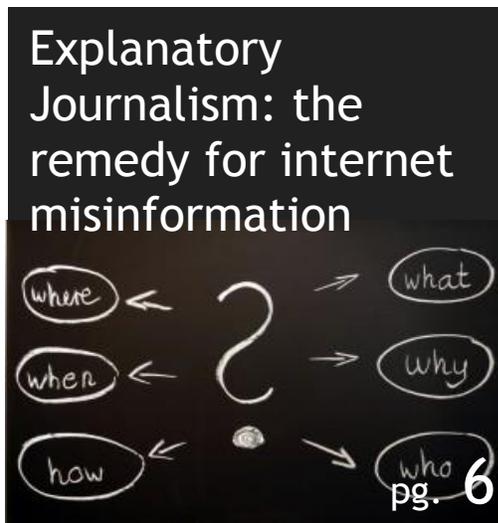




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**+**

The JMC program improves course design

*Dr. Teresa Taylor Moore*

Learning the craft of journalism is a challenging feat. It is even more challenging in the online environment. But just because you are in the online environment does not mean that we have to sacrifice collaborative efforts, gathering “real” news, and writing for publications.

Courses in the program are being redesigned to include assignments that require you to go into the real world and write stories on breaking news. You will also be using more technology in courses to create digital publications, and most importantly you will learn to work collaboratively in the online environment with other students to create your own publications. These new opportunities will

liven up the classroom and will also provide you with opportunities to have your work published!

The stories that you write will be included in your ePortfolios which are also a new element of the JMC courses. Additionally, you will have opportunities to publish on the SPJ website and being that your weekly stories in many of your courses will surround your own local and breaking news, you may also be able to convince your hometown paper to run your story.

We are delighted that you are a JMC major and we are committed to providing you with a dynamic experience in the program.



JMC Student Review student editor, Elsie Goycoolea, sits down with SPJ Vice President Sara Christiansen.



## + An Interview with SPJ Vice President Sara Christiansen

We are so happy to have you for our first student/alumni interview in the *JMC Student Review*. The newsletter was designed to share the voices of journalism students in a way that can support their learning at Ashford. You are a senior and also the acting vice president of SPJ. Can you share with the readers what is SPJ's mission and what made you want to become part of it?

It is an absolute honor to serve in a leadership position for The Society of Professional Journalists (SPJ) - especially at Ashford since we are breaking new ground as the first and only fully online student chapter of the organization. The SPJ has served the journalism community for the last 109 years and is one of the oldest and

most estimable journalism organizations in the U.S.

SPJ's mission is to maintain a "[free press as the cornerstone of our nation and our liberty](#)." With a base of over 9,000 student and professional journalists nationwide, the group supports a number of significant programs - including an industry-leading Freedom of Information project that sets the standard for other national media organizations. As an individual whose monthly blog focuses on the Freedom of Information Act, you can understand how greatly I value the efforts of this organization.

Lest we forget, the SPJ also sets the ethical standard for journalists across the nation with its Code of Ethics,

which reminds us all that "[public enlightenment is the forerunner of justice and the foundation of democracy](#)." Every journalist - student and professional alike - should join the SPJ.

At SPJ you frequently share posts for the "Series on Freedom of Information" where you reflect on the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) and its application in current times. You state, "FOIA is the little act that could, can and will be used however and whenever our nation has the right to know"; however, you also say that, "government transparency is still an aspiration, rather than an accomplishment." Why do you think this is the case?

**(Continued on next page)**

### Is the FOIA not enough?

Apart from the empty rhetoric of the campaign trail, government transparency is a long way from becoming the standard of our nation. Greed, corruption, and power still lurk behind the mask of public service and we can never rest in rooting out these ills that seek to ruin our nation.

What our forefathers desired was for the Press to remain as watchdogs over our government. Our First Amendment right to a free press was not granted merely to restrain government control of public media, but to oversee that which is governing us. If we ever stop doing so, if we ever consent to our government's attempts to prevent us from doing so, we will no longer be the Shining City on a Hill that the rest of the world looks up to.

The FOIA is a start, but it needs teeth to bite into the bureaucracy that turns requests for information away, at every turn. There are too many exceptions, delays, and loopholes in the Act, as it stands. While we are excited about celebrating the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the FOIA this Fourth of July, we need to keep pressure on Congress to fortify the Act's bowels.

