Reporting in Buenos Aires

**Class Code**  JOUR-UA 9204

**Instructor Details**  Santiago O'Donnell  
Email: santiod@yahoo.com.ar  
Office Hours: tuesdays and thursdays 3:15 to 4:15 pm

**Class Details**  Tuesdays and Thursdays 1:45-3:15 p.m.  
Location: Ocampo Room

**Prerequisites**  In order to take this course students do not have to have journalism knowledge but they should be curious and should have a satisfactory score on writing skills in terms of accuracy and objectivity.

**Class Description**  The course intends to introduce students to Buenos Aires, a city of more than four million people and 47 neighborhoods, and to develop and/or sharpen journalistic technique, particularly written journalism. Emphasis will be on dealing with cultural differences and local context. During the course, students will explore territories and cultures and practice reporting and writing. Practices will include generating story ideas, exercising news judgment, and gathering information. We will have guest speakers, a visit to a local a media institution and classes will combine lecture, discussion of readings and editorial meetings.

**Desired Outcomes**  The course will aim to sharpen students’ abilities to develop beats and find news angles for local and foreign newspapers and magazines by using the techniques of information gathering, text organization, and writing. Writing and reporting on different topics will be a significant aspect of the course. Students will learn about Buenos Aires, Latin America, journalism, writing, and themselves.

**Assessment Components**  
- Written assignments 40%  
- Class participation 30%  
- Final profile 40%  
Failure to submit or fulfill any required course component results in failure of the class.

**Assessment Expectations**  
**Grade A:** The student makes excellent use of empirical and theoretical material and offers well structured arguments in their work. The student writes comprehensive essays and the work shows strong evidence of critical thought and extensive reading.  
**Grade B:** The candidate shows a good understanding of the problem and has demonstrated the ability to formulate and execute a coherent research strategy.
**Grade C:** Work is acceptable and shows a basic grasp of the research problem. However, the work fails to organize findings coherently and is in need of improvement.

**Grade D:** The work passes because some relevant points are made. However, there may be a problem of poor definition, lack of critical awareness, or poor research.

**Grade F:** The work shows that the research problem is not understood; there is little or no critical awareness and the research is clearly negligible.

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**Submission of work**

Final essay dates cannot be changed under any circumstance. Written work due in class must be submitted during the class time to the instructor.

**Final essays must be submitted to the instructor in print or in electronic copy.** Copies must arrive before or on the date of established deadline.

**Attendance Policy**

- NYU’s Global Programs (including NYU Buenos Aires) must adhere to a strict policy regarding course attendance. No unexcused absences are permitted.
- Each unexcused absence will be penalized by deducting 1% from the student’s final course grade.
- Absences are only excused if they are due to illness, religious observance or emergencies.
- Absences due to illness or mental health issues must be discussed with the Assistant Director for Academic Programs, Moira Pérez, within one week of your return to class.
- A doctor’s note excusing your absence is mandatory for the absence to be justified. The note must clearly state that student is not able to attend class.
- The date on the doctor’s note must be the date of the missed class or exam.
- Being absent to any kind of examination must be informed at or before the time of said examination via email to the Assistant Director for Academic Programs.
- Requests to be excused for non-illness purposes must be discussed with your instructor prior to the date(s) in question. (If you want the reasons of your absence to be treated confidentially and not shared with your lecturer, please contact the Assistant Director for Academic Programs).
- Students with more than four unexcused absences will fail the course.
- Each class lasts one hour and half or two hours. **Missing one class represents one absence. For courses that meet once a week (three-hour block), missing one class represents two absences.**
- Students are responsible for making up any work missed due to absence.
- NYU BA also expects students to arrive to class promptly (both at the beginning and after any breaks) and to remain for the duration of the class. Three late arrivals or early departures (10 minutes after the starting time or before the ending time) will be considered one absence. Missing more than 20 minutes of a class will count as a full absence.
- Please note that for classes involving a field trip or other external visit, transportation difficulties are never grounds for an excused absence. It is the student’s responsibility to arrive at an agreed meeting point in a punctual and timely fashion.

Make-up classes for Holidays are mandatory as regular scheduled classes.

**Late Submission of Work**

Late work should be submitted **in person** to the Assistant Director for Academic Programs **during office hours** (Mon – Fri, 9.30 am to 5 pm), who will write on the essay or other work the date and time of submission, in the presence of the student. Another member of the administrative staff can accept the work, in person, in the absence of the Assistant Director for Academic Programs and will write the date and time of submission on the work, as above.

Work submitted within 5 weekdays after the submission time without an agreed extension receives a penalty of 10 points on the 100 point scale.

