

James W. Foley Journalism Safety Modules



Last Update: May 2026



Associated Press

There's physical courage, but that's nothing compared to moral courage. If I don't have that moral courage, we don't have journalism.
~ James Foley

Contents

An Overview	1
Module 1: Journalism Safety: Developing Safe Habits.....	2
BE SAFE (Before Everything, Stop Assess Focus Enact)	2
Committee to Protect Journalists, Risk Assessment: Getting Started	3
"Journalism Ethics 101: A Survival Guide for Student Journalists Navigating a Shifting World" Delaney Nothhaft, <i>Markkula Center for Applied Ethics</i>	3
"For student journalists, the beats are the same but the protections are different" Stephanie Sugars, <i>Freedom of the Press Foundation</i>	4
"Teen distrust of journalism is rising -- media literacy may be the industry's best defense" Diane Sylvester, Editors & Publishers	4
U.S. Press Freedom Tracker	4
Module 2: Running a Newsroom – Creating a Culture of Safety.....	5
Risk Assessments (click to open)	5
"Plan for the expected and unexpected: What you need to think about when completing a risk assessment" Caroline Scott, <i>WAN IFRA: World Association of News Publishers</i>	5
"Journalists should prepare to defend their right to report the news" <i>Poynter</i>	6
"Editors' Checklist: Preparing for U.S. protest assignments" <i>Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ)</i>	6
"Are Newsrooms Doing Enough to Take Care of Their Journalists' Mental Health and Safety?" Nu Yang, <i>Editor & Publisher</i>	7
"Coping with Emotional Trauma in the Newsroom" Kenna Griffin, <i>Prof KRG: A practical resource for student journalists</i>	7
Module 3: On Assignment – Mitigating Risk.....	8
"Risk assessments can make journalism safer" Joel Simon, <i>Columbia Journalism Review</i>	8
"U.S Journalist Safety Kit" <i>Committee to Protect Journalists</i>	8
"Safety Resources for Journalists Covering Protests" <i>PEN America</i>	8
"Covering Injustice: Safety Tips for Reporting on Protests" <i>IWMF</i>	9
"It's time to change the way the media reports on protests. Here are some ideas." Kendra Pierre-Louis, <i>Nieman Lab</i>	9
"Safety & Arrest Response Protocols for Journalists" <i>The Pivot Fund Staff</i>	9
"Journalists Under Attack: Lessons from the Field" Jennifer Dorroh, <i>IJNet</i>	9
Module 4: Covering Immigration (incl. ICE)	10
"A Legal FAQ on 'ICE Raids' for Student Journalists" <i>Student Press Law Center (SPLC)</i>	10
"Immigration Reporting Legal Guide" <i>Reporters Committee for Freedom of the Press</i>	10
"In Minneapolis, journalism students are learning to report under pressure amid an immigration surge" Al Tompkins, <i>Poynter</i>	11
"Inside a Minneapolis Newspaper's Coverage of the ICE Raids" The Editors of <i>Aperture</i>	11

