



**JOUR 490/590 Directed Research:
Work On A Real Global Investigation
2 Units**

Spring 2020

Section: 21441D/21677D

Location: ANN 204A

Instructor: Mark Schoofs

Office: ANN 204A

Office Hours: By appointment

Contact Info: schoofs@usc.edu

Student: Name

Student ID: Ten-digit USC ID number

Major: Program of study

Contact Info: Email and phone number

I. Course Description

This is not an ordinary academic class. This is a unique opportunity to participate in a huge professional investigative project under the guidance of a Pulitzer Prize winning professor who will act as your editor.

A major international news organization has been conducting a global investigation for well over a year. You will help bring this massive project home, helping the reporters with different aspects of their research that could range from interviewing sources to combing through documents to analyzing data. Those who contribute significantly will get credit, helping to burnish their résumés.

Students who join up must commit to spending, on average, at least eight hours per week. The work will be exacting, hard, and often unglamorous. The work will vary and change depending on the real needs of a moving investigation. And work will intensify closer to deadline. But at the end, you will have contributed to a towering work of journalism.

Prerequisites: An investigative reporting course or the equivalent (such as working on the Beacon Project or an investigative story for professional or student media.) Students must apply for this DR by submitting a resume and three samples of journalistic work to schoofs@usc.edu no later than November 15.

All students must sign an NDA before details of the investigation and specific assignments will be disclosed.

II. Overall Learning Objectives

Students will learn what it takes to close a sprawling, complex investigation spanning multiple nations.

Specifically, students will learn:

- How to bulletproof information so that it is accurate and error-free.
- How to make sure stories are fair to individuals mentioned in them.
- How editors, lawyers, and reporters work together to refine stories for publication.
- How to communicate and work in a digitally secure way.

III. Description of Assignments

Assignments will be given after students sign the NDA. Note that assignments can change on a moment's notice, based on the real-world needs of the investigation.

IV. Grading

a. Breakdown of Grade

The grading breakdown will be given after students sign the NDA. But assignments will likely include calling sources, sifting through records, and/or analyzing data. Students must commit to eight hours per week. Students will be graded on how well they carry out their assignments.

Assignment	Points	% of Grade
Reporting assignment 1	35	35%
Reporting assignment 2	35	35%
Bi-weekly updates	30	30%
TOTAL	100	100%

b. Grading Scale

95% to 100%: A	80% to 83%: B-	67% to 69%: D+
90% to 94%: A-	77% to 79%: C+	64% to 66%: D
87% to 89%: B+	74% to 76%: C	60% to 63%: D-
84% to 86%: B	70% to 73%: C-	0% to 59%: F

Students must earn a grade of C- or better in JOUR 490 in order to receive major credit. Students must earn a grade of B or better in JOUR 590 in order to receive "Credit" (CR) towards the major.

c. Grading Standards

Journalism

All assignments will be edited on a professional basis and you will be judged first on the accuracy, fairness and objectivity of your stories. You will be then evaluated for broadcast style, editing, production value, originality and the ability to meet deadlines.

"A" stories are accurate, clear, comprehensive stories that are well written and require only minor copyediting (i.e., they would be aired or published). Video work must also be shot and edited creatively, be well paced and include good sound bites and natural sound that add flavor, color or emotion to the story.

"B" stories require more than minor editing and have a few style or spelling errors or one significant error of omission. For video, there may be minor flaws in the composition of some shots or in the editing. Good use of available sound bites is required.

“C” stories need considerable editing or rewriting and/or have many spelling, style or omission errors. Camera work and editing techniques in video stories are mediocre or unimaginative, but passable. Sound bites add little or no color - only information that could be better told in the reporter’s narration.

“D” stories require excessive rewriting, have numerous errors and should not have been submitted. Camera work is unsatisfactory or fails to show important elements.

