

Field Ethics of Journalism in Serbia, Bosnia, and Kosovo

JOUR 3500 (3 credits / 45 hours)

SIT Study Abroad Program:

Serbia, Bosnia, and Kosovo: Peace and Conflict Studies in the Balkans

PLEASE NOTE: This syllabus is representative of a typical semester. Because courses develop and change over time to take advantage of unique learning opportunities, actual course content varies from semester to semester.

Course Description

This course will provide students with the necessary background in journalism ethics and reporting—both conceptual and experiential—in order to prepare for the production of a major feature story (ISPJ) in Serbia. Students learn the highest standards of journalism ethics by focusing on issues unique to conducting a journalistic assignment in the Balkans. Students gain an overview of the milieu in which Balkan journalists practice through ongoing reporting assignments, peer edits, and the development of a story pitch on an important issue in the Balkans related to Peace and Conflict Studies. This pitch will become the subject of the student's Independent Study Project in Journalism (ISPJ).

The course will deepen students' cultural and ethical awareness of the themes discussed during the semester while enhancing students' understanding and respect and increasing their ability to act sensitively, ethically, and responsibly while studying abroad and conducting their ISPJ. Students learn through a combination of lectures, in-class exercises, field-based activities, and individual meetings with the course instructors. Concepts presented and skills developed in the seminar underlie and reinforce all other program components.

In this course, students learn the strictest standards of journalism ethics with an emphasis on ethical issues encountered in foreign reporting, specifically in the Balkans. There are ongoing reporting assignments with professor-guided peer edits and with a focus on journalism ethics. Some tutorial sessions are provided online by the Poynter Institute, a premier journalism training organization based in the United States.

Learning Outcomes

The Field Ethics of Journalism in Serbia, Bosnia, and Kosovo course comprises 45 hours of instruction (3 credits). Upon completion of the course, students will be able to:

- Demonstrate the highest journalistic ethics and standards as practiced in a global environment

- Understand the unique ethical issues involved in reporting from the Balkans
- Conduct comprehensive and independent field reporting
- Develop a professional-quality pitch for the ISPJ with an eye towards publication
- Submit to the LRB the proposal and the application for review of the ISPJ research with human participants

Language of Instruction

This course is taught in English, but students will be exposed to vocabulary related to course content and Serbian words useful in field reporting.

Course Schedule

Module 1: Doing Journalism in Serbia and in the Balkans

Session 1: Orientation

This session includes the course introduction: conducting journalism research in the context of post-war societies, with the focus on post-Yugoslav dynamics and post-socialism, as well as a drop-off exercise.

Session 2: An overview: The politics of media in Serbia from the 1990s to the present

Students learn the strictest standards of journalism ethics with an emphasis on ethical issues encountered in foreign reporting, specifically in Balkans.

In this session students are:

I - briefly introduced to the political background that shaped media in Serbia as the country was transitioning into war and during the war-period Milošević regime in the 1990s:

- Media in communist Yugoslavia
- Late 1980s; Milosevic's rise in power, taking control over media in Serbia
- Serbian media war propaganda in 1990s, the creation of independent media as a response

II- introduced to the media scene in Serbia today

- Media in Serbia today, main media outlets, online media
- Government media policy, freedom of the press
- What could and what could not be reported, most sensitive issues, most interesting topics

Required Reading:

Subašić, K. (2002). Role of the Media and the Internet as Tools for Creating Accountability to Poor and Disadvantaged Groups. Occasional Paper UNDP Report, pp. 10-28.

http://hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/subasic_2002.pdf

Session 3: Balkanism & Orientalism: Standpoint & Insider/Outsider Positionality

- Discuss contemporary research and journalism work about the break-up of YU: top down vs. bottom up approaches
- Develop your standpoint (positionality): outsider/insider positions and the ways it shapes research topics/research questions and data analysis
- Definitions and terms: Southeast Europe, Balkans, Western Balkans, Orientalism, balkanization

Required Reading:

Goldsworthy, V. (2002). "Invention and In(ter)vention: The Rhetoric of Balkanization." In Dušan Bjelić D., & O. Savić (Eds). *Balkan as Metaphor*. Cambridge: The MIT Press.

Recommended Reading:

Bakić-Hayden, M. (1995). Nesting Orientalisms: The Case of Former Yugoslavia. *Slavic Review*, 54, 4, 917- 931.

Session 4: Choosing and Forming a Topic for Pitching a Feature Story

- How to choose a topic for a feature article
- Assessing audience interest
- Ethical/cultural awareness of limitations in asking certain questions/reporting certain topics
- Shaping your pitch for different media

Required Reading:

Huang, T. (2012). 6 questions all journalists should be able to answer before pitching a story. Retrieved from: <http://www.poynter.org/how-tos/writing/185746/6-questions-journalists-should-be-able-to-answer-before-pitching-a-story/>

Module 2: Field Reporting in Serbia

Session 1: Introduction to Field Reporting: Interviewing and Observation

- Foreign correspondent experience, how to report from a foreign country
- What does it look like working for a major news agency? What kind of features does Reuters look for? What if you have a story to offer to Reuters?
- Types of interviews, preparing for an interview
- Interview questions (in accordance with the topic)
- Ethical dilemmas and challenges—Objectivity
- Observation in field reporting, importance of color, details, background
- Human Subjects policy (SIT and your sending school)

Required Reading:

Fridman, O. (2016). Memories of the 1999 NATO Bombing in Belgrade, Serbia. *Südosteuropa*, 64(4), 438-443.

Block, R. (1995). The madness of general Mladic. *New York Review of Books*, 42(15), 7-9.

