

Seminar 2

How to Conduct Risk Assessments & What New Journalists Should Consider

Table of Contents

Seminar Two: Overview	3
Instructor Advance Reading.....	3
ACOS Principles	3
Reporters Instructed in Saving Colleagues (RISC).....	3
Rory Peck Trust Risk Assessment.....	3
Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP).....	3
The Salama Project	3
Ground Truth	3
Global Journalist Security.....	3
Centurion Risk Assessment Services.....	3
Hostage US.....	3
IWMF Hosts SF Panel, Intros Reporta App to Help Reporters Stay Safe	3
UNESCO Observatory of Killed Journalists.....	3
Report of the Frontline Freelance Register Survey of Members	4
Student Advance Reading	4
“In Syria Freelancers Like James Foley Cover a Dangerous War Zone with No Front Lines” by Ellen Shearer	4
“The Real Value of ISIS Antiquities Trade” by Ben Taub.....	4
“The Journey from Syria” by Ben Taub (read all six parts)	4
“U.S. Death Toll Hits 2,000 in Iraq” by Richard Boudreaux, Louise Roug and Paul Richter.....	4
“Safety Guide for Journalists” from Reporters Without Borders	4
Instructor Notes	4
Discussion Questions	4
Rory Peck Trust: Risk Assessment.....	4
International News Safety Institute Safety Code.....	4
International Women’s Media Foundation Emergency Fund	4
Handouts: Risk Assessment, Proof of Life, and ACOS Safety Checklist.....	4

Ten Questions You Should Consider in a Risk Assessment.docx	4
Proof of Life Template.doc.....	4
ACOS Safety Checklist	4
Initial Considerations from Hostage US	5
Relationships with Family and Friends from Hostage US	5
Video 1: Tom Hundley, Pulitzer Center on Crisis Reporting.	5
Discussion Questions for Video 1.....	6
Video 2: Louise Roug, Global News Editor of Mashable.	6
Discussions Questions for Video 2	7
The Dart Center for Journalism & Trauma offers resources on PTSD	8
Video 3: Instructor introduces Ben Taub.	8
Discussion Questions for Video 3.....	8
Fact Sheet: US Government Hostage Policy	8
“Changing the US Hostage Policy” by Joel Simon	8
Follow-up assignment for students	9

Seminar Two: Overview

The purpose of this seminar is to show students the various risk assessment strategies, tools and applications that have been created to help while they are in the field reporting and ways to think about what conflicts, terrorism or unrest they are capable of covering, based on their experience.

Newly minted journalists may think of freelancing abroad as a way to start a career as a foreign correspondent rather than trying to find jobs at organizations that eventually would send them overseas. Today's lesson looks at some of the realities and ways to prepare for such a career and how to build a career as a foreign correspondent in a sensible and safe manner.

Instructors are provided with background readings to help inform their teaching as well as materials for students to read in advance of the session. The instructors are also given questions to provoke discussion along with key points to be made when raising each question.

Instructor Advance Reading

In addition to the reading below, please read the student reading materials. Each discussion question offers background material to help you guide the discussion.

- [ACOS Principles](#)
A Culture of Safety (ACOS) Alliance was formed in January 2015 at a freelance journalism safety conference in Washington. Its goal was to encourage the news industry to protect the journalists it hires, both staff and freelancers, and to encourage journalists to learn best practices in protecting themselves on assignment. The “Freelance Journalists Safety Principles” were launched in February 2015.
- [Reporters Instructed in Saving Colleagues \(RISC\)](#), the organization that trained James Foley
- [Rory Peck Trust Risk Assessment](#)
- [Smart Traveler Enrollment Program \(STEP\)](#)
- [The Salama Project \(Risk Assessment Application for Journalists & Media Organizations\)](#)
- [Ground Truth – A Field Guide for Correspondents](#)
- [Global Journalist Security – safety training company](#)
- [Centurion Risk Assessment Services – safety training company](#)
- [Hostage US – a nonprofit that helps families of hostages during and after the captivity](#)
- [IWMF Hosts SF Panel, Intros Reporta App to Help Reporters Stay Safe](#)
- [UNESCO Observatory of Killed Journalists – 1300 Journalists Killed Since 1993](#)

- [Report of the Frontline Freelance Register Survey of Members](#)

Student Advance Reading

- [“In Syria Freelancers Like James Foley Cover a Dangerous War Zone with No Front Lines”](#) by Ellen Shearer
- [“The Real Value of ISIS Antiquities Trade”](#) by Ben Taub
- [“The Journey from Syria”](#) by Ben Taub (read all six parts)
- [“U.S. Death Toll Hits 2,000 in Iraq”](#) by Richard Boudreaux, Louise Roug and Paul Richter
- [“Safety Guide for Journalists”](#) from Reporters Without Borders

Instructor Notes

Beneath each question to be posed to students, there are notes and bullet points intended to help instructors focus on the information, controversy and/or issues that students should learn and debate.

