

## jour 5300 Public Affairs Reporting



Neighborhood  
Immersion  
Project

What the hell are *public affairs* and how do we cover them? And how do we make the relevant interesting?

We'll wrestle with these questions and others. This class covers the basics of covering local government but it's more than that. It's multimedia, it's neighborhood immersion, it's hard and soft news, it's features, it's pretty much everything about telling true stories.

some day at some time  
in some room  
Dr. Barry Hollander  
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### Books

*Writing Tools: 50 Essential Strategies for Every Writer* by Roy Peter Clark. We'll do this one early on because I want you to tighten and brighten your writing. Expect to use this throughout the semester. Buy it now.

*Making Important News Interesting* by Perry Parks. Buy it now.

### Policies

We meet about 30 times in a semester. You get 3 free misses. On the fourth, I automatically drop you a letter grade. Non-negotiable. I don't care if you work for the R&B, the President, or the Pope. On the fifth miss, another grade dropped. There are no excused absences, so save them up for when you need them. Do not tell me why you missed.

### Grades

Based on exams, writings, random number theory, and the application of whimsical suggestions by complete strangers as to the grade you deserve. The neighborhood immersion stuff will be at least half your grade. Some proportion (to be put in later) will go to writing take-aways, daily good-bad stuff,

## Major Projects

### *Neighborhood Immersion:*

You'll be divided into teams and will adopt a neighborhood. Everything about the place, from history to current issues, to the people and the place, all will be fodder for your special attention. You'll write, create multimedia, analyze data, all about this one place. It'll go online. This is hyper-local at the most extreme and is the guts of the Fall class.

meeting stories, and other assorted tortures I devise between now and the end of the semester.

*Muahahaha.*

### Stuff

Speaking of stuff, there will be a lot of outside-of-class work, getting to know your adopted neighborhoods, talking to people, crunching numbers. Get ready for it, or go ahead and drop and save us both a lot of time, trouble, and in your case, pain.

Late work is **never** accepted. It's a "0" for that assignment. All stuff is turned in to me as hard copies.

## CLASS CALENDAR IS BELOW

Uploading Instructions . . . Point your Fetch or FTP program to:

[www.journalism.uga.edu/studentsites](http://www.journalism.uga.edu/studentsites)

or

using a browser, click [here](#)

ID and PW = college name

Saddle up, boys and girls.

### **Writing Take-Aways:**

We'll use the Clark book every week, reading two or three chapters, talk about what you learned. At the end of the semester you will turn in a 5-7 "take-aways" that sum up the material, the stuff most useful to you, and explain why, give examples. In this you may end up taking 3 or 5 of his topics and collapse into a single one. You do not have to use 'em all.

### **Good and Bad:**

We'll spend a lot of time having you find good and bad examples of local reporting, bringing them to class, and talking about them. Sometimes seeing awful stuff helps.

### **Meetings and Such:**

Yes, you'll have to cover at least two public governmental meetings. It's important you know the pain. At least one meeting must be a serious local governing body such as

ACC or ACC  
schools. The  
other can be  
University  
Council on  
campus, if you  
like.

### Sites You'll Use

Nieman Narratives  
 News Gems  
 IRE Extra Extra!  
 NICAR  
 Social Explorer  
 ACC Government  
 American Factfinder - Athens

*"I don't think writers are sacred, but words are. They deserve respect. If you get the right ones in the right order, you might nudge the world a little ..."*  
 - Tom Stoppard, British playwright

		<h2>Class Calendar</h2> <p><i>a work in progress ... old stuff below, to be changed for F09 soon ... so don't take anything below seriously.</i></p>	
	Week 1 8/18-8/22	<p><b>Tuesday</b> we intro the class, each other, share a group hug. I explain plans for the semester so those of you who want to flee can do so. There's a lot of outside work in neighborhoods and government coverage. I will go into some detail about how we'll do the major immersion project. Then you leave, go buy books, get started.</p> <p>Also, we begin our neighborhood identification process. You are to go into actual Athens, drive or walk through actual neighborhoods. Maybe look at a map, check some numbers. Think about a neighborhood you think might be good for our teams to focus on. The neighborhood thing is due next Thursday (see next week for details).</p> <p><b>Thursday</b>, for those who foolishly remain, read the Introduction of the Parks text and this <a href="#">article</a>. Bring in a local <b>news</b> article about local government (not from R&amp;B or ABH) that you think fails and write a few sentences on why you think it fails. Have it printed, not handscrawled, done <b>before</b> class.</p>	
	Week 2 8/25-8/29	<p><b>Tuesday</b> read Parks text, chapters 1-3. Bring to class (already typed, printed) #2 from p. 30. I will hand out a fact sheet today just as warm up for writing a meeting story. This is due to me, <b>via email with an attached Word file</b>, by 10 p.m. Wednesday.</p> <p><b>Thursday</b> read Parks text chapters 4-5 and Chapter 1 of Journalism 2.0. Bring in one good neighborhood you propose we include in our project. Be prepared to discuss it. Show you've done a little homework on the</p>	

