

## **JOUR 539: Introduction to Investigative Reporting** **2 Units**

**Fall 2021 – Mondays – 9-10:50 a.m.**

**Section:** 21565D

**Location:** ANN 413

**Instructor: Gary Cohn**

**Office:** ANN Lobby 1<sup>st</sup> floor (near coffee/snack bar)

**Office Hours:** Mondays, 11 a.m.-12 p.m., and by appointment

**Contact Info:** [garycohn@usc.edu](mailto:garycohn@usc.edu); 310-699-5594 (text and phone)

### **Course Description**

The goal of this course is to inspire you and teach you the practical reporting, writing and analytical skills and ethical principles that will allow you to portray and evaluate contemporary newsworthy events and become a responsible investigative reporter in our rapidly changing journalism landscape.

The focus of the class will be on learning the fundamentals of investigative journalism: how to choose a subject for investigation; how to identify diverse human sources and persuade them to talk with you on the record; how to conduct an interview; how to use documents, and how to organize large amounts of material and data and present it in a fair and compelling way.

In addition, this class will teach you the fundamentals of data journalism. Proficiency with gathering, analyzing and visualizing data is essential in today's journalism landscape, whether you are a math expert or not. It is important for business reporters, beat reporters, sports reporters and investigative journalists. You will learn how to use data as a key news "source," and how to "interview" data in both your daily and investigative work.

This class is intended to give you a strong foundation of reporting, writing and data skills that should allow you to do more interesting stories than most other journalists do. While the focus will be on learning practical skills, you should also develop a better understanding of the principles of the First Amendment and the roles of an investigative journalist in our society. In addition, we will be discussing the practical, ethical and legal aspects of investigative reporting in the context of our rapidly changing media landscape.

There will be an emphasis during our class sessions, and in your assignments, in using multi-media tools and presentations to complement your written stories and present investigative stories in the most compelling way possible.

This course will explore the relationship between news events, investigative reporting and the broader society, especially regarding issues of race, gender, and social justice. This instructor is committed to valuing the identities and voices of all students, particularly those students from historically marginalized and vulnerable groups. I hope we will all hold each other accountable for ensuring an inclusive learning environment during these challenging times.

Lectures, class discussions, guest speakers, hands-on exercises involving interviewing techniques and public records, culminating in an original project that we will aim to get published.

## Overall Learning Objectives and Assessment

### Overall Learning Objectives

By the end of the course, students will be able to:

- Generate story ideas for investigative and in-depth stories, including story ideas that explore the connection between news events and issues of race, gender and social justice.
- Understand the basic tenets of investigative reporting, and how it differs from other kinds of journalism
- Identify diverse human sources and learn how to prepare for and conduct in-depth sources
- Learn how to approach reluctant and hostile sources and persuade them to talk
- Conduct in-depth interviews with diverse sources that go beyond daily news events and personalities to issues involving news and society and money, power, race, gender and social justice.
- Understand how to find, obtain and interpret public records
- Identify and use documents, databases, the federal Freedom of Information Act and state and local open records laws.
- Learn the fundamentals of data-driven journalism by analyzing data sets
- Write and present in-depth material in a compelling way.
- Produce a deeply researched, compelling multi-media story of publishable quality.

### Learning Assessments

The learning objectives will be measured by:

- A deeply researched, compelling and comprehensive story proposal that includes significant original reporting and research
- A report on a significant investigative story that includes an interview with the reporter, an analysis of the reporting and writing techniques and a discussion of the obstacles and ethical issues faced
- Analysis of civil and criminal court records
- An assignment requiring students to research and write federal Freedom of Information and state Open Records requests
- Data analysis exercises and a data/math quiz for journalists
- Field work assignments interviewing sources and obtaining public documents
- Student-led discussions and class participation involving investigative journalism and issues involving power, economics, race, gender, social justice.
- A final project that includes significant original reporting and research, including interviews with a diverse number of people.

