

# COURSE SYLLABUS

|                    |                                      |
|--------------------|--------------------------------------|
| COURSE NUMBER      | COMM 4306                            |
| SECTION            | 001                                  |
| CLASS NAME         | Election Night Broadcasting          |
| CLASSROOM          | PHEB 102                             |
| MEETING DAYS/TIMES | TR 2:00–3:15 PM                      |
| TERM               | Fall 2026 (August 25–December 3)     |
| INSTRUCTOR         | Dr. Brian C. Brantley                |
| EMAIL              | brian.brantley@tamusa.edu            |
| OFFICE             | CAB 319C                             |
| OFFICE PHONE       | 210-784-2214                         |
| OFFICE HOURS       | TR 830–915 AM, 1230–130 PM, 330–4 PM |

## WHAT THIS CLASS ACTUALLY IS

**Catalog Description** — A special-topics production course in which students build and execute a live, student-produced broadcast of Election Day returns, with emphasis on local and regional races and ballot measures. Students learn to identify and research locally relevant political stories, develop on-camera and technical production skills, and analyze election results and broadcast decisions after the fact.

**Course Objectives** — By the end of this course, students should be able to do each of the following:

1. Identify and evaluate the newsworthiness of local and regional political stories, and articulate why a story merits coverage.
2. Conduct verified, source-based research on political races and ballot measures under deadline pressure.
3. Perform effectively in at least one live broadcast production role (on-camera, technical, or production/editorial).
4. Apply ethical and legal standards for election-night broadcast journalism, including verification and on-air error correction.
5. Analyze actual election results against pre-election research and the broadcast's editorial decisions.
6. Collaborate as part of a live production crew under real-time pressure.

**Prerequisites** — None.

**Special Course Designation** — None.

## REQUIRED TEXT

Stewart, P., & Alexander, R. *Broadcast Journalism: Techniques of Radio and Television News* (8th ed.). Routledge.

Supplemental (free, provided via Blackboard): Reporters Committee for Freedom of the Press, Election Legal Guide; The Elections Group, Covering Elections and Voting; CEIR, explainer on election results coverage; Journalist's Resource, election reporting tip sheets.

## HOW THIS CLASS IS GOING TO WORK

The semester is divided into six phases, building toward a live broadcast of the November 2026 midterm election returns:

- Foundations (Weeks 1–2) — ethics, story types, newsworthiness criteria
- Research Methods (Weeks 3–4) — story pitching, verification, interviewing, writing
- Production Skills (Weeks 5–8) — on-camera, technical, and newsroom production training, rotating through crew roles
- Dress Rehearsals (Weeks 9–10) — full mock broadcasts, final crew assignments locked
- Election Night (Week 11) — the live broadcast itself
- Aftermath/Autopsy (Weeks 12–15) — critique, results analysis, portfolio

A recurring 'Story Watch' practice runs inside regular sessions throughout the semester, evolving from instructor-led newsworthiness criteria, to student-led story pitches, to live beat monitoring, to real-time judgment calls during rehearsals — scaffolded to build toward the judgment calls the crew will need to make on election night itself.

Beat assignment is hybrid: students pitch beats via the Story Pitch Memo, and the instructor selects the strongest pitches and fills any remaining coverage gaps.

## GRADING

| Component                                                                          | Weight |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------|
| Individual Deliverables (10 assignments — see Assignment Sheets)                   | 33.3%  |
| Role Performance (General Performance Matrix — 30% rehearsals, 70% election night) | 33.3%  |
| Collective Broadcast Outcome (whole-crew scorecard)                                | 33.3%  |

Ten assignments carry these components — see the companion Assignment Sheets document for full instructions, and the Assessment Matrix document for the General Performance Matrix and Collective Outcome Scorecard.

Letter grades are assigned as follows:

| Grade | Score    |
|-------|----------|
| A     | 90–100   |
| B     | 80–89    |
| C     | 70–79    |
| D     | 60–69    |
| F     | Below 60 |

# CLASS POLICIES

## Late Work Policy

Late work is accepted up to one week past the due date. A 5% penalty applies for each day the work is late.

## Attendance Policy

**Attendance** — Attendance is mandatory for this class and all others in the Communication program. If you do miss a class, it is your responsibility to check Blackboard, find out about any assignments/due dates/handouts/announcements that were covered in the class(es) you missed, and make up any work you missed.

