

## **LT365 Longform Journalism: Crafting Investigative & Narrative Stories**

Seminar Leader: Channing Joseph – just call me “Professor J”

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**Schedule Office Hours Here:**

<https://calendly.com/channingjoseph/office-hours>

**Fall 2025 - FRIDAYS, 2:00-5:15 PM**

### **Course Description**

In this course, students have the unique opportunity to work with an award-winning journalist dedicated to longform storytelling and investigative reporting. Channing Gerard Joseph has written for The New York Times, The Guardian, The Nation, and other major publications. His reporting explores issues of power, identity, and representation, blending rigorous research with narrative storytelling.

The class examines the craft of longform journalism — a style of in-depth, narrative-driven reporting that allows journalists to move beyond breaking news and produce deeply researched, immersive stories. From investigative exposés to literary nonfiction, longform journalism is one of the most powerful forms of public storytelling. But what makes a longform piece compelling? How do journalists balance fact and narrative? What ethical dilemmas arise when writing about real people’s lives?

Students will analyze major works of longform journalism, studying how reporters structure complex stories, build compelling characters, and use storytelling techniques borrowed from literature. Readings will include standout pieces from The New Yorker, The Atlantic, The Guardian, and The New York Times Magazine.

Berlin offers a dynamic backdrop for this work. Students will develop their own longform projects, selecting a topic of public interest and conducting field reporting, interviews, and archival research. The course will include discussions on media ethics, representation, and bias, asking how journalists shape public perception through their choices in framing, sourcing, and storytelling.

This course combines media analysis with hands-on reporting. Students will complete a series of structured writing exercises before producing a 1,500-word feature story as their final project. Assignments will focus on interviewing, narrative structuring, research techniques, and ethical decision-making in journalism. Through this work, students will gain a foundation in longform storytelling, preparing them for careers in journalism, feature writing, and nonfiction storytelling.

### **Requirements**

#### **Academic Integrity**

Bard College Berlin maintains the highest standards of academic integrity and expects students to adhere to these standards at all times. Instances in which students fail to meet the expected

standards of academic integrity will be dealt with under the Code of Student Conduct, Section 14.3 (Academic Misconduct) in the Student Handbook.

### **Accommodations**

Bard College Berlin is committed to inclusion and providing equal access to all students; we uphold and maintain all aspects of Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, and the ADA Amendments Act of 2008, and Section 3 of the German Disability Equality Act of April 27, 2002 (Federal Law Gazette I p. 1468). If you have a disability, or think you may have a disability, please contact the Disability Accommodation Coordinator, Atticus Kleen, ([accommodations@berlin.bard.edu](mailto:accommodations@berlin.bard.edu)) to request an official accommodation.

Requests for accommodations should be made as early as possible to ensure adequate time for coordination and planning. Please note that accommodations are not retroactive and may require advance notice to implement.

If you have already been approved for accommodations with the Disability Accommodation Coordinator, please arrange to meet with me outside of class so that we can develop an implementation plan.

Students may face extenuating circumstances related to various personal or external factors, which impact their academic performance. While these circumstances often do not fall within the legal framework of Disability Accommodations, Bard College Berlin is committed to supporting students experiencing such circumstances. A student needing a short extension or a replacement assignment because of an extenuating circumstance is encouraged to make arrangements directly with instructors if possible. If further support is needed, please visit the [Bard College Berlin Accessibility page](#). Questions about this process can be directed to James Harker ([j.harker@berlin.bard.edu](mailto:j.harker@berlin.bard.edu)) or Maria Anderson-Long ([m.andersonlong@berlin.bard.edu](mailto:m.andersonlong@berlin.bard.edu)).

### **Attendance**

Attendance at all classes is a crucial part of the education offered by Bard College Berlin. To account for minor circumstances, two absences from twice-per-week courses or the equivalent (e.g., one absence from a once-per-week course) should not affect the participation grade or require documentation.