### Description and Assessment of Assignments

**Story Pitches:** Suggest three investigative stories. Explain why you chose each story, how you would go about reporting each story and why you believe each of these stories would make a compelling and important story. One of the investigative stories should involve USC or campus-wide topics; a second should focus on the neighborhood or town where you grew up, and a third should focus on the neighborhood you live in while at USC. At least one of these story ideas should involve issues of race, gender, and social justice. Please explain your reasoning and proposed reporting techniques in detail. One of these ideas can be developed as your semester-long investigative project.

**Reporter Interview:** Interview with an investigative/data reporter and write-up. Select in-depth story (one that you would aspire to write), and interview the reporter about how he or she got the story idea, gathered the information, and wrote the article. This must be an investigative article or series (including sports), but not an editorial or a column. Cite your reasons for selecting the article. In your interview and in your paper, stress how the reporter came up with the story idea and how he gathered the

information; public records used; interviewing techniques, the writing process, also discuss any obstacles that came up and how the reporter overcame those obstacles. The interview must be done in person or on Zoom or a similar platform (not by email, though you may use email for follow-up questions). Approximately 1,000 words. This assignment could also include a multi-media component, such as a video or audio clip.

**Use of Court Records I:** Go to the state courthouse in Los Angeles and identify a court case in which a Hollywood, sports or political figure or local company or civic institution (such as a museum) is the plaintiff or defendant and that would make the basis for a good investigative story. Pull the court file and write a story proposal, explaining why you chose this case and summarizing some of the leads contained in the court files. Explain how you would use the case, as a starting point, and what other steps you would take to complete this investigative story. Be sure to include the case number and case and be specific when quoting or paraphrasing from court documents. This assigned designed to test your skill at identifying and using court records, and your creativity at spotting and pursuing investigative stories.

**Use of Court Records II:** Identify a search warrant affidavit from criminal court in Los Angeles that could be the basis for an investigative story. Pull the court file (online) and write a story proposal, explaining why you chose this search warrant and summarizing some of the leads contained in it. Explain how you would use the search warrant, as a starting point, and what other steps you would take to complete this investigative story.

**FOIA/Open Records Request:** You will have an assignment requiring you to draft letters to appropriate federal and state agencies under the federal Freedom of Information Act and state open records laws. You will be assessed on the quality and completeness of your FOIA and Open Records Request.

**Data and Math-for-Journalists Exercises:** You will have two short homework assignments designed to reinforce the “math for journalists” and data journalism skills that will be covered in our class sessions.

**Final Project:** You will be required to propose report and write one in-depth investigative. Your story should be approximately 1,400 to 2,500 words in length and must include a significant amount of original reporting, including interviews with diverse human sources, public records and data analysis. In addition to your text proposal, your project must also include at least one multi-media component, such as audio, video, graphics or a photography slide show. We will discuss the elements required during class, and I will provide you with a detailed pitch form that will help guide you through this process. You will be expected to discuss the progress of your project periodically during our classes and in one-on-one meetings with the instructor. The goal of this final project is to help you learn investigative and data journalism techniques while pursuing a groundbreaking investigative story. A further goal is to get your project published. I will work with you to help you get your project published in a campus or professional publication. You may also expand our final project for your Capstone or final thesis project.

**Class Participation and In-Class Assignments:** You will be expected to regularly participate in class discussions, engage in discussions with your classmates and the instructor and ask insightful questions of guest speakers. We will also have several in-class assignments, designed to teach you how to obtain public records, for example, such as obtaining the public health reports for local restaurants (online).

**Readings for the following week:** Each week there will be required readings that will prepare you for the discussions, guest speakers and assignments during the scheduled course time.

### **Course Notes**

The focus will be on learning practical skills involving interviewing, public records and data analysis, and you will learn mainly by doing. You will also learn how to overcome the obstacles that all investigative journalists face, and you will understand the value – and rewards – of persistence. You will also learn to apply the techniques you will be taught in this class.

You will be expected to participate in classroom discussions with the instructor and your fellow students, and to ask questions and challenge the instructor and our guest speakers. The instructor will create a culture of respect for our discussions, and will expect all students to follow this guideline.