"Filming ICE is legal but exposes you to digital tracking" Nicole M. Bennett, <i>The Conversation</i>	11
Module 5: Covering Elections	12
"Covering Elections: Journalist Safety Kit" Committee to Protect Journalists	12
"Advice for reporters covering unrest during elections" Jorge Luis Sierra, <i>IJNet</i>	13
"Covering the 2024 elections? Here are some tips and resources from IRE experts" <i>Investigative Reporters & Editors (IRE)</i>	13
"What journalists need to know about the laws on covering elections" Amy Sherman, <i>Poynter</i>	13
"Election Legal Guide" from <i>Reporters Committee for the Freedom of the Press</i>	14
"12 tips for minding the security of your mobile device when covering elections" Jorge Luis Sierra	14
"What journalists need to know to combat information disorder" Amarah Ennis, <i>IJNet</i>	14
"How to cover Election Day and beyond" Vivian Schiller & Garrett M. Graff, <i>Columbia Journalism Review</i> . .	15
Module 6: Reporting Abroad (incl. Conflict Reporting)	16
Special Presidential Envoy for Hostage Affairs (SPEHA)	16
Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP)	16
Hostile Environment First Aid Training (HEFAT)	16
<i>Jim: The James Foley Story</i> (2016) HBO, Director: Brian Oakes	16
"The Principles: We Must Embed a Culture of Safety in Our Profession" <i>ACOS Alliance</i>	17
"A Field Guide for Correspondents" Charles M. Sennott, <i>The GroundTruth Project</i>	17
"Tips for Independent Media Facing Security Risks" SembraMedia, <i>IJNet</i>	17
"Nothing to Declare: CPJ's advice for journalists crossing a U.S. border" <i>CPJ</i>	18
"Insurance" <i>A Culture of Safety Alliance (ACOS)</i>	18
Module 7: Photojournalism – Staying Safe	19
"Video & recap: Caring for photojournalists – Preventing burnout, treating trauma and ensuring equity" <i>The National Press Club Journalism Institute</i>	19
"Photojournalists: The key to getting published and staying safe" Glenn Edwards, <i>Thomson Foundation</i>	20
"#SafetyInFocus: Photojournalists at risk" <i>Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ)</i>	20
"'We face a different danger,' war photographer Paul Conroy says" Lucy Westcott, <i>CPJ</i>	20
"When Should Journalists Put Down the Mic and Lend Aid?" Patrick L Plaisance, <i>Psychology Today</i>	20
"Safety Tips for Travel Photographers (Particularly Women)" Karthika Gupta, <i>Digital Photography School</i> 21	
Module 8: Understanding Journalists' Rights (Legal).....	22
"What some reporters get wrong about the First Amendment" Jonathan Peters, <i>Columbia Journalism Review (CJR)</i>	22
"Journalists, attacked by police and rioters alike, must build local bridges" Joel Simon, <i>Columbia Journalism Review</i>	23
"Press arrests used to silence protest coverage in 2025" from Stephanie Sugars, <i>Freedom of the Press Foundation (US Press Freedom Tracker)</i>	23
"Police, Protesters and the Press" <i>Reporters Committee for the Freedom of the Press (RCFP)</i>	23

"Student journalists covering protests face unprecedented violence from police" Joe Severino, <i>Student Press Law Center (SPLC)</i>	23
Module 9: Self-Care – Mental Health and Emotional Trauma	24
"For Reporters Covering Stressful Assignments, Self-Care is Crucial" Catherine Stifter, <i>Center for Health Journalism</i>	24
"How journalists can take care of themselves while covering trauma" Kari Cobham, <i>Poynter</i>	25
"How journalists practice self-care while covering tough stories" Elite Truong, <i>Poynter</i>	25
"Self-care tips for journalists - plus a list of several resources" Naseem S. Miller, <i>The Journalist's Resource</i>	25
Module 10: Working with Sources	26
"When interviewing trauma victims, proceed with caution and compassion" Sherry Ricchiardi, <i>IJNET</i>	26
"An editor's sensitive guide to interviewing victims of trauma" Jan Winburn, <i>Nieman Foundation</i>	26
"Interviewing in the aftermath of trauma" Kimina Lyall, <i>Global Center for Journalism & Trauma</i>	26
"Journalists of Color Face Harassment by Sources" Jane C. Hu, <i>The Open Notebook</i>	27
"The Art of the Interview: Asking the Hard Questions About the Hard Questions" Ann Friedman, <i>Columbia Journalism Review</i>	27
"How to Conduct Difficult Interviews" Mallory Pickett, <i>The Open Notebook</i>	28
Module 11: Diversity in the Newsroom	29
"The cost of reporting while female" Anne Helen Petersen, <i>Columbia Journalism Review</i>	29
"Why going solo is a risk for female reporters in the US and Canada" Lucy Westcott, <i>CPJ</i>	29
"IWMF Emergency Fund" <i>International Women's Media Foundation</i>	30
"Journalists of color are part of the story of racism in America. That raises tough questions on the job" Tracy Potts, <i>Center for Health Journalism</i>	30
"Journalists of color facing racism head-on: 'It kind of rips you apart'" April Simpson, <i>Current: News for People in Public Media</i>	30
"Journalism for Black Lives: A Reporting Guide" <i>The Movement for Black Lives and Free Press</i>	30
"Resources for trans journalists to stay safe and thrive in the newsroom" Nazlee Arbee, <i>IJNet</i>	31
Module 12: Digital Security	32
"Digital security resources for journalists" <i>Nieman</i>	32
"How to Dox Yourself on the Internet" Kristen Kozinski, Neena Kapur, & Floyd Muir, <i>NYT Open</i>	32
"Digital Safety Kit" <i>Committee to Protect Journalists</i>	33
"Journalism School?: Lessons in security they might not teach at your J-school" <i>Surveillance Self-Defense</i> ..	33
"Are You Savvy About Digital Security?" Sarah Wild, <i>The Open Notebook</i>	33
Module 13: Online Harassment and Cyberbullying	34
"How can I protect the journalists in my newsroom from online harassment?" <i>PEN America</i>	34
"Online Harassment New Frontline for Journalists, Report Says" Dalia Faheid, <i>Voice of America</i>	34
"Patrolling the Trolls: How Journalists Can Cope with Harassment and Threats" Shannon Ramlochan, <i>Beyond Bylines: Covering the Intersection of Journalism, Emerging Media and Blogging</i>	34

