JOUR 4810.713

News/Sports Practicum

Fall 2026

Course Introduction

The News/Sports Practicum is experiential learning -- that is, a course in which you learn by doing. Experiential learning is the most powerful tool for mastering the skills, tools, and, most crucially, the judgment and discipline required for professional journalists. All Mayborn graduates must have at least one experiential learning credit, either through an internship or a practicum. This course meets this requirement.

You'll do stories and carry out related duties for the North Texas Daily, either for News or Sports. The Daily's editors will make your assignments and supervise your work. My role is to assess the quantity and quality of your work for practicum credit, help you through any difficulties, and report your earned grade.

Professor

Randy Lee Loftis, MA
Senior Lecturer, Digital Journalism, Mayborn School of Journalism
Faculty Adviser, North Texas Daily

Course meetings

- This course does not have regular meetings. Students are required to attend Slash, the Daily's weekly staff meetings, at 3 p.m. Fridays in GAB 105.

Contact information

- Email: randy.loftis@unt.edu
    - Email me only from your official UNT email account -
      - yourname@my.unt.edu -- or via Canvas messaging.
    - Don't use non-UNT email (gmail, yahoo, etc.), social media, or text.
    - If you work on campus and have a UNT employee email, don't use it for class matters.
    - Always tell me which class you're writing about. It makes researching your concern *sooo* much easier.
    - I'll reply within 24 hours, except for weekends and holidays.
- Office and phone: 211 Sycamore Hall; (940) 565-2395

Office hours

211 Sycamore Hall

- Tuesday& Thursdays, 10:30 a.m.-noon
- Other times by appointment
- … and I'll be at Slash

Course overview and requirements

Here's what's required to pass the practicum:

- You should expect to devote your time, talents, and energy to the practicum just as you would for an internship or a professional job. The more dedicated you are, the better your learning will be.
- You must choose at the semester's start whether you will write for News or Sports. This is your choice. You may also write on occasion for Arts & Life, the Dose, or Opinion, but not as your regular practicum beat, and subject to the rules found below under Academic Integrity and Ethics.
- The practicum has a default expectation of at least seven stories during the 15-week semester. This is flexible since no one can predict news developments, etc. A more complex story might count for two of these, for example. The Daily editors make these decisions and communicate them to me.
- You should be prepared to find and pitch stories on your own and to handle assignments from editors. Again, the editors are in charge.
- Practicum reporters, who generally have more developed skills, are key resources for the Daily and the UNT-Denton community. This means the editors may come to you for ideas and advice and that your high-quality work should serve as an example for less-experienced staff members.
- You should be prepared to collaborate and communicate with the visual journalists assigned to your story.
- You should keep a log of every story you do, noting:
    - when you pitched it or received the assignment
    - the assigned word count
    - the assigned deadline
    - when you submitted it to the editor
    - the submitted word count
    - when it was published or when it is scheduled for publication
    - a link, if it's been published.
    - You will turn in your story log to me at mid-semester and at the semester's end.

- You are expected to attend the mandatory orientation for the volunteer staff at the assigned time and date during the first week of the semester. Time and place TBA.
- You are required to attend Slash each Friday at 3 p.m.,
- You are expected to communicate often with editors, other staff, and, as needed, me. Professionals don't believe in ghosting.

Grading

Just like professional performance assessments, practicum grading is subjective.
I assign grades based on the student's performance and progress. I regularly communicate with Daily editors to assess performance.

- A: Excellent performance, initiative, and quality throughout the semester.
- B: Good performance throughout. Credit for significant improvement.
- C: Minimally acceptable performance throughout.
- D. Poor performance, below minimum standards. Course must be repeated for credit
- F. Wholly inadequate performance. Course must be repeated for credit.

A grade of Incomplete can be given under these defined circumstances:

- Only during the last quarter (four weeks) of the semesterOnly if the student is passing
- Only if the student has a justifiable and documented reason beyond their control for not completing the required work.