		neighborhood. Give this to me in a brief, 1-page, printed summary. Sell your neighborhood! Also we'll look at your meeting stories on the projector. We'll do more of these, maybe even give you another one today to write out of class.	
Week 3 9/1-9/5	How to tell a story differently.	<b>Tuesday</b> read Parks chapters 6-7. Oh, and read this <b>brief report</b> . <b>Thursday</b> read Chapter 2 of Journalism 2.0. Discuss the neighborhoods. A couple will be ones you identified, a couple probably not from your one-pagers.	
Week 4 9/8-9/12	Another <b>story</b> told kinda like the one above.  Quick and dirty <b>CAR example</b> using UGA data.	<b>Tuesday</b> , turn in <b>at class</b> your stories on the cemetery. Fact sheet handed out last week. We'll look at them briefly. Also ... read Chapters 3-4 of Journalism 2.0 (which talks about podcasting in part, so <b>see this too</b> ), chapter 8 of Parks. Don't make me think I'm the only one who read them, otherwise hour-long pop quizzes are in our future. Or, rather, <b>your</b> future.  <b>Thursday</b> read Chapter 5 of Journalism 2.0 and Introduction from Clark (the green writing book). Also, some "team time" for you in class so you can plot the overthrow of the universe, or at least of the neighborhood you're assigned to cover (see above for new and improved team lists).	
Week 5 9/15-9/19		<b>By Monday at 5 p.m., email me</b> your news story based on the fact sheet I handed out in class last week. <b>Simply attach a Word file or put it in the body of the email.</b>  <b>Tuesday</b> , read chapter 9 of Parks, chapters 1-3 of Clark. Using especially Chapter 3 of Clark, <b>find a public affairs news story from any source and rewrite a few graphs of it, fixing lousy verbs and any other language. Bring a copy of the story and your version, make sure you underline or highlight the part on the original that you fixed.</b>  <b>Thursday</b> , I want you to be <b>elsewhere</b> , working with your team on the neighborhood immersion. This DOES NOT mean sleep in. <b>NO CLASS.</b>	
Week 6 9/22-9/26	Clarke traffic	<b>Tuesday</b> , read chapter 10 of Parks, chapters 4-6 of Clark. <b>Find a news article laced with too many "ly" or "ing" words as described by Clark; one or two are often too many. Bring it to class Tuesday, underline the portion you rewrote, and -- yep -- rewrite that section.</b>  Here is a <b>fact sheet</b> . The password is <i>grady</i> . Write a meeting advance based on the info. You will not use all of the info provided. Story is due by Friday, 5 p.m., via email. If late, don't bother sending it in. Note: this was posted here on Tuesday of this week. You were reminded Thursday.  <b>Thursday</b> , guest speaker ... Wil Haygood of <i>The Washington Post</i> . Here's <b>one story</b> . Here's <b>another</b> .	

