

Trauma Journalism Unit

Note to instructors: This unit was created by Dr. Stephanie Anderson of Murray State University in 2018. I am posting this to my website in order to share it with educators around the world. I believe it is imperative that we start teaching trauma journalism to collegiate journalists. I have spent more than three years developing this course. I think we are the best educators when we share ideas. However, I hope that you respect this research, effort, time and dedication I have put into this unit. I take full ownership of this material but allow others to use it and adapt for your institution. Reproducing and/or claiming authorship of this work is strictly prohibited. I ask that you please contact me if you are going to use this material as it is intended, so that I may keep records of which institutions will be using. Feel free to contact me if you have any questions. Thank you!

This unit could be included into an existing journalism course.

Week 1: What is trauma journalism?

Reading *Trauma Journalism*: Chapter 1: Tracking a Media Movement

In Class: Class Introduction, Syllabus/Outline Review, Watch Ted Talk: Trauma-Aware Journalism

Assignment: Journal Entry #1

Week 2: Case Study: Columbine High School

Reading *Trauma Journalism*: Columbine pages 100-102

Reading *Covering Violence*: Chapter 9: Columbine: A Story That Won't Let Go

Reading: The Columbine Shooting: Live Television Coverage by Alicia Shepard

In Class: Reading Quiz, Discussion on Columbine, Watch Covering Columbine

Assignment: Journal Entry #2

Week 3: Case Study: Virginia Tech Massacre

Reading: Twice Victimized: Lessons from the Media Mob at Virginia Tech

In Class: Discussion on VA Tech, Ethics Discussion, Watch - C-SPAN Panel on Media Coverage, Watch - Cho Manifesto

Assignment: Journal Entry #3, Case Study Paper

Week 4: Coping with the Physical and Psychological Effects

Reading *Trauma Journalism*: Chapter 5: Traumatic Stress Studies

Reading: Principles of trauma therapy: A guide to symptoms, evaluation, and treatment

Visiting Lecturer: Psychologist or psychology professor

In Class: Lecture on PTSD, Dissociative Disorders/Symptoms and Discussion on how journalists are affected

Assignment: Journal Entry #4, Coping Paper

Week 5: Learning from the Experts

In Class: Student Presentations and Panel of Journalists, Watch Teaching Trauma Journalism Documentary

Assignments: Journal book due, presentations

Assignments:

Journal: Keep a weekly journal of how you are feeling, what you are thinking about while going through this course. Reflect upon what you have learned in this course, from the journalists, visiting professor, from the readings and discussions. This can be an emotional class as it deals with difficult issues. This is a way to put those thoughts onto paper. This should be 1-2 pages each week. Your journal book will be due at the end of the semester. These are worth 25 points each.

Coping Paper: You are to research what assistance is available for journalists throughout the world. You may research scholarly articles on the University Libraries website. You may research books and essays on the topic. You may consult the DART Center website. You are free to choose your own sources. You need to have 3 to 5 resources a journalist could use if they feel they or someone they know is suffering from PTSD or related disorders. The paper should be 5 to 7 pages, double-spaced. It must include a bibliography, be double-spaced and free of spelling, grammar and syntax errors. It should follow APA style. Worth 100 points

Covering presentation: In a group: you are to take the course material and create a presentation you could give to professional journalists on the proper way to cover a traumatic event. Review your course material and the lessons learned from each of the case studies and readings. You need to provide specific examples. You are not limited to the traumatic events discussed in this course. However, should you choose to use a traumatic event outside of the course, it must be approved by the instructor. Others could include Oklahoma City Bombings, Aurora, Colorado Theater Shooting, Orlando Nightclub Shooting, 2016 attack on Paris, Sandy Hook, Las Vegas shooting etc. The presentation is designed to show what you have learned in this course about how to properly cover a traumatic event. Do not make the focus on one specific event. You are to use at least 3 to 5 references. You must have a PowerPoint. The presentation should last 10 to 15 minutes and every member of the group must contribute and present. You must also have a one page summary of your presentation to hand to the journalists. Local journalists will be invited to attend your presentations. Worth 200 points

Case Study Paper: You will write 1 paper case study (Columbine or Virginia Tech). This paper should follow the following outline:

Introduction

Define the case (what happened- give me verified details)

What went wrong/what went well with media coverage

What can journalists learn from this case

Conclusion

References

Each paper is to be 3 to 5 pages, double-spaced, include a bibliography (with a minimum of 3 sources) and be free of spelling, grammar and syntax errors. Each paper is worth 100 points.