The student then has a maximum of one calendar year to complete the missing assignments and replace the incomplete with the earned letter grade.

Attendance policy

Attendance at Slash is mandatory. If you must miss, notify me and your section editor in advance.

Unexcused absences

... are unprofessional. More than one unexcused absence from Slash will result in a reduction of the semester grade or possible failure of the course:

- Two unexcused absences: reduction of one letter grade
- Three unexcused absences: reduction of two letter grades
- Four unexcused absences: automatic failure of the course.

Excused absences:

The best professional news organizations have high expectations but are not run like sweatshops. Things happen to us all.

If you're sick or face some other crisis, just let me know. I don't ask for a doctor's note, a copy of your loved one's published obituary, or the program from their memorial service. I try to respect your privacy and dignity.

In return, I expect everyone to demonstrate professional and personal integrity.

Academic integrity

Do right in all things.

Practicum reporters are bound both by the academic integrity rules of UNT, the Mayborn School of Journalism, and this course; and those of the North Texas Daily, which include the Society of Professional Journalists Code of Ethics. Violations of these rules may result in penalties including but not limited to:

- Loss of credit for an assignment
- Referral to the MSOJ/UNT academic integrity system
- Dismissal from the Daily staff and an automatic grade of F in the practicum.

See the syllabus for the full details of UNT and MSOJ academic integrity rules and procedures.

For this class, in addition to UNT and MSOJ rules, any of the following will count as academic integrity and ethics violations:

- Submission of copy written in any amount by or substantially based on generative AI. We do not publish AI slop. You should be prepared to document your own sources, found through your own reporting, for every statement in your story.
- Plagiarism
- Fabrication
- Deceiving, misleading, or lying to an editor, colleague, source, professor, or anyone else
- Unprofessional conduct or demeanor
- Failure to disclose a conflict of interest that should reasonably disqualify you from writing a story.

Adhering to all this should be easy. Any questions, see me.

Mayborn and UNT information:

JOURNALISM REQUIREMENTS & GUIDELINES

JOURNALISM COURSE REGISTRATION

- By registering for this course, you are stating that you have taken the required prerequisites according to your catalog year and major/minor status. If the instructor later determines that you haven't taken and passed these requirements, then you may be dropped at any point in the semester. If you have questions about your prerequisites, please see an advisor.
- A journalism major enrolled in any restricted 3000 and 4000 level classes must have taken and passed all foundational courses. Students must earn and maintain a 2.5 UNT and/or overall GPA (depending upon catalog year) to be eligible for major-level courses.

RE-TAKING FAILED JOURNALISM CLASSES

Students will not be allowed to automatically take a failed journalism course more than two times. Once you have failed a journalism course twice, you will not be allowed to enroll in that course for one calendar year after the date you received the second failing grade. Once a student has waited one calendar year after failing a course twice, the student may submit a written appeal to the director to be approved to enroll a third time. Students will not be allowed to re-take a failed journalism course more than three times.

TEXTBOOK POLICY

The Mayborn School of Journalism doesn't require students to purchase textbooks from the University Bookstore. Many are available through other bookstores or online.

FINANCIAL AID SATISFACTORY ACADEMIC PROGRESS (SAP) UNDERGRADUATES

A student must maintain Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) to continue to receive financial aid. Students must maintain a minimum 2.0 cumulative GPA in addition to successfully completing a required number of credit hours based on total registered hours per semester. Students cannot exceed attempted credit hours above 150% of their required degree plan. If a student does not maintain the required standards, the student may lose financial aid eligibility.

If at any point you consider dropping this or any other course, please be advised that the decision to do so has the potential to affect your current and future financial aid eligibility.
Please visit UNT Financial Aid (https://financialaid.unt.edu/satisfactory-academic-progress-requirements) for more information about financial aid Satisfactory Academic Progress. It may be wise for you to schedule a meeting with your MSOJ academic advisor or visit the Student Financial Aid and Scholarships office to discuss dropping a course before doing so.