Active participation in class discussions and in in-class group assignments will be a major component of the final grade in this course, and missed in-class assignments generally cannot be made up at a later date. Remote participation is not an option.

Bard College Berlin may not offer credit for any course in which a student has missed more than 30% of classes, regardless of the reasons for the absences. The full Bard College Berlin attendance policy can be found in the Student Handbook, Section 2.8.

### **Learning Objectives and Assessment**

In this course, you will learn how to report and write journalistic stories of various types, including news stories, profiles, and enterprise stories. In addition, if you show up every week, ask great questions, and listen compassionately, you will also leave this course being able to:

1. Discuss the contemporary landscape of English-language journalism, particularly investigative, enterprise, and longform narrative writing.
2. Explain the importance of journalism to the proper functioning of a democratic society.
3. Explain some specific ways that journalism has sometimes failed communities, promoted violence, or propagated bias against marginalized communities.
4. Identify coverage gaps in how marginalized communities are covered today.
5. Sharpen your ability to detect and explain bias in the media.
6. Identify a journalistic idea and explain why it is newsworthy.
7. Pitch a story idea to an editor.
8. Cultivate sources, conduct interviews, and manage an enterprise reporting project from the brainstorming to submission phase.
9. Explain how some communities can become distrustful of traditional media outlets when they do not see themselves represented favorably, and learn strategies for building trust.
10. Identify gaps in coverage of marginalized communities and analyze the effects of past coverage.
11. Identify your own unique style as a writer.

### **III. Description and Assessment of Assignments**

#### **Seminar Participation + Discussion (30%)**

Class participation will be an important part of your grade, and you should be ready to be called upon to join in class discussions, to answer questions about the assigned readings, and to offer constructive criticism of your classmates' work during workshop sessions.

#### **In-Class Writing and Interviewing Exercises (10%)**

Class exercises may include interviewing guest speakers about their work, interviewing people on or near campus, interviewing each other, doing timed writing exercises, or analyzing pieces of media.

#### **Media Missteps Presentations (10%)**

Over the course of the semester, you will prepare two 10-minute presentations in which you share with the class a news item that you feel misrepresents, offends, excludes, or alienates a marginalized community.

Show us the news item (it can be a headline, a sentence within a larger piece, a photo, etc.). Then tell us why you think the item exemplifies bias, then close by suggesting how you might approach the piece in a different way in order to represent the community more fairly, inclusively, or accurately.

It is preferable if you choose to discuss items from recent news (within the last few months).

### **Midterm Story (15%)**

Your midterm assignment will be a fully reported and polished original feature story of 800 to 1,000 words. After pitching your story idea to the instructor, including a one-page memo describing what has previously been published on your topic, you will arrange and conduct interviews (in person, phone, and Zoom interviews are acceptable) with at least three separate human sources as well as conducting other relevant research (using library reference materials, online databases, government documents, or other records).

As a piece of journalism, the originality of your topic is of paramount importance. Your goal will be to find a story that has not been reported on before, or that has not been reported on from the angle you are taking. In addition, as a piece of narrative journalism, your writing is as important as your reporting: Your story should include an engaging narrative lede; a clear nutgraf; and several strong quotes, including a memorable kicker. You must include contact information (email, phone, etc.) for everyone you interviewed for the story, even if you did not quote them in the final piece.

### **Final: Enterprise Story + Presentation (30%)**

Your final assignment will be an original enterprise story of between 1,200 and 1,500 words. Like your midterm project, it must be based entirely on your own original reporting, interviews, and writing. Your topic must be approved in advance by the instructor, based on a one-page memo explaining the story's newsworthiness and what has previously been published on the topic. The specific subject will depend on your interests, but I encourage you to consider writing about an under-reported problem facing a marginalized community in Berlin.

