

# Computer-Assisted Reporting JOUR 4430/7430 Spring 2016

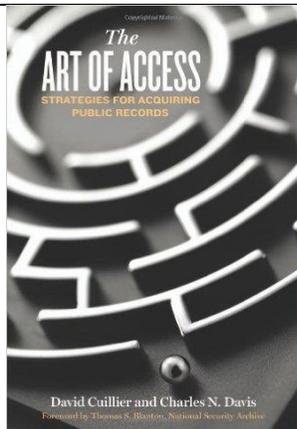
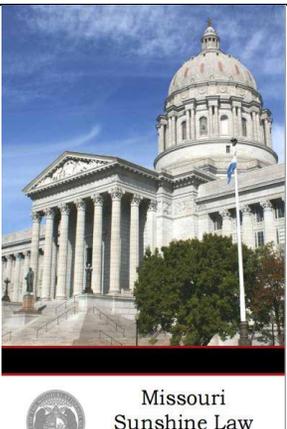
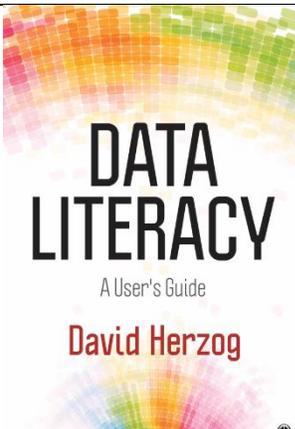
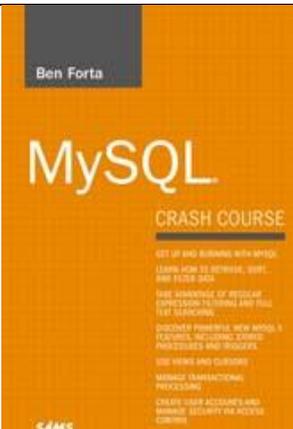
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10 a.m. – noon Thursdays  
Class bookmarks: <https://delicious.com/dherzog/cars16>

Computer-assisted reporting (CAR) is a form of data journalism that refers to the analysis of public records that are stored electronically.

This is largely a skills course with a heavy hands-on component. By successfully completing this course, you will be able to identify, obtain, evaluate, clean, analyze and visualize data. You will be expected to think like a journalist by evaluating data critically and applying what you learn to news stories, information graphics or web applications.

You'll learn how to use software, such as spreadsheets, database managers, text editors, data-cleaning programs and visualization tools.

## Required books

			
<p><a href="#">The Art of Access: Strategies for Acquiring Public Records</a>, by David Cuillier and Charles N. Davis Available at the University Bookstore</p>	<p>Missouri Sunshine Law Guide, (will provide in class; available as <a href="#">PDF</a>)</p>	<p><a href="#">Data Literacy: A User's Guide</a>, by David Herzog Available at the University Bookstore.</p>	<p><a href="#">MySQL Crash Course</a>, by Ben Forta Available at the University Bookstore</p>

## Other required materials

- Text editor: [TextMate](#) or [TextWrangler](#) for Mac; [Notepad++](#) for PC (free, install now)
- [SQLite](#) database manager add-in for Firefox (free, download and install later)
- [OpenRefine](#) (free, download and install later)
- [Tableau Desktop](#) (free, download and install later)
- 4 GB (minimum storage capacity) USB flash drive

**Grading components** (Note: there is no final exam)

**I. Participation and effort (25 percent)**

I expect everyone will participate in class by taking part in discussions, following along during lectures and asking questions. I've found that the best classes are the ones where students are engaged in their learning. See below for my attendance policy.

Participation also means making sure you're on top of the reading assignments and putting your best effort into class overall. In addition, I also expect that everyone will read a daily newspaper or watch television news. [The New York Times](#) and [USA Today](#) regularly use database analysis for news reporting and interactive web applications, so those are two excellent choices. ESPN's [FiveThirtyEight](#) and The Times' [The Upshot](#) blogs feature data-driven journalism. Also, you should follow the [CAR stories on IRE's ExtraExtra! Blog](#)

**II. Homework assignments (25 percent)**

You will have a number of homework assignments during the semester. In many of these assignments you will be expected to download data from Blackboard and analyze it using a question-and-answer sheet as your guide. **I will not accept late assignments unless you've made arrangements with me in advance. You will receive a 0 for unexcused late work.**

**III. Data negotiation (25 percent)**

Identify a database held by a government agency that you would like to have and try to get it. Since you are negotiating for public data as a journalist, it is not acceptable to promise that you will not use the records. **Downloading data from the Internet does not fulfill the requirements of this exercise. Neither does getting records on paper or as PDFs.** On the day this exercise is due or later, you will give a 5-min. lightning talk detailing your experience and hand in a written report. Details will be provided separately.

**IV. Group final project (25 percent of final grade)**

Analyze a database and write a 10-page minimum story proposal. The goal of this project is to create a body of work that can be passed along to student journalists at The Missourian, KBIA or KOMU for further reporting and, eventually, publication or broadcast. Details will be provided separately.

