PhD <https://billkovarik.com/bio/>

School of Communication, Radford University

Email: [wkovarik@radford.edu](mailto:wkovarik@radford.edu)

Instructor office hours: Zoom M-W 9 – 11 pm or by appointment

**Overall:** These two capstone courses combine what you have learned about reporting, writing and visual communication and help expand your skill set. We will also be concerned with professional standards, journalism ethics and contemporary issues.

### Objectives:

**Media technology skills:** Publish video, podcasts, e-newspapers and e-books

**Professional practice:** Research, agenda setting, reporting, writing and editing

**Professional perspectives:** Ethics & other professional topics in journalism

### Policies:

**Deadlines** are critical in the news business. You will be graded down substantially for reports turned in past the deadline, and any article that contains a factual error or misspells a proper name.

**Plagiarism** on any paper will result in an automatic F for the course and will be reported as an Honor Code violation. Original reporting is expected for COMS 404. You may not get credit for work produced for another course. No retreads from previous semesters.

**Conflicts:** Professional journalists present themselves as impartial observers. For that reason, there is a conflict if you report on or about your friends, family or organizations in which you participate. You have to get comfortable approaching and interviewing strangers.

**Standards:** News is an ethical, factual report of a significant public event or issue explained in terms that are understandable to the average reader. Remember the [SPJ code](#): Seek the truth, act independently, minimize harm, be accountable. For more details on standards, see: "[Standards for news reporting and writing](#)," by Prof. Kovarik.



### You'll need:

A reporter's notepad

A camera for photos

A video camera & tripod

Audio recorder

A non-commercial WP site

Associated Press Stylebook

Professional Assn. membership

### Resources

[D2L for assignments](#)

[Class web page & manual](#)

[Assignment tracking 404 - 482](#)

[RU journalism FB Page](#)

[New River Daybook](#)

## Overall Evaluation

Grades will be weighted as follows:

- Six level 1 (or equivalent) news reports - 600 points  
Variety of subjects and approaches; Some direct assignments, some on reporter initiative. All stories must be pitched in advance and meet criteria for newsworthiness.
- Quizzes/Assignments/Attendance 200 points  
These are in and out-of-class assignments that further your reporting skills, short quizzes on the readings and other material covered in class.
- Final Project 200 points  
Explanatory long form report will be shared/screened during finals week.
- Social media posts - professional issues or promotion of your stories - 100 points

## Grading Scale

A = 900-1,000 B = 800-899 C = 700-799  
D = 600-699 F = < 600

## University policies

**Honor Code** -- By accepting admission to this university, each student makes a commitment to understand, support and abide by the honor code without compromise or exception.

**Confidentiality** — Discussions about your grade or other aspects of your life at RU are kept in strict confidence under the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) (20 U.S.C. § 1232g; 34 CFR Part 99).

This means that the instructor will be happy to talk with your mom or dad, but only with your permission.

**Disabilities** — If you are seeking academic accommodations under the Americans with Disabilities Act at Radford University, you are required to register with the Disability Resource Office (DRO). To receive academic accommodations for this class, please submit your documentation to the DRO in the lower level of Tyler Hall Suites 54-69, by fax to 540-831-6525, by email to [dro@radford.edu](mailto:dro@radford.edu). For more information and/or for documentation guidelines, visit [www.radford.edu/dro](http://www.radford.edu/dro) or call 540-831-6350.



Radford journalism students interview Larry Gibson at Kayford Mountain, West Virginia, October, 2008. (Photo by Bill Kovarik)

## Attendance Policy

Attendance and participation are important to ensure that the class runs smoothly and stays on track. It's also an important habit to practice for your personal and professional success after graduation.

I allow for a reasonable number of absences for illness, outside commitments or to participate in extracurricular activities. Reasonable would be fifteen percent of 26 classes, or about 4. I do not distinguish between excused and unexcused absences.

How attendance affects your grades:

- Students who have one or no absences will have their final grade increased by 20 points.
- Two, three or four absences will not directly affect a student's grade. Notify me in advance of a planned absence.
- Students are still responsible for assignments and should get any missed notes or assignments from a classmate. I cannot cover the material twice because of absence.
- Students who have five or more absences will see their grade decreased by 100 points, or one full letter grade. Six absences would decrease a grade by 200 points. Seven absences is an automatic "F."