ACADEMIC ADVISING

All first-time-in-college students at UNT are required to schedule an appointment with their Academic Advisor and receive an advising code to register for classes both fall and spring semesters of the first year in college. ALL students should meet with their Academic Advisor at least one time per long semester (Fall & Spring). It is important to update your degree plan on a regular basis to ensure that you are on track for a timely graduation.

It is imperative that students have paid for all enrolled classes. Please check your online schedule daily through late registration to ensure you have not been dropped for non-payment of any amount. Students have been unknowingly dropped from classes for various reasons such as financial aid, schedule change fees, parking fees, etc. MSOJ will not be able to reinstate students for any reason after late registration, regardless of situation. It is the student's responsibility to ensure all payments have been made.

ACCREDITATION

The Mayborn, which is one of over 100 journalism programs across the world that are accredited, is renewing its credentials this year. Accreditation is important to you because it means your degree is more valuable than one that comes from an unaccredited school.

Accreditation has profound benefits. Accredited programs may offer scholarships, internships, competitive prizes, and other activities unavailable in non-accredited programs.

Accreditation also provides an assurance of quality and rigorous standards to students, parents, and the public. Students in an accredited program can expect to find a challenging curriculum, appropriate resources and facilities, and a competent faculty.

Accreditation is our promise to our students that you will receive the best education possible in journalism and mass communication. With today's technology, anyone can present information

to a mass audience. But not all are trained in the creation of ethical messages that reach and serve diverse audiences that our standards uphold. What you learn in an accredited program makes you more marketable and your degree more valuable!

The Mayborn School's accreditation is determined by the Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communications (ACEJMC) through an extensive evaluation process. Accreditation by the ACEJMC council means we embrace the value of a broad, multidisciplinary curriculum that nurtures critical thinking, analytic reasoning and problem-solving skills that are the essential foundation for all mass communication education.

ADOBE ACCESS

UNT has a contract with Adobe. The following link contains all the information that students will need to purchase a subscription, and opt-out of an existing agreement that is at a higher price: https://cvad.unt.edu/cvad-it-services/it-services-adobe-cloud-access.html

The email address for students to ask questions or report problems is adobe@unt.edu.

JOURNALISM EQUIPMENT CHECK OUT

Checkout length for the **Canon Mirrorless Camera, Batteries, Lighting Gear, Mirrorless Tripods, Individual Lenses, and Accessories** can be checked out up to 72 hours.

To checkout a **Canon Mirrorless Camera and items listed above** longer than 72 hours, the Professor for the course will need to approve the request.

Checkout length for the **Panasonic Video Camera, Batteries, SDXC, and Tripods** can be checked out up to 24 hours.

To checkout a **Panasonic Video Camera and items listed above** longer than 72 hours, the Professor for the course will need to approve the request.

Please send extended reservations approval from the Professor to the following email: **mayborn-equipment@unt.edu**

Journalism Equipment Room - Location and Contact Information

The Journalism equipment room is located at **Chilton Hall 410 S. Ave. C, Room 155.**

Equipment room phone number is **940-565-3580.**

Equipment room email is **mayborn-equipment@unt.edu.**

Equipment room supervisor can be reached at **ladaniel.maxwell@unt.edu**

Journalism Equipment Room - Operating Hours

Monday/Wednesday: 9 a.m. – 9:00 p.m.

Tuesday/Thursday: 9 a.m. – 9:00 p.m.

Friday: 9 a.m. - 6 p.m.

Sat-Sun: 12 p.m. - 6 p.m.

Journalism Equipment Room - Agreement Form

Anyone who plans to check out equipment during the semester must complete the checkout agreement form found below:

Journalism Web Checkout Agreement Form

This form must completed prior to checking out equipment and only needs to be done once per semester.

Journalism Equipment Room - Late Returns/Abuse of Checkout Policy

For every hour the student is late; a ban will be placed on the student's account accumulating the same amount of time.