Microaggressions will not be tolerated, and will be addressed immediately. We will all be expected to engage in vigorous and spirited discussions while always treating each other with respect.

Students will be expected to attend class regularly and be on time for class. If you are sick or have a family emergency, please notify the instructor in a timely manner by text or email. Students can reach the instructor by text, email or phone. All communication from students will be answered in a timely manner, usually within 24 hours and always within 48 hours. The instructor will respond to emails at all times, including weekends.

## Grading

### a. Breakdown of Grade

Assignment	% of Grade
Final project (including initial story ideas and comprehensive text/multi-media story)	40%
Reporter Interview	10%
Court assignment 1 (civil court)	10%
Court assignment 2 (criminal courts/search warrant)	10%
FOIA/Open Records Request	10%
Data exercises (2) – each worth 5 percent)	10%
Class participation and in-class assignments.	10%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100%</b>

### 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

### 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 then be 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.

#### **d. Grading Timeline**

In general, assignments will be graded and returned within one week.

#### **Assignment Submission Policy**

All your assignments must be sent to me by email (word attachment or google doc please) at [garycohn@usc.edu](mailto:garycohn@usc.edu) before class on the due date. Please make sure to include your name and contact information on all attachments.

You must hand in assignments by deadline. Lacking prior discussion and agreement with the instructor, assignments that are 1 day to 1 week late will be penalized one full grade (for example, “B” work would receive a “C.”). Assignments that are more than one week late will not be accepted and will automatically be given a grade of F.

For all print and text assignments, you need to also bring a paper copy of your assignments to class.

#### **Required Readings and Supplementary Materials**

Required: *All the President’s Men*, by Carl Bernstein and Bob Woodward.

Strongly Recommended: *The Investigative Reporter's Handbook: A Guide to Documents, Databases and Techniques*, 5th Edition by Brant Houston and Investigative Reporters and Editors, Inc. This book will be useful for this class, for your future classes going forward and in your careers ahead. Inexpensive copies are available on Amazon.

All other readings will be available on the web, via USC online libraries, or distributed to students by the course instructor.

Additional Reading:

Gary Cohn and Will Englund, "Shipbreakers," a series of articles in the Baltimore Sun about the dangers to people and the environment when old ships are dismantled, 1997.

<http://www.pulitzer.org/winners/gary-cohn-and-will-englund>

Andrew Chung and others for their Pulitzer Prize winning examination, powered by a pioneering data analysis of U.S. federal court cases, of the obscure legal doctrine of "qualified immunity" and how it shields police who use excessive force from prosecution, 2020.

<https://www.pulitzer.org/winners/andrew-chung-lawrence-hurley-andrea-januta-jaimi-dowdell-and-jackie-botts-reuters>

Jeff Gottlieb and Ruben Vives, a series of articles in the Los Angeles Times that exposed widespread corruption in the small city of Bell, 2010.

<http://www.pulitzer.org/winners/los-angeles-times-4>

Anne Hull, Dana Priest, and Michel duCille, a series of articles in the Washington Post that exposed the mistreatment of veterans at Walter Reed Hospital, 2007.

<http://www.pulitzer.org/winners/staff-65>

Laurie Garrett, a series of articles in Newsday reporting on the Ebola outbreak in Zaire, 1995.

<http://www.pulitzer.org/winners/laurie-garrett>

Spotlight Team, a series of articles in the Boston Globe that revealed sexual abuse by priests and resulted in widespread reforms, 2002.

<http://www.pulitzer.org/winners/boston-globe-1>

Films, Video and Television

George Clooney (director), "Good Night and Good Luck," 2005.

Joel Grover (KCBS Investigative Report), "Behind the Kitchen Door," 1997.

Tom McCarthy (director), "Spotlight," 2015.

Errol Morris (director), "The Thin Blue Line," 1988.

Alan J. Pakula (director), "All the President's Men," 1976.

Sydney Pollack (director), "Absence of Malice," 1981.

Websites (readings will be assigned from certain of these sites).

