What is this course?
So you want to be a journalist. And why not? People rave about your writing. You amaze them with your computer skills and your knowledge of Facebook. You dream of sitting in your cozy cabin and writing pithy essays about important events. You look at advertisements and say, “I could do better than that.” You aspire to become the Next Big Thing in marketing or play-by-play sports or event planning or movie reviewing.

Whatever you dream about in journalism, this is where you start. It’s a course in finding, gathering and using information. That sounds so dry and boring, though. Really, this is a course in honing your curiosity, stoking your enthusiasm for finding answers and building your confidence as a researcher. It’s about figuring out where to go when you have questions and then figuring out what to do with all that information once you’ve filled your recorder with interviews, your spreadsheet with data and your notebook with doodles. (Actually, we hope you’ll fill your notebook with great ideas, but we also know how journalism students procrastinate. Hence, the doodles.)

This is also a class about questions. Only by crafting good questions can you expect to find good answers. Only by using high-quality sources can you expect to find high-quality information. With that in mind, we want you to be able to formulate questions that will help you think better, help you research better and help you analyze information better.
So we’ll approach this semester with broad questions we want you to help us answer:

- What is information?
- How do we find information?
- How do we check information so we know we can trust it?
- How do we analyze and synthesize information effectively?
- How can we use information?
- How do we stay current with information?
- How can we create new information?
- How do we present information in ways that others can learn from it?

This isn’t an exercise in philosophy, although we hope you’ll formulate a philosophy about information this semester. It is a pursuit of knowledge, of better preparing yourself for a world awash in information both good and bad, in media both trusted and shady, in resources of all kinds that you must scrutinize if you hope to learn and act as a citizen, a worker and a scholar.

### Course goals

By the end of this course, you should be able to do following:

- Understand the scope, forms and purposes of information.
- Ask pertinent questions that allow you to find and interpret information, and explain it clearly.
- Critically evaluate information sources, research data and your own work for credibility, accuracy, completeness, and diversity.
- Develop focused plans for research projects.
- Use a variety of digital and non-digital tools for research.

### Achieving the course goals

We will work toward those goals in several ways:

- Creating your own learning goals to help guide you during the semester.
- Completing online modules that contain readings, video, audio and interactive components.
- Participating in discussions online and in class.
- Creating a group project that you help identify and that helps meet your learning goals.
- Creating an individual curated site on topics related to your interests.

### Class format

This is a hybrid class, so your work will be both online and in-person. You will have assignments to work through online before class meets each week. These assignments will include a combination of videos, readings, discussions, quizzes and self-assessments. If you don’t complete the online assignments, you will not only be lost when we meet in the classroom, but your grade will suffer. So please keep up.
This isn’t a class where you will come into the room and sit back in your seat. You will work in teams to discuss material, plan projects and give presentations. The class is structured to promote active learning. The idea is to give students freedom to explore areas that interest them, and to create an open atmosphere that makes it fun to learn. That works only if everyone is willing to participate, though, so come to class with the right mindset.

Required books:

Required materials: 
- Access to Blackboard.
- A free Popplet account.
- An open mind and a willingness to think broadly about the future.

Suggested materials:
- Laptop computer. If you have one, bring it to class each week.
- Associated Press Stylebook.

Assignments
To master any subject, you must engage it, practice it, learn its ins and outs. In this class, that practice will involve trying out many approaches to research, individually and in teams. These will include web projects, library projects, an individual curation project, group multimedia projects, and reports in class about your findings and your ideas.

Each student will be part of a learning group that will discuss readings, videos and other material each week, lead class discussions, flesh out idea on Popplet, and work on other projects. These teams are an important part of the learning process in this class. It’s important that you remain involved in the teams, take part in discussions, and do your share of the work. If you don’t, your learning and your grade will suffer.

Watch for changes
The requirements for this course are very likely to change to accommodate unscheduled events, visitors or unanticipated developments, or to provide an opportunity to re-emphasize certain skills. Check the schedule often.
Grading
This class will follow the guidelines in a separate grade contract. Each assignment will receive a grade of satisfactory or unsatisfactory, and you will have an opportunity to revise any unsatisfactory work. This system puts you in control, giving you the freedom to succeed and to learn, depending upon how much time and effort you are willing to devote to the class. That may sound easy, but it’s not. This approach requires a great deal of planning, involvement and dedication on your part.

Important note: Journalism majors must receive a grade of C or better in this class to advance to other courses in the school. A grade or C- or lower means the student must retake the course.

Attendance
In the workplace, people who fail to show up without notice are soon fired. You will approach this course as you would your chosen profession. Attendance is mandatory. The time you spend in class in an important part of your learning. Come to class prepared to participate and discuss. You are responsible for budgeting your time and meeting deadlines for assignments.

If you are sick and cannot attend class, or if you are going to be late, contact your instructor, preferably before class. If you do so, you may be excused from that day’s assignment. If you do not contact your instructor, you may receive a zero. See the grade contract for more details of how this will affect your grade.