"Tips and tools for journalists to deal with online harassment" Natasha Tynes, <i>IJNET</i>	35
Module 14: Covering Natural Disasters and Weather-Related Events.....	36
"Resources for journalists covering the environment or extreme weather" <i>CPJ</i>	36
"Covering extreme weather: What to avoid and how to get it right" Chloe Reichel, <i>The Journalist's Resource</i>	36
"This is our Super Bowl: why do reporters go into the eye of the storm?" Luke O'Neil, <i>The Guardian</i>	36
"Hurricanes & Other Natural Disasters" <i>RTDNA</i>	37
"10 Investigative Questions to Ask after a Natural Disaster" Rowan Philp.....	37
Modified Risk Assessment for Journalists.....	38
Modified Risk Assessment for Newsroom Managers	39
In Loving Memory of James Wright Foley.....	40



(Nicole Tung/ASSOCIATED PRESS)

James W. Foley Journalism Safety Modules

An Overview

Since 2024 when the James W. Foley Legacy Foundation (JWFLF) was founded following the brutal murders of James Foley, Steven Sotloff, and others by ISIS, the risks journalists face, including here in the United States, have continued to increase. JWFLF initially focused on providing safety resources for journalists – primarily freelancers – working in conflict zones. We soon recognized a clear and sobering reality: safety concerns are not limited to journalists working abroad in conflict zones. All journalists, domestically and abroad, need to be prepared to mitigate risks no matter their beat or their location.

JWFLF is committed to supporting and protecting press freedom. JWFLF's efforts include an emphasis on introducing journalism and communications students to safety as a key component of their craft. We believe the safety of young journalists is paramount and that aspiring journalists must know how to prepare for – and respond to – danger as they prepare for a career in media. Towards that end, JWFLF, in collaboration with Marquette University's Diederich College of Communication, developed the James W. Foley Journalism Safety Modules with students of journalism and communication studies in mind.

In 2019, Marquette University's Diederich College of Communication piloted the safety modules across their curriculum. Currently, instructors at over 25 colleges and universities across the US have incorporated safety resources from the modules into their existing journalism courses. In addition, the Samir Kassir Foundation provided grant funding to enable an Arabic translation of the safety modules. Both the English and Arabic versions have been introduced into 11 Lebanese universities.

The safety modules help educators create a culture of safety. Each module has clear objectives with resources that can be implemented into existing courses. Depending on the instructor's needs and course content, the resources can be incorporated into a class period or across multiple class periods. Some instructors incorporate resources from one module into their course; others incorporate materials from multiple modules. Summaries and discussion questions are offered (as suggestions) for each linked resource. The modules need not be covered in a linear pattern; rather, instructors should incorporate modules into their existing courses based on how well the materials fit with the content of their course.