Center for Investigative Reporting  
<https://www.revealnews.org/>

Center for Public Integrity  
<https://www.publicintegrity.org/>

Guidestar  
<http://www.guidestar.org/Home.aspx>

Investigative Reporters and Editors  
<https://www.ire.org/>

Open Secrets  
<https://www.opensecrets.org/>

ProPublica  
<https://www.propublica.org/>

Pulitzer Prizes  
<http://www.pulitzer.org/>

Reporters Committee for Freedom of the Press  
<https://www.rcfp.org/>

Securities and Exchange Commission  
<http://www.guidestar.org/Home.aspx>

## **VIII. News Consumption and Knowledge of Current Events**

As journalists, you should keep up with what is happening on campus, in the Los Angeles area, in the United States and around the world. USC provides subscriptions for students, staff and faculty to The New York Times and the Los Angeles Times, as well as the Wall Street Journal.

Through the USC library, you have access to many regional news outlets and a variety of publications that cover specific communities. You should be familiar with publications covering the many communities of Los Angeles such as The Los Angeles Sentinel, The Los Angeles Blade, The Los Angeles Wave, La Opinión, L.A.Taco, The Eastsider, The Armenian Weekly, High Country News, the Asian Journal and others. You should keep up with the Daily Trojan and [uscannenbergmedia.com](http://uscannenbergmedia.com), including USC student-led verticals Dímelo and Black., listen to NPR and news radio, watch local and national television news, read news email newsletters and push alerts and follow news organizations social networks, including Twitter, Instagram and TikTok. You are encouraged to sign up for Nieman Lab's newsletter, which publishes brief, readable articles on important issues in the media. Following the news will sharpen your judgment and provide good (and bad) examples of the state of mainstream journalism.

### **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 Digital Lounge](#) for more information. To connect to USC's Secure Wireless network, please visit USC's [Information Technology Services](#) website.

### **Add/Drop Dates for Session 001 (15 weeks: 8/23/21 – 12/3/21)**

Link: <https://classes.usc.edu/term-20213/calendar/>

**Friday, September 10:** Last day to register and add classes for Session 001

**Friday, September 10:** Last day to change enrollment option to Pass/No Pass or Audit for Session 001

**Friday, September 10:** Last day to purchase or waive tuition refund insurance for fall

**Tuesday, September 14:** Last day to add or drop a Monday-only class without a mark of “W” and receive a refund or change to Pass/No Pass or Audit for Session 001

**Friday, October 8:** Last day to drop a course without a mark of “W” on the transcript for Session 001. Mark of “W” will still appear on student record and STARS report and tuition charges still apply. [Please drop any course by the end of week three (or the 20 percent mark of the session) to avoid tuition charges.]

**Friday, October 8:** 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, November 12:** Last day to drop a class with a mark of “W” for Session 001

**Course Schedule: A Weekly Breakdown**

Important note to students: Be advised that this syllabus is subject to change - and probably will change - based on the progress of the class, news events, and/or guest speaker availability.

	<b>Topics/Daily Activities</b>	<b>Readings and Homework</b>	<b>Deliverable/Due Dates</b>
<b>Week 1 Date: 8/23</b>	<p>Course overview; fundamentals of investigative reporting; choosing the investigative story; the investigative hypothesis; information-gathering techniques; brief introduction to interviewing skills and public records research; discussion of great investigative print and multi-media and what it accomplished;</p> <p>The roles, responsibilities and opportunities for investigative reporters, historically and continuing to the present day.</p>	<p>Read Shipbreakers series by Gary Cohn and Will Englund (stories will be sent to you by email) and prepare a list of at least six questions about the reporting and writing process.</p>	<p>Story Ideas Assignment – Suggest three investigative stories. Explain why you chose each story, how you would go about reporting each story and why you believe each of these stories would make a compelling and important story. One of the investigative stories should involve USC or campus-wide topics; a second should focus on the neighborhood or town where you grew up, and a third should focus on the neighborhood you live in while going to USC. At least one of these ideas should involve issues of race, gender and social justice. Please explain your reasoning and proposed reporting techniques in detail. Due before our next class on August 30.</p> <p>Reading: Read Shipbreakers series, parts 1, 2, 3 and come up with at least six questions about the reporting and writing process involved in this series. The six questions should be emailed to <a href="mailto:garycohn@usc.edu">garycohn@usc.edu</a> before our next class on Aug 30</p>