University assistance
If an emergency or crisis causes you to miss three or more days of class, the Academic Achievement and Access Center can help contact your professors.

Office: 22 Strong
Phone: 785-864-4064.
Fax: 785-864-2817.

Students who miss three or more consecutive days because of illness or injury can request a Documentation of Illness/Injury statement from Student Health Services or another medical provider. Students who have illnesses or injuries of shorter duration and who schedule appointments at Student Health Services can obtain a copy of their medical records containing information about their visit by submitting an Authorization for Use/Disclosure form to the Student Health Services Records and Registration Department.
**Academic Misconduct**

In this class, and in all journalism classes, honesty and integrity are critical. Any work you do must be original and reflect your own ideas, thoughts, and research. In a work setting, if you choose to violate professional standards, you will be fired. In this class, if you choose to violate the standards for academic integrity, you will fail the assignment and possibly the course. You may be expelled from or denied admission to the School of Journalism.

We strictly follow the code of Academic Misconduct detailed in the Code of Student Rights and Responsibilities. University policies covering academic misconduct are spelled out in the current Student Handbook, which is available free in Room 213 of Strong Hall.

**Here's some clarification:**

If you use or attempt to use any unauthorized materials during a test, or if you give any unauthorized materials to someone else during a test, this is cheating. Unauthorized materials include written materials, such as notes on paper or on electronic devices. Unauthorized materials include any forms of nonverbal communication (one cough, the answer is A; two coughs, the answer is B, etc.). Copying an answer from someone else’s work is also cheating.

**Plagiarism is stealing.** You take someone else’s ideas, thoughts, or words, and you present them as your own original work. This includes taking ideas from written sources, such as books, as well as materials on the Internet. Cutting and pasting materials from the Internet and presenting that work as if it was your own is plagiarism. There may be times when you want to incorporate another person’s ideas, opinions, and words into the papers you write, to make a point or to provide background. If you do, it is essential that you attribute that information—that you explain where the information came from and give credit where credit is due.

**Fabrication and falsification mean that you made it up.** This can include making up an entire interview or embellishing a fact, quote, or statistic to make it sound better. Don’t do it.

**Policy on Plagiarism and Fabrication or Falsification**

The School of Journalism does not tolerate plagiarism, fabrication of evidence or falsification of evidence.

Penalties for engaging in such behavior can include a failing grade for this course and expulsion from the school.

**If you have questions about what constitutes plagiarism, fabrication or falsification, please consult the instructors.**

The following definitions are from Article II, Section 6, of the University Senate Rules and Regulations, revised FY98.

**Plagiarism**

Knowingly presenting the work of another as one's own (i.e., without proper acknowledgement of the source). The sole exception to the requirement of acknowledging sources is when the information or ideas are common knowledge.

**Fabrication and Falsification**

Unauthorized alteration or invention of any information or citation in an academic exercise.
Inclement weather
In the event of inclement weather, the decision to cancel classes is made by KU officials. To determine whether snow or icy conditions have canceled classes, call 864-7669 (864-SNOW).

Special needs
The Academic Achievement & Access Center coordinates accommodations and services for all KU students who are eligible. If you have a disability for which you wish to request accommodations and have not contacted the AAAC, please do so as soon as possible. That office is located in 22 Strong Hall; the phone number is 785-864-4064 (V/TTY). Information about the center’s services can be found at http://disability.ku.edu. Please contact me privately in regard to your needs in this course.

Copying or Recording
Course materials prepared by the instructors, together with the content of all lectures and review sessions presented by the instructors are the property of the instructors. Video and audio recording of lectures and review sessions without the consent of the instructors is prohibited. On request, the instructors will usually grant permission for students to audio tape lectures, on the condition that these audio tapes are only used as a study aid by the individual making the recording. Unless explicit permission is obtained from the instructors, recordings of lectures and review sessions may not be modified and must not be transferred or transmitted to any other person, whether or not that individual is enrolled in the course.

Adding and Dropping
Here is School of Journalism policy, by which you must abide:

“No student may add a journalism class after the 20th day of a semester.

“Students must attend their classes and laboratory periods. Instructors may take attendance into account in assessing a student’s performance and may require a certain level of attendance for passing a course. Instructors may choose to drop students from a course, based on attendance, without consent.

“The School of Journalism reserves the right to cancel the enrollment of students who fail to attend the first class or laboratory meeting.

“The KU Office of Student Financial Aid is required by federal law to determine whether students who receive aid are attending each class in which they are enrolled. Instructors are required to report to that office absences of students who have stopped attending and names of those who have enrolled but never have attended. Students who do not attend classes may be required to repay federal and/or state financial aid.

“Students who receive any form of financial aid should learn all requirements including minimum hours of enrollment and grades to qualify for and retain that aid.”