JWFLF aims for students and instructors to think about safety throughout the undergraduate experience. These safety modules serve as 'safety scaffolding' with lessons learned building upon one another. The 14 safety modules cover a variety of topics, including, but not limited to, completing risk assessments, the responsibilities of newsroom managers, the safety of female and minority journalists, covering civil unrest (including protests), covering immigration (ICE) and elections, emotional self-care, care of sources, interviewing hostile sources, reporting on foreign conflicts, protecting digital data, covering weather-related stories, and reporting during the current pandemic. Along the way, students learn to view safety as a core component of strong, healthy, and ethical journalism.

Module 1: Journalism Safety: Developing Safe Habits

In *Democracy in America* (1835 & 1840), Alexis de Tocqueville wrote, “The more I observe the main effects of a free press, the more convinced am I that, in the modern world, freedom of the press is the principal...element of freedom.” Press freedom is the foundation upon which democracy is built. The Society of Professional Journalists’ Code of Ethics posits that journalists should “seek truth and report it” and they “should be honest, fair, and courageous in gathering, reporting and interpreting information.” While attacks on press freedom are nothing new, journalists face an increasingly hostile environment. More than ever, being a journalist requires the tools to work safely. The purpose of this introductory module is to make sure students recognize safety is paramount for all journalists. Yes, there will always be risks and dangers associated with journalism, but preparation, including completing risk assessments, helps mitigate risks and dangers. From the early stages of their career, student journalists should be thinking about their safety and the safety of those impacted by their work.

Learning Objectives

1. Students will recognize that safety is an essential element of journalism.
2. Students will understand how to complete risk assessments.
3. Students will be able to articulate and explain why completing risk assessments is an important safety measure for journalists.

BE SAFE (Before Everything, Stop Assess Focus Enact)

This introductory module helps aspiring journalists, editors, newsroom managers and other members of the media develop safe habits. An **easy-to-remember** acronym for students is to **BE SAFE**: Before Everything, Stop Assess Focus Enact. Marquette University, for instance, created a business-sized card with **BE SAFE** on the front and a summary of the Society of Professional Journalists preamble with important contact numbers on the back for students to carry.

BE SAFE Issued by the Department of Journalism and Media Studies, Marquette University	Before Everything: Stop <i>Don't rush into a story, interview, situation.</i> Assess <i>Where are you going? Who are you interviewing? What is your purpose?</i> Focus <i>What can go right/wrong?</i> Enact <i>Your plan.</i>	The ethical journalist is accurate and fair; treats sources, subjects, colleagues and the public respectfully; meets the highest and primary obligation to serve the public; takes responsibility for one's work; and is willing to explain one's decisions to the public. <i>From: Society of Professional Journalists Code of Ethics</i> On-Campus Police: 414.288.1911 Off-Campus Police: 911 Marquette Counseling Center: 414.288.7172
--	---	--

When preparing for an assignment, journalists must understand their decisions have direct bearing on their own safety and the safety of others. Covering any beat comes with some risk, but careful planning and completing thoughtful risk assessments can mitigate those threats. Developing safe habits helps journalists think through how to manage risk and respond to the situation.

Dual goals arise: Reporting accurately if a situation turns dangerous while minimizing risk to avoid injury or worse. Preparation is the best way to mitigate risk. Risk assessments should be completed

before any assignment. Do not assume that because similar events were not dangerous, this assignment will be safe. Advanced preparation helps reporters react correctly without thinking. Much depends on a journalist's ability to react to situations that change in the blink of an eye. Journalists must be realistic about their physical and emotional thresholds. If a journalist deems the risk too great, that decision should not be treated as a source of shame or stigma.

Journalists must avoid assuming there is no risk in covering less controversial or risky stories. Journalists and newsroom employees must always be prepared. Not scared. Prepared.