A **ban** restricts the student from checking out any equipment within the Journalism Equipment Room.

For example, if the student returns equipment 2 hours late, a 2 hour ban will be placed on the student's account.

If the student returns equipment 72 hours late, a 72 hour ban will be placed on the student's account.

If you are going to be late or unable to return equipment that you checked out on time, please email **mayborn-equipment@unt.edu** or **ladaniel.maxwell@unt.edu**

ACADEMIC ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

Understanding the academic organizational structure and appropriate Chain of Command is important when resolving class-related or advising issues. When you need problems resolved, please follow the steps outlined below:

Individual Faculty Member/Advisor

Dean, Mayborn School of Journalism

Divisional Dean, College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences

OFFICE OF DISABILITY ACCESS

The University of North Texas and the Mayborn School of Journalism make reasonable academic accommodation for students with disabilities. Students seeking accommodation must first register with the Office of Disability Access (ODA) to verify their eligibility. If a disability is verified, the ODA will provide you with an accommodation letter to be delivered to faculty to begin a private discussion regarding your specific needs in a course. You may request accommodations at any time. However, ODA notices of accommodation should be provided as early as possible in the semester to avoid any delay in implementation. Note that students must obtain a new letter of accommodation for every semester and must meet with each faculty member prior to implementation in each class.
Students are strongly encouraged to deliver letters of accommodation during faculty office hours or by appointment. Faculty members have the authority to ask students to discuss such letters during their designated office hours to protect the privacy of the student.
For additional information see the website for the Office of Disability Access (http://www.unt.edu/oda). You may also contact them by phone at 940.565.4323.

COURSE SAFETY STATEMENTS

Students in the Mayborn School of Journalism are urged to use proper safety procedures and guidelines. While working in laboratory sessions, students are expected and required to identify and use property safety guidelines in all activities requiring lifting, climbing, walking on slippery surfaces, using equipment and tools, handling chemical solutions and hot and cold products. Students should be aware that the University of North Texas is not liable for injuries incurred while students are participating in class activities. All students are encouraged to secure adequate insurance coverage in the event of accidental injury. Students who do not have insurance coverage should consider obtaining Student Health Insurance for this insurance program. Brochures for this insurance are available in the UNT Health and Wellness Center on campus. Students who are injured during class activities may seek medical attention at the UNT Health and Wellness Center at rates that are reduced compared to other medical facilities. If you have an insurance plan other than Student Health Insurance at UNT, please be sure that your plan

covers treatment at this facility. If you choose not to go to the UNT Health and Wellness Center, you may be transported to an emergency room at a local hospital. You are responsible for expenses incurred there.

ACADEMIC DISHONESTY

Academic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to, the use of any unauthorized assistance in taking quizzes, tests, or exams; dependence upon the aid of sources beyond those authorized by the instructor, the acquisition of tests or other material belonging to a faculty member, dual submission of a paper or project, resubmission of a paper or project to a different class without express permission from the instructors, or any other act designed to give a student an unfair advantage. Plagiarism includes the paraphrase or direct quotation of published or unpublished works *without* full and clear acknowledgment of the author/source. Academic dishonesty will bring about disciplinary action which may include expulsion from the university. This is explained in the UNT Student Handbook.

MSOJ ACADEMIC INTEGRITY POLICY

The codes of ethics from the Society of Professional Journalists, American Advertising Federation and Public Relations Society of America address truth and honesty. The Mayborn School of Journalism embraces these tenets and believes that academic dishonesty of any kind – including plagiarism and fabrication – is incongruent with all areas of journalism. The school's policy aligns with UNT Policy 06.003 and requires reporting any act of academic dishonesty to the Office for Academic Integrity for investigation. If the student has a previous confirmed offense (whether the first offense was in the journalism school or another university department) and the student is found to have committed another offense, the department will request the additional sanction of removing the student from the Mayborn School of Journalism. The student may appeal to the Office for Academic Integrity, which ensures due process and allows the student to remain in class pending the appeal.