Towards that end, the SPJ has spearheaded campaigns to enact measures in both the House of Representatives ([HR 653](#)) and Senate ([S 337](#)). Support for these bills is necessary if we ever hope to secure transparency in government.

**You came to Ashford with some experience in the industry. You are about to graduate and set foot again into the real world. How do you think Ashford has added to your existing journalism knowledge?**

### What are your 3 key takeaways?

As a former citizen journalist, I don't think I fully appreciated the integrity and professionalism that should be ascribed to the field until I came to Ashford and began my studies here.

Of all the things I've learned at Ashford, I'd say my three key takeaways are:

- 1) **Always abide by the SPJ Code of Ethics.** Adherence to these principles sets professionals apart from citizen journalists, and should be considered the *rules to write by*.
- 2) **Appreciate and fight for Freedom of Information.** As journalists, our most crucial responsibility is to "[seek truth and report it](#)" - at every level and at all costs.
- 3) **Never stop learning.** No matter how much we think we know, there is always more to learn. As journalists, we should consider every interview an opportunity to glean knowledge. We are, after all, the conduit between our subjects and the public. Our questions must be our readers' questions.

**I am sure that being a senior at Ashford, the acting vice president of SPJ and also a full time worker must be quite difficult to manage without added stress. Many Ashford students have to balance their studies with their work or their jobs as parents. Can you share any advice? Do you have any organization tips?**

Pursuing an education while working a high-stress job and devoting time to an extracurricular activity is a bit like starting a new business - exhausting

beyond comprehension, yet satisfying beyond measure.

I'm hyper-vigilant about staying organized, so I keep a lot of lists. I write each day's responsibilities down as they crop up - checking each item off my list as I complete my tasks. If a task is not yet complete, I bring it forward to the next day, until such time as it can be crossed off my list.

*Journalists are more than reporters, after all - they are the world's observers, committed to relaying their observations to the public.*

I've found this to be a great way of remembering what my commitments are, and reminding me of just how much I've already accomplished.

In school and in life, we need to eliminate distractions and commit to pursuing our victories. Getting through school is a *major* commitment and one which may mean little sleep and lack of free-time. I believe that's an understanding we should all have before commencing any academic pursuits. I don't watch TV because I know it will distract me, and I turn down weekend invitations in lieu of research paper completions. The little sacrifices now will mean the highest yields, in the end. Success comes to the well-disciplined.

Surround yourself with positive messages and stay focused. Remember, we all get discouraged and overwhelmed, sometimes; but when that happens, look back at your victories and remember how far you've already come.

(Continued page 9)



By Gregory Keogh

If you are like me, you are having difficulties managing your time to adapt to school, work and other matters in our routine lives. What some do not realize, as such with myself, is that managing time better leads to a more active and productive lifestyle. We all strive to be the best we can be but often feel as if focusing on the *needs* rather than the *wants* leaves us missing out on all the fun. But, the truth of the matter is, finding a balance in business and pleasure allows each individual his or her own unique, adaptable way of enjoying life from now until retirement. The "fun" is over, and now is the time to find having fun in being an adult and prioritizing responsibilities to better serve one's long-term goals.

Oliver Emberton (2013) of *Forbes* magazine answers how to manage one's time more effectively in his online article. Emberton's advice suggests that "the secret to mastering your time is to systematically **focus on importance and suppress urgency**," (para. 1). While Emberton does list his own variations of how to sharpen one's time-management skills, I will provide my own adaptation to express what has best suited my needs: Touching on Emberton's "*say no*" technique, I suggest that it is **okay to be selfish**, especially when certain decisions greatly affect your future (2013). In other words, fulfill your life's requirement(s) first.

Second, **limit/minimize distractions** in your life to the best of your ability. You will see that in doing so, even gradually, time-management will become easier and easier to accomplish.

Third, **prioritize, prioritize, prioritize**. Do not set your goals in order of what is easiest to complete, rather find the most difficult or time-consuming and put time into the task. Even if a little amount of time is put forth with each effort, you will notice the progress

and further reduce the stresses that come with meeting deadlines.

Additionally, **set a schedule** in order to adjust to a routine. Doing so will assist in implementing a form of muscle memory into your lifestyle. From my experiences, adhering to a schedule not only exemplifies a professional standard, but is half the battle of climbing the corporate ladder.

Finally, and thanks to Nike (2016) for perhaps the most influential phrase known to exist, "**just do it!**" Instead of questioning whether or not to perform a task, "*just do it.*" By simply just doing it, you are alleviating the pressures that arrive when procrastination sets in (because it will not set in) as well as not allowing yourself to fall behind.