**Graduate student component & final grading**

Interview a data journalist and write a 1,500-word article about how he or she contributed to a project within the past year. Details will be provided separately.

**Grading scale: Graduates**

- 98-100 percent of possible points earned.....A+
- 94-97 percent of possible points earned.....A
- 90-93 percent of possible points earned.....A-
- 88-89 percent of possible points earned.....B+
- 84-87 percent of possible points earned.....B
- 80-83 percent of possible points earned.....B-
- 78-79 percent of possible points earned.....C+
- 74-77 percent of possible points earned.....C
- 70-73 percent of possible points earned.....C-
- 69 percent or less of possible points earned.....F

**Grading scale: Undergraduates**

- 98-100 percent of possible points earned.....A+
- 94-97 percent of possible points earned.....A
- 90-93 percent of possible points earned.....A-
- 88-89 percent of possible points earned.....B+
- 84-87 percent of possible points earned.....B
- 80-83 percent of possible points earned.....B-
- 78-79 percent of possible points earned.....C+
- 74-77 percent of possible points earned.....C
- 70-73 percent of possible points earned.....C-
- 68-69 percent of possible points earned.....D+
- 64-67 percent of possible points earned.....D
- 63-60 percent of possible points earned.....D-
- 59 percent or less of possible points earned.....F

Work will be evaluated on several levels, including:

1. Technical skill – the ability to use the software to construct correct formulas, queries, etc. If a result is recorded on an answer sheet but the work is not preserved in the appropriate spreadsheet or database, points will be deducted. Incorrect formulas and/or queries will result in lost points even if a correct answer coincidentally results despite a technical error.
2. Reporting skill – the ability to accurately record findings; in other words, if your spreadsheet is correct, but your answer sheet is wrong, points will be deducted. If an answer is not recorded at all but it exists in the spreadsheet or database, points will be deducted. When you’re reporting on your findings, please stick to what you know. Do no invent other “facts” for your story.
3. Communication skill – the ability to verbalize findings, usually in the form of writing three paragraphs at the conclusion of an assignment based on the data reporting. These paragraphs are to be written as newspaper or broadcast stories and must employ journalistic standards.

**Attendance policy**

Students are expected to attend all class sessions. Again, this is a largely a skills course and your success will depend upon the time you spend in front of the computer, working on your exercises. Also, when you miss key classes, you will fall behind. I realize that you will sometimes miss class, so you get three (3) unexcused absences.

If you have four (4) unexcused absences, your final grade will drop one full letter grade.

If you have six (6) unexcused absences you will either be dropped from the class or receive an F for your final grade.

Religious holidays, illness and personal/family emergencies all are excused absences, though I may ask for documentation.

**A note for Honors College students**

If you wish to earn Honors College credit for this class, you may to enter into a Learning-By-Contract agreement with the instructor and complete an additional project that deepens your knowledge of data journalism.

**About the instructor**

David Herzog has taught data journalism and served as the academic adviser for the National Institute for Computer-Assisted Reporting since 2002. He was a 2010-2011 Reynolds Journalism Institute fellow and led the team that launched OpenMissouri.org. Before coming to Mizzou, he was a newspaper reporter and editor for nearly 15 years, including The Providence Journal, The Baltimore Sun and The Morning Call in Allentown, Pa.

## **Academic Honesty**

Academic integrity is fundamental to the activities and principles of a university. All members of the academic community must be confident that each person's work has been responsibly and honorably acquired, developed and presented. Any effort to gain an advantage not given to all students is dishonest whether or not the effort is successful. The academic community regards breaches of the academic integrity rules as extremely serious matters. Sanctions for such a breach may include academic sanctions from the instructor, including failing the course for any violation, to disciplinary sanctions ranging from probation to expulsion.

Academic misconduct includes but is not limited to the following:

- Use of materials from another author without citation or attribution.
- Use of verbatim materials from another author without citation or attribution.
- Extensive use of materials from past assignments without permission of your instructor.
- Extensive use of materials from assignments in other classes without permission of your instructor.
- Fabricating information in news or feature stories, whether for publication or not.
- Fabricating sources in news or feature stories, whether for publication or not.
- Fabricating quotes in news or feature stories, whether for publication or not.
- Lack of full disclosure or permission from editors when controversial reportorial techniques, such as going undercover to get news, are used.

When in doubt about plagiarism, paraphrasing, quoting or collaboration, consult with your instructor. For closed-book exams and exercises, academic misconduct includes conferring with other class members, copying or reading someone else's test and using notes and materials without prior permission of the instructor. For open-book exams and exercises, academic misconduct includes copying or reading someone else's work.

## **Classroom Misconduct**

Classroom misconduct is defined by the [University of Missouri's collected rules](#) and regulations are also outlined in the [M-Book Student Code of Conduct](#).

Classroom misconduct can include obstruction or disruption of teaching, such as late arrival or early departure or failure to turn off mobile devices unless otherwise instructed.