**Absences** — Missing the equivalent of two weeks of class due to unexcused absences will reduce your final grade for the course by one full letter grade. Missing the equivalent of three weeks of class due to unexcused absences means that you cannot pass the course. Should this happen, you will (a) need to drop the course or (b) receive a failing grade. In a course like this one, six absences is the equivalent of missing three weeks of class.

- An excused absence is one in which you miss class either for a required activity or because of illness (excessive excused absences can also result in you not passing the class).
- An unexcused absence is any other absence.

**Arriving on Time** — This course begins at 2:00 PM every Tuesday and Thursday. If you arrive after attendance has been recorded, then you will be counted late for that class session.

**Accumulated Lates** — Three lates equals one absence. These add up more quickly than you'd think.

**Classroom Distractions** — If you're doing something in class that has nothing to do with what we're covering that day, then I'm likely to be distracted by what you're doing. If you distract me, I will ask you as politely as possible to stop. If you persist in the distracting behavior, then you will be removed from class for the remainder of that day's class.

*Election night (Nov 3) attendance is effectively mandatory given crew roles — a missed crew position is not just a missed class but a gap in the broadcast itself.*

## Use of Generative AI

On all classroom assignments, you will be allowed to use Grammarly for Education in order to guide you in the writing process (but NOT as a substitute for doing the actual writing yourself).

# IMPORTANT POLICIES AND RESOURCES

## University Email Policy and Course Communications

All correspondence between professors and students must occur via university email accounts. You must have your Jaguar email account ready and working. If it is not working, contact the help desk at [helpdesk@tamusa.edu](mailto:helpdesk@tamusa.edu) or at 210-784-HELP (4357). If you don't hear back within 48 hours, contact them again. They have many requests during the first part of the semester, so you may need to follow up with them.

## Academic Accommodations for Individuals with Disabilities

Texas A&M University-San Antonio is committed to providing all students with reasonable access to learning opportunities and accommodations in accordance with The Americans with Disabilities Act, as

amended, and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act. If you experience barriers to your education due to a disability or think you may have a disability, Disability Support Services is in the Central Academic Building, Suite 210. You can also contact us via phone at (210) 784-1335, visit us at the Disability Support Services website, or email us at [dss@tamusa.edu](mailto:dss@tamusa.edu). Disabilities may include, but are not limited to, attentional, learning, mental health, sensory, physical, or chronic health conditions. All students are encouraged to discuss their academic accommodations with Disability Support Services and their instructors as soon as possible.

## Academic Learning Center

All currently enrolled students at Texas A&M University-San Antonio can utilize the Academic Learning Center for subject-area tutoring. The Academic Learning Center provides free course-based tutoring to all currently enrolled students at Texas A&M University-San Antonio. Students wishing to work with a tutor can make appointments through the Brainfuse online tutoring platform. Brainfuse can be accessed in the Tools section of Blackboard. You can contact the Academic Learning Center by emailing [tutoring@tamusa.edu](mailto:tutoring@tamusa.edu), calling (210) 784-1307, or visiting the Central Academic Building, room 202. Online tutoring is also available for after hours and weekend assistance.

While tutoring hours may change based on tutor schedules and availability, the current tutoring hours in the ALC are as follows:

| Day       | Appointments available | Walk-in Tutoring — No appointment needed |
|-----------|------------------------|------------------------------------------|
| MONDAY    | 8 am–6 pm              | 9 am–5 pm                                |
| TUESDAY   | 8 am–6 pm              | 9 am–5 pm                                |
| WEDNESDAY | 8 am–6 pm              | 9 am–5 pm                                |
| THURSDAY  | 8 am–6 pm              | 9 am–5 pm                                |
| FRIDAY    | 8 am–5 pm              | 11 am–4 pm                               |

## Counseling/Mental Health Resources

As a college student, there may be times when personal stressors interfere with your academic performance and negatively impact your daily functioning. If you are experiencing emotional difficulties or mental health concerns, support is available to you through the Student Counseling Center (SCC). To schedule an appointment, visit our website, call 210-784-1331 or visit Madla 120 between the hours of 8:00 AM and 5:00 PM.