“F” stories have failed to meet the major criteria of the assignment, are late, have numerous errors or both. Your copy should not contain any errors in spelling, style, grammar and facts. Any misspelled or mispronounced proper noun will result in an automatic “F” on that assignment. Any factual error will also result in an automatic “F” on the assignment. Accuracy is the first law of journalism. The following are some other circumstances that would warrant a grade of “F” and potential USC/Annenberg disciplinary action:

- Fabricating a story or making up quotes or information.
- Plagiarizing a script/article, part of a script/article or information from any source.
- Staging video or telling interview subjects what to say.
- Using video shot by someone else and presenting it as original work.
- Shooting video in one location and presenting it as another location.
- Using the camcorder to intentionally intimidate, provoke or incite a person or a group of people to elicit more “dramatic” video.
- Promising, paying or giving someone something in exchange for doing an interview either on or off camera.
- Missing a deadline.

V. Assignment Submission Policy

This is not an ordinary class. It is real-world journalism. So the following rules will apply:

No assignment can be late. Any late assignment will result in an automatic F and possible dismissal from the course.

Accuracy is paramount. Any misspelling of any proper name or any factual error will result in an automatic F and possible dismissal from the course.

Security is paramount, largely to protect sources. Students will be trained on digital security and must adhere strictly to the security requirements. Assignments will be submitted in accordance with those requirements.

VI. Required Readings and Bibliography of Sources

Readings will be assigned after students sign the NDA.

VII. Laptop Policy

All undergraduate and graduate Annenberg majors and minors are required to have a PC or Apple laptop that can be used in Annenberg classes. Please refer to the [Annenberg Virtual Commons](#) for more information. To connect to USC’s Secure Wireless network, please visit USC’s [Information Technology Services](#) website.

VIII. Add/Drop Dates for Session 001 (15 weeks: 1/13/20 – 5/1/20)

Friday, January 31: Last day to register and add classes for Session 001

Friday, January 31: Last day to drop a class without a mark of “W,” except for Monday-only classes, and receive a refund for Session 001

Tuesday, February 4: Last day to drop a Monday-only class without a mark of “W” and receive a refund for Session 001

Friday, February 28: Last day to drop a course without a mark of “W” on the transcript for Session 001. [Please drop any course by the end of week three (or the 20 percent mark of the session) to avoid tuition charges.]

Friday, February 28: Last day to change pass/no pass to letter grade for Session 001. [All major and minor courses must be taken for a letter grade.]

Friday, April 3: Last day to drop a class with a mark of “W” for Session 001

IX. Course Schedule

	Research or Activity	Deliverable/Due Dates
Week 1 Dates: 1/13-1/17	Signing of NDAs, digital security training.	Digital lockdown of each student’s email, social media, bank accounts, etc. completed before week 2.
Week 2 Dates: 1/20-1/24	Overview of investigation. Initial assignments given.	[MLK Day: Monday, January 20] Due as assigned.
Week 3 Dates: 1/27-1/31	Carry out assignments for the project. Biweekly progress report, outlining accomplishments, challenges, and lessons learned.	Due as assigned. Biweekly progress report due Friday at 5:00
Week 4 Dates: 2/3- 2/7	Carry out assignments for the project.	Due as assigned.
Week 5 Dates: 2/10-2/14	Carry out assignments for the project. Biweekly progress report, outlining accomplishments, challenges, and lessons learned.	Due as assigned. Biweekly progress report due Friday at 5:00
Week 6 Dates: 2/17-2/21	Carry out assignments for the project.	[President’s Day: Monday, February 17] Due as assigned.
Week 7 Dates: 2/24-2/28	Carry out assignments for the project. Biweekly progress report, outlining accomplishments, challenges, and lessons learned.	Due as assigned. Biweekly progress report due Friday at 5:00
Week 8 Dates: 3/2- 3/6	Carry out assignments for the project.	Due as assigned.
Week 9 Dates: 3/9- 3/13	Carry out assignments for the project. Biweekly progress report, outlining accomplishments, challenges, and lessons learned.	Due as assigned. Biweekly progress report due Friday at 5:00
Spring Break	No Classes	Due as assigned.

