

**Spring 2016**

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

**Classes**                    **T/Th 11-12:30 BMC 3.208**  
**Lab**                         **F 9-11 BMC 3.378A**

Instructor:                Tracy Dahlby  
Office:                      BMC 3.324  
Telephone:                512-471-6272  
Email:                      [tracy.dahlby@austin.utexas.edu](mailto:tracy.dahlby@austin.utexas.edu)  
Office Hours:             Tuesday: 2:30 to 4; Wednesday 1:30 to 3; or by appointment

Teaching Assistant:    Cate Malek  
Telephone:                512-850-3299  
Email:                      [cate.malek@gmail.com](mailto:cate.malek@gmail.com)

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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.”

Where do we find such tales? In my experience, we find them wherever 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 that telltale NPR music story that illuminates the secret life of the tuba or the one limning the unique history of the pear.

To tell such stories effectively, yes, we need to get our facts straight. But to make stories memorable, we also need to access what Tom Wolfe calls the “emotional core” of a story – 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.

There's a concrete goal as well: To publish as many of our stories as possible on Reporting Texas.

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 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:** In hunting for good stories to tell, we will decide as individuals and a group what we want to work on, how and with whom. The starting assumption is that most people will want to work on projects as individuals. If you want to work on a team to produce an editorial package, that's fine too—but we will want to make clear what constitutes a fair, equitable and substantive division of labor among team members. We will 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 software skills you will then use to tell stories. In fact, the purpose is exactly the opposite. We will think about how to exploit our collective toolkit by choosing the right tools to best tell your particular story. In so doing, we hope to exploit the variety of storytelling talents of the individuals on our team and learn something from one another as we go. In short, the tools will not dictate the work; the work will dictate the 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.” News outlets you’ll be required to follow: The New York Times, The Guardian, Al Jazeera English, BBC World News and Reuters. Suggested outlets: The Wall Street Journal or The Washington Post, 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.)

## Labs

Consider Friday lab sessions our “newsroom” – a place for you to interact with colleagues and receive individual guidance on your reporting and production work. Interaction with an editor and other journalists is an important part of the human “software” that makes the editorial enterprise go – so be sure to take advantage of the opportunity.

**Important:** You are required to attend at least six lab sessions during the semester, including the three required sessions listed immediately below and underlined in the course schedule. Attendance will be taken. **You are strongly encouraged to attend all sessions, as the labs are critical to your success in refining your storytelling skills.** One-on-one meetings with your instructor or TA should not be viewed as a substitute for attending lab sessions.

**Mandatory labs: Jan. 29, Feb. 12 and Feb. 19.**

## Assignments

1. Individual assignments will focus on the natural stages of bringing to life a good story: coming up with winning ideas; introducing your ideas in proposal form; developing *the* idea through researching and reporting; organizing your information; drafting your story; editing it; 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. 29, 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. 19, 6 p.m.)** 100 pts.
- **Assign 4: Reporter’s blueprint (due: March 4, 6 p.m.)** 50 pts.
- **Assign 5: Outline + evolved blueprint (due: March 23, 6 p.m.)** 100 pts.
- **Assign 6: Story rough cut (due: April 1, 6 p.m.)** 100 pts.
- **Assign 7: Story fine cut (due: April 15, 6 p.m.)** 100 pts.
- **Assign 8: Story final (due: May 6, 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: 800 words. **Deadline: On or before March 25, 6 p.m.**

3. Storytelling Essentials: In this class participation exercise, you’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 for you. And remember, quality, not necessarily quantity, is our ultimate 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 sharply – one grade level at each of the following benchmarks: 30 minutes, 12 hours, 24 hours late. Be aware that you can always file your assignments *before* deadline for extra credit.

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. **Grid:** 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** **40 %**
- **Semester project (total of all three drafts)** **30 %**
- **Class participation** **30 %**

### **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. Also please 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 storytelling efforts in a handful of words helps us focus – and focusing on what it is we want to say is half the battle in the effort to tell good stories.**

## Editorial Consultations

You will meet with your instructor 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.

**Important: Please do all the reading (or viewing or listening) assigned by the deadline for discussion so that 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.**

**You are required to attend a minimum of seven lab sessions during the semester, including the mandatory sessions on Jan. 29, Feb. 12 and Feb. 19. Attending a lab means being there on time at 9 a.m. and staying for the entire session. The same rules of attendance for regular classes also apply to labs.**

**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. This is important both in the course and for your development as a critical thinker. 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. And taking good notes is the best way yet invented to ensure you have something of lasting value to show for your encounters with the world of sources and ideas... something you can then connect to what you already know and what you may soon discover.

### **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 or 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. 19      **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.”

### 21            **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**

**In-class**      A brief tour of story modes and techniques

### 22            **NO LAB THIS WEEK**

### 26            **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 on in a “golden age” or dumbing down? What’s at stake?