Session 2: Kosovo Excursion

Students work on an optional Reporting Assignment on current relevant themes in Kosovo

Session 3: Field Reporting II, Preparing to Write a Feature Story

- Reporting on Kosovo in Serbia—what could be read about Kosovo and where; how do Serbs get information about Kosovo?
- What is possible to report in Serbia about Kosovo and what is not?
- What language is used in local media in Serbia to report about events in Kosovo, Serb-Albanian relations, or Albanians in Kosovo? Case study: Reporting on the events: Serbia-Albania 2014 football match, Albanian Prime Minister's 2014 visit to Serbia.
- What is position of a foreign reporter in Serbia writing about the Kosovo issue?
- Ethical dilemmas and challenges: my positionality as an interviewer and a student from the US
- Documentation of data: field notes, research diary
- Ethics and privacy of the subjects/interviewees
- Introduce *Focused Story Pitch* assignment

Session 4: Field Reporting III, Writing Process

- Outsider/Insider position in covering war and post war stories—Bosnia as a case study
- Ethics and challenges in conducting research and working on post-war stories among vulnerable communities
- Discuss the “Expertee syndrome” and the “Zoo effect”

- Details of writing process: how to write a lead, open a story, build structure of the story
- Time management, expectations

Recommended Readings:

McPhee, J. (2013). Structure, beyond the picnic-table crisis. Retrieved from:
<http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2013/01/14/structure>

Module 3: ISPJ proposal and Final Pitch

Session 1: ISPJ Proposals

- ISPJ proposal: Structure and requirements
- In-class exercise: Choosing an ISPJ topic and defining your assignment
- IRB forms
- Feature a story structure, background research, relevant statements and reports that could help you better understand your topic
- How to quote sources, use of anonymous sources, relevance of sources used in the story
- How to form contacts and approach potential interviewees for your research
- ISPJ advisors: roles and responsibilities
- Travel during ISP: safety and security
- Remaining questions

Session 2: A Professional Pitch

Students finalize their ISPJ proposal. This typically requires at least 3 pitch revisions and numerous pitch sessions with professional journalists and the Academic Director. This process is particularly challenging, affording students the rare opportunity to work directly with seasoned professionals. The focus is on finding a compelling, original, focused journalistic story from Serbia having to do with Peace and Conflict Studies.

Required readings:

Watling, J. (2015). Pitching: keep it focused, the key to success. *The Rory Peck Trust*. Retrieved from <https://rorypecktrust.org/rpt-live/January-2015/pitching>.

Huang, T. (2012). 6 questions all journalists should be able to answer before pitching a story. Retrieved from: <http://www.poynter.org/how-tos/writing/185746/6-questions-journalists-should-be-able-to-answer-before-pitching-a-story/>

Recommended reading:

Marku, H. (2016). An Awkward Conversation about Foreigners in Kosovo. *Prishtina Insight*. Retrieved from: <http://prishtinainsight.com/awkward-conversation-foreigners-kosovo/>

Evaluation and Grading Criteria

Students will be expected to prepare for, regularly attend, and actively participate in lectures, discussions, and field visits. They will also be expected to complete all assignments in a professional, timely manner. The final grade will be determined as follows:

Assessment:

ISPJ Proposal (stage I, II, and final proposal)	40%
Reporting assignment	20%
Focused story	30%
Class Participation	10%

Class Participation evaluation includes:

- Students **file news of the day every day** throughout the program, taking turns in alphabetical order by last name. Each day, students file one story—the headline with a link to the story. In addition to completing the required readings and being able to

discuss them with a lively curiosity, students are expected to read local, regional, and global newspapers and other media.

- **Introduce today's lecturer:** This is not only a chance to hear what experts have to say about important topics in the Balkans, but also a chance to interview them. Do your homework before each lecture. Have questions ready. If it is your turn, be ready to introduce the lecturer. Your questions for the lecturers will be taken into account in your grade for the course. A big part of doing good journalism is asking the right questions. Respect differences of opinion (those of classmates, lecturers, local constituents engaged with on field visits). You are not expected to agree with everything you hear, but you are expected to listen and consider other perspectives with respect.

Grading Scale:

94-100%	A	Excellent
90-93%	A-	
87-89%	B+	
84-86%	B	Above Average
80-83%	B-	
77-79%	C+	
74-76%	C	Average
70-73%	C-	
67-69%	D+	
64-66%	D	Below Average
below 64%	F	Fail

Expectations and Policies

Please note that **late submissions** will have an effect on the **final grade**.

All assignments must be completed on the due date by a specified time. Any assignments received after the specified time will be considered late. Late assignments will be docked 5% (of the total possible grade, i.e., a 95% becomes a 90%), for each day, or portion of a day, late.

Students should notify the AD, and the person to whom you are handing the assignment, at or before the time of collection, that the assignment will be late; otherwise a grade of '0' may be given. All assignments must be satisfactorily completed in order to receive credit for the class.

Exceptions to this policy will only be made for serious and substantiated medical reasons brought to the attention of the AD BEFORE the due date/time. This policy applies to ALL academic components of the program.

Academic Policies: SIT prides itself on providing students with an experientially based program; we hold ourselves, and our students, to the highest of academic standards. Students are asked to refer to the **SIT Study Abroad Handbook** for policies on academic integrity, ethics, academic warning and probation, diversity and disability, sexual harassment and the academic appeals process.

Disability Services: Students with disabilities are encouraged to contact Disability Services at disabilityservices@sit.edu for information and support in facilitating an accessible educational experience. Additional information regarding SIT Disability Services, including a link to the online request form, can be found on the Disability Services website at <http://studyabroad.sit.edu/disabilityservices>.