All mental health services provided by the SCC are free and confidential (as the law allows). The Student Counseling Center provides brief individual and group therapy, crisis intervention, consultation, case management, and prevention services. Crisis support is available 24/7/365 by calling the SCC at 210-784-1331 or through the TELUS Student Support App, which also provides an anonymous peer-to-peer support network, mental health screenings, podcasts, and articles to improve your mental wellbeing.

## Emergency Preparedness

JagE Alert is Texas A&M University-San Antonio's mass notification system. In the event of an emergency, such as inclement weather, students, staff and faculty, who are registered, will have the option to receive a text message, email with instructions and updates. To register or update your information, visit the JagE Alert website. More information about the Emergency Operations Plan and

the Emergency Action Plan is available from the university. Download the SafeZone App (<https://safezoneapp.com/>) for emergencies or call (210) 784-1911. Non-Emergency (210) 784-1900.

## **Financial Aid and Verification of Attendance**

According to the following federal regulation, 34 CFR 668.21: U.S. Department of Education (DoE) Title IV regulation, a student can only receive Title IV funds based on Title IV eligibility criteria which include class attendance. If Title IV funds are disbursed to ineligible students (including students who fail to begin attendance), the institution must return these funds to the U.S. DoE within 30 days of becoming aware that the student will not or has not begun attendance. Faculty will provide the Office of Financial Aid with an electronic notification if a student has not attended by the published Census Date (the first week of class). Any student receiving federal financial aid who does not attend prior to the published Census Date will have their aid terminated and returned to the DoE. Please note that any student who stops attending at any time during the semester may also need to return a portion of their federal aid.

## **Jaguar Writing, Language, and Digital Composing Center (WLDCC)**

The WLDCC provides writing support to graduate and undergraduate students in all three colleges as well as faculty and staff. Writing tutors work with students to develop reading skills, prepare oral presentations, and plan, draft, and revise their written assignments. Our language tutors support students enrolled in Spanish courses and students composing in Spanish for any assignment. Our digital studio tutors support students working on digital projects such as eportfolios, class presentations, or other digital multimedia projects. The WLDCC offers face-to-face, synchronous online, and asynchronous digital appointments. Students can schedule appointments with the WLDCC in JagWire under the Student Services tab. Click on "Writing, Language, and Digital Composing Center" to make your appointment. The WLDCC can also be reached by emailing [wldcc@tamusa.edu](mailto:wldcc@tamusa.edu).

## **Meeting Basic Needs**

Any student who has difficulty affording groceries or accessing sufficient food to eat every day or who lacks a safe and stable place to live, and believes this may affect their performance in the course, is urged to submit a CARE report for support. Furthermore, please notify the professor if you are comfortable in doing so. This will enable them to direct you to available resources. A food pantry is available on campus — contact the General's Store for hours and contact information.

## **Military Affairs**

Veterans and active-duty military personnel are welcomed and encouraged to visit the Office of Military Affairs for any question involving federal or state VA Education Benefits. Visit the Patriots' Casa building, room 202, or contact the Office of Military Affairs at [military.va@tamusa.edu](mailto:military.va@tamusa.edu) or (210) 784-1397.

## **Religious Observances**

Texas A&M University-San Antonio recognizes the wide variety of faiths represented among the campus community and protects the rights of students, faculty, and staff to observe religious holidays according to their tradition. Under the policy, students are provided an opportunity to make up any examination, study, or course work requirements that may be missed due to a religious observance, provided they notify their instructors before the end of the second week of classes for regular session classes.

## **The Six-Drop Rule**

Students are subject to the requirements of Senate Bill (SB) 1231 passed by the Texas Legislature in 2007. SB 1231 limits students to a maximum of six (6) non-punitive course drops (i.e., courses a

student chooses to drop) during their undergraduate careers. A non-punitive drop does not affect the student's GPA. However, course drops that exceed the maximum allowed by SB 1231 will be treated as "F" grades and will impact the student's GPA.