You must conduct interviews with at least five separate human sources, in person, by phone, or via Zoom. Most stories require at least five interviews to be complete and, depending on your chosen topic, may require more. You must include contact information (email, phone, etc.) for everyone you interviewed for the story, even if you did not quote them in the final piece. At the end of the semester, you will present and discuss your project for about 10 minutes in class.

### **Final Reflection (5%)**

In an informal essay of about 600 words, discuss what you have learned in this course. What was your biggest challenge? What have you learned about the power and limits of longform and investigative journalism? What tips do you have for others?

## **IV. Course Notes**

Class materials, lectures, assignments, homework and grades will be posted in Google Classroom and/or shared via email.

## V. Grading

### a. Breakdown of Grade

Assignment	% of Grade
Seminar Preparation (Reading) and Participation (Active Discussion)	30%
In-Class Writing and Interviewing Exercises	10%
Media Missteps Presentations	10%
Midterm Story	15%
Final: Enterprise Story and Class Presentation	30%
Final Reflection	5%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100%</b>

### b. Grading Scale

95% to 100%: A	80% to 83%: B-	67% to 69%: D+
90% to 94%: A-	77% to 79%: C+	64% to 66%: D
87% to 89%: B+	74% to 76%: C	60% to 63%: D-
84% to 86%: B	70% to 73%: C-	0% to 59%: F

### c. Grading Standards

#### *Journalism*

All assignments will be judged first on the accuracy, fairness, and overall quality of your stories. You will then be evaluated for originality and the ability to meet deadlines.

**“A” stories** are accurate, clear, comprehensive stories that are well written and require only minor copyediting (i.e., they would be published as is).

**“B” stories** require more than minor editing and have a few style or spelling errors or one significant error of omission.

**“C” stories** need considerable editing or rewriting and/or have many spelling, style or omission errors.

**“D” stories** require excessive rewriting, have numerous errors and should not have been submitted.

**“F” stories** have failed to meet the major criteria of the assignment, are late, have numerous errors or both. Your copy should not contain any errors in spelling, style, grammar and facts. Any misspelled or mispronounced proper noun will result in an automatic “F” on that assignment. Any factual error will also result in an automatic “F” on the assignment. Accuracy is the first law of journalism. The following are some other circumstances that would warrant an “F” and potential disciplinary action:

- Fabricating a story or making up quotes or information.
- Plagiarizing an article, part of an article or information from any source.
- Promising, paying or giving someone something in exchange for doing an interview.
- Missing a deadline.

### ***Plagiarism***

This class will demand the highest journalistic standards of fairness, accuracy, and honesty. Students guilty of plagiarism or falsification will be subject to severe sanctions both within this class and in terms of their standing within the school. Every story for this class must be original; it should not be a story you have done previously, either in or out of school. You should not have used any story in any previous class.

**In addition, all work must be your own. You are explicitly not permitted to use ChatGPT, Claude, Gemini, or any other large-language model to produce the text of your story.**

### **Assignments**

#### **Policy on Late Submission of Papers**

Essays that are up to 24 hours late can be downgraded up to one full grade (from B+ to C+, for example). Instructors are not obliged to accept essays that are more than 24 hours late. Where a professor agrees to accept a late assignment, it should be submitted by the new deadline agreed upon by both parties. Thereafter, the student will receive a failing grade for the assignment. Grades and comments will be returned to students in a timely fashion. Students are also entitled to make an appointment to discuss essay assignments and feedback during instructors' office hours.

Students receive end-of-semester grades for their seminar work. Students are entitled to make an appointment with an instructor to discuss seminar participation, or may be asked to meet with the instructor at any stage in the semester regarding class progress.

### **VI. Assignment Rubrics**

Assignment rubrics and requirements will be distributed to students for every major assignment in the course.

