



JOUR 322: Introduction to Investigative and Data Journalism

2 units

Fall 2023 – Mondays – 7:30-9:10 p.m.

Section: 21178R

Location: ANN 307

Instructor: Grace Manthey

Office Hours: By appointment (in-person or zoom)

Contact Info: gmanthey@usc.edu

Cell: 907-229-8360

Pronouns: she/her/hers

Course Description

This course builds on the beat reporting skills you developed in JOUR 207/307 Reporting and Writing I and II. It's an introduction to the fundamentals of investigative and data journalism – quantitatively analyzing datasets, summarizing facts, opinions, complex narratives and fact checking.

JOUR 322 is a research skills class to equip you to go beyond anecdotal reporting and into a systematic examination of the factors driving a major societal issue. This semester we will tackle a multitude of datasets, such as population, crime and environmental data. The final is a research brief and pitch that may require you to have an understanding of government jurisdictions, the criminal justice system, how data is collected and more that will give you a foundation for covering many different topics.

Student Learning Outcomes

1. Analyze a raw dataset.
 - Describe what questions a dataset can and can't answer.
 - Identify and explain the biases in the way data is collected, analyzed and reported, and how these biases have contributed to systemic inequities.
 - Use AP Style guidelines to write precisely and accurately about race and ethnicity.
 - Categorize and add additional information to a raw dataset.
 - Prepare a data dictionary that documents what's in each column and identifies missing and problematic data issues.
2. Use math and Excel to "interview" data to answer research questions about possible stories.
 - Calculate absolute vs. relative change; fractions, rates, percentages and per capita; averages and medians.
 - Use reader-friendly techniques in stories such as rounding numbers and writing paragraphs that include fewer than eight digits.
 - Use Excel as a qualitative data organizing tool.
3. Compile and summarize relevant information from primary source documents for an investigative story.
 - Select the relevant facts from an analysis of a dataset and identify the biases, missing data and other caveats that affect the use of the dataset in a story.
 - Locate, log and summarize documents and processes from law enforcement agencies, district attorneys, federal civil courts and select secondary sources.

- File Freedom of Information Act or California Public Records requests for primary source documents.
- Write research briefs suitable for a general news audience and annotate them using industry-standard fact checker notations.

Description and Assessment of Assignments

1. Weekly assignments

There will be weekly assignments due **at the beginning of each class**. Assignments will usually have two components – an Excel worksheet with calculations from raw data, and a write-up and/or short answers based on the data.

Grading for the weekly assignments will be largely based on your analysis, interpretation and write-up of data vs. your Excel skills. Each question or component will have a point value.

Each week's assignments build on the previous week's, so **please do not be late with your assignments**.

I will help with any aspect of any assignment if needed. However, if you need help please do not wait until the day it is due. I will work with you to help you understand each assignment. Please do not turn in incomplete assignments. If you have trouble with a question, just ask for help.

2. Interview with an investigative or data journalist and write-up

This assignment will help you explore what it takes to report and produce an investigative or data journalism story. It will be due in Week 9.

3. Final project

The final is a collection of documents summarizing your research into a dataset, along with a list of possible sources, follow up questions for those sources, and a list of additional assets you would need if you wanted to do pursue this story. Treat this like a well-thought-out pitch. The final project is everything you would need for a story up until the point where you would start interviewing sources on-the-record.

Course Notes and Policies

Please be courteous to me and your classmates by arriving on time and being fully engaged. Regular attendance will be crucial for successfully completing the weekly assignments and the final project. The scope of the work and the interpretations and context that should be in the write-ups will be determined by class discussion, similar to how a newsroom team operates.

We will be researching the details behind some data that might deal with sensitive topics. Please let me know if you or any of your classmates are struggling with the materials, discussions and/or assignments.