	<p>Week 7 9/29-10/3</p> <p>UGA majors Fun with Google part of my continuing messing with data for stories</p>	<p><b>Tuesday</b>, read chapter 11 of Parks, chapters 7-10 of Clark, chapter 7 of Journalism 2.0. We will meet until about 10:15 and then I will free you to do team stuff (plus I'm gonna do a drop-in guest lecture in another class at about that time). Oh, and I should have graded those stories due last Friday.</p> <p><b>Thursday</b>: Visit by Carolyn Carlson to discuss our public records project. Some <b>details</b> here. This is a major part of the semester. I have a handout for this day with details.</p>	
	<p>Week 8 10/6-10/10</p> <p>Fresh off the Net</p> <p>Sex offenders mapped</p> <p>Bad Jocks</p> <p>Sound violations</p>	<p><b>Tuesday</b>, read chapter 12 of Parks, chapter 8 of Journalism 2.0. Due today, a rough list of potential neighborhood immersion stories. I'm expecting a rather large package of stories to be done before the semester ends. I need from each team a typed list. We'll talk about this and the readings.</p> <p><b>Thursday</b>, read chapters 11-16 of Clark. Talk about writing, about your neighborhoods, about stuff. Also random assignment to public records requests, with process beginning next week. And we'll read two short stories in class as examples of concrete writing: <b>Rampaging Rooster</b> and <b>Pin Boys</b></p>	
	<p>Week 9 10/13-10/17</p> <p>sweet tea in Virginia</p> <p>Mrs. Kelly's Monster</p> <p>Terror</p>	<p><b>Tuesday, NO CLASS. Work on your open records assignments (get these done!!!) and neighborhood stories. SEE ABOVE for ASSIGNMENTS. Get this done now.</b></p> <p><b>Thursday</b>, 9-10, and Epilogue of Journalism 2.0, and chapters 17-18 of Clark. Discuss in detail your neighborhood assignments, public records work.</p>	
	<p>Week 10 10/20-10/24</p> <p>A great court story</p>	<p>No class</p>	
	<p>Week 11 10/27-10/31</p>	<p>NO CLASS THIS WEEK. Finish public records stuff and the group of stories you should have on your respective neighborhoods. I'm talking multiple stories here, using multiple media</p>	
	<p>Week 12 11/3-11/7</p>	<p>Tuesday, you should have read Clark, chapters 19-40. Yes, I'm gonna check.</p> <p>Thursday, read chapters 41-45 of Clark. Provide precinct breakdowns from your neighborhood on how people voted. Also, <i>weird writing day</i>.</p>	

	<p>Week 13 11/10-11/14</p> <p>CAR Fire Story</p> <p>Hunting CAR</p>	<p>Tuesday, read chapters 46-50 of Clark. Watch the two tutorials on how to use GradyJournal. The tutorials are <a href="#">here</a>, the journal itself <a href="#">here</a>. We'll work through easy CAR data examples. First is "crony" and the other is "sewers" and another is "skultrip." Pword for each file is grady. Story examples using CAR to the left.</p> <p>Thursday: more CAR, heavy data lifting. I'll teach you how to do pivot tables and such with Excel. The data you'll need: <b>crime</b>, <b>drugs</b>, and <b>exxon</b>. I'll hand out directions. All pwords grady.</p>	
	<p>Week 14 11/17-11/21</p> <p>Story on new news sites. Read it.</p>	<p>Tuesday: CAR, learning "Access." Data to play with: PrezRace, Natlarts, Hunting.</p> <p>Thursday: Neighborhood stories, CAR, etc.</p> <p><i>Writing Takeways</i> due from the Clark book by Friday 4 p.m. Hard copies only. In the "takeaway" you are to come up with about five concept areas from the text that you found useful in your own writing, and tell me why. It may be that three or four chapters fall together in one area (for example, verbs (chp 3), adverbs (chp 5) and -ing words (chp 6) all come together for you as a single concept area of improving your writing. So you'll have about five Concept Areas, each of which may be more than a single chapter, though a couple may be only a single chapter depending on how you do them. Tell me how these areas work for you, and why, with examples. In other words, write about your writing.</p>	MATH TEST
	<p>Week 15 11/24-11/28</p>	<p>Thanksgiving Break. Kill and eat a turkey.</p>	
	<p>Week 16 12/1-12/5</p> <p>Chase street elementary, neighborhood school.</p> <p>Do people really like diverse communities?</p>	<p>Tuesday. <a href="#">See this</a>. And the rest of the time, discussing neighborhood stories and such. The earlier you get in some stuff, the better. Also, <a href="#">read this</a>.</p> <p>Thursday - Last day of class for us. <b>Course Evals. Go Here!</b></p>	
	<p>Week 17 12/8-12/12</p>	<p>Tuesday is a Friday, according to the brainiacs of UGA, so we don't meet this week. There is <b>NO</b> final exam.</p>	