FINAL EXAM POLICY

Final exams will be administered at the designated times during the final week of each long semester and during the specified day of each summer term. Please check the course calendar early in the semester to avoid any schedule conflicts.

This course does not have a final exam.

As you know, your access point for business and academic services at UNT occurs within the My.UNT site (www.my.unt.edu). If you do not regularly check EagleConnect or link it to your

favorite e-mail account, please so do, as this is where you learn about job and internship opportunities, MSOJ events, scholarships, and other important information. Visit the Eagle Connect website for more information (http://eagleconnect.unt.edu/) including tips on how to forward your email.

COURSES IN A BOX

Any MSOJ equivalent course from another university must receive prior approval from the MSOJ academic advisor to ensure that all MSOJ degree plan requirements are met. For example, courses that are taken online or from a program that offers course material via CD, booklet, or other manner of correspondence must have prior advisor approval.

IMPORTANT NOTICE FOR F-1 STUDENTS TAKING DISTANCE EDUCATION COURSES

To comply with immigration regulations, an F-1 visa holder within the United States may need to engage in an on-campus experiential component for this course. This component (which must be approved in advance by the instructor) can include activities such as taking an on-campus exam, participating in multiple on-campus lecture or lab activity, or other on-campus experience integral to the completion of this course.

If such an on-campus activity is required, it is the student's responsibility to do the following:

> (1) Submit a written request to the instructor for an on-campus experiential component within one week of the start of the course.
>
> (2) Ensure that the activity on campus takes place and the instructor documents it in writing with a notice sent to the International Advising Office. The UNT International Advising Office has a form available that you may use for this purpose.

Because the decision may have serious immigration consequences, if an F-1 student is unsure about his or her need to participate in an on-campus experiential component for this course, students should contact the UNT International Advising Office (telephone 940-565-2195 or email international@unt.edu) to get clarification before the one-week deadline.

EMERGENCY NOTIFICATION & PROCEDURES

UNT uses a system called Eagle Alert to quickly notify you with critical information in an event of emergency (i.e., severe weather, campus closing, and health and public safety emergencies like chemical spills, fires, or violence). In the event of a university closure, please refer to Canvas for contingency plans for covering course materials. If Canvas is not accessible during

the emergency, contact me via email or phone for more information. Students should confirm that their Eagle Alert contact information is correct via the myUNT portal.

STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF TEACHING (SPOT)

Student feedback is important and an essential part of participation in this course. The student evaluation of instruction is a requirement for all organized classes at UNT. The short SPOT survey will be made available to provide you with an opportunity to evaluate how this course is taught. You will receive an email from "UNT SPOT Course Evaluations via *IASystem* Notification" (no-reply@iasystem.org) with the survey link. Please look for the email in your UNT email inbox. Simply click on the link and complete your survey. Once you complete the survey you will receive a confirmation email that the survey has been submitted. For additional information, please visit the SPOT website (www.spot.unt.edu) or email spot@unt.edu. Spots survey dates:

Term	Survey Administration Dates
8W1	September 29-October 8
8W2	December 1-December 10
Reg Fall Term	November 17-December 3

ACCEPTABLE STUDENT BEHAVIOR

Student behavior that interferes with an instructor's ability to conduct a class or other students' opportunity to learn is unacceptable and disruptive and will not be tolerated in any instructional forum at UNT. Students engaging in unacceptable behavior will be directed to leave the classroom and the instructor may refer the student to the Dean of Students to consider whether the student's conduct violated the Code of Student Conduct. The university's expectations for student conduct apply to all instructional forums, including university and electronic classroom, labs, discussion groups, field trips, etc. The Code of Student Conduct can be found on the Dean Of Students website (www.deanofstudents.unt.edu).