Readings, hardware/software, laptops and supplementary materials

1. ***Numbers in the Newsroom: Using Math and Statistics in News***, Second Edition, by Sarah Cohen for Investigative Reporters and Editors, Inc., 2014, 134 pages.
Available for \$10 via [the IRE website](#).

This handbook includes explanations about the quantitative concepts in the course and guidelines about writing about numbers that I'll be referring to – and grading you on – throughout the semester.

2. **The Associated Press Stylebook**

Available for free from [the USC Library \(must be signed in\)](#).

All assignments will be graded for AP Style. Expressing numbers in a consistent style is essential to communicating data accurately, clearly and credibly. A summary of the AP Style guidelines for numbers is on Blackboard.

You will be completing an assignment to help you learn the [AP Style guidelines when describing gender, race and ethnicity](#) when appropriate in a story. From the AP Stylebook: “In all coverage – not just race-related coverage – strive to accurately represent the world, or a particular community, and its diversity through the people you quote and depict in all forms. Omissions and a lack of inclusion can render people invisible and cause anguish.”

3. **More resources**

The following style guides will be available on BB:

- NLGJA Stylebook on LGBTQ Terminology: <https://www.nlgja.org/stylebook/>
- National Center on Disability and Journalism: <https://ncdj.org/style-guide/>
- Native American Journalists Association: <https://najanewsroom.com/reporting-guides/>
- National Association of Black Journalists: <https://www.nabj.org/page/styleguide>
- Asian American Journalists Association: <https://aaja.org/2020/11/30/covering-asia-and-asian-americans/>
- The Diversity Style Guide: <https://www.diversitystyleguide.com>
- The NAHJ Cultural Competence Handbook: <https://nahj.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/NAHJ-Cultural-Competence-Handbook.pdf>
- Transjournalist Style Guide: <https://transjournalists.org/style-guide/>
- SPJ Diversity Toolbox: <https://www.spj.org/diversity.asp>

Annenberg also has its own style guide that students can access through the app Amy the Stylebot on the Annenberg Media Center's Slack workspace. Annenberg's style guide is being developed with input from students, and whether or not students use our guide, they can provide valuable input here: <http://bit.ly/annenbergediting>

In addition, Annenberg Media's Guide for Equitable Reporting Strategies and Newsroom Style (<https://bit.ly/AnnMediaEquitableReportingGuide>) created by students, has detailed guidelines on thoughtful language and best practices for creating journalism respectful and reflective of a diverse world. Along with other useful resources, it can be found on Blackboard and is incorporated into Amy the Stylebot (mentioned above).

4. **Computer 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.

5. **Software**

Microsoft Office 365 or Office 2016 (Word, Excel, PowerPoint) is required. It is available for free to USC students at itservices.usc.edu/officestudents.

Annenberg is committed to every student's success. There are multiple resources available to assist students with issues that limit their ability to participate fully in class. Please reach out to a professor and/or advisor for help connecting with these resources. They include the Annenberg Student Success

Fund, 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, and other scholarships and awards.

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, 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're 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.

Grading

a. Breakdown of Grade

Assignment	% of Grade
Weekly assignments	65%
Interview with an investigative reporter and write-up	5%
Participation	5%
Final project	25%
TOTAL	100%

b. Grading Scale

Letter grades and corresponding point value ranges.

Letter grade and corresponding numerical point range		
95% to 100%: A	80% to 83%: B-	67% to 69%: D+ (D plus)
90% to 94%: A- (A minus)	77% to 79%: C+ (C plus)	64% to 66%: D
87% to 89%: B+ (B plus)	74% to 76%: C	60% to 63%: D- (D minus)
84% to 86%: B	70% to 73%: C- (C minus)	0% to 59%: F

c. Grading Standards

Grammar, punctuation, spelling, AP Style, number formatting and rounding all count.

Below are some common components for all assignments. Due to the quantitative aspects of this course, you will be held to a higher standard for accuracy than what you may be used to. A typo in a word is minor editing; a typo with a number is a material factual error.