To recap:

1. **Be Selfish** - You will thank yourself later.
2. **Limit/Minimize Distractions** - Rid yourself of what is holding you back.
3. **Prioritize** - Work smarter, not harder.
4. **Set a Schedule** - Adapt to a routine.
5. "**Just Do It!**" - Actions speak louder than words.

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# AP Style ✓

## Top Five AP Style Mistakes

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1. Quotes go in a paragraph by themselves so they do not get buried.

2. Attribution for quotes goes at the end of the first sentence.

EX: More than 200 people attended this year’s commencement ceremony,” said President William Staples. “It was the best graduate reception we’ve ever had at UHCL. I hope it will be the start of a new trend.”

3. How to attribute quotes: When to use “said” - For example, “Smith said” versus “said Smith.” Use “said Smith” when you introduce a person with a full name and title.

EX: “More than 200 people attended this year’s commencement ceremony,” said President William Staples. Use “Smith said” when the person has already been introduced and you are using his/her last name only.

EX: “More than 200 people attended this year’s commencement ceremony,” Staples said.

4. Lowercase titles when used after the name.

EX: William Staples, president of UHCL. NOT: John Smith, President of UHCL.

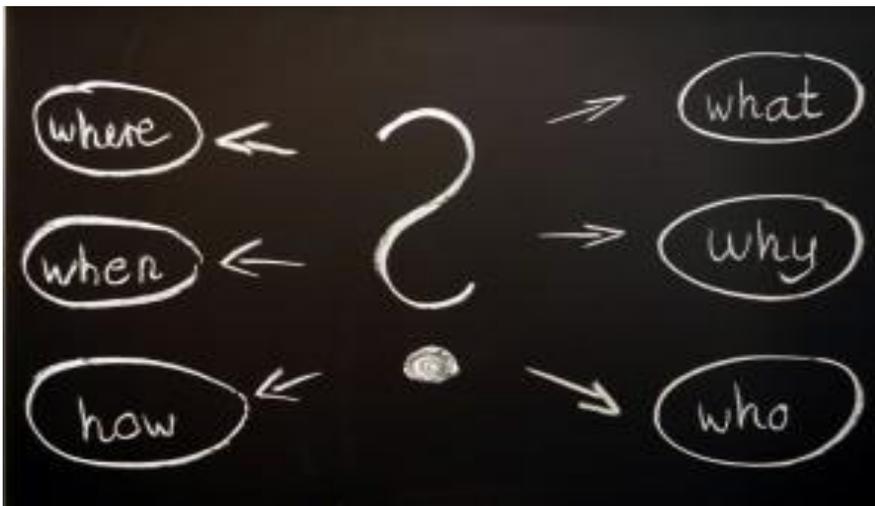
5. Must use full names (first and last) and titles for anyone quoted or photographed in the newspaper.

Students’ titles are their majors. EX: Mary Doe, communication major.

Faculty titles are the programs they teach. Use “of” for professors and “in” for instructors. EX: Ashley Packard, professor of communication; EX: Paul McGrath, adjunct instructor in communication

(Also, always check to see if the faculty is a professor, associate professor, assistant professor, visiting professor, lecturer or adjunct.)

For more, visit 20 Most Common AP Style Mistakes Checklist [HERE](#)



## Explanatory Journalism: the remedy for internet misinformation

By Benjamin Williams

As the average social media user can quantify, there is a lot of misinformation in today's digital world. Whether it's a misquoted meme on Facebook or an article on a liberal or conservative website, the practice of writing factual articles is giving way to producing "clickbait" stories. Misinformation is not merely a harmless prank, as the ability to create traffic in this fashion is now a lucrative business model. So what is the average social media user searching for accurate content to do? Luckily, there is a trend surfacing that could signal the resurgence of explanatory journalism.

Explanatory journalism is a term used to describe a focused effort on delivering news and information in a format that is more accessible and reliable, and it is making a comeback.

If explanatory journalism sounds unfamiliar, it probably shouldn't. According to *Brookings*, there has been a Pulitzer Prize category for it since the mid-1980s. The latest iterations of it are having success carving out a spot in the age of digital media, and the timing is noteworthy. According to *Mashable*, 71% of young adults now rely on digital media and the Internet for news - a statistic not lost on traditional media.