CLASSROOM POLICIES

The Mayborn School of Journalism requires that students respect and maintain all university property. Students will be held accountable through disciplinary action for any intentional damages they cause in classrooms. (e.g., writing on tables). Disruptive behavior is not tolerated (e.g., arriving late, leaving early, sleeping, talking on the phone, texting or game playing, making inappropriate comments, ringing cellular phones/beepers, dressing inappropriately).

SEXUAL DISCRIMINATION, HARRASSMENT, & ASSAULT

UNT is committed to providing an environment free of all forms of discrimination and sexual harassment, including sexual assault, domestic violence, dating violence, and stalking. If you (or someone you know) has experienced or experiences any of these acts of aggression, please know that you are not alone. The federal Title IX law makes it clear that violence and harassment based on sex and gender are Civil Rights offenses. UNT has staff members trained to support you in navigating campus life, accessing health and counseling services, providing academic and housing accommodations, helping with legal protective orders, and more.

UNT's Dean of Students' website (http://deanofstudents.unt.edu/resources_0) offers a range of on-campus and off-campus resources to help support survivors, depending on their unique needs. Renee LeClaire McNamara is UNT's Student Advocate and she can be reached through e-mail at SurvivorAdvocate@unt.edu or by calling the Dean of Students' office at 940-565-2648. You are not alone. We are here to help.

MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

UNT provides mental health services to students to help ensure there are numerous outlets to turn to that wholeheartedly care for and are there for students in need, regardless of the issue or its severity. Listed below are several resources on campus that can support your academic success and mental well-being:

1. Student Health and Wellness Center
(https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/student-health-and-wellness-center#programs)
1800 Chestnut St. (Chestnut Hall)
940-565-2333
M-Th, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.

2. Counseling and Testing Services – Free to UNT Students
(https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/counseling-and-testing-services)
801 N. Texas Blvd., Suite 140 (Gateway Center)
940-565-2741
M-F, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.

3. UNT CARE Team – Free to UNT Students
(https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/care)
Dean of Students, University Union
940-565-2648

careteam@unt.edu

4. Psychiatric Services (https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/student-health-and-wellness-center/services/psychiatry)
940-565-2333

5. Individual Counseling – Free to UNT Students (https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/counseling-and-testing-services/services/individual-counseling)
940-369-8773

If at any time you are feeling alone or in jeopardy of self-harm, reach out to any of the following:

- National Suicide Hotline 800-273-8255
- Denton County MHMR Crisis Line 800-762-0157
- Denton County Friends of the Family Crisis Line (family or intimate partner violence) 940-382-7273
- UNT Mental Health Emergency Contacts
    - During office hours, M-F, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m: Call 940-565-2741
    - After hours: Call 940-565-2741
    - Crisis Line: Text CONNECT to 741741
    - Live chat: (http://www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org)

STATEMENTS OF STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

Statement of Student Learning Outcomes

- ð Understand and apply the principles and laws of freedom of speech and press for the country in which the institution that invites ACEJMC is located, as well as receive instruction in and understand the range of systems of freedom of expression around the world, including the right to dissent, to monitor and criticize power, and to assemble and petition for redress of grievances
- ð Demonstrate an understanding of the history and role of professionals and institutions in shaping communications
- ð Demonstrate an understanding of diversity in domestic society in relation to mass communications
- ð Demonstrate an understanding of the diversity of peoples and cultures and of the significance and impact of mass communications in a global society

- ð Understand concepts and apply theories in the use and presentation of images and information
- ð Demonstrate an understanding of professional ethical principles and work ethically in pursuit of truth, accuracy, fairness and diversity
- ð Think critically, creatively and independently
- ð Conduct research and evaluate information by methods appropriate to the communications professions in which they work
- ð Write correctly and clearly in forms and styles appropriate for the communications professions, audiences and purposes they serve
- ð Critically evaluate their own work and that of others for accuracy and fairness, clarity, appropriate style and grammatical correctness
- ð Apply basic numerical and statistical concepts
- ð Apply tools and technologies appropriate for the communications professions in which they work