"A" stories are accurate, clear, comprehensive stories that are well written and require only minor copyediting (i.e., they would be aired or published). The data, calculations and any data visualizations are correct and complete, and use Excel as directed. Data sources are correctly presented.

"B" stories require more than minor editing and have a few style or spelling errors or one significant error of omission.

"C" stories need considerable editing or rewriting and/or have many spelling, style or material or omission errors.

"D" stories require excessive rewriting, have numerous errors and should not have been submitted.

"F" stories have failed to meet the major criteria of the assignment, are late, have numerous errors or both.

For example:

- It doesn't use the correct data or calculations.
- It misspells a proper noun and/or doesn't use the full and proper name for a dataset.
- It states a hypothesis as a fact.

The following are some other circumstances that would warrant a grade of "F" and potential USC Annenberg disciplinary action:

- Emailing, texting or otherwise communicating in-class quiz or assignment questions and/or answers to others.
- Fabricating data or making up quotes or other information.
- Plagiarizing a script/article, part of a script/article or information from any source.

d. Late work policy

I do accept late work. I understand that students have other classes and lives outside of this class and sometimes things happen. That being said, it is important for your to keep up with your work and not fall so far behind that you have to catch up. I will grant extensions on a case-by-case basis for full credit, **but this must be communicated to me ahead of time**. If I don't hear from you and I don't have your assignment, I will take off 10% for every week that it is late, up to 50% off.

Students are encouraged to submit their work for consideration to Annenberg Media or the Daily Trojan, or pitch it to mainstream media outlets. Visit <http://bit.ly/SubmitAnnenbergMedia> for more information about that submission and review process and email Daily Trojan news editors at dt.city@gmail.com for more on how to pitch work to the campus newspaper.

Add/Drop Dates

(15 weeks: 8/21/2023 – 11/27/2023; Final Exam Period: 12/6-13/2023)

Link: <https://classes.usc.edu/term-0231/calendar/>

Last day to add: Friday, September 8, 2023

Last day to drop without a mark of "W" and receive a refund: Friday, September 8, 2023

Last day to change enrollment option to Pass/No Pass or Audit: Friday, September 8, 2023 [All major and minor courses must be taken for a letter grade.]

Last day to add/drop a Monday-only class without a mark of "W" and receive a refund or change to Audit: Tuesday, September 12, 2023

Last day to withdraw without a "W" on transcript or change pass/no pass to letter grade: Friday, October 6, 2023 [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 for session 001 (or the 20 percent mark of the session in which the course is offered) to avoid tuition charges.]

Last day to drop with a mark of "W": Friday, November 10, 2023

Course Schedule – SUBJECT TO CHANGE

Week	Topics/Datasets	Quantitative / Excel / Assignment
Week 1 – Aug. 21	Introduction to the class <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Class survey How much data is out there 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Set up/intro to Excel Survey assignment READING: Numbers in the newsroom: Chapter 1 & Chapter 2 pages 44-49
Week 2 – Aug. 28	Getting started with data <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Where to find data/the process What's actually out there? Questions to ask Different forms of data Data dictionaries (what is the data actually measuring?) Jargon & definitions (crime, etc.) Biases in data and the way it's gathered Describing data (digits in a sentence, rounding, etc.) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Airbnb data More excel basics Importing data Filtering/sorting Describing a list: Ranges, averages, medians Difference between them and how to describe them <i>What could we expand on?</i> Ranges/averages/medians assignment Interview with an investigative or data journalist assignment assigned
Week 3 – Sept. 4	LABOR DAY – NO CLASS	
Week 4 – Sept. 11	Cleaning data <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Names Dates Places 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Excel tips to clean data Cleaning data assignment
Week 5 – Sept. 18	Pivot tables <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What are pivot tables? What are they for? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pivot table assignment READING: Numbers in the newsroom: Chapter 2 pages 26-34
Week 6 – Sept. 25	Change/Data over time <ul style="list-style-type: none"> SoCal geography/jurisdictions City of Los Angeles vs. LAPD COVID data FBI Crime data Nuances of these datasets 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Absolute (amount) vs. relative (percent) change for different time frames Weekly/monthly averages Importance of comparing data over time Data over time assignment
Week 7 – Oct. 2	All about the Census <ul style="list-style-type: none"> U.S. Census data & geographies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How to find Census data Gathering data from data.census.gov