Written work submitted after 5 weekdays after the submission date without an agreed extension fails and is given a zero.

**Language Courses:** Work submitted within 2 days after the submission time without an agreed extension receives a penalty of 10 points on the 100-point scale. Written work submitted after 2 days after the submission date without an agreed extension fails and is given a zero.

**Please note** end of semester essays must be submitted on time.

**Plagiarism Policy**

**Academic Integrity**

Academic Integrity is intimately related to the teaching and learning process. When writing research papers, you need to keep in mind that plagiarism includes the use of another person’s words, ideas, judgment, images or data as though they were your own, whether intentionally or unintentionally. It also includes presenting and/or paraphrasing discourse or ideas from a published work (in print or on internet) without quotation marks and clear without acknowledgment of the original source.

For formatting in your papers, refer to MLA guidelines.

On matters regarding academic integrity, refer to the section “Academic Standards and Discipline” in the College of Arts and Science Bulletin [http://bulletin.cas.nyu.edu/page/academic.policies#STANDARDS](http://bulletin.cas.nyu.edu/page/academic.policies#STANDARDS) and to “Statement on Academic Integrity” in NYU Expository Writing Program: Policies and Procedures: [http://www.nyu.edu/cas/ewp/html/policies___procedures.html#statementacademicintegrity](http://www.nyu.edu/cas/ewp/html/policies___procedures.html#statementacademicintegrity)
All your written work must be submitted as a hard copy AND in electronic form to the instructor.

It is expected that the student follow the rules on academic honesty and intellectual integrity established by NYU University.

**Required Texts**

Reading assignments listed in each class, including selected readings from reading pack in NYU classes

**Supplemental Texts**


**Internet Research Guidelines**

Poynter Institute: [www.poynter.org](http://www.poynter.org)

Nieman Program on Narrative Journalism: [www.nieman.harvard.edu/narrative](http://www.nieman.harvard.edu/narrative)

Maynard Institute: [www.maynardije.org](http://www.maynardije.org)

Transom: [www.transom.org](http://www.transom.org)

Nieman Narrative Digest

[http://www.nieman.harvard.edu/narrative/digest/](http://www.nieman.harvard.edu/narrative/digest/)

Revista Anfibia: [www.revistaanfibia.com](http://www.revistaanfibia.com)

The Pulitzer Prizes: [www.pulitzer.org](http://www.pulitzer.org)

**Additional Required Equipment**

Tape recorder or cell recorder.

Video/photo camera (optional)

Note: This Syllabus is subject to change due to the dynamics of working with breaking news and as opportunities become available for different guest lectures and activities.

**Session 1**

[Tuesday, Feb 6]

Introductory meeting. Overview of the course and talk of the students’ and teacher’s expectations. Definitions of news.

**Session 2**

[Thursday, Feb 8]

Leads, nut graphs, transitions, kickers. How to write the news. The inverted pyramid and other tricks of the trade. First assignment: carnival coverage. Roots, candombe and afroamerican culture in Buenos Aires.
Session 3
[Thursday, Feb. 15 (no class on Feb 13 due to Carnival holiday)]

The editorial meeting. Preparing the story. The pitch. **Carnival story draft due:** 500 words on carnival in Buenos Aires

Reading due: Orwell George, “Politics and the english language”
http://www.orwell.ru/library/essays/politics/english/e_polit/

Session 4
[Tuesday, Feb. 20]

Structure, dialogue, description, anecdote, summary, context, question, quote, attribution. Review of drafts. **Reading due:** John Mcphee: Omission
(attached in class messages)

Session 5
[Thursday, Feb. 22]

The culinary scene. Pitching stories about argentine food. Pitching session. **Reading Due:** Michael Pollan “Why cook?” from “Cooked” in reading pack on class resources . **500 word Carnival story final draft due**

Session 6
[Tuesday, Feb. 27]

Reaching an audience. Focus, topic and tension. Point of view and personal involvement. Pitching session. **Reading due:** Malcom Gladwell, “The ketchup conundrum” in reading pack

Session 7
[Thursday, March 1]

Class discussion on food stories. Food and culture. Covering the food industry. **700-word Argentine food story draft due. Reading due:** last three “Tables for two” columns in the New Yorker website.