**Assigned**      Tracy Dahlby: “Twilight of the Story Gods”  
Michael Kinsley: “Cut This Story!”  
Rachel McAthy: “How Long-Form Journalism is Getting  
‘A New Lease of Life’ in the Digital World”  
Optional: CJR: “Readers Will Finish Long Stories,  
Especially If They Come from a Trusted Source”

### 28            **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.

**Assigned**      Sebastian Junger: “How PTSD Became a Problem Far  
Beyond the Battlefield”  
Paul Ford: “What Is Code?”  
New York Times team: “The Avalanche at Tunnel Creek”



**29 LAB: HOW TO WRITE A GOOD PROPOSAL (REQUIRED)**

**Assigned** TD memo: “Writing Proposals That Levitate”

**Feb. 2 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.

**Assigned** Ana Swanson: “Kurt Vonnegut Graphed the World’s Most Popular Stories”  
John McPhee: “Structure”  
Optional: *The Art & Craft of Feature Writing*, p. 69-126

**4 Format I: The Social Dynamic Narrative**

Combine a strong, sustained narrative, an evolving sociocultural event or trend, and the nonfiction techniques of a novel, and you arrive at a story form that sets out to tap the human core in the service of larger 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”**

**5 LAB**

**9 Format I: The Social Dynamic Narrative, Continued**

**A Skype conversation with “AIDS in the Heartland” author Jacqui Banaszynski.**

**11 Format 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.”

**Assigned** NPR team: “The Giant Pool of Money”

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

**12 LAB: ORGANIZATION I: STARTING YOUR REPORTER'S BLUEPRINT (REQUIRED)**

**Assigned** TD memo: "The Reporter's Blueprint"

**16 Format 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"

**18 Format III: Pointillism, Another 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

**19 LAB: REPORTING I: THE ART, CRAFT AND PSYCHOLOGY OF HANDLING OF SOURCES (REQUIRED)**

**Assigned** *Telling True Stories*, p. 24-45  
Janet Malcolm: *The Journalist and the Murderer* (excerpt)

**23 Production I: Getting Energy and Texture into Your Work**

One important way of pulling an audience into your story is to invest the work with descriptions of people, places and things that generate energy and stoke honest tension in the piece from the get-go. How do we do that? **(A conversation with NPR's John Burnett.)**

**Assigned** **Materials TBA**

**25 Forms IV: Working the Historical 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** Alan Bellows: "The Zero-Armed Bandit"  
Kathryn Schulz: "Pond Scum: Henry David Thoreau's Moral Myopia"

26

**LAB**

**Mar. 1**

**Format V: The Chess Game of Video Storytelling**

A good filmmaker faces the challenges of dealing not only with words but also moving images. How different is it to work the “blend” and the “weave” in telling stories for the screen? **(A Skype conversation with filmmaker Gibney.)**

**Assigned**      **Alex Gibney film TBA**

3

**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

4

**LAB**

8

**Story thinking I: Finding Out Where the Good Stories Live**

No doubt about it: Coming up with winning story ideas is a creative process. What are some ways to spark 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

10

**Story thinking II: 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

11

**NO LAB THIS WEEK**

**SPRING BREAK**

**22 Organization II: 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"

**24 Organization III: 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"

**25 LAB**

**29 Organization IV: 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

**31 Production II: 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"

**Apr. 1 LAB**

**5 Production III: 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

**7                    Format VI: A Newish-Slightly-Oldish-but-Durable-Enough-for-Now-Storytelling Thing**

Three years ago, the New York Times made jaws drop when it produce a game-changer in multimedia reporting: “Snowfall: The Avalanche at Tunnel Creek.” Today newsrooms across the country are using the same and more advanced techniques to tell similar stories. What represents the state of the art in traditional multimedia storytelling? **(A Skype conversation with New York Times senior staff editor Amy Zerba.)**

**Assigned      Materials TBA**

**8                    NO LAB THIS WEEK**

**12                  Format VII: Virtual Reality: The “New New” Thing**

You may have heard: The School of Journalism is working in partnership with Computer Science and The Washington Post to develop cutting-edge storytelling using virtual reality. School director R.B. Brenner will take us inside the stories currently in development. To what extent will VR change our ideas of what it means to tell a story?

**Assigned      Materials TBA**

**INTERLUDE: CONSIDERING CULTURE & ETHICS**

**14                  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

**15                  LAB**

**19                  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

**21                    Production IV: 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.

**22                    LAB**

**26                    Your Careers: The Entrepreneurial Storyteller**

Is it possible to make a go of it as a freelancer in this heavily digitized, competitive age? Let’s talk with former student Tara Haelle about how she’s successfully organized her career.

**Assigned**        **A sampler of Tara’s work**  
*Telling True Stories*, p. 263-287

**28                    Production V: 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

**29                    LAB**

**May 3-5            Course Wrap-Up: Reviewing the Road Traveled**

**In class**        NewsHour: “In Haiti, Kwame Dawes Tells of Quake Aftermath Through Poetry”

**NO LAB THIS WEEK**

## 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://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.”