Sites like FiveThirtyEight.com, founded by renowned statistician Nate Silver, are built on the foundation of companies like Disney (who owns ABC and ESPN, and lists FiveThirtyEight as an ESPN affiliate). Vox.com, which content pioneer Ezra Klein started in 2014, have procured talent from legacy media and have been greeted with high praise from the critics. According to *Brookings*, the

New York Times, the Washington Post, and Bloomberg News have all invested resources into explanatory journalism.

Explanatory journalism is not perfect. Legacy media continues to be the primary destination when it comes to breaking news. It might not possess the flash of sites looking to generate traffic by spurring an emotional response with "clickbait." But for those of us searching for the remedy of factual and accessible content in a desolate wasteland of misinformation, explanatory journalism could be the solution.

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Mashable. (2014), *'FiveThirtyEight,' 'The Upshot' and Vox Bet Big on Explanatory Journalism.* Retrieved March 5, 2016, from <http://mashable.com/2014/03/25/data-journalism/#sHqJpaN9zPqb>



In this March issue of the *JMC Student Review*, Elsie Goycoolea interviews Ashford JMC instructor Larry Holden.

## An Interview with Instructor Larry Holden

From an early age, Larry Holden was fascinated by the power and the passion of the written word. His B.A. in journalism, with a minor in English, is from Louisiana State University, and his Masters in journalism is from Texas A&M University-Commerce.

After graduating from LSU, Holden was a public information officer (captain) and editor of an award-winning monthly magazine for the United States Air Force. Upon completion of his military service, he became a full-time celebrity journalist. He's interviewed more than 1,000 movie and TV stars and about 150 country music artists. Holden's celebrity and non-celebrity articles have been published in hundreds of national and

international magazines and other outlets. One article in *Writer's Digest* magazine was selected to be a chapter in a non-fiction writing textbook, *The Hardest Parts*. He continues to regularly interview celebrities and people in the news for websites and digital publications and has had short stories published in magazines and in a science fiction anthology. Additionally, he's edited novels and non-fiction books for other authors and is now writing a series of mystery novels based on the same collection of characters—lawyers and detectives.

This month, I sat down to speak with him about being a celebrity journalist, the viability of social media, and the state of journalism.

**One of the reasons I wanted to feature you on the *JMC Student Review* is because amongst the extensive background you hold in this industry, you have experience in one of the most controversial areas of the profession: celebrity journalism. Celebrity journalism carries a negative reputation and is often portrayed as gossip. What are your views on this issue? Do you think this reputation is unfounded?**

In my view and based on my four-decades of experience as a professional writer/journalist, celebrity journalism—or, as it is often called, entertainment journalism—does not carry a negative reputation. Now, are there celebrity journalists

**(Continued next page)**

who write gossip stories? There are. Just like there are celebrity journalists who conduct in-depth interviews and write journalistically-sound articles. I think whether you look at celebrity journalism in a negative light or in a positive light could possibly come from your own experiences.

**I am sure that many students are intrigued to know how it feels to be a celebrity journalist and I would think that you might have some stories from the times you have interviewed celebrities. Can you share an anecdote?**

Not long ago I interviewed Robert David Hall, who portrayed crime lab coroner Dr. Albert Robbins on CBS' long-running CSI. To prepare for his role, Hall has seen his share of real-life autopsies. He told me, "The very first autopsy that I attended in Vegas happened to have eight medical students there to observe. The coroner would pick up a body part and hand it to me and tell me to weigh it in these Tupperware containers. I figured he was trying to mess with me because I was an actor and I wasn't going to let him get the best of me."

But it wasn't Hall who reacted to the handling and weighing of body parts. A couple of the med students got sick. One gal fainted and hit her head on the wall.

**At Ashford, students take courses on every area of journalism from print, to broadcast, to digital. You seem to have chosen the area of print journalism, most precisely magazines. With the rise of new technologies and the Internet, do**

**you share what people say that print journalism is dead?**

Dead, no. Evolving, most definitely. The field of print journalism is transforming itself, driven by technological advances and a readership who focuses on the speed of digital communication and the convenience of news and features being delivered straight into a person's pocket or purse via their smartphone or tablet. For example, I still do interviews and write features the way I always have, however, my pieces now often find their homes on websites and in digital publications.

