

## **Tracking the Media Tracking the Coronavirus Outbreak Brant Houston**

**Tuesdays, 11:00-12:30 \*NEW DAY AND TIME\***

**September 1 through October 20**

**Format: Webinar**

This course will look at the challenges that newsrooms faced – and continue to face – in tracking and reporting on the outbreak and the successes and failures of the coverage. The course will cover how social media and bloggers got out the initial message on the virus, how newsrooms followed the China outbreak (including dealing with government censorship), and how newsrooms dealt with government denials and misinformation and also worked with public health officials to deliver accurate information. It will also look at how some media misled the public on the seriousness of the outbreak and the role of social media in spreading false information. The course will also compare the news coverage to coverage of previous outbreaks.

Updated information: Since we have a very current issue, with changes every week, I have added a weekly update section. In addition, if one of the class topics becomes more relevant I may swap classes.

### **September 1**

#### **Class One**

Overview of the course. Where we are now with the virus and the media.

A review of reliable web sites on what is happening and brief review of “numbers’ issues.

A review of the origins of the virus and the initial coverage. How the cutbacks in newsrooms has affected local coverage.

The initial role of bloggers, alternative media and social media on reporting on the virus. Introduction to the challenges of reporting when there are conflicting messages from the Trump administration, the CDC, the World Health Organization, and public health officials.

### **September 8**

#### **Class Two**

Weekly update for each class. What is the latest news.

Reporting on the numbers. Definitions and misdirection. Digging into meanings and impact of positivity, infection, active, recovered, and death certificates. Comparison of the numbers coming in, who tracks them and how they are reported, and the context for them.

## **September 15**

### **Class Three**

Weekly update for each class. What is the latest news.

Reporting on prevention, shutdowns and re-openings. The economy versus health. A review of the states responses including Washington state, New York, Florida, California, and Georgia and the reporting on it. A review of Illinois response and Champaign County's response.

## **September 22**

### **Class Four**

Weekly update for each class. What is the latest news.

Reporting on treatments, quackery and dangerous buffoonery. An ongoing challenge for the media.

## **September 29**

### **Class Five**

Weekly update for each class. What is the latest news.

Reporting on school and university re-openings. What happened and how good was the national and local reporting on it.

## **October 6**

### **Class Six**

Weekly update for each class. What is the latest news.

Reporting on testing, its reliability, and its effectiveness. Comparing the responses of the U.S. and Champaign County and the university to other countries and to public health standards.

## **October 13**

### **Class Seven**

Weekly update for each class. What is the latest news.

Reporting on vaccines. Reporting on the development of vaccines, the politics of it, and the potential impact of anti-vaxxers.

**October 20**

**Class Eight**

Weekly update for each class. What is the latest news.

Where we are now? Has reporting on the virus improved? What have we learned after living with the virus for more than 9 months. A review of the campaign of disinformation.