<p><b>Week 2</b> <b>Date: 8/30</b></p>	<p>Anatomy of an investigative story, Shipbreakers, by Gary Cohn and Will Englund. This class will take you through the investigative process – from coming up with the story idea through the reporting and writing process to follow up stories. It will also show you how if you master the fundamentals of reporting and writing, you can produce great investigative work that will have a lasting impact.</p>	<p>Read Loosening Lips, a tip sheet on preparing and conducting the investigative interview and come prepared with questions.</p> <p>Reading: All the President’s Men, pages to be assigned.</p>	<p>Your story ideas assignment is due before class – please email to <a href="mailto:garycohn@usc.edu">garycohn@usc.edu</a> and bring a hard copy of your assignment to class.</p> <p>Assignment: Reporter Interview: Select in-depth story (one that you would aspire to write) and interview the reporter about how he or she got the story idea, gathered the information, and wrote the article. This must be an investigative article or series (including sports), but not an editorial or a column. Cite your reasons for selecting the article. In your interview and in your paper, stress how the reporter came up with the story idea and how he gathered the information; public records used; interviewing techniques, the writing process, also discuss any obstacles that came up and how the reporter overcame those obstacles. The interview must be done in person or on the telephone (not by email, though you may use email for follow-up questions. Approximately 1,000 words. This assignment could also include a multi-media component, such as a video or audio clip.</p>
<p><b>Week 3</b> <b>Date: 9/6</b> <b>NO CLASS LABOR DAY</b></p>	<p>NO CLASS</p>		

<p><b>Week 4</b> <b>Date: 9/13</b></p>	<p>Interviewing 1 – The Investigative Interview – You will learn how to identify and approach diverse sources and prepare for interviews, how to conduct an investigative interview and other techniques including “investigative listening”</p>	<p>Reading: Case studies of excellent interviews, will be distributed to students</p> <p>Keep working on your reporter interview assignment</p>	<p>Keep working on your reporter interview assignment</p>
<p><b>Week 5</b> <b>Date: 9/20</b></p>	<p>Interviewing 2 – Dealing with reluctant sources; asking the hard questions. When is it advisable, legally and ethically, to promise sources they will be anonymous?</p>	<p>Homework and Reading: Set up an IFOIA account at <a href="https://www.ifoia.org">https://www.ifoia.org</a></p> <p>Read the Reporters Committee for Freedom of the Press Federal Open Government Guide at <a href="http://www.rcfp.org">www.rcfp.org</a></p>	<p>Your reporter interview assignment is due before class. Please email to <a href="mailto:garycohn@usc.edu">garycohn@usc.edu</a></p>
<p><b>Week 6</b> <b>Date: 9/27</b></p>	<p>Public Records 1: The Federal Freedom of Information Act and state Open Records laws. We will have a hands-on session during class during which you will learn how to prepare FOIA and Open Records requests.</p> <p>We will also have an in-class assignment on obtaining and using Health Department records on local restaurants and food trucks.</p>	<p>Homework: Prepare a FOIA or Open Records Request for documents that can be used as part of your final project.</p>	<p>Assignment: Prepare a FOIA or Open Records Request for documents that can be used as part of your reporting on your final project. Please email to <a href="mailto:garycohn@usc.edu">garycohn@usc.edu</a></p>

**Week 7**  
**Date: 10/4**

Public Records 2: Court records. We will discuss the use of court records in researching and telling stories. We will be discussing both state and federal courts, and civil and criminal courts.

Among other things, we will be discussing how court records can be used as a starting point in telling investigative stories, for both broadcast and print.

We will also discuss how to obtain search warrants in criminal cases, and how to use them in telling an investigative story.