VIRTUAL CLASS ON ZOOM THIS WEEK	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Biases in Census data 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Census assignment READING: Numbers in the newsroom: Chapter 2 pages 11-20
Week 8 – Oct. 9	Populations, rates, percents <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Death rates/injury rates/etc. AP Style guidelines on race and ethnicity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Different kinds of rates (per person, percent, 1 out of 4, etc.) Rates for large and small numbers Rates/Race/Ethnicity assignment READING: Numbers in the newsroom: Chapter 2 pages 21-26
Week 9 – Oct. 16 ***INTERVIEW W/ A DATA or INVESTIGATIVE JOURNALIST ASSIGNMENT DUE***	Comparing rates <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Racial breakdown of different occupations/crimes vs population COVID data <i>How would we write/visualize this?</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Relative rates Small vs large rates Significance and rates <i>How would we write/visualize this?</i> Rates assignment READING: Numbers in the Newsroom Chapter 3
Week 10 – Oct. 23	Visualizing data & investigations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> When to use what Maps, Tables, Graphs Interactive vs static Broadcast vs text 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Different kinds of graphics How to make graphics (tools) Graphics assignment
Week 11 – Oct. 30	Final project: Where to start? + Requesting data <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Datasets themselves One-off stories Tips What are people saying vs what is actually happening? California Public Records Act information requests Creating your own dataset: examples/best practices What do to when data is missing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assignment: Find <i>three stories</i> that could be expanded on from a data/investigative standpoint Submit a FOIA/PRA request
Week 12 – Nov. 6	Combining data <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Why you might need to combine large datasets Different ways of combining data 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How to merge datasets Basic R workshop Alternatives to coding to merge datasets Choose your final project topic Combining data assignment
Week 13 – Nov. 13	A data story from the idea to the reporting <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Putting all the skills we've learned so far together 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Final project update
Week 14 – Nov. 20	When you're ready to pitch/report: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fact checking Final project workshop 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fact checking assignment

Week 15 – Nov. 27	Final project workshop	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Final project prep
Final Exam Period – Dec. 11, 7-9 p.m.	Summative experience Final project is due on Monday, December 11, by 9 p.m.	

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 Academic Conduct

The USC Student Handbook (https://policy.usc.edu/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/USC_StudentCode_August2022.pdf)

Academic Integrity

USC's Unifying Value of integrity is a foundational principle that inspires the community to match its values to its actions. Academic integrity is ultimately the sole guarantor of the legitimacy of one's education, and therefore, is vitally important not just for oneself, but for the entire USC community. The value of all USC degrees is negatively impacted by violations of academic integrity. In the classroom, general principles of academic integrity include the concept of respect for the intellectual property of others, the expectation that individual work will be submitted unless otherwise allowed by an instructor, and the obligations both to protect one's own academic work from misuse by others as well as to avoid using another's work as one's own. All students are expected to understand and abide by these principles.

Academic Integrity violations (academic dishonesty) include, but are not limited to: Plagiarism and Cheating

- The submission of material authored by another person but represented as the student's own work, whether that material is paraphrased or copied in verbatim or near-verbatim form.
- Re-using any portion of one's own work (essay, term paper, project, or other assignment) previously submitted without citation of such and without permission of the instructor(s) involved.
- Improper acknowledgment of sources in essays or papers, including drafts. Also, all students involved in collaborative work (as permitted by the instructor) are expected to proofread the work and are responsible for all particulars of the final draft.
- Acquisition of academic work, such as term papers, solutions, or other assignments, from any source and the subsequent presentation of those materials as the student's own work, or providing academic work, such as term papers, solutions, or assignments that another student submits as their

own work.