Dates: 3/16-3/20		
Week 10 Dates: 3/23-3/27	Carry out assignments for the project. Biweekly progress report, outlining accomplishments, challenges, and lessons learned.	Due as assigned. Biweekly progress report due Friday at 5:00
Week 11 Dates: 3/30-4/3	Carry out assignments for the project.	Due as assigned.
Week 12 Dates: 4/6-4/10	Carry out assignments for the project. Biweekly progress report, outlining accomplishments, challenges, and lessons learned.	Due as assigned. Biweekly progress report due Friday at 5:00
Week 13 Dates: 4/13-4/17	Carry out assignments for the project.	Due as assigned.
Week 14 Dates: 4/20-4/24	Carry out assignments for the project. Biweekly progress report, outlining accomplishments, challenges, and lessons learned.	Due as assigned. Biweekly progress report due Friday at 5:00
Week 15 Dates: 4/27-5/1	Carry out assignments for the project.	Due as assigned.

X. Policies and Procedures

Additional Policies

This is not just a class. This is actual journalism, carried out to the highest standards. Think and act accordingly.

Internships

The value of professional internships as part of the overall educational experience of our students has long been recognized by the School of Journalism. Accordingly, while internships are not required for successful completion of this course, any student enrolled in this course that undertakes and completes an approved, non-paid internship during this semester shall earn academic extra credit herein of an amount equal to 1 percent of the total available semester points for this course. To receive instructor approval, a student must request an internship letter from the Annenberg Career Development Office and bring it to the instructor to sign by the end of the third week of classes. The student must submit the signed letter to the media organization, along with the evaluation form provided by the Career Development Office. The form should be filled out by the intern supervisor and returned to the instructor at the end of the semester. No credit will be given if an evaluation form is not turned into the instructor by the last day of class. Note: The internship must be unpaid and can only be applied to one journalism class.

Statement on Academic Conduct and Support Systems

a. Academic Conduct

Plagiarism

Plagiarism – presenting someone else’s ideas as your own, either verbatim or recast in your own words – is a serious academic offense with serious consequences. Please familiarize yourself with the discussion of plagiarism

in *SCampus* in Part B, Section 11, “Behavior Violating University Standards” policy.usc.edu/scampus-part-b. Other forms of academic dishonesty are equally unacceptable. See additional information in *SCampus* and university policies on scientific misconduct, policy.usc.edu/scientific-misconduct.

USC School of Journalism Policy on Academic Integrity

The following is the USC Annenberg School of Journalism’s policy on academic integrity and repeated in the syllabus for every course in the school:

“Since its founding, the USC School of Journalism has maintained a commitment to the highest standards of ethical conduct and academic excellence. Any student found plagiarizing, fabricating, cheating on examinations, and/or purchasing papers or other assignments faces sanctions ranging from an ‘F’ on the assignment to dismissal from the School of Journalism. All academic integrity violations will be reported to the office of Student Judicial Affairs & Community Standards (SJACS), as per university policy, as well as journalism school administrators.”

In addition, it is assumed that the work you submit for this course is work you have produced entirely by yourself, and has not been previously produced by you for submission in another course or Learning Lab, without approval of the instructor.

b. Support Systems

Counseling and Mental Health - (213) 740-9355 – 24/7 on call

studenthealth.usc.edu/counseling

Free and confidential mental health treatment for students, including short-term psychotherapy, group counseling, stress fitness workshops, and crisis intervention.

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline - 1 (800) 273-8255 – 24/7 on call

suicidepreventionlifeline.org

Free and confidential emotional support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention and Services (RSVP) - (213) 740-9355(WELL), press “0” after hours – 24/7 on call

studenthealth.usc.edu/sexual-assault

Free and confidential therapy services, workshops, and training for situations related to gender-based harm.