Homework: Civil court exercise. Go to the state courthouse downtown (online) and identify a court case in which a Hollywood, sports or political figure or local company or civic institution (such as a museum) is the plaintiff or defendant and that would make the basis for a good investigative story. Pull the court file and write a story proposal, explaining why you chose this case and summarizing some of the leads contained in the court files. Explain how you would use the case, as a starting point, and what other steps you would take to complete this investigative story. Be sure to include the case number and case and be specific when quoting or paraphrasing from court documents. This question is designed to test your skill at identifying and using court records, and your creativity at spotting and pursuing investigative stories. Due Oct. 11. Approximately length: two pages.

FOIA/Open Records Request Assignment is due a beginning of class.

Civil court assignment will be due before our next class.

<p><b>Week 8</b> <b>Date: 10/11</b></p>	<p>Public Records 3: Business and financial records.</p> <p>Investigating nonprofits, charities and foundations. Among other things, you will learn how to access and use the publicly available tax filings of non-profit corporations.</p> <p>Investigating publicly traded corporations. You will learn how to access and use public filings by publicly traded companies.</p>	<p>Search warrant assignment: Go to the state courthouse downtown. Review the search warrant log (online) and find a potential story in a search warrant. Write 500-1000 words on what the possible story is and specify the reporting steps you would take, including interviews and other court records or public documents. Include the search warrant with your paper. Due before class on October 18.</p> <p>Reading: Case study of the Rolling Stone story about a sexual assault at the University of Virginia: A Rape on Campus.</p> <p>Columbia Journalism School report on UVA rape story. (Material will be emailed to students)</p> <p>Case study: The Arthur Ashe stories that revealed that Ashe had become HIV positive from a flawed blood transfusion. We will discuss the privacy v. right to publish aspects. Material will be emailed to students.</p>	<p>Civil lawsuits assignment is due before class.</p> <p>Search warrant assignment is due before our next class. Be sure to include a copy of the search warrant with your paper.</p>
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<p><b>Week 9</b> <b>Date: 10/18</b></p>	<p>Ethics and accountability: Case studies dealing with investigative reporting, ethics, privacy, the use of anonymous sources and related topics. Among others, we will be discussing the Arthur Ashe privacy case study and the Rolling Stone story about a sexual assault at the University of Virginia, as well as the media' coverage of the Duke lacrosse team that was falsely accused of sexual assault.</p>	<p>Reading: Numbers in the Newsroom, introduction and pages 1-32. (To be distributed to students). Also review these three guides to Google Sheets: These two for beginners: <a href="https://railsware.com/blog/google-sheets-for-beginners/">https://railsware.com/blog/google-sheets-for-beginners/</a> and <a href="https://zapier.com/learn/google-sheets/google-sheets-tutorial/">https://zapier.com/learn/google-sheets/google-sheets-tutorial/</a>, and this one on pivot tables: <a href="https://www.benicollins.com/spreadsheets/pivot-tables-google-sheets">https://www.benicollins.com/spreadsheets/pivot-tables-google-sheets</a></p>	<p>Search warrant exercise is due before class.</p> <p>Your draft project is due before class. Please email to <a href="mailto:garycohn@usc.edu">garycohn@usc.edu</a> and bring a hard copy to class.</p>
<p><b>Week 10</b> <b>Date: 10/25</b></p>	<p>DATA 1: Overview of the power of data in both daily stories and investigative work.</p> <p>What exactly is a data set and how to "interview" it.</p>	<p>Homework: Stories and data. Identify one investigative story and one daily journalism story that successfully used data in telling and enriching the story. Write 500 words explaining why you chose each story, and how each successfully used data. Make sure to include the stories with your paper. About 500 words.</p> <p>List at least three data sets that might bear on some aspect of the story pitch you are developing for this class.</p>	<p>Your stories-and-data assignment is due before our next class</p>

