Department of Journalism
Emerson College

2012-2013
Graduate Student’s Manual

Prepared by the faculty
of the Department of Journalism

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This is an important document.
It helps you navigate through the program and offers valuable advice and warnings.
Read it.

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I. Program mission and requirements

Mission
The graduate program in Journalism prepares students to be thoughtful, ethical, and informed news professionals. The program focuses on the professional skills needed to practice quality journalism in the increasingly cross-media environment of news, and on the critical skills needed to assess the news profession. It includes both classroom training and opportunities for field experiences through internships and applied capstones. The curriculum provides students with theoretical and applied foundations in the areas of writing, reporting, editing, and research in journalism, and is enhanced by courses in law and ethics, new media, and the business aspects of journalism.

All students in the program enroll in a convergence-centered core curriculum that requires students to conceive, report, and write stories for delivery across multiple news media. After completing this common, cross-media experience in their first semester, students enroll in courses that enable them to acquire a “key competency” – a professional foundation – in either print and multimedia journalism or broadcast journalism. Through elective offerings, they can also develop further skills in either producing the news for other media or in building expertise in specialized areas of journalistic interest such as public affairs reporting, business reporting, and cultural affairs reporting. Hands-on work in the classroom is grounded in and informed by courses that explore the history and theory of journalism.

Most students end their studies by participating in a rigorous,
portfolio-based, cross-media capstone course that requires the completion of a body of work of professional quality. Students can request permission to substitute a thesis for this capstone course.

The master’s degree in journalism at Emerson College is demanding. Each course may require 10 to 15 hours of homework outside of class each week. Students enrolling in three courses (or two courses totaling 12 credits their first semester) are urged to limit outside work commitments to no more than 25 hours a week and to set aside at least a day during conventional working hours for interviewing and research that is integral to completing assignments. All students are expected to enter the program with a firm grasp of written and spoken English. Students also may be required by instructors to seek weekly individualized tutoring or support sessions.

**Journalism Program Objectives**

- Students will be prepared to find and assess information and present it accurately, efficiently and compellingly through a variety of media.

- Students will learn about the traditions of journalism and be able to explore contemporary challenges to those traditions.

- Students will be able to think critically and to write about events and issues clearly, succinctly and in context.

- Students will develop a respect for diversity and individuality so their reporting will reflect a society of varied lifestyles and cultures.
• Students will understand the theoretical and applied foundations of journalistic writing, reporting, editing, and research.

Students will develop knowledge of communication law and ethics, media convergence, and the business aspects of journalism.

Degree requirements

1. Core Requirements (20 credits)* (all courses are 4 cr. except JR 600)
   JR 600 Writing and Reporting Across the News Media (8 credits)
   JR 601 News and Society
   JR 615 Journalism Law (2 credits)
   JR 616 Journalism Ethics (2 credits)
   JR 606 News Communication Theory and Research Methods (Prereq. JR 601)

*Students with a Journalism degree may waive JR 600, 601 and/or JR 615, 616 and substitute elective(s) if they completed equivalent courses within the last 5 years with a B or better. See the Journalism Graduate Program Director.

2. Key competencies (8 credits)
   Broadcast Journalism
   JR 611 Television News Producing
JR 613  Electronic News Gathering/Reporting

Print and Multimedia Journalism

JR 610  Advanced Print and Multimedia Reporting

And either: JR 608 Interactive News Or JR 640 News Editing and Page Design

3. Electives (12 credits)

Students can choose a mix of elective courses from three areas:

Conceptual electives provide an analytical and/or theoretical perspective on the news media. Cross-media electives require only that students have successfully completed JR 600. In some (but not all) of these classes students can prepare assignments for more than one medium. Advanced electives require students to complete additional prerequisites before they can enroll.

Courses from other departments also may be selected with the approval of the Graduate Program Director in Journalism.

Conceptual electives

JR 555 -- Reporting Issues of Cultural Diversity (spring)

JR 570 -- Global Journalism (fall)

JR 571 -- Newsroom Management (semester varies)

JR 574 -- The Press and Propaganda (semester varies)

JR 694 -- Journalism Topics (semester varies)
Cross-media electives (JR 600 is the only prerequisite for these classes)

JR 595 -- Multimedia Journalism Practicum (summer)

JR 608 -- Interactive News (fall)

JR 610 -- Advanced Print and Multimedia Journalism (every spring, fall as demand dictates)

JR 611 -- TV News Producing (every spring, fall as demand dictates)

JR 613 -- Electronic Newsgathering (spring)

JR 640 -- News Editing and Page Design (semester varies)

JR 660 -- Feature Writing (semester varies)

JR 664 -- Specialized Reporting (semester varies)

JR 690 -- Internship

JR 695 -- Directed Projects

JR 697 -- Directed Studies

Advanced electives (note prerequisites before registering)

JR 561 -- TV News Magazine and Documentary (semester varies). Students must get the Instructor’s or GPD’s permission.

JR 562 -- The Magazine (semester varies). Students must get the Instructor’s or GPD’s permission.

JR 590 -- Online Publishing (fall semester). Students must get the Instructor’s or GPD’s permission.
4. JR 693 -- Cross-Media Capstone or JR 699 -- Thesis

(4 credits)

Students taking the capstone course must first complete a key competency.

Students are strongly encouraged to enroll in the portfolio-based capstone course as their culminating experience of their master's program at Emerson. Students who wish instead to complete a research study may enroll for the master's thesis course (JR 699) and find a faculty adviser who will approve their research proposal and supervise their study. The approval of the Graduate Program Director is also required.

This capstone course is designed to allow each student an opportunity to pursue individual and group news projects that demonstrate his/her ability to do professional work in a key competency like print, broadcast or online. It also is designed to have each student develop journalistic work in a cross-media environment that demonstrates his/her understanding and ability to combine print, broadcast and online to create unique news storytelling experiences.

II. Important: Guidelines and suggestions

- This information is complementary to the Graduate Student Handbook with which you need to be familiar. Make sure you have a copy of the most current Master's Thesis Guidelines pamphlet that is
distributed by Graduate Studies—it offers information that goes beyond the scope of this manual and it's essential to your work.

• Please, note that there are graduate school as well as departmental deadlines by which certain tasks must be accomplished. Keep in mind that professors need time to read and assess your work. You should allow a minimum of five business days for them to read proposals (assuming you've met with them ahead of time) and a minimum of two-three weeks for them to assess final versions of theses. It is imperative that you keep your committee members informed of your academic activities in order to avoid surprises and delays at the end.

• Project work plans for the capstone course need to be developed before the start of the course and should be completed within the first two weeks of the course.

A NOTE ON SUMMER SCHOOL: As you plan your schedule, you should keep in mind that many professors and many courses are NOT available in the summers. (Professors are normally NOT here during the December-January holiday break, either.) Do NOT plan on any summer school advising or graduation unless your adviser and committee member are in full agreement and will be here to supervise you. It is also your responsibility to learn and adhere to summer school deadlines.

• Missing deadlines may result in late or continuing student status fees. If you foresee a problem, contact the graduate school for advice and/or a deadline extension.

• For those who have language problems, the journalism department provides assistance through tutors who meet with students regularly or as needed. Although the program is voluntary, if the problem is serious
instructors may require students to seek such assistance. Go to the department's secretary for more details and appointments.

• In case of an academic problem, you should get in touch promptly with the journalism chairperson, the graduate program director and/or the faculty to try to solve it. They are there to help you. If they can't help you they'll identify someone who can.

• Please, keep in mind that the journalism graduate program director is responsible for all procedural matters concerning your academic program, including registration issues.

The Graduate Office has the following forms:
  Transfer of Credit, Leave of Absence, Request to Return from Leave of Absence, Petition (for waiving required courses, late fees, etc.).

The Registrar has the following forms:
  Change of Grade, Warrants (for graduation), Intent to graduate.

The Department has the following forms:
  Thesis Committee Appointment, Directed Study Contracts.

• Start planning your exit activity (thesis or capstone course) as early as possible in the program. Note that your thesis proposal must have been approved by your committee by the last day of classes of the semester preceding the semester in which you plan to graduate. Please, note that this does not mean that you may submit it on the last day of classes. It is supposed to have been approved by then. The best guide to an exit activity is to see one that was done by a journalism student in the past: VISIT THE JOURNALISM THESES/PROJECTS AREA IN THE LIBRARY.

• An early start toward your thesis proposal or capstone course plan may also allow you to get an internship, take courses or, on a rare occasion, do a Directed Study in an area that would be beneficial to your exit activity. You must remember that the exit activity must
demonstrate that you have mastered an area of study. Read carefully this manual and the Graduate School Guidelines concerning theses.

• Your thesis adviser will be determined through discussions between you and members of the Journalism faculty. The graduate coordinator can recommend appropriate departmental faculty who might have an interest and expertise in the area in which you need advice concerning your thesis. An adviser and another faculty member constitute your thesis committee. After you settle on an adviser you need to fill out a Committee Chair Designation Form. This is the form you take to the registrar to register for thesis credit. If you and your adviser agree that the proposal is on track and is about to be approved, you may fill out the form in time for pre-registration during the semester preceding your graduation. If the proposal has problems or the adviser is not confident it will be approved by pre-registration time, then you can wait until the proposal is approved and register during regular registration period at the start of the semester in which you hope to graduate.

• It makes sense for you to take courses from a diverse group of faculty, because eventually you'll need to ask one of them to serve as your exit activity adviser.

• Your thesis proposal ideas first must be "shopped around" among departmental faculty members and then refined with the input of the instructor who has agreed to be your adviser (committee chair). It is this student-teacher cooperation that transforms an "idea' to a "proposal" for a thesis or a capstone. WARNING: Last minute proposal submissions to faculty members who have not been consulted by the student before or who have not agreed to advise, will NOT be accepted.

• As you begin to look at potential theses advisers, keep in mind the following departmental policy on committee chairs and members:
  
  Thesis: A journalism thesis committee chair should be a full-time member of the journalism faculty and have a doctorate. A part-
time faculty member with an M.A. degree and a distinguished professional career could serve as the other committee member.

Exceptions: Any exceptions to these rules should have the approval of the journalism department's chair and graduate program director as well as that of the college’s graduate studies director.

• Since it is highly unlikely that you will start and finish your thesis in one semester, it is advisable that you stagger your thesis credit hours. Most students split them over two semesters. You may register for some credit even as you actively pursue your ideas with your adviser and you must be a registered student during the semester in which you plan to graduate. As you divide your workload, however, keep in mind that your main adviser (committee chair) and/or your reader (committee member) may not be here during the summer months.

**A Special Note on Plagiarism and Cheating**

Journalism is a public service that is based on the sacred trust between the journalist and his/her audience. There is nothing more central to the credibility of journalism than the implicit promise of every writer to every reader that the information in stories is real, original and truthful. Journalists and journalism students who make things up or who steal the work of others and pass it off as their own, undermine not only their own careers but also the public's trust in the entire profession. There is no room for them in journalism or in the Department of Journalism.

As the faculty syllabi indicate more specifically, anyone in our classes caught violating the trust between writer and reader by plagiarizing the work of others or by making up quotes, sources or stories will automatically fail the course and face possible suspension from the College. This departmental standard is based on the Emerson College plagiarism policy, which states, in part, that "the attempt of any student to present as his or her own work, the work of another or any
work which he or she has not honestly performed...renders the offender liable to immediate suspension.

III. The cross-media capstone course

If you choose to take this culminating course, you must be prepared to work individually and in groups on news stories and projects for print, broadcast and/or web media. You will be expected to do work that strengthens your journalistic skills in your key competency, expands your understanding of the fundamentals of other news platforms and develops your ability to work in a cross-media news environment.

You will be expected to report and produce:
- a) individual, short-form, on-deadline or spot news stories,
- b) individual, longer-form news segments, newspaper/magazine series, investigative projects or mini-documentary ,
- c) contributions to a group multimedia journalism project.

Almost all of the reporting work will be done outside of class time and at least half if not more of the producing work will be done outside of class time. Class time will be devoted to workshops and final group production work.

Before you take this course, you will be expected to have completed two courses identified as your key competency classes such as JR608 Interactive News, JR610 Advanced Print & Multimedia Reporting, JR611 Electronic Newsgathering, JR613 TV News Producing and JR640 News Editing and Page Design.

A. Individual short-form news stories
In the capstone, you will be required to report and produce news stories on a deadline in your “key competency” of print, broadcast or online. You will be expected to find these stories on your own and present cogent focus statements regarding their validity to be published or aired. The stories will be edited and must meet a variety of journalistic values such as backgrounding, sourcing, accuracy, fairness, truth and verification. These stories should demonstrate newsworthiness and an understanding of the audience being served. Some of these stories will also be expected to be delivered to an audience in more than one medium. For example, a print story may be reworked to appear online or include interview audio clips. A broadcast story might be reworked into a newspaper story.

B. Individual longer-form news stories

No later than the first class meeting, you will be required to present a five-page written proposal for an individual reporting project, a longer-form piece of journalism you develop by yourself. This proposal should demonstrate your knowledge of the subject (i.e. your ability to research or background the topic), explain your approach to the topic (why you want to do a newspaper or magazine series, TV news magazine segment, print magazine piece, NPR-like radio feature, mini-documentary, take-out piece, investigative or database report, etc.), outline how it could fit into a larger multimedia project and list sources, interview topics and interviewees, documents and other elements you will need to do this project.

Because some longer-form projects demand special organizational, reporting and producing skills, some individual projects may require a course pre-requisite. For example, students who want to do a mini-documentary would be expected to have taken JR 561 TV News Magazine and Documentary. Students who want to do a print magazine piece would be expected to have taken or to take concurrently JR 562 The Magazine. Students specializing in online should be
taking or have taken JR590 Online Publishing. Students doing investigative projects should have taken JR664 Investigative Reporting.

These longer-form news stories must also include a multimedia or web component to demonstrate your understanding of value-added with online presentation.

C. Group long-form multimedia news projects

The cross-media project team will contain a mix of print, broadcast and online journalism “specialists.” This group must agree on a reporting project topic and on individual sub-topics for a semester-long reporting project. This project culminates in a cross-media, multimedia digital storytelling presentation that will appear online in a special projects area of JSONS.

A proposal outlining each person’s contribution to the project and the plan to pull it all together would be drawn up by each group and presented for review by the second week of class. The group project proposal, like the one for the individual project, must include research on the topic, an outline of the project pieces and the approach being taken. This group project would need to incorporate the best aspects of traditional and new media in journalistic storytelling. It also would demonstrate coordination between traditional and new media in organization, management and presentation.

IV. The master’s thesis

THE FIRST THREE THINGS you need to do as you begin to think about your topic are to: 1. Check the Journalism and Mass Communication Abstracts at the library—they contain all master’s theses and Ph.D. dissertations done in the United States; 2. Talk with journalism faculty members to explore their views of your idea and gauge their potential
interest in serving as your thesis adviser and, 3. CHECK THE LIBRARY HOLDINGS OF THESES BY PREVIOUS EMERSON STUDENTS IN THE LIBRARY.

A student will be required to complete a thesis proposal to the satisfaction of the thesis committee before the student registers or pre-registers and/or begins work on the thesis. For registration purposes, the student needs to submit the Committee Designation Form to the Registrar.

DEADLINES: A student must have chosen a committee and the committee must have approved the thesis proposal by the last day of classes of the semester preceding the semester in which the student plans to work on the thesis. The thesis adviser and the student are responsible for setting deadlines that must be met so the student can finish on time (deadline for chapter submission, oral examination, etc.). Deadlines that cannot be changed by the adviser are those set by the graduate school for thesis submission—fore 2011-12, these deadlines are: Dec. 12, 2011 and April 25, 2012. If pre-registration is not possible, the student can register for thesis/capstone during the regular registration period of the semester in which she/he plans to graduate.

A. The proposal

A thesis proposal is required. Below is a model (advisers may amend it) for constructing a proposal.

A thesis proposal should state a well-developed, focused, and succinct journalism-related “problem,” issue or topic. It should include:
- An annotated bibliography of existing research literature related to the problem/issue/topic, and
- a clear description of the method you plan to use to address (observe, assess, process and/or “solve”) the problem/issue/topic. A realistic timetable should also be proposed at this point;
- a preliminary table of contents (with a brief description of every chapter) that will serve as the early compass of your thesis and may be amended as the work progresses.

The proposal will essentially guide your research and writing and will also allow your committee to evaluate your proposed targets and give you advice. You should work with your committee on the proposal until your committee finds the proposal acceptable. This process may require several rewrites of the proposal, but a clear understanding (by all parties involved) of the aims and timetable of your thesis is essential to your success. Furthermore, a well-written proposal may serve as the basis for chapter in your thesis.

B. The methodology

It is advisable that you begin to construct your proposal after you have taken the News Communication Theory and Research Methods course (JR 606). In selecting and applying a method you should consider, with your committee’s approval, these factors:

-- Whether the method is appropriate to the question you are posing and whether it will generate information that will help you answer your questions within the time you have allotted for your study;

-- Whether you have sufficient background and expertise to effectively and validly apply this method to your study or whether you are willing and able to gain that expertise during the early stages of the thesis.
You should note that in producing your proposal, you are required to
discuss the method you propose to use. The method is as important in
your initial formulations of the thesis as the rationale for the study
and the literature review.

C. A journalism thesis model

If you have any questions about the following entries, consult your
advisor. You and she/he must have the same interpretation of what
they mean.

Table of Contents
Don’t start without it and don’t turn anything in to your readers
without it—it’s the compass you’ll need to stay focused. It can be
amended as you progress, but the latest version should be always in
front of you and in the hands of your advisers.

Introduction
--Elements the Introduction should include are:
--Description or definition of what you’ll do (via, perhaps, a historical
development or a literary scheme or something else that grabs the
interest of the reader).
--Reason why this topic is important to study, why it’s different from
the studies of others.
--Why it’s important to study this now.
--Who would benefit from this study.

Chapter I
--A more detailed description/definition of the topic/issue/problem.
--Give context: historical, conceptual, geographical, legal, etc.—all
that’s necessary to understand the various facets of this issue and the
uniqueness of your study.
--This naturally will lead you into the **review of literature** through which you'll establish the uniqueness of your study. This review should **summarize** the most important pieces of work that relate to the topic on which your study will focus and point out the **shortcomings** that led you to propose your study.

--Unless the above is too long and deserves a chapter of its own, Ch. I should also include: A detailed description of the **methodology** you'll use and why that best suits your purposes. This segment should include a set of **hypotheses or research questions** that can be tested or researched within the **timeframe** of the thesis and through the **resources** you'll have within your reach. Legal or historical theses should include **expectations of findings** rather than theory-based hypotheses.

--Ch. I should conclude with a blueprint of what the following **chapter** will accomplish. These should follow a **logical** order—how do we get from point A to point B....

**Middle chapters**

--They should follow a sequence pre-approved by the adviser.

--Each should present the research findings on one of the dimensions of the topic/issue/problem proposed in Ch. I. Some could have a **historical** basis, others a **geographic** one, and then others could be focusing on each of the various **concepts** encompassed by your topic.

--After all the preliminaries have been presented and all the possible angles have been covered, the thesis is ready for the presentation of the **main findings**, including charts, etc.

**Last chapter(s): analysis and conclusion**

--Here you analyze and assess the findings of the previous chapter and explain how the hypotheses of Ch. I fared.

--Here you also express your **views** clearly and eloquently based on the evidence you've gathered.

--And finally, you describe the **shortcomings** of your study and findings and make **recommendations** for further study by future researchers of your topic.
Your style of writing should follow one of the established thesis style manuals accepted by the Graduate School: Chicago, MLA or APA.

D. Submitting theses

The Graduate School’s “Master’s Thesis/Project Guidelines” pamphlet is the authority on format. Graduate Studies will automatically send you the pamphlet, but if you don’t have it ask for it. Any deviation from it will cause rejection of your thesis/capstone. It is also advisable for you to show your work to the Graduate Studies staff before you begin your final draft. You are responsible for meeting ALL of your committee’s and College deadlines.

Also don’t forget that: Early in the semester in which you plan to graduate you must register for graduation.