Participation: Participation is a huge part of this course. The more in-depth discussions we have in class, the more you will get out of it. Therefore, participation will count for 200 points. While students are not expected to share personal traumatic events in their lives, they are expected to participate in class discussion each week.

Unit Contract: Students will sign a contract at the beginning of the unit agreeing to the terms of the course. Students will lose points and possibly fail the course if they do not abide by this contract. This is to protect the conversations during class and provide a safe environment where students feel as though they can voice their opinion, thoughts and emotions. Worth 100 points.

Activities:

Journalist Panel: bring in local journalists including photographers, reporters, MMJ's, newspaper reporters, editors etc. with a diverse background and specialty. Have the students prepare questions ahead of time to ask the panel. Instructor will moderate the panel. This will allow students to ask how local journalists cover and cope with traumatic events.

Covering Columbine: Watch the video *Covering Columbine* in class. This is great insight into the tragedy that occurred and how it affected the journalists, survivors and victims' families. This is a great opportunity for class discussion.

C-SPAN Panel on Media Cover of VA Tech: Watch *C-SPAN's Panel on Media Coverage of VA Tech Shooting*. This is an excellent discussion from a variety of journalists, including a collegiate journalists, on what went right/wrong and how they covered and coped with it.

These are optional activities should you choose to do a longer unit.

First-Aid Training: Bring in your local American Red Cross or another Health Service organization in your area to provide students with certified training for CPR, AED and First-Aid.

Victims' Family and/or Survivor: Bring in the survivor of a traumatic event or a victim's family. Let him or her tell their story and ask him or her to share their experience (good or bad) with the media during that time. Allow the students to ask them questions or do a mock interview.

Active Shooter Training: Bring in your campus police department to provide an active shooter training for students.

Active Shooter Simulation: Ask your local law enforcement if they have an active shooter simulator. This is provided by state governments in some states. ***I recommend if you do this training that you: 1) clear it with the department chair/university, 2) alert students to what will happen 3) get any permissions needed. This simulation includes handling a real firearm that does not have real bullets but does make a sound when pulling the trigger. This is a real life*

*scenario type of training that requires students to fire the gun at a suspect on a projected screen. Again, there are no real bullets and no physical safety risks. This gives students the police perspective of an active shooter situation which will give them a better understanding of what occurs from a law enforcement perspective during these traumatic events.***

Prerequisites: *Must at least include a reporting and writing course. At Murray State, minimum requirements will be JMC 168 and JMC 194. I personally do not think that this unit is appropriate for freshmen and sophomores. A level of maturity is needed for this to be an effective course.*

Instructor Resources:

Books:

Simpson, R., Coté, W. (2006). *Covering Violence: A Guide to Ethical Reporting About Victims & Trauma*

Wilkins, L., Vultee, F., Thorson, E., Greeley, K., Collins, K. (2012). *Reporting Disaster on Deadline: A Handbook for Students and Professionals.*

Massé, M. (2011). *Trauma journalism: on deadline in harm's way.* New York, NY: Continuum International.

Journalism After September 11 (2011). Edited by Barbie Zelizer and Stuart Allan. New York: Routledge,. 342 pp.

Briere, J. N., Scott, C., & Jones, J. (2015). The effects of trauma. In J. N. Briere, & C. Scott, (Eds.), *Principles of trauma therapy: A guide to symptoms, evaluation, and treatment*(2nd Ed; pp 25-61.). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.

Chen, S. (2009). Debunking the myths of Columbine, 10 years later. Retrieved from <http://www.cnn.com/2009/CRIME/04/20/columbine.myths/>. CNN transcripts. (2001, September 11). Terrorist attack on the United States. Retrieved January 27, 2017, from <http://www.cnn.com/TRANSCRIPTS/0109/11/bn.01.html>.

Articles:

Walsh-Childers, K., Lewis, N. and Neely, J., 2008-08-06 "Twice Victimized: Lessons from the Media Mob at Virginia Tech" Paper presented at the annual meeting of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication, Marriott Downtown, Chicago, IL Online . 2014-12-01 from http://citation.allacademic.com/meta/p271879_index.html.

Feinstein, A. & Nicolson, D. (2005). Embedded journalists in the Iraq war: Are they at greater psychological risk? *Journal of Traumatic Stress*, 18, 129-132.

Feinstein, A., Owen, J., & Blair, N. (2002). A hazardous profession: War, journalism, and psychopathology. *American Journal of Psychiatry*, 159, 1570-1576.

Shepard, Alicia C. "The Columbine Shooting: Live Television Coverage." Columbia University.

Schauer, M., & Elbert, T. (2010). Dissociation following traumatic stress: Etiology and treatment. *Zeitschrift Für Psychologie/Journal Of Psychology*, 218(2), 109-127.
doi:10.1027/0044-3409/a000018

Manuals/Guidebooks:

American Red Cross First Aid Training Manual:

https://www.redcross.org/content/dam/redcross/atg/PHSS_UX_Content/FA-CPR-AED-Part-Manual.pdf

Note this training may require a course fee in order to cover the cost, if any

James Foley Safety Guide:

<https://www.jamesfoleyfoundation.org/the-james-w-foley-journalist-safety-guide/>

Online Resources:

Dart Center for Journalism and Trauma at the Columbia Journalism School- The Dart Center is the leader in trauma journalism. They have spent years conducting research and offering trainings and assistance to journalists all over the world. This website has classroom resources, videos, thousands of articles, publications, tip sheets and more. www.dartcenter.org

Teaching journalism students how to cover violence, victims and trauma. (2006). Retrieved from http://www.icmpa.umd.edu/pages/studies/trauma_journalism_education/introduction_TJE.html.

Bolton, E.E. (2016, July 3). U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. PTSD: National Center for PTSD. Retrieved from <http://www.ptsd.va.gov/index.asp>

Dart Center. (n.d.). History: Dart center for journalism and trauma. Retrieved from <http://dartcenter.org/history>.

Drevo, S., Newman, E., & Smith, R. (2015, July 1). Covering trauma: impact on journalists. Dart Center for Journalism & Trauma. Retrieved January 27, 2017, from <http://dartcenter.org/content/covering-trauma-impact-on-journalists>.

Videos:

Ted Talk: Trauma Aware journalism:

<https://dartcenter.org/media/ted-talk-trauma-aware-journalism>

Jim: James Foley Story: (You can purchase this online or rent)

<https://www.amazon.com/Jim-James-Foley-Story/dp/B01E9I5QTS>

NBC Coverage of 9/11: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OtZKEjr-Sfg>

Created by Dr. Stephanie Anderson, Assistant Professor and Publications Adviser, Murray State University, 2018

C-SPAN Panel on Media Coverage of VA Tech:

<https://www.c-span.org/video/?200368-2/media-coverage-virginia-tech-tragedy>

Cho Manifesto (VA Tech): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wZUAB9m2UtU&t=163s>

Note- there are dozens of varieties of this video. Any of them will do

Covering Columbine: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p3aUo89yjFI>

Teaching Trauma Journalism Documentary: Coming Soon (from Dr. Anderson). Please check back on the website. The goal is to have it complete by Christmas.

Student Contract for Trauma Journalism Unit

By signing this contract, I am agreeing to the following terms and conditions for this unit:

1. I understand that this course could be emotional and at times difficult to deal with.
2. I understand that any conversations in this course are to remain private. I agree not to talk about what I have heard from my peers outside of this classroom.
3. I understand that the material covered in this course may be graphic in nature.
4. I understand that the material in this course may contain disturbing images, sounds and foul language.
5. I agree to be open and honest during this course.
6. I agree to be respectful of the material, the professor and my peers and their opinions.
7. I agree to participate in this course as required by the instructor.
8. I agree to take the subject matter seriously and maturely.
9. I understand that I have the right to leave the classroom at any time in order to compose myself or if the subject matter is difficult for me to handle. Should this occur, I agree to get in touch with the professor following class and discuss.
10. I understand that the University has counselors on-hand to help students with any issues that may arise from this course. "The licensed mental health professionals in the Counseling Center are available to provide a variety of counseling services for Murray State students, including individual therapy, couples therapy, group therapy, and family therapy. The Counseling Center is open 8:00 - 4:30 Monday through Friday whenever the university is open. We have a counselor on call 9:00 - 3:00 Monday through Friday during the academic year to meet with walk-in clients or help with crisis situations. All services are free of charge. In emergency situations after hours or on weekends or holidays, please call the Murray State Police at 270-809-2222 or 911. The Counseling Center is located in C104 Oakley Applied Science Building. Phone 270-809-6851
11. I understand that this course is to further my education in trauma journalism.
12. I understand that if I do not follow these agreed upon terms that I may be: 1) asked to leave the classroom, 2) be sent to the department chair, 3) have my grade lowered, 4) be expelled from the course.

Student Name: (Printed) _____

Student Signature: _____ Date: _____