Discussion Questions

1. Following up on the last session, let’s talk more about preparation and safety in hostile environments. What steps should a journalist take – and are there differences between freelancers and staff writers in terms of risks?

Increasingly, freelance reporting is the main form of reporting in war zones. The costs, training and risks fall to the freelancer, not a news organization, so the reporter has to factor in costs, combat zone education, story subjects and their sensitivity, communications strategy, proof of life document, medical and insurance considerations, and equipment, among other things.

- [Rory Peck Trust: Risk Assessment](#)
- [International News Safety Institute Safety Code](#)
- [International Women’s Media Foundation Emergency Fund](#)

News organizations have an obligation, some say, to band together to provide guidance and support for journalist safety. ACOS was created after James Foley’s death in response to that obligation. Click for the [ACOS Safety Principles](#) endorsed by major media worldwide.

Handouts: Risk Assessment, Proof of Life, and ACOS Safety Checklist

- [Ten Questions You Should Consider in a Risk Assessment.docx](#)
- [Proof of Life Template.doc](#)
- [ACOS Safety Checklist](#)

2. What responsibilities does a journalist have toward his or her family when going into a potentially dangerous foreign assignment? To the news organization? To his or her government, which may be called upon to help in an emergency?

- [Initial Considerations](#) from Hostage US
- [Relationships with Family and Friends](#) from Hostage US

Introduction to Videos

Instructors now move the seminar toward a series of interviews with journalists who have reported from abroad – about conflicts, in conflicts, in hostile situations and more. They will offer advice based on their experiences about how to prepare for assignments in hostile or potentially hostile environments so as to mitigate risks.

Start by asking the students to think about the following as they listen to the speakers:

- What does foreign reporting mean? It's not all war. What is a hostile environment? There are many places to report that are hostile if not sensibly done, even in the United States.
- How should new journalists approach hostile reporting environments in terms of choosing how to start a career? There is a mythology about the glamorous war reporter, but that is not what a new reporter should be thinking of as a first story/assignment.

Video 1: Tom Hundley, Pulitzer Center on Crisis Reporting.

<https://vimeo.com/227886611> (Approx. 5 minutes)

Tom Hundley is senior editor at the Pulitzer Center on Crisis Reporting. Before joining the Pulitzer Center, he was a newspaper journalist for 36 years, including nearly two decades as a foreign correspondent for the *Chicago Tribune*. During that time, Hundley served as the *Tribune*'s bureau chief in Jerusalem, Warsaw, Rome and London, reporting from more than 60 countries. He has covered three wars in the Persian Gulf, the Arab-Israeli conflict, and the rise of Iran's post-revolutionary theocracy.

In the mid-1990s, Hundley spent several years in the Balkans reporting on the violent break-up of Yugoslavia. He covered Eastern Europe's transition from communism to democracy and Northern Ireland's transition from war to peace.

Hundley also has spent time at U.S. newspapers large and small, from the *Middletown (N.Y.) Times-Herald Record* and the *Bergen Record* to the *Detroit Free Press* and the *Tribune*. His work has won numerous journalism awards.

Hundley graduated from Georgetown University and holds an M.A. in International Relations from the University of Pennsylvania. He was also a National Endowment for the Humanities Journalism Fellow at the University of Michigan.

(Bio reprinted, with edits, from the Pulitzer Center with permission)

Discussion Questions for Video 1

1. What is your reaction to a veteran journalist saying he is afraid of getting hurt?
 - This is a good way to get into a discussion of the value of being fearful. Journalists, like many people, are often embarrassed to admit fear. But for journalists heading into dangerous situations, fear can be a friend – a reminder to think things through, to take precautions. It also is an emotion that can help you be brave enough to realize that your risk assessment shows you that it is, in fact, too dangerous to go on the assignment.
2. What are questions you would ask yourself in trying to determine the risks of a foreign or conflict assignment or a story you're considering?
 - Provide students with the following handout: [Ten Questions You Should Consider in a Risk Assessment.docx](#)
 - Walk through each question and ask them to relate it back to Hundley's monologue. Hundley suggested daily check-ins, knowing your vehicle ID, traveling in a group, getting insurance, and having training in advance.
3. Hundley said journalists had traditionally been treated as noncombatants, but that changed after 2003 and the invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq. What do you think caused journalists to no longer be seen as neutral? Why are they now targeted?
4. Safety training is valuable so journalists may better understand situational awareness, what to do in hostage situations, how to administer first aid to themselves and others, and much more. But do you agree with Hundley that it could give a false sense of confidence? Have you had an experience where your false sense of confidence led to trouble?
5. Hand out the [Proof of Life](#) questions and the [ACOS Checklist](#).
 - Ask students to think about this in relation to the documentary and how important it was to the hostages to be asked for Proof of Life.
 - Review the ACOS Checklist step by step.

Video 2: Louise Roug, Global News Editor of Mashable.

<https://vimeo.com/227886039> (Approx. 8 minutes)

Louise Roug is the New York-based global news editor of *Mashable*, directing the teams that cover news and politics in the U.S. and the rest of the world. She is a Pulitzer finalist with more than 15 years of experience in digital journalism, magazines and newspapers.