Session 8 [Friday March 2 (makeup for Feb 13)]

Reaching an audience. Writing and reporting spot news **Reading Due:** Gay Talese, “A New Journalist’s Suggestions for Daily Journalists” from Nieman Storyboard.
www.niemanstoryboard.org/author/gay-talese/

Session 9
[Tuesday, March 6]

How to discover trends, where to find them. Political, economic, cultural, technological, social, lifestyle, sports, artistic and leisure trends. Trend piece ideas. **Reading Due:** Malcolm Gladwell “The cool hunt” (reading pack in resources)

Session 10
[Thursday, March 8]

Trend piece pitching session. **Argentine food story final draft due. Reading due:** “The face of Facebook” by Jose Antonio Vargas (reading pack)

Session 11
[Tuesday, March 13]

Covering human rights in Argentina and Latin America. Trend piece pitching session. **Reading due:** “The daughter of the disappeared” by Mei-ling Hopgood (reading pack)

Session 12
[Thursday, March 15]

Covering sex and gender politics in Argentina and Latin America Reading due: “Atomic heart mothers” by Pablo Plotkin (reading pack) **Trend piece draft due.**

Session 13
[Tuesday, March 20]

Social unrest Argentina and Latina America. **Reading due:** The revolutionary by John Lee Anderson (reading pack). Ideas for mini-profiles

Session 14
[Thursday, March 22]

Reporting on US-Latin American relations. The work of the foreign correspondent. Mini-profile pitching session. **Reading Due:** “Live in gringo-land” from “Evo Morales” by Martin Sivak
**Session 15**
[Tuesday, April 3. (No classes on March 27-29 due to spring break)]

The art of the interview. Fairness and depth. Preparing for the interview. How to make it work. Mini-profile pitching session. **Reading due:** The Scheer\Carter interview (excerpt):
https://books.google.com.ar/books?id=k-DXZDo9xUC\&pg=PA33\&lpg=PA33\&dq=scheer+carter+playboy\&source=bl\&ots=ws15W_Hp_B8sig=X5gWN1qDnSLNDG78Hn8JDYpePk4\&hl=en\&sa=X\&ved=0CDAQ6AEwAmoVChMIyuzHq8fWxwIVxSOQCh32sA-L\#v=onepage\&q=scheer%20carter%20playboy\&f=false

**Session 16**
[Thursday, April 5]

Identifying a good subject matter. How to get up close while keeping your distance. Mini-profile pitching session. **Reading due:** "Frank Sinatra has a cold" by Guy Talese (reading pack)

**Session 17**
[Tuesday, April 10]

Executing a long term project. Picking the right character: what makes him or her interesting for the writer and for the reader. Thoroughness and availability. Background and depth. **Reading Due:** "A world apart" by Bella Stumbo

**Session 18**
[Thursday, April 12]

What makes a story work. Class review and discussion of mini profile and final profile project. **Mini-profile draft due. Reading due:** "Yaeger" by Tom Wolf (pdf in class resources.)

**Session 19**
[Tuesday, April 17]

Project outline and first approaches to a full blown profile. Who are we writing for? What do we want to say about the subject and what does the subjekt say about us?

**Reading due:** "Christmas with Assange" by Santiago O’Donnell
https://www.opendemocracy.net/democraciaabierta/santiago-odonnell/christmas-with-assange

**Session 20**
[Thursday, April 19]

Live from Argentina: A visit to the Página/12 newsroom. Interviewing the news gatherers. Reading due: “What’s Next for Mauricio Macri, Argentina’s New President?” by Graciela Mochkofsky

**100-word final mini profile draft due**

**Session 21**
[Tuesday, April 24]

How to turn a mini profile into a full blown profile. Ow to break a story into chapters. The second and third interview. The telling detail. The secondary players. The critics. The background search. Surrounding your subject with information. **Reading due:** “The three stooges” by Tom Wolf (pdf in resources)

**Session 22**
[Thursday, April 26]

Group workshop. **Assignment of additional reading based on choice of profile.**

**Session 23**
[Thursday, May 3 (No class on May 1 due to holiday)]

Group workshop II. **Assignment of additional reading based on choice of profile.**

**Session 24**
[Friday, May 4]

One on one workshop. Fine tuning writing and reporting details.
Session 25
[Tuesday, May 8]
One on one workshop II. Final edit.

Session 26
[Thursday, May 10. End of classes]

Session 27

Session 28

Exam Week
[Thursday, May 17]
Final profile due

Classroom Etiquette
The use of phones, tablets and notebooks and in class are only allowed for classroom purposes

Required co-curricular activities
Participate in activities outlined above.

Suggested co-curricular activities
Friday night lectures, when not mandatory

Your Instructor
I’m a former Los Angeles Times and Washington Post reporter living in Argentina for the past two decades. I’m the foreign editor of Buenos Aires newspaper Página/12, director of the Journalism Master’s program at the University of Buenos Aires and the author of four nonfiction books. BA in Government and Intl. Relations at Notre Dame University and MA in International Journalism at the University of Southern California (USC).