

## **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

\*Please be aware that topics and excursions may vary to take advantage any emerging events, to accommodate changes in our lecturers' availability, and to respect any changes that would affect student safety. Students will be notified if this occurs.

### Module 1: Doing Journalism in Serbia and in the Western Balkans

Introduction to reporting circumstances in Serbia and the Balkans, similarities and differences of being a foreign correspondent in the region, including ethical and contextual issues.

#### 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 exercises.

#### 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:

- Introduction to the political background that shaped media in Serbia as the country was transitioning into war and during the war-period Milosevic 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
- Introduction 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:*

Ahmetašević, N. and Matic, T. (2014). *Transitional justice, culture, and society: Beyond outreach*. *International center for Transitional Justice*, pp. 211-220. Retrieved from: [https://s3.amazonaws.com/ssrc-cdn1/crmuploads/new\\_publication\\_3/%7B222A3D3D-C177-E311-A360-001CC477EC84%7D.pdf](https://s3.amazonaws.com/ssrc-cdn1/crmuploads/new_publication_3/%7B222A3D3D-C177-E311-A360-001CC477EC84%7D.pdf)

#### Session 3: Balkanism & Orientalism: standpoint and 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**

Introduction to the basic of journalism and field reporting, including interviewing and observation that would enable students to acquire skills and learn elements needed for a feature story.

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, AP or AFP look for? What if you have a story to offer to a foreign or regional media outlet?
- 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.

James F. (2017). Blocked in the Balkans: the refugees that Europe won't allow in. *The Guardian*. Retrieved from: [www.theguardian.com/world/2017/aug/08/eu-refugees-serbia-afghanistan-taliban](http://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/aug/08/eu-refugees-serbia-afghanistan-taliban)

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

- What is the position of a foreign reporter in Serbia when reporting on contested political issues?
- 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 Scene Piece story 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 “Expertise 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 Reading:*

Marku, H. (2016). An Awkward Conversation about Foreigners in Kosovo. *Prishtina Insight*.

Retrieved from: <http://prishtinainsight.com/awkward-conversation-foreigners-kosovo/>

### **Module 3: ISPJ proposal and Final Pitch**

Introduction to the pitching process in journalism; how to form a story idea and pitch it successfully to an editor. Students in this module learn how to finalize their ISPJ proposal and create a feasible reporting plan and timeline.

#### 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 ISPJ: 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:*

John McPhee’s writing Life: <http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2013/01/14/structure>

### **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:

#### Independent Study Project in Journalism Proposal (30%)

Students will make a three-stage proposal for a feature story that they plan to do as their Independent Study Project in Journalism, which includes a story idea, research question, context and a detailed reporting plan and timeline:

- In first stage students will propose a topic and a research question they are interested in;
- In the second stage students will define a story to cover the topic they are interested in, form a pitch based on a template, propose initial sources, provide a basic background and a reporting plan;
- Final proposal will be finalized following intensive consultations with the journalism instructor and a feedback received at a pitching session with an outside editor.

### Reporting Assignment (30%)

During the semester students will report three stories that will contain elements aimed at preparing them for the final project in journalism, a feature story:

- 250-300 word food story about Serbian cuisine, a restaurant or meal on their choice;
- 500-word long profile story about a Belgrade-based person or organization;
- 500-word story about a building of Radio Television of Serbia bombed by NATO in 1999.

### Poynter courses (20%)

Students must complete three online reporting courses developed especially for this program by the Poynter Institute, a premier journalism training organization based in the United States. Based on the Poynter course materials, students will prepare an in-class presentation.

### Photojournalism (10%)

Throughout the semester students will learn how to take photographs and part of their story assignments will be to include at least three photographs.

### Class Participation (10%)

Part of class participation will be students' responsibility to file news of the day, every day throughout the program. 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.

### Assessment:

ISPJ Proposal (stage I, II, and final proposal)	30%
Reporting assignments	30%
Poynter courses	20%
Photojournalism	10%
Class Participation	10%

### 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.

- Show up prepared. Be on time, have your readings completed and points in mind for discussion or clarification. Complying with these elements raises the level of class discussion for everyone.
- Have assignments completed on schedule, and done accordingly to the specified requirements. This will help ensure that your assignments are returned in a timely manner.
- Pay attention during lectures, ask questions in class, and engage the lecturer. These are often very busy professionals who are doing us an honor by coming to speak....
- Comply with academic integrity policies (no plagiarism or cheating, nothing unethical).
- Respect differences of opinion (classmates', lecturers, local constituents engaged with on the visits). You are not expected to agree with everything you hear, but you are expected to listen across difference and consider other perspectives with respect.

**Please refer to the SIT Study Abroad Student Handbook** for policies on academic integrity, ethics, 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](mailto: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>.