Office of Equity and Diversity (OED)- (213) 740-5086 | Title IX – (213) 821-8298

equity.usc.edu, titleix.usc.edu

Information about how to get help or help someone affected by harassment or discrimination, rights of protected classes, reporting options, and additional resources for students, faculty, staff, visitors, and applicants. The university prohibits discrimination or harassment based on the following *protected characteristics*: race, color, national origin, ancestry, religion, sex, gender, gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation, age, physical disability, medical condition, mental disability, marital status, pregnancy, veteran status, genetic information, and any other characteristic which may be specified in applicable laws and governmental regulations. The university also prohibits sexual assault, non-consensual sexual contact, sexual misconduct, intimate partner violence, stalking, malicious dissuasion, retaliation, and violation of interim measures.

Reporting Incidents of Bias or Harassment - (213) 740-5086 or (213) 821-8298

usc-advocate.symplicity.com/care_report

Avenue to report incidents of bias, hate crimes, and microaggressions to the Office of Equity and Diversity |Title IX for appropriate investigation, supportive measures, and response.

The Office of Disability Services and Programs - (213) 740-0776

dsp.usc.edu

Support and accommodations for students with disabilities. Services include assistance in providing readers/notetakers/interpreters, special accommodations for test taking needs, assistance with architectural barriers, assistive technology, and support for individual needs.

USC Support and Advocacy - (213) 821-4710

uscса.usc.edu

Assists students and families in resolving complex personal, financial, and academic issues adversely affecting their success as a student.

Diversity at USC - (213) 740-2101

diversity.usc.edu

Information on events, programs and training, the Provost's Diversity and Inclusion Council, Diversity Liaisons for each academic school, chronology, participation, and various resources for students.

USC Emergency - UPC: (213) 740-4321, HSC: (323) 442-1000 – 24/7 on call

dps.usc.edu, emergency.usc.edu

Emergency assistance and avenue to report a crime. Latest updates regarding safety, including ways in which instruction will be continued if an officially declared emergency makes travel to campus infeasible.

USC Department of Public Safety - UPC: (213) 740-6000, HSC: (323) 442-120 – 24/7 on call

dps.usc.edu

Non-emergency assistance or information.

Annenberg Student Success Fund

<https://annenberg.usc.edu/current-students/resources/additional-funding-resources>

The Annenberg Student Success Fund is a donor-funded financial aid account available to USC Annenberg undergraduate and graduate students for non-tuition expenses related to extra- and co-curricular programs and opportunities.

Breaking Bread Program [undergraduate students only]

<https://undergrad.usc.edu/faculty/bread/>

The Breaking Bread Program is designed to provide individual undergraduate students with an opportunity to meet and have scholarly discussions with faculty members outside of the normal classroom setting. Through this program, students and faculty enjoy good company and great conversation by literally “breaking bread” over a meal together and USC will pick up the tab! Your meal event can take place anywhere outside of the normal classroom setting. Your venue can be a restaurant or eatery on or off-campus.

XI. About Your Instructor

Over his 30-year career, Pulitzer Prize-winner Mark Schoofs edited Chicago's lesbian and gay newsweekly, *The Windy City Times*; won a Pulitzer Prize for his reporting on AIDS in Africa at New York's famed alternative newspaper *The Village Voice*; shared in another Pulitzer Prize at *The Wall Street Journal* for reporting from Ground Zero on the 9/11 terrorist attacks; wrote the opening and closing stories in a *Wall Street Journal* series on Medicare fraud that was a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize; taught journalism at Yale University; oversaw complex investigations at ProPublica; and launched and led a powerhouse investigative reporting team at BuzzFeed News. In less than five years, that team, which he built from zero to more than 20 reporters, earned some of journalism's top prizes including a George Polk Award and a National Magazine Award, and its work was twice named as a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize.