

Spring 2017

J332G/J395 33: Explanatory Journalism: Storytelling in a Digital Age

Classes: T/Th 11-12:30 BMC 3.208

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Description & Objectives

“One way or another we are living the stories planted in us early or along the way.”

-- Poet and storyteller Ben Okri

“Tell me something I don’t know.” Almost forever good editors have asked reporters for stories that leap off the page and lodge themselves indelibly in readers’ minds. Stories that illuminate corners of the world and human experience people would not otherwise see. Stories that, in the words of an old editor of mine, “levitate.”

In my experience, we find such tales where our deep curiosity leads us. They can be about war, politics, crime or any other issue of importance to the immediate public interest. Or they can delve into areas that simply tell us something interesting about our world – like one of those trademark NPR stories that illuminates the secret life of the tuba or the unexpected history of the pear.

To tell such stories effectively, yes, we need to get our facts straight. But to make them memorable, we also need to access what Tom Wolfe calls the “emotional core”– exactly how and to what extent human beings and their experiences are bound up with the issue under your storyteller’s microscope.

Together we will learn how to find such stories, explore time-honored techniques for telling them, and examine new ways of interactive storytelling by which consumers of journalism take on greater responsibility to explain things to themselves.

In sum, the goal of this course is to come up with nonfiction stories we *really* want to tell, to tell them well, and to think hard about the processes and techniques that help us to do so. The course will help you establish habits for thinking deeply about the storytelling process, from the spark of an idea through to the finished tale. Stories that levitate.

Along the way, we will learn to:

- Define what constitutes *really good stories* that you want to tell and people want to read, see and hear.

- Think critically about your choice of topics.
- Identify the best format and tools for telling the story you want to tell.
- Hone thinking, writing and production skills.
- Study and practice techniques for adding quality to your stories.
- Consider the role of ethics in explanatory storytelling as it relates to fairness, accuracy and seeking truth in a digital age.

Course Mechanics

Focus: Consider this course a thinking person’s professional workshop. We will think as hard as we can about why, as journalists, we do what we do and how we can do it best. We’ll look for stories that *you* want to tell on the assumption that if you’re truly interested in something you can, by employing good technique, make other people interested too. You will produce one long-form story (print or multimedia) at the end of the semester after working methodically through the steps necessary to get there – from inspiration and reporting to organizing, drafting and editing.

Organization: We’ll start with the assumption that most people will want to work on projects as individuals. If you want to work on a team project that’s possible too—but we’ll want to make clear what constitutes a fair, equitable and substantive division of labor among team members. We’ll devote a portion of class time to editorial meetings in which we decide how to proceed and help one another sort out any challenges that arise.

What it’s not: This is *not* a course that will teach you new multimedia skills or software programs you will then use to tell stories. In fact, the purpose is exactly the opposite: to determine what tools are most appropriate for the story we want to tell and to use those. In short, the tools will not dictate the work; the work will dictate our choice of tools.

Classes

Our regular class meets for 75 minutes twice a week. As I say, think of it as a multifaceted editorial meeting in which we will:

- Start every Tuesday with a discussion of world, national and local news, and how it relates to our work. We call this “News of the Week.” You will be required to follow The New York Times (and I’d suggest you consider purchasing a digital subscription at the student discount for the semester). Other suggested outlets: The Guardian, Wall Street Journal, Washington Post, Al Jazeera English, BBC World News, Reuters, VICE News and BuzzFeed.
- Start every Thursday with a discussion of nonfiction stories you will pull from any source anywhere (e.g., magazines, newspapers, books) *because they appeal to you*. We call this “Stories We Like.” You’ll be responsible for presenting your story to the class, saying why you chose it and what we have to learn from it in terms of **Storytelling Essentials**. (See “Assignments” below.)
- Build up our intellectual capital for acquiring a better command of what story possibilities the world holds and how to discover and act on them.

- Workshop our reporting, writing and production techniques, according to the Course Schedule below.
- Vet any professional or technical challenges that arise in the course of your story development or review material covered in earlier sessions.
- Entertain guest speakers when the opportunity arises. (Note: From time to time we may need to adjust our schedule depending on availability of speakers.)