Before joining *Mashable* in 2014, she was the foreign editor of *Newsweek* and *The Daily Beast*, overseeing the foreign coverage of a combined digital and print 140-person global newsroom.

Prior to that, she worked for the *Los Angeles Times* for almost a decade, covering the 2008

presidential election and conflict in the Middle East, among many other things.

Roug's work has been recognized with numerous awards. She won the Overseas Press Club Award and she was a Pulitzer finalist in 2006 in the International Reporting category for Iraq coverage as part of a group. At *Newsweek/The Daily Beast*, she won two back-to-back Webby Awards in 2012 and 2013 for Best News Site and a 2012 National Magazine Digital Ellie Award as part of a team.

(Bio reprinted, with edits, from LinkedIn page with author's permission)

Discussions Questions for Video 2

1. Roug offers some specific advice for women on what to wear and how to act, but also says being a woman can be an advantage in some Muslim countries where women aren't allowed to talk to male strangers. Explore with the students how female reporters should operate in hostile environments, unfamiliar countries.

- How would you feel as a reporter wearing an abaya? Would you have any problem with having to dress differently from male reporters?
- Are female journalists more at risk than men? Less? No difference?

2. Roug offers tips on developing situational awareness. What most struck you as helpful advice?

- She emphasized the need to always be thinking about where you are, and what and who you are around. Situational awareness is paramount.
- Learn from others who have been there and ask advice, both about logistical issues like finding fixers and drivers who are trustworthy, where to stay and officials you can trust and about the situation on the ground in terms of political situation, attitudes of citizens toward the media and potential powder kegs.
- It's smarter to hang back when the action starts rather than rushing forward, and it gives you a chance to read your surroundings.
- You don't have to be on the scene: If it's too risky, don't go. There are ways to cover the action without being there, through fleeing refugees, military reports, and other sources. Ask students to think about how they would cover an insurgent attack on a military base, for instance, or on a village being guarded at a distance by U.S. troops.

3. Roug noted that during the Arab Spring, reporters with little experience arrived in Egypt to report on the protests, change in government, etc. She was critical of their lack of preparation. Do you think that's a fair assessment, or what should they have done differently?

- What should they have done to create a plan and be better prepared? What would you do in that situation as a beginning reporter?
- What about getting a fixer, translator and driver? How would you do that, and how would you afford that?
- Do you think a reporter who is going into a hostile or violent situation as his or her first foreign reporting experience is taking too much of a risk? If so, what would your approach be to get to the point where you could cover such events? If not, why not?

4. Roug acknowledged that covering conflicts for extended periods had caused her to have post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

- What was your reaction to that information? Were you surprised because she is experienced? Or because she was very matter-of-fact, not overly emotional?
- Do you think there is still a stigma to admitting that you have PTSD, a concern that it will hurt your career?
- The Dart Center for Journalism & Trauma offers resources on PTSD – review them with the students.

Video 3: Instructor introduces Ben Taub.

<https://vimeo.com/175015397> (Approx. 11 minutes)

Ben Taub, 25, is a journalist and former contestant on *The Voice*, appearing in the series' third season. He graduated from Princeton University in 2014 and from the Columbia University Graduate School of Journalism in 2015. He also received a one-month fellowship to work at the Reuters bureau in Jerusalem after receiving his master's degree. He is a member of the Frontline Freelance Register and a regular contributor to the *New Yorker*.

Discussion Questions for Video 3

1. Taub advocated not rushing into a dangerous situation if you haven't had experience in conflict coverage in the past. He suggests learning slowly from experience – both your own in less dangerous situations and others' who have operated in dangerous areas. He suggests reporting from afar at first. In some places, like Syria, even veteran journalists may find that reporting from afar is the right course after going through a risk assessment of the situation.

- What is your reaction to staying in Turkey to report on Syria, or going to refugee camps rather than going to the conflict area? Do you agree that the reporting can be as effective? Why or why not?
- His tips: getting documents from the area, seeking information from the government, using rebels to provide a detailed look, which is sometimes more thorough than on-the-ground reporting. You can create a historical record of events through documents.

2. He talked about the obligation you have to your helpers – fixers, translators, drivers. You may be willing to take a risk, but you can leave the country; they cannot.

- Devil's advocate – they know the risks when they take the job. Do you have an obligation to reinforce the risks, to find ways to mitigate risks to them? Or do they know what they are getting into and therefore are taking the job with full awareness?

3. He notes that terrorists are now targeting journalists – for the attention such kidnappings bring and for the ransom money. U.S. hostage policy prevents paying ransom.

- [Fact Sheet: US Government Hostage Policy](#)

Review criticism of U.S. hostage policy:

- [“Changing the US Hostage Policy”](#) by Joel Simon

Follow-up assignment for students

Students choose one of the following countries and prepare a 600-word risk assessment – Iraq, Columbia, Mexico, Ukraine, Ethiopia, India, Chad. Use handouts as guides.