USC School of Journalism Policy on Academic Integrity

https://catalogue.usc.edu/preview_entity.php?catoid=16&ent_oid=3459

“Since its founding, the 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.”

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.

Students and Disability Accommodations:

USC welcomes students with disabilities into all of the University’s educational programs. The Office of Student Accessibility Services (OSAS) is responsible for the determination of appropriate accommodations for students who encounter disability-related barriers. Once a student has completed the OSAS process (registration, initial appointment, and submitted documentation) and accommodations are determined to be reasonable and appropriate, a Letter of Accommodation (LOA) will be available to generate for each course. The LOA must be given to each course instructor by the student and followed up with a discussion. This should be done as early in the semester as possible as accommodations are not retroactive. More information can be found at osas.usc.edu. You may contact OSAS at (213) 740-0776 or via email at osasfrontdesk@usc.edu.

Support Systems:

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

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

988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline - 988 for both calls and text messages – 24/7 on call

The 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline (formerly known as the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline) provides free and confidential emotional support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, across the United States. The Lifeline is comprised of a national network of over 200 local crisis centers, combining custom local care and resources with national standards and best practices. The new, shorter phone number makes it easier for people to remember and access mental health crisis services (though the previous 1 (800) 273- 8255 number will continue to function indefinitely) and represents a continued commitment to those in crisis.

Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention Services (RSVP) - (213) 740-9355(WELL) – 24/7 on call

Free and confidential therapy services, workshops, and training for situations related to gender- and power-based harm (including sexual assault, intimate partner violence, and stalking).

Office for Equity, Equal Opportunity, and Title IX (EEO-TIX) - (213) 740-5086

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.

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

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

The Office of Student Accessibility Services (OSAS) - (213) 740-0776

OSAS ensures equal access for students with disabilities through providing academic accommodations and auxiliary aids in accordance with federal laws and university policy.

USC Campus Support and Intervention - (213) 740-0411

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

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion - (213) 740-2101

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

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) 442-1200 – 24/7 on call

Non-emergency assistance or information.

Office of the Ombuds - (213) 821-9556 (UPC) / (323-442-0382 (HSC)

A safe and confidential place to share your USC-related issues with a University Ombuds who will work with you to explore options or paths to manage your concern.

Occupational Therapy Faculty Practice - (323) 442-2850 or otfp@med.usc.edu

Confidential Lifestyle Redesign services for USC students to support health promoting habits and routines that enhance quality of life and academic performance.

Annenberg Student Success Fund

<https://annenbergscholarships.usc.edu/current-students/resources/annenbergscholarships-and-awards>

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.

Annenberg Student Emergency Aid Fund

<https://annenbergscholarships.usc.edu/current-students/resources/annenbergscholarships-and-awards>

Awards are distributed to students experiencing unforeseen circumstances and emergencies impacting their ability to pay tuition or cover everyday living expenses. These awards are not intended to cover full-tuition expenses, but rather serve as bridge funding to guarantee students' continued enrollment at USC until other resources, such as scholarships or loans, become available. Students are encouraged to provide as much information in their application, as well as contact their academic advisor directly with questions about additional resources available to them.

About Your Instructor

Grace Manthey is a data journalist at ABC7/KABC. She's done stories on a multitude of topics from hospital earthquake ratings to police diversity to tree cover disparities in Los Angeles. She loves to build interactive tools for these stories and learned her much of her data journalism basics from her time in the MS program at USC! She graduated with her master's in Journalism in 2019, after getting her bachelor's in journalism in 2018 from Quinnipiac University in Hamden, Connecticut. She is passionate about data journalism and loves when students find out how awesome it is too!