Assignments

1. Individual assignments will focus on the natural stages of bringing a good story to life: coming up with winning ideas; introducing your ideas in proposal form; developing *the* idea through researching and reporting; organizing your information; drafting your story; engaging with an editor and self-editing; and producing a final story that we (and others) like. To that end, we will produce the following:

- **Assign 1: Initial list of story ideas (due: Jan. 27, 6 p.m.)** 50 pts.
- **Assign 2: Story proposals, the first two (due: Feb. 10, 6 p.m.)** 100 pts.
- **Assign 3: Story proposals, the final one (due: Feb. 20, 6 p.m.)** 100 pts.
- **Assign 4: Reporter's blueprint (due: March 3, 6 p.m.)** 50 pts.
- **Assign 5: Outline + evolved blueprint (due: March 24, 6 p.m.)** 100 pts.
- **Assign 6: Story rough cut (due: March 31 1, 6 p.m.)** 100 pts.
- **Assign 7: Story fine cut (due: April 14, 6 p.m.)** 100 pts.
- **Assign 8: Story final (due: April 28, 6 p.m.)** 100 pts.
- **Class participation** 300 pts.

2. Grad students only: In consultation with your instructor, grad students will read a book, view a documentary video or otherwise consider a significant piece of work that uses the techniques of explanatory journalism to examine its topic. You will then write a critique assessing the work, citing at least three outside sources to help develop the argument. Length: 700 words. **Deadline: On or before March 27, 6 p.m.**

3. Storytelling Essentials: In this class participation exercise, we'll keep a running list during the semester of what we determine to be the essential elements for the successful telling of stories.

4. To help ensure productive in-class discussions, you will want to keep notes on your reading-listening-viewing assignments. The instructor reserves the right to require occasional "reflection papers" on the course material. (See "A Tip for Success" below.)

Project Formats: If your project of choice is print only, plan on producing a story of not less than 2,500 *finished* words (3,000 for graduate students) and not more than 3,500 *finished* words (4,000 for graduate students); if a photo essay, look to include 24 to 40 superior images in a storytelling format with captions and/or audio, and a print overview; if a video, plan to produce eight to 10 minutes of edited AV, and a print overview; if a podcast, produce six to 12 minutes of edited audio, and a print overview.

Important: If you plan to work in two or more formats, please consult your instructor on the appropriate parameters. And remember: Long-form storytelling requires length to establish depth, but quality, not gross quantity, is our main goal. Thus the emphasis is on thorough, “finished” work, with no loose ends.

Grades

1. **Timing:** Deadlines are sacrosanct in journalism and critical in any area of media production. Meet them and qualify your assignments for full credit; miss them and your highest potential grade will drop— one grade level (e.g., A minus to B plus) at each of the following benchmarks: 30 minutes, 12 hours, 24 hours late.

2. **Assessment:** Assignments will be graded on the skill with which you use words and, where appropriate, images and sound; good organization; solidly reported content; and production skills to illustrate and satisfy your topic – and the degree to which you improve your skills over the course of the semester. **See Appendix I below for a detailed assessment grid.**

3. **Points:** Final course grades will be calculated on the plus/minus grading system for both undergraduate and graduate students. They will be tallied according to the following percentage guidelines:

▪ Developmental assignments	400 points
▪ Semester project (total of all three drafts)	300 points
▪ Class participation	300 points
“News of the Week”	50
“Stories We Like”	50
Attendance and discussion	200

4. Grading Scale

A = 940 to 1000 points

 A- 900 to 939

 B+ 870 to 899

B = 840 to 869

 B- 800 to 839

 C+ 770 to 799

C = 740 to 769

 C- 700 to 739

 D+ 670 to 699

D = 640 to 669

 D- 600 to 639

Filing Your Work

All written communication between you and your editors (instructor and TA) will be electronic. For routine memos (messages), use standard email. We will post all assignments (proposals, outlines, drafts) as “files” to the discussion thread on our Canvas website. Please also file a backup copy of your assignment by email to Tracy and Cate with the assignment properly labeled (see below) and sent as a Word attachment.

Important: When filing an attachment always put the same label (slug) on both your email and the Word attachment.

Here’s how to create a proper slug:

Start by using the correct tag for the item you’re sending: For all assignments, it’s “file.” For all other messages, it’s “memo.” Add a space, then your last name, and then another space, and finally the assignment number (or for memos only, a brief topic identifier). If your last name is Smith, for example, and you’re filing your first assignment, the slug reads:

file smith assign1

If you’re sending a routine memo, it reads:

memo smith missed deadline

Please send all backup assignment files to both of your editors – one copy to Tracy, one to Cate. Send memos to either one or both, depending on to whom you want to talk about what.

Important: Excepting memos, anything you write for this class (story proposals, blueprints or story drafts) must carry a working headline. Artfully summing up our theme in a handful of words helps us focus – and focusing on what we want to say is half the battle in the effort to tell good stories.

Editorial Consultations

You will meet with Tracy at least once during the semester to discuss individual progress, reporting methods, research ideas and career goals. You are also encouraged to make use of office hours to discuss any of the foregoing.

Readings

Reading, both panoramic and sharply focused, is essential to your success as a journalist. Formal reading assignments come from main two sources – required texts or materials provided for you on Canvas. **Please do all the reading (or viewing or listening) assigned for each discussion so we can make the best use of our class time.**

Required Texts

Telling True Stories: A Nonfiction Writers' Guide From the Nieman Foundation at Harvard University, edited by Mark Kramer and Wendy Call
The Art and Craft of Feature Writing, by William E. Blundell

Course Flags

This course carries two course flags in the undergraduate curriculum: Independent Inquiry and Writing. Independent Inquiry courses are designed to engage you in the process of inquiry over the course of a semester, providing you with the opportunity for independent investigation of a question, problem, or project related to your major. You should expect a substantial portion of your grade to come from such activities. Writing courses are, as the term implies, writing intensive, in which case a substantial part of your grade comes from your written work.

Attendance & Rules of the Road

Showing up when you need to be there is a first requirement of the journalism professional. Come to class on time. Do your work. If you can't be on time, tell your instructor why – in advance.

Important: Please attend all classes. If you accumulate three unexcused absences from regular classes, you should consider dropping the course. (Please don't interpret this to mean you have three "free passes" – you don't. Each class period carries specific weight in your grade for class participation.) Being five minutes late equals half an absence. Fifteen minutes late is a full absence. Leaving class early will be treated the same way. Unexcused absences can be converted to excused absences when you present acceptable documentation – e.g., a note from a healthcare provider.

Professional courtesy: Attention is the key to good intellectual and creative work. To help us maintain our focus, sharp and clear, use of electronic devices (cell phones, tablets, e-readers or laptops) is not permitted during class unless required for in-class assignments specifically approved by the instructor. If you require personal digital connectivity during class time, this is not the class for you.

Likewise, please don't consume food in class. Beverages are okay provided they don't prove a distraction.

A Tip for Success

Taking good notes is second nature to professional and creative people; even in the presence of cameras or other recording devices you want your own record of comments and events to help you decide what *you* think about things and how they connect to *other things* you know. Accordingly, each time you encounter a source, whether human or media (e.g., book, article or video) please take notes. To talk or write authoritatively about a subject you need to not only read, view and/or listen but to master the relevant materials, which means retaining key ideas and supporting detail. Don't leave your data in the cloud; making information your own requires that you work it. Taking good notes is the best way yet invented to do just that.

Our Roadmap

The following class schedule is intended to provide a roadmap of the territory we will cover. At the same time, a map is a map, and we will speed up, slow down or change direction depending on the “reality on the ground” – to wit, our progress as a class in mastering the requisite materials and techniques.

COURSE INTRODUCTION: EXPLAINING WHAT TO WHOM AND WHY?

Jan. 17 **Some Basic Questions**

What will this course cover? How will it be structured and how will it work? We will review the syllabus and talk about how you will source “News of the Week” and “Stories We Like.”

Assigned TD memo: “News of the Week Made Easy”

19 **Basic Definitions**

What is explanatory journalism? How is it evolving? What is the “explanatory continuum”? What are “storytelling essentials”? How do we pick the best tools best for telling our stories?

Assigned *Telling True Stories*, p. xv-xvii, 3-16
Alumni Story Sampler on Canvas
TD memo: “‘Lucky Eight’ Story Ideas”

In-class A brief tour of story modes and techniques

24 **The Case for Story: Debating the Digital Impact**

What’s our “personal relationship with story”? What’s the impact of the digital revolution on our storytelling traditions? Are we in a “golden age” or dumbing down? What’s at stake?

Assigned Tracy Dahlby: “Twilight of the Story Gods”
James Bennett: “Against Long-Form Journalism”
CJR: “Readers Will Finish Long Stories,
Especially If They Come from a Trusted Source”

26 **Storytelling Basics: Considering the Continuum**

Explanatory journalism exists on a sliding scale, from the overwhelmingly expositional to the intensely narrative. Let’s examine stories to decide how

they're the same or different, and what that tells us about the nature of the craft and its materials. **Practice: We will also discuss how to write a story proposal.**

Assigned John Hersey: "Hiroshima"
Kathryn Schulz: "The Really Big One"
New York Times team: "The Avalanche at Tunnel Creek"
TD memo: "Writing Proposals That Levitate"

31 **Working the Blend: Plot, Architecture, Format and Technique**

Long-form storytelling is typically a blend of elements: Plot, structure (story architecture), format and technique. Let's also talk about "working the weave"—the technique of establishing a proper balance of narrative and exposition. **Practice: We will discuss the "Universal Story Template."**

Assigned Ana Swanson: "Kurt Vonnegut Graphed the World's Most Popular Stories"
John McPhee: "Structure"
TD memo: "Universal Story Template"
Optional: *The Art & Craft of Feature Writing*, p. 69-126

Feb. 2 **Form I: The Social Dynamic Narrative**

Longtime New Yorker writer John McPhee put it this way: "You find out what sort of writer you'll be by banging around from one form to the next." We'll start our study of form with one that melds an evolving event or trend with the narrative techniques of a nonfiction novel. In so doing, it tries to tap the emotional core in the service of larger social issues.

Assigned Jacqui Banaszynski: "AIDS in the Heartland"
Context and analysis on Canvas

Homework **Bring in a story you think is a current-day equivalent of "AIDS in the Heartland"**

7 **Form I: The Social Dynamic Narrative, Continued**

A Skype conversation with "AIDS in the Heartland" author Jacqui Banaszynski.

Assigned Jacqui Banaszynski bio

9

Form II: The Public Interest Explainer

Where does this type of story fit on our “explanatory continuum”? What are some hallmarks of great explaining? Let’s first look at “enlightened public narrative.” **Practice: Let’s discuss the uses of the “Reporter’s Blueprint.”**

Assigned NPR team: “The Giant Pool of Money”
TD memo: “The Reporter’s Blueprint”

Homework **Bring in a story you think is a current-day equivalent of “The Giant Pool of Money”**

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Inspiration I: Finding a Story

Coming up with ideas that have the right degree of “specific gravity” (substance + emotional density = energy ²) to carry the distance is both the challenge and the redemption of long-form work. Let’s talk about where the good ideas come from. **(A conversation with Texas Observer multimedia editor Jen Reel.)**

Assigned Texas Observer: “The Things They Left Behind”
NPR: “In Texas, A Database Of Exhumed Objects Aims To ID Migrants Who Perished”
Texas Observer: Jen Reel bio

16

Form III: Literary Nonfiction

Literary nonfiction comes in many forms, from the artfully angled profile to the autobiographical essay with stops in between. Do we need to make a case today for literary journalism? Is literary journalism too literary?

Assigned Gay Talese: “Frank Sinatra Has a Cold”
Zadie Smith: “Love in the Gardens”
George Orwell: “A Hanging”

21

Form III (cont.): Pointillism, A Subset of Literary Nonfiction

Let’s continue our discussion of nonfiction with a literary flair.

Assigned Gay Talese: “New York Is a City of Things Unnoticed”
Telling True Stories, p. 65-78, 89-94

23

Reporting I: The Art, Craft and Psychology of Handling Sources

Long-form work is source-intensive and, therefore, you surely want to think about practical guidelines in dealing with sources but also the deeper dynamics of the relationship between journalist and source. **Practice: Let's discuss the rudiments of field reporting.**

Assigned *Telling True Stories*, p. 24-45
Janet Malcolm: *The Journalist and the Murderer* (excerpt)
New York Times Book Review: "Is It Possible for a Writer to Be Objective?"

28

Form IV: Working the Profile

The pros tell us that doing a good profile is not only a matter of interviewing your main subject but also the people who know him or her best and can deepen the depth of field. Historical research is important too.

Assigned Kathryn Schulz: "Pond Scum: Henry David Thoreau's Moral Myopia"
Rachel Aviv: "The Philosopher of Feelings"
Telling True Stories, p. 86-89

Mar. 2

Reporting II: Thinking Your Story Through (And What Happens When You Don't)

Stage your reporting properly and save yourself tons of wasted effort when you're in the field. How do we find the "right" direction? How do we identify sources and cultivate them?

Assigned *The Art & Craft of Feature Writing*, p. ix-xii, 1-22

7

Inspiration II: Fanning the Creative Spark

No doubt about it: Coming up with winning story ideas is a creative process. What are some ways to locate and ignite our creativity? How do we get audiences "to invest"? How do we induce the "A-ha!" experience? **(A conversation with singer-songwriter Darden Smith.)**

Assigned *Telling True Stories*, p. 19-24, 55-59
SongwritingWith:Soldiers website
Darden Smith bio

9 **Inspiration III: Treasure Buried in the Mountain: Searching the Writerly Core**

If curiosity be a key, how do we exploit our own deep curiosity? What roles do myth and the psyche play in finding stories worth telling? How do we identify a story that rises internally?

Assigned Christopher Booker: *The Seven Basic Plots* (excerpt)
The Art & Craft of Feature Writing, p. 23-68

SPRING BREAK

21 **Form V: The Chess Game of Visual and Audio Storytelling**

A good documentarian, working in photos, film, sound or all three, faces challenges the pure writer doesn't. How different is it to work the "blend" and the "weave" in telling stories for the eyes and ears? (**Conversation with documentarian TBA.**)

Assigned Materials TBA

23 **Organization I: Methods and Chronology Revisited**

Explanatory work can be fun but is also fraught and fluid. You need a system. How do you find the one that works for you? Let's look again at how to handle source material, space and time.

Assigned *The John McPhee Reader*, "Introduction"
John McPhee: "Encounters with the Archdruid"

28 **Organization II: Reasons Stories Fail – No Characters, No Conflict, Too Much "About"**

Put people first. Okay, but how do we know when we've found the right ones? Why is "viewpoint switching" so important and why do we often come up short? What is "About-itis" and why is it a problem?

Assigned *The Art & Craft of Feature Writing*, p. 13-22 (review)
Tom Herman's memo on "About-itis"

30 Organization III: Translating Reporting Into Writing and Production

Stories aren't only about people and events; they also involve historical background and other elements that exist outside the narrative flow. How do we achieve proper balance between narrative and context? How do we translate our blueprint into a workable writing and production outline?

Assigned *The Art & Craft of Feature Writing*, p. 127-157
Telling True Stories, p. 97-121

Apr. 4 Production I: Let's Talk About Our Writing

So we've reported our story, organized our materials and our thoughts. Now comes the writing and production. Let's talk about how to make the writing part as painless as possible.

Assigned George Orwell: "Politics and the English Language"

6 Production II: Really, We Do Need to "Work the Weave"

One of the biggest challenges of telling narrative stories is to arrive at the right combination of ideas, examples and background. We'll review how to blend the necessary elements.

Assigned *Telling True Stories*, p. 125-159

11 Form VI: Telling Medium- and Long-form Stories on the Web and Where the Market is Headed

A number of former students and Storytelling alumni have or are now working as videographers for legacy and start-up media. In this session we'll discuss the state of medium- and long-form work on the web, technological change and the state of journalism in general. **(A Skype conversation with NBC News documentarian Rebecca Davis.)**

Assigned Materials TBA
Rebecca Davis bio

INTERLUDE: CONSIDERING CULTURE & ETHICS

13 Separating Fact from Fiction

Narrative storytelling can impose unique ethical challenges. How do we keep fact separated from fiction and sources protected? To what

extent do we have to maintain “distance” from our stories?

Assigned *Telling True Stories*, p. 163-193

18 Working Across Cultures

Crossing cultural boundaries requires special considerations too. How do we maintain our identity while exploring the identity of others? How do we gain entry into unfamiliar worlds and present them fairly?

Assigned Tracy Dahlby: “Into the Field: A Foreign Correspondent’s Notebook” excerpt
Telling True Stories, p. 46-51

20 Production III: The Overwhelming Advantages of Self-Editing

The ability to step back, spot flaws in your work and work out solutions as objectively as possible is a key to successful production – and not as painful as it sounds. We’ll discuss tips for better self-editing.

Assigned *The Art & Craft of Feature Writing*, p. 218-224; optional, p. 188-217.

25 Your Careers: The Entrepreneurial Storyteller

How does a young creative make a go of it in this heavily digitized, competitive age? Where should you place yourself, what steps should you take? What are employers looking for in creative types? What’s a “creative hub” and how does it work? **(A conversation with filmmaker and Arts + Labor owner Alan Berg.)**

Assigned *Telling True Stories*, p. 263-287
Alan Berg bio

27 Production IV: But Everybody *Does* Need an Editor

To be successful, you also need “another set of eyes” on your work to help shape the ideas and get a “sense of audience.” We’ll talk about the relationship between content producers and content editors.

Assigned *Telling True Stories*, p. 197-223

May 2-4 Course Wrap-Up: Reviewing the Road Traveled

APPENDIX I

Assessment Grid for Production Work

In evaluating your work for this course, we will use the following framework:

1. The work shows an effective, well-focused presentation of topic.

0 1 2 3 4

2. The ideas represented in the work are focused and well developed for the purposes of the assigned format.

0 1 2 3 4

3. The work demonstrates effective research and/or reporting, factually accurate, and is supported by appropriate sources.