### **VII. Assignment Submission Policy**

- A. All assignments are due on the dates specified. Lacking prior discussion and agreement with the instructor, late assignments will automatically be given a grade of F (0). Instructors are not obligated to accept late assignments.
- B. Assignments must be submitted via email or Google Classroom unless otherwise indicated.
- C. Assignments are due before the start of class on the date indicated unless otherwise indicated by your instructor.
- D. Unless otherwise indicated, all assignments must be your original work produced this semester for this course only.

E. No assignments will be accepted after the last day of class. Failure to turn in an assignment by the last day of class will result in a failing grade for that assignment.

### VIII. Required Readings and Supplementary Materials

Each week, you will be sent a selection of 3-4 news articles or book chapters to read, and occasionally short videos to watch or audio clips to listen to. In addition, please follow current events by reading reliable sources such as The New York Times, The Washington Post, or Los Angeles Times, and/or by listening to NPR or Democracy Now.

### IX. About Your Instructor

Channing Gerard Joseph is an award-winning journalist with two decades of experience covering race, social justice, LGBTQ+ culture, and other topics in the U.S., Africa, Asia, and Europe. His reporting has been featured on Page A1 of [The New York Times](#) and has been published globally by the Associated Press. His work has also appeared in [The Nation](#), [The International Herald Tribune](#), [The Washington Post](#), [The Guardian](#), [The Atlantic](#), and many other publications. A recognized global authority on African American LGBTQ+ history, Joseph has been a featured guest on Comedy Central's *The Daily Show*, NBC's *Majority Report*, Germany's Deutsche Welle, and Canada's CBC, among other programs. His viral TED Talk, "[How Black Queer Culture Shaped History](#)," has more than 1.5 million views.

### Weekly Schedule

**Important note to students:** Be advised that this syllabus is subject to change - and probably will change - based on the progress of the class, news events, and/or guest speaker availability.

<u>Dates</u>	<u>Topics/Daily Activities</u>	<u>Upcoming Due Dates</u>	<u>Readings</u>
<b><u>Week 1</u></b> <b>Fri, 5 Sep</b>	<p><b>Introduction:</b> The Power and Responsibility of Journalists: Comforting the Afflicted and Afflicting the Comfortable</p> <p>Media "Missteps": How has the news promoted discrimination and violence against marginalized communities?</p> <p>The Structure of a News Story</p> <p>In-Class Profile Writing Exercise</p>	Due Week 2: Complete reading on great story ledes (check your email).	The readings will be determined by current events. They will usually be a mix of recent articles, book chapters, and video/audio clips. I will share readings each week via email or Google Classroom.

<p><b><u>Week 2</u></b> <b>Fri, 12 Sep</b></p>	<p>Discuss readings.</p> <p>What's the difference between a topic, an idea, and a pitch? Where can you find stories?</p> <p>What makes a story engaging? Who is the audience?</p> <p>What makes it "newsworthy"?</p> <p>Investigating our privileges and unpacking "invisible knapsacks" / Being an ally</p> <p>Social listening via Twitter, Instagram, etc.</p>		<p>Due Week 3: Read a selection of narrative pieces and the "How to Pitch" handout (check your email).</p> <p>Readings to be shared via email or Google Classroom.</p>
<p><b><u>Week 3</u></b> <b>Fri, 19 Sep</b></p>	<p>Discuss readings + Midterm Project Memo</p> <p><b>Guest speaker TBD</b></p> <p>Why some communities don't trust journalists and how to earn that trust back / The difference between reporting ABOUT and reporting FOR a community</p> <p>Identifying the news coverage needs of a community</p> <p>In-class writing exercise.</p>	<p>Due Week 4: Prepare a one-page memo on your proposed midterm project.</p>	<p>Complete readings for Week 4</p> <p>Readings to be shared via email or Google Classroom.</p>
<p><b><u>Week 4</u></b> <b>Fri, 26 Sep</b></p>	<p><b>SUBMIT ONE-PAGE MEMO</b></p> <p>Discuss readings + Present Media Missteps.</p> <p><b>Guest speaker TBD</b></p> <p>News gaps: What's missing?</p> <p>Covering "invisible" communities and people</p>	<p>Due Week 5: Submit revised one-page story pitch.</p>	<p>No readings this week.</p>



	<p>Language usage and cultural cues in reporting and writing about marginalized communities and people</p> <p>In-class writing exercise.</p> <p><b>Present your one-page story pitch. Tell us what your idea is, why it's newsworthy, and what research and reporting you have already done on it.</b></p>		
<b><u>Week 5</u></b> <b>Fri, 3 Oct</b>	Federal Holiday - <b>NO CLASS</b>		
<b><u>Week 6</u></b> <b>Fri, 10 Oct</b>	<p><b>Guest speaker TBD</b></p> <p>Who makes a good choice for a profile? Can anyone be? Why or why not?</p> <p>In-class writing exercise.</p>	<p>Due Week 7: <b>MIDTERM PROJECT</b></p>	<p>Due Week 7: Read stories with great scene-setting (check your email).</p> <p>Readings to be shared via email or Google Classroom.</p>
<b><u>Week 7</u></b> <b>Fri, 17 Oct</b>	<p><b>SUBMIT MIDTERMS TODAY</b></p> <p>Discuss readings + Present Media Missteps.</p> <p>How to find stories in data.</p> <p>Discuss completed Midterm Projects.</p>		<p>Complete readings for Week 8</p> <p>Readings to be shared via email or Google Classroom.</p>
<b><u>Week 8</u></b> <b>Fri, 24 Oct</b>	<b>FALL BREAK - NO CLASS</b>		No readings this week.
<b><u>Week 9</u></b> <b>Fri, 31 Oct</b>	<p><b>Guest speaker TBD</b></p> <p>In-class writing exercise.</p> <p>Discuss final project plans, including setting up interviews and finding records.</p>	<p>Due Week 10: Submit one-page memo for final project.</p>	<p>Complete readings for Week 10</p> <p>Readings to be shared via email or Google Classroom.</p>

<b><u>Week 10</u></b> <b>Fri, 7 Nov</b>	<b>SUBMIT ONE-PAGE MEMO</b>  Discuss readings. Finding stories in government and corporate records		Complete readings for Week 11  Readings to be shared via email or Google Classroom.
<b><u>Week 11</u></b> <b>Fri, 14 Nov</b>	Discuss readings + Present Media Missteps.  “Both sides”-ism  A conversation about objectivity and ethics in journalism: When your identity matters to the story		Complete readings for Week 12  Readings to be shared via email or Google Classroom.
<b><u>Week 12</u></b> <b>Fri, 21 Nov</b>	Discuss readings + Present Media Missteps.  Check-ins. Possible in-class exercise.	<b>Due Week 13: FINAL PROJECT NEARLY COMPLETE, POLISHED VERSION</b>	Complete readings for Week 13  Readings to be shared via email or Google Classroom.
<b><u>Week 13</u></b> <b>Fri, 28 Nov</b>	<b>SUBMIT FINAL PROJECT</b>  Discuss readings.  <b>GUEST SPEAKER TBD</b>  In-class writing.  What are some of the principles of good editing?  How do we develop the discipline to edit ourselves?		Complete readings for Week 14  Readings to be shared via email or Google Classroom.
<b><u>Week 14</u></b> <b>Fri, 5 Dec</b>	Discuss readings.  Individual work/conferences to discuss revisions of your final project.	<b>Due Week 16: FINAL PROJECT REVISIONS &amp; FINAL REFLECTION</b>	

<b><u>Week 15</u></b> <b>Fri, 12 Dec</b>	<b>SUBMIT FINAL REFLECTION</b>  <b>FINAL CLASS MEETING</b>  <b>IN-CLASS PRESENTATIONS OF PROJECTS</b>		
<b><u>Completion Week</u></b> <b>Fri, 19 Dec</b>		<b>HAVE A GREAT BREAK!</b>	