**I have had the pleasure of having you as an instructor at Ashford for a few classes. What propelled you to become an instructor? What is the main takeaway that you want your students to take from your classes?**

I'd taught some college classes early on in my writing career and really enjoyed working with students to help them expand their experiences and improve their writing. Then, like now, I believe the better writers excel at everything—in the workplace, in academics and in life. What I want students to get out of my classes is straight-forward: to advance their knowledge and their writing skills in our five weeks together.

**One of the courses I took with you as an Instructor was JRN 425 Journalism & Politics. In the class we learned about framing, agenda-setting and priming. Lately, there is much talk of politics in the media. Do you think audiences are receiving a balanced and unframed breakdown of the U.S elections?**

I think for any audience to receive "a balanced and unframed breakdown" of any news topic—including the U.S. elections—readers/viewers/listeners should never get their intake of news from one source. To lessen the impact of bias from any news source, examining a news event from a variety of sources is always the best method to achieve journalistic balance.

**It cannot be denied that social media has impacted the journalism industry. Many media organizations have entered this new business opportunity trying to reach younger markets. Do you think that news can be reported in a single image or in less than 140 characters? Is social media helpful or harmful to journalism?**

Most news cannot be reported in a single image or in less than 140 characters—however, Twitter, Facebook and all other social media platforms can deliver news with impact and speed. Social media can, and has, distributed distorted and erroneous news; it can also distribute breaking news that is accurate and crucial for the public to know. To me, social media is a component of journalism—a method to jumpstart, highlight and sometimes drive the news of the day.

**Finally, I like to ask our interviewees for a headline that describes the future of journalism. Can you share in a few words what can we expect from journalism in the next few years?**

(Continued next page)

(Larry Holden Interview continued)

My future journalism headline is: Wide Open and Unafraid. Journalism is an evolving, expanding, exciting career field. It isn't your grandfather's journalism or even your father's journalism—it's journalism born out of the historical context of the First Amendment and the ever-developing technological changes of digital communication. That, my friends, is a powerful one-two punch for journalism's future.



(Sara Christiansen Interview continued)

**Many students choose this career path because they have a passion for writing and communicating; however, a journalist is not always placed in the same basket as an author or writer. What made you choose journalism? Are journalists different from authors?**

Journalists *are* writers. Some of the world's most beautiful prose is captured in features and opinion pieces, in my opinion. Journalists are more than reporters, after all - they are the world's observers, committed to relaying their observations to the public.

I pursued journalism in order to fulfill a life-long goal - but I will never think of myself as a reporter. I am a writer. Anyone who has ever found his or her voice by writing can and should say the same.

Writing well opens impenetrable doors and journalists shouldn't think of this degree path as limiting, in any fashion. Every company in every field, every workplace in every country needs good

writers. There are no limits when one can write well. It is a skill that will never fail.

**You mention that your main interest is focusing on human-interest pieces and world events. If you could write a headline for a story that *must* be written what would it be? What should everyone be informed about today?**

I believe we are watching a Christian genocide in the Middle East through the rise of ISIS in this region. The atrocities being committed against this people-group are unfathomable and deserve acknowledgment. We can't turn a blind eye because it is distant and uncomfortable. These stories need to be told before it is too late. This world event is much more than a refugee crisis - it's a question of awareness and compassion. A story that *must* be written, in my opinion, would have the headline "Middle Eastern Christians Massacred by ISIS in Genocidal Proportions."



## GET TO KNOW YOUR JMC FACULTY

**Dr. Teresa Taylor Moore** is an Associate Professor and Chair of the Journalism and Mass Communications Program. Contact her at [Teresa.TaylorMoore@ashford.edu](mailto:Teresa.TaylorMoore@ashford.edu)



**Dr. Gabriel Scala** is an Assistant Professor and the Faculty Advisor for both the *JMC Student Review* and the SPJ at Ashford. Contact her at [JodiGabriel.Scala@ashford.edu](mailto:JodiGabriel.Scala@ashford.edu)



# EDITORS



**Elsie Goycoolea** is a Spanish student pursuing a career in journalism and psychology to help connect news and people together. She is the editor-in-chief of the *JMC Student Review*.



**Gregory Keogh** is a desert-dwelling father of one girl and sports enthusiast with a passion for writing.



**Benjamin Williams** is trying to start up a new career in the realm of Journalism. Ideally, a sports writing career would be his dream job, but anything that allows him to apply his writing ability is something that he enjoys doing.



## Not a Member of SPJ@Ashford?

Check out the great work your student organization is doing and learn how to get involved at

[www.spjashford.org](http://www.spjashford.org)