0 1 2 3 4

4. The writing is straightforward, logical and persuasive of its point of view.

0 1 2 3 4

5. Grammar, spelling and punctuation are correct.

0 1 2 3 4

6. The work properly attributes sources.

0 1 2 3 4

7. The visual and audio materials used in the work (if any) are of a quality and variety conducive to telling the story well.

0 1 2 3 4

8. The work demonstrates critical thinking about issues relevant to a full treatment of the topic at hand.

0 1 2 3 4

APPENDIX II

Required University Notices and Policies

University of Texas Honor Code

The core values of The University of Texas at Austin are learning, discovery, freedom, leadership, individual opportunity, and responsibility. Each member of the university is expected to uphold these values through integrity, honesty, trust, fairness, and respect toward peers and community.

Documented Disability Statement

The University of Texas at Austin provides upon request appropriate academic accommodations for qualified students with disabilities. For more information, contact Services for Students with Disabilities at 471-6259 (voice) or 232-2937 (video phone).

Plagiarism and the Consequences of Plagiarizing

Any instances of plagiarism will be dealt with in accordance with University policies referred to in the web link immediately below. If you are in doubt about how to define or prevent plagiarism, ask your instructor and refer to the learning module, also below:

http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/sjs/acadint_conseq.php
<http://www.lib.utexas.edu/services/instruction/learningmodules/plagiarism/>

Resources for Learning & Life at UT Austin

The University of Texas has numerous resources for students to provide assistance and support for your learning.

The UT Learning Center: <http://www.utexas.edu/student/utlc/>

Undergraduate Writing Center: <http://uwc.utexas.edu/>

Counseling & Mental Health Center: <http://cmhc.utexas.edu/>

Career Exploration Center: <http://www.utexas.edu/student/careercenter/>

Student Emergency Services: <http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/emergency/>

Use of Canvas in Class

This course will use Canvas—a Web-based course management system with password-protected access at <http://canvas.utexas.edu>—to distribute course materials, to communicate and collaborate online, to post grades, to submit, and to give you online quizzes and surveys. You can find support in using Canvas at the ITS Help Desk at 475-9400, Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 6 p.m., so plan accordingly.

Use of E-Mail for Official Correspondence to Students

Email is recognized as an official mode of university correspondence; therefore, you are responsible for reading your email for university and course-related information and announcements. You are responsible to keep the university informed about changes to your e-mail address. You should check your e-mail regularly and frequently to stay current with university-related communications, some of which may be time-critical. You can find UT

Austin's policies and instructions for updating your e-mail address at <http://www.utexas.edu/its/policies/emailnotify.php>.

Religious Holy Days

By UT Austin policy, you must notify the instructor of your pending absence at least fourteen days prior to the date of observance of a religious holy day. If you must miss a class, an examination, a work assignment, or a project in order to observe a religious holy day, the instructor will give you an opportunity to complete the missed work within a reasonable time after the absence.

Behavior Concerns Advice Line (BCAL)

If you are worried about someone who is acting differently, you may use the Behavior Concerns Advice Line to discuss by phone your concerns about another individual's behavior. This service is provided through a partnership among the Office of the Dean of Students, the Counseling and Mental Health Center (CMHC), the Employee Assistance Program (EAP), and The University of Texas Police Department (UTPD). Call 512-232-5050 or visit <http://www.utexas.edu/safety/bcal>.

Emergency Evacuation Policy

Occupants of buildings on the UT Austin campus are required to evacuate and assemble outside when a fire alarm is activated or an announcement is made. Please be aware of the following policies regarding evacuation:

- Familiarize yourself with all exit doors of the classroom and the building. Remember that the nearest exit door may not be the one you used when you entered the building.
- If you require assistance to evacuate, inform me in writing during the first week of class.
- In the event of an evacuation, follow my instructions or those of class instructors.

Do not re-enter a building unless you're given instructions by the Austin Fire Department, the UT Austin Police Department, or the Fire Prevention Services office

Q drop Policy

The State of Texas has enacted a law that limits the number of course drops for academic reasons to six (6). As stated in Senate Bill 1231:

“Beginning with the fall 2007 academic term, an institution of higher education may not permit an undergraduate student a total of more than six dropped courses, including any course a transfer student has dropped at another institution of higher education, unless the student shows good cause for dropping more than that number.”