<p><b>Week 11</b> <b>Date: 11/1</b></p>	<p>Data 2: Math in the Newsroom. We will be discussing everything from percentage increase and decrease to terms such as mean, median and average – in short, the fundamental concepts that all journalists need to successfully tell their stories, both in daily journalism and in investigative work.</p>		<p>Your stories-and-data assignment is due before class.</p>
<p><b>Week 12</b> <b>Date: 11/8</b></p>	<p>Data Journalism (continued) we will be discussing the use of various government databases in telling investigative and in-depth stories – everything from U.S. Census records to databases compiled by the FAA, the Center for Disease Control and the Department of Health and Human Services. The focus will likely be databases that relate to pandemic, and how to use them to produce original stories.</p>	<p>Reading: The instructor will distribute several case studies of investigative work that were particularly well written and well told. You should read them carefully and be prepared to discuss what made the writing and telling of these stories so compelling.</p>	<p>Your data assignment #2 will be due before class.</p> <p>Assignment: The second draft of your final project (text) is due before our next class. Please email a copy to <a href="mailto:garycohn@usc.edu">garycohn@usc.edu</a> This second draft will not be graded, but it is important to make this as complete as possible.</p>
<p><b>Week 13</b> <b>Date: 11/15</b></p>	<p>Pulling it all together: Organizing and writing the investigative story.</p>	<p>Several case studies involving sports and investigative journalism will be distributed to students. Please read before our next class.</p>	<p>Your second draft of your final project is due before class.</p>

<p><b>Week 14</b> <b>Date: 11/22</b></p>	<p>Sports Investigative Reporting – Most of our sports writing has been dictated by game coverage and personalities of sports figures. In this class, we will discuss how many of today’s biggest stories from the world of sports involve events that take place off the field. We will also discuss investigative journalism that explores the relationship between sports and issues of race, gender and social justice.</p> <p>Guest speaker: Michael York, who won a Pulitzer for investigative reporting for his stories about improper payments to University of Kentucky basketball players. Mike will also discuss the subject of whether college athletes should be paid, and the changing economics of college sports.</p> <p>Also one-on-one meetings to discuss your final project.</p>		
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<b>Week 15</b> <b>Date: 11/29</b>	Student Presentations: Each student will present his or her final project to the class. This will be a draft final project, and students will have the opportunity to revise the projects. The final version will be due during finals week.		
<b>FINAL EXAM PERIOD</b> <b>Date: Mon., Dec. 13, 11 a.m. – 1 p.m.</b>	Summative experience. We will also discuss strategies for getting investigative internships and jobs. Final project is due.		Final project is due

## Policies and Procedures

### 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 or public relations 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](http://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](http://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](http://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](http://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](http://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](http://equity.usc.edu), [titleix.usc.edu](http://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.symplcity.com/care\\_report](http://usc-advocate.symplcity.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](http://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*

[uscsa.usc.edu](http://uscsa.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](http://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](https://dps.usc.edu), [emergency.usc.edu](https://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](https://dps.usc.edu)

Non-emergency assistance or information.

*Annenberg Student Success Fund*

<https://annenbergsuccessfund.usc.edu/current-students/resources/annenbergscholarshipsandawards>

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.

## **About Your Instructor**

Pulitzer Prize winner Gary Cohn is a longtime investigative reporter. Many of his stories have exposed systemic problems and resulted in significant reforms. A reporter for more than three decades, Cohn has been teaching undergraduate and graduate courses at USC Annenberg for more than ten years. In summer 2019, Cohn was one of the editors who helped lead Annenberg's groundbreaking Beacon Project, which was aimed at teaching, training and inspiring the next general of investigative journalists.

Cohn has worked for the Los Angeles Times, the Philadelphia Inquirer, the Baltimore Sun, the Lexington (Ky.) Herald-Leader, The Wall Street Journal, Bloomberg News and for columnist Jack Anderson in Washington. He also served for two years as Atwood Professor of Journalism at the University of Alaska at Anchorage.

Cohn won the Pulitzer Prize for investigative reporting in 1998 and was a Pulitzer finalist in 1996 and 2002. His work has received numerous other prestigious journalism awards, including two Selden Ring Awards for investigative journalism, an Investigative Reporters & Editors (IRE) Medal, a George Polk Award for environmental reporting and two Overseas Press Club awards.