Classroom misconduct can also include misuse of computing resources, harassment, bullying, physical abuse or safety threats; theft; property damage; disruptive, lewd or obscene conduct; abuse of computer time; repeated failure to attend class when attendance is required; and repeated failure to participate or respond in class when class participation is required.

**IMPORTANT:** Entering a classroom late or leaving a classroom before the end of the period can be extremely disruptive behavior. Students are asked to arrive for class on time and to avoid early departures. This is particularly true of large lectures, where late arrivals and early departures can be most disruptive. Instructors have the right to deny students access to the classroom if they arrive late and have the right to dismiss a student from the class for early departures that result in disruptions.

Under MU policy, your instructor has the right to ask for your removal from the course for misconduct, disruptive behavior or excessive absences. The instructor then has the right to issue a grade of withdraw, withdraw failing or F. The instructor alone is responsible for assigning the grade in such circumstances.

## **Dishonesty and Misconduct Reporting Procedures**

MU faculty are required to report all instances of academic dishonesty or classroom misconduct to the appropriate campus officials. Allegations of classroom misconduct must be reported to MU's Office of Student Conduct. Allegations of academic misconduct must be reported to MU's Office of the Provost.

## **Professional Standards and Ethics**

The School of Journalism is committed to the highest standards of academic and professional ethics and expects its students to adhere to those standards. Students should be familiar with the Code of Ethics of the Society of Professional

Journalists and adhere to its restrictions. Students are expected to observe strict honesty in academic programs and as representatives of school-related media. Should any student be guilty of plagiarism, falsification, misrepresentation or other forms of dishonesty in any assigned work, that student may be subject to a failing grade from the instructor and such disciplinary action as may be necessary under University regulations.

### **Professional Values and Competencies**

The Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communications requires that, irrespective of their particular specialization, all graduates should be aware of certain core values and competencies and be able to:

Understand and apply the principles and laws of freedom of speech and press for the country in which the institution that invites ACEJMC is located, as well as receive instruction in and understand the range of systems of freedom of expression around the world, including the right to dissent, to monitor and criticize power, and to assemble and petition for redress of grievances.

- Demonstrate an understanding of professional ethical principles and work ethically in pursuit of truth, accuracy, fairness and diversity.
- Think critically, creatively and independently.
- Write correctly and clearly in forms and styles appropriate for the communications professions, audiences and purposes they serve.
- Apply basic numerical and statistical concepts.
- Apply current tools and technologies appropriate for the communications professions in which they work, and to understand the digital world.

### **Executive Order #38, Academic Inquiry, Course Discussion and Privacy**

**Faculty allowing recording:** University of Missouri System Executive Order No. 38 lays out principles regarding the sanctity of classroom discussions at the university. The policy is described fully in Section 200.015 of the Collected Rules and Regulations. In this class, students may make audio or video recordings of course activity unless specifically prohibited by the faculty member. However, the redistribution of audio or video recordings of statements or comments from the course to individuals who are not students in the course is prohibited without the express permission of the faculty member and of any students who are recorded. Students found to have violated this policy are subject to discipline in accordance with provisions of [section 200.020](#) of the Collected Rules and Regulations of the University of Missouri pertaining to student conduct matters.

### **University of Missouri-Columbia Notice of Nondiscrimination**

The University of Missouri does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, age, disability or status as a protected veteran.

### **Title IX**

The University of Missouri prohibits all forms of sex or gender discrimination, including sex-based violence. If you or someone you know has experienced sex discrimination or been harassed or assaulted, you can get help at the Relationship & Sexual Violence Prevention (RSVP) Center, a confidential resource, at [rsvp@missouri.edu](mailto:rsvp@missouri.edu) or (573) 882-6638, or go to [www.rsvp.missouri.edu](http://www.rsvp.missouri.edu). You can also contact the Title IX Office ([title9@missouri.edu](mailto:title9@missouri.edu); (573) 882-3880; or [www.title9.missouri.edu](http://www.title9.missouri.edu)). Because we care about our community, Mizzou employees are required to report all incidents of sex discrimination to the Title IX Office.

### **Students with Disabilities**

If you anticipate barriers related to the format or requirements of this course, if you have emergency medical information to share with me, or if you need to make arrangements in case the building must be evacuated, please let me know as soon as possible.

If disability related accommodations are necessary (for example, a note taker, extended time on exams, captioning), please register with the [MU Disability Center](#), S5 Memorial Union, 573-882-4696, and then notify me of your eligibility for reasonable accommodations.

**Religious Holidays**

Students are excused for recognized religious holidays. Let your instructor know in advance if you have a conflict

**Intellectual Pluralism**

The University community welcomes intellectual diversity and respects student rights. Students who have questions or concerns regarding the atmosphere in this class (including respect for diverse opinions) may contact the faculty chair; associate dean; director of the Office of Students Rights and Responsibilities (<http://osrr.missouri.edu>); the MU Equity Office, (<http://equity.missouri.edu>) or [equity@missouri.edu](mailto:equity@missouri.edu).

All students will have the opportunity to submit an anonymous evaluation of the instructor(s) at the end of the course.