## **Statement of Harassment and Discrimination**

Texas A&M University-San Antonio is committed to the fundamental principles of academic freedom, equal opportunity, and human dignity. Texas A&M University-San Antonio, in accordance with applicable federal and state law, prohibits discrimination, including harassment, on the basis of race, color, sex, religion, national origin, age, disability, genetic information, veteran status, sexual orientation, or pregnancy/parenting status. Individuals who believe they have experienced harassment or discrimination prohibited by this statement are encouraged to contact the University's Civil Rights Officer at 210-784-2061 or [titleix@tamusa.edu](mailto:titleix@tamusa.edu).

Texas A&M University-San Antonio faculty are committed to providing a safe learning environment for all students and for the university as a whole. If you have experienced any form of sex discrimination or harassment, including sexual assault, sexual harassment, domestic or dating violence, or stalking based on sex, know that help and support are available. Please be aware that all A&M-San Antonio employees (other than those designated as confidential resources such as counselors and trained victim advocates) are required to report information about such discrimination and harassment to the university's Title IX Coordinator ([titleix@tamusa.edu](mailto:titleix@tamusa.edu), 210-784-2061, CAB 439K). If you wish to speak to a confidential employee who does not have this reporting requirement, you can contact the Student Counseling Center at (210) 784-1331 or visit them in Madla 120.

## **Pregnant/Parenting Students**

Texas A&M-San Antonio does not require a pregnant or parenting student, solely because of that status, to take a leave of absence, limit their studies, change their program, or otherwise stop participating in any course, activity, or program at the University. The university will provide such reasonable accommodations to pregnant students as would be provided to a student with a temporary medical condition related to the health and safety of the student and the student's unborn child. Pregnant/parenting students are encouraged to contact the Title IX Coordinator with any questions or concerns related to their status ([titleix@tamusa.edu](mailto:titleix@tamusa.edu); 210-784-2061; CAB 439K).

Texas A&M-San Antonio has also designated the Title IX Coordinator as the liaison officer for current or incoming students who are the parent or guardian of a child younger than 18 years of age. Young Jaguars can support parenting students with daycare if students meet this criteria: (1) must be enrolled in classes at Texas A&M-San Antonio in the current semester, (2) must be Pell eligible or a single parent, (3) child(ren) must be aged 3 to 12-years-old, and (4) child(ren) must be enrolled in Pre-K-3 through 6th grade. Hours of operation are Monday–Thursday, 3:30–9:00 PM. For more information, contact Young Jaguars at [youngjaguars@tamusa.edu](mailto:youngjaguars@tamusa.edu) or call (210) 784-2636.

## **Students' Rights and Responsibilities**

The following statement of students' rights and responsibilities is intended to reflect the philosophical base upon which University Student Rules are built.

### **Students' Rights**

1. A student shall have the right to participate in a free exchange of ideas, and there shall be no University rule or administrative rule that in any way abridges the rights of freedom of speech, expression, petition and peaceful assembly as set forth in the U.S. Constitution.
2. Each student shall have the right to participate in all areas and activities of the University, free from any form of discrimination, including harassment, on the basis of race, color, national or ethnic origin,

religion, sex, disability, age, and pregnancy/parenting or veteran status in accordance with applicable federal and state laws.

3. A student has the right to personal privacy except as otherwise provided by law, and this will be observed by students and University authorities alike.
4. Each student subject to disciplinary action arising from violations of university student rules shall be assured a fundamentally fair process.

### **Students' Responsibilities**

1. A student has the responsibility to respect the rights and property of others, including other students, the faculty, and administration.
2. A student has the responsibility to be fully acquainted with the published University Student Rules found in the Student Handbook and University Catalog, and to comply with them, as well as with federal, state, and local laws.
3. A student has the responsibility to recognize that student actions reflect upon the individuals involved and upon the entire University community.
4. A student has the responsibility to recognize the University's obligation to provide a safe environment for learning.
5. A student has the responsibility to check their university email for any updates or official university notifications.

Students are expected to exhibit a high level of honesty and integrity in their pursuit of higher education. Academic misconduct is any act, or attempt, which gives an unfair advantage to the student. For more information on academic misconduct policies and procedures, review the Student Code of Conduct or visit the OSRR website.

### **Use of Generative AI**

This course's generative AI policy is described under Class Policies, above.

## **IMPORTANT FALL 2026 DATES**

| Date                    | Event                                                 |
|-------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------|
| August 20               | Tuition & Fee Payments deadline                       |
| August 25               | First day of class                                    |
| September 7             | Labor Day Holiday — No Classes / University Closed    |
| September 9             | Census Date                                           |
| October 5–October 16    | Midterm grading period                                |
| November 3              | ELECTION NIGHT — live broadcast (extended session)    |
| November 13             | Last day to drop with an automatic “W”                |
| November 25             | Study Day — No classes                                |
| November 26–November 28 | Thanksgiving Holiday — No Classes / University Closed |

| Date                   | Event                                                     |
|------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------|
| November 30            | Last day to drop a course or withdraw from the University |
| December 4             | Last day of classes                                       |
| December 5–December 11 | Final exams                                               |
| December 15            | Commencement                                              |

## COURSE CALENDAR

| Week | Date        | In-Class Activity                                                                                                                                | Work Due                                              |
|------|-------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------|
| 1    | 8/25 & 27   | T: Syllabus, course overview (Ch. 1 deferred to background reading — no textbook access yet)<br>Th: Media lab tour                               | —                                                     |
| 2    | 9/1 & 3     | T: Ch. 2 (Ethics, Law, Fakes & Fabrications) — part 1<br>Th: Ch. 2 (cont'd) + Ch. 3 (Story Types)                                                | —                                                     |
| 3    | 9/8 & 10    | T: Ch. 4 (News Channels) + skills inventory; Story Watch begins (instructor-led)<br>Th: Ch. 5 (Where News Comes From); Story Pitch Memo assigned | Skills Inventory due before 9/10                      |
| 4    | 9/15 & 17   | T: Ch. 6 (Choosing and Chasing the Story) — beats selected; Story Pitch Memo due<br>Th: Ch. 7–8 (Interview); Interview Prep assigned             | Story Pitch Memo due 9/15                             |
| 5    | 9/22 & 24   | T: Ch. 9–11 (Writing Basics, Style Book)<br>Th: Ch. 12 (Putting the Show Together)                                                               | Beat Backgrounder Memo due; Interview Prep due (9/24) |
| 6    | 9/29 & 10/1 | T: Ch. 13–14 (Anchors, On Air)<br>Th: Ch. 15–16 (Newsreading, Story Treatment)                                                                   | —                                                     |
| 7    | 10/6 & 8    | T: Ch. 17 (Recording)<br>Th: Ch. 18–19 (Editing, The Studio)                                                                                     | —                                                     |
| 8    | 10/13 & 15  | T: Ch. 20 (TV Newsroom Production)<br>Th: Ch. 21–22 (Writing/Gathering TV News)                                                                  | —                                                     |
| 9    | 10/20 & 22  | T: Ch. 23–24 (Shots, Editing Pictures/Sound); Story Watch shifts to beat monitoring                                                              | —                                                     |

| Week | Date       | In-Class Activity                                                                                                                           | Work Due                                                                                          |
|------|------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|      |            | Th: Ch. 25 (Live TV Reporting) + Ch. 26 (Data, Graphics, Visuals); Interview Prep Part B assigned (early voting line interview)             |                                                                                                   |
| 10   | 10/27 & 29 | T: Ch. 27 (TV Studio and Presentation)<br>Th: Full mock broadcast — crew assignments and backups locked; Story Watch live-simulation begins | Rehearsal Readiness Checklist due before each session (10/22–29); Interview Prep Part B due 10/27 |
| 11   | 11/3 & 5   | T: ELECTION NIGHT — live broadcast (extended session)<br>Th: Hot debrief                                                                    | Scored live via Assessment Matrix; Aftermath Analysis assigned                                    |
| 12   | 11/10 & 12 | T: Ch. 2 revisited + Reporters Committee Election Legal Guide<br>Th: CEIR supplement — how results coverage works                           | —                                                                                                 |
| 13   | 11/17 & 19 | T: Journalist's Resource supplement<br>Th: Structured critique of broadcast footage                                                         | —                                                                                                 |
| 14   | 11/24 & 26 | T: Analysis piece work day<br>Th: No class — Thanksgiving Holiday                                                                           | Aftermath Analysis Piece due 11/24                                                                |
| 15   | 12/1 & 3   | T: Portfolio work + peer review<br>Th: Final presentations, course wrap                                                                     | Final Portfolio/Reflection due 12/3                                                               |