Readings & Resources

Risk Assessments ([click to open](#))

Risk assessments are essential. They help the entire team – journalists, crew members, and newsroom managers – prepare for potential risks when working any assignment. Risk assessments identify risks that may be encountered and help to mitigate them. The entire team needs to do their due diligence when assessing the risk/reward of covering any story. Young journalists are encouraged to talk with colleagues or instructors who have worked or reported on similar beats. This includes peers, instructors, and other experienced journalists.

Risk assessments are assignment-specific and context-dependent. Take a risk assessment-informed approach because all reporting carries the possibility of risk. Get in the habit of completing risk assessments that cover steps taken from the beginning of the assignment to the end. Risk assessments help think through “What if...?” scenarios. Ultimately, the team must confront whether risks involved are worth the benefits of an assignment.

Committee to Protect Journalists, Risk Assessment: Getting Started

A great starting point for introducing safety and the importance of mitigating risk for young journalists. CPJ provides a risk assessment template for journalists and editors to complete. Journalists should make it a habit to complete risk assessments for all assignments. This helpful template covers the following: Risk Assessment & Security Protocol; Communications Plan; Digital Risk Assessment; and Proof of Life. After reading through, students should be prepared to discuss the discussion questions listed below.

Discussion Questions

1. What is a risk assessment? Why should journalists undertake a risk assessment?
2. How can risk assessments help journalists prepare for an assignment?
3. How and why should journalists update their risk assessment while on assignment?

"Journalism Ethics 101: A Survival Guide for Student Journalists Navigating a Shifting World"

Delaney Nothaft, *Markkula Center for Applied Ethics*

Explores the importance of free press, including on college campuses. Tackles questions about the importance of college newspapers, the difference between college newspapers and regular publications, and ethical guidelines for student journalists. Identifies ten ethical guidelines for student journalists and newsrooms to prioritize.

Discussion Questions

1. What are some differences between college newspapers and regular newspapers?
2. Why is it important to develop ethical guidelines? How do ethical guidelines relate to safety for journalists and contribute to a healthy newsroom?

"For student journalists, the beats are the same but the protections are different" Stephanie Sugars, *Freedom of the Press Foundation*

Student journalists face the same challenges as their professional counterparts. The shuttering of local newsrooms results in student journalists filling the void in local journalism.

Discussion Questions

1. How has the changing landscape of journalism impacted the role of student journalists?
2. What are some of the risks that student journalists may face?

"Teen distrust of journalism is rising -- media literacy may be the industry's best defense" Diane Sylvester, *Editors & Publishers*

This resource examines teenage viewpoints about journalism. According to a News Literacy Project study, "84% described news media negatively, calling it 'biased,' 'boring' or 'bad.'" This is an opportunity for students to consider the headwinds that many journalists face, and to consider media literacy, including their own.

Discussion Questions

1. What is media literacy, and how does media literacy impact how journalists and journalism are viewed?
2. Are there ways to establish -- or re-build -- trust with audiences? What steps can be taken? Why is it important to understand your own media literacy?



U.S. Press Freedom Tracker

Refer students to the U.S. Press Freedom Tracker. This nonpartisan website aims to provide reliable, easy-to-access information on press freedom violations in the US, including the number of journalists arrested, physically attacked, equipment seized, stopped at the border, etc. Students should be aware of the risks journalists face and be prepared to learn how to navigate the world of journalism as safely and confidently as possible.

Discussion Questions

1. Why is the media under so much scrutiny? Is the scrutiny warranted?
2. Why is it important to learn about safety when preparing to work in the media?

Module 2: Running a Newsroom – Creating a Culture of Safety

This module assists aspiring newsroom managers in considering the safety of journalists and other staff members when handing out assignments. Newsroom managers should avoid faulting or penalizing a journalist for questioning or turning down an assignment if the potential risk is deemed too great. Newsroom managers should clearly inform their staff about the support that is provided, including emotional counseling for those who experience trauma on the job. If these issues are not addressed when a journalist begins a story, stressful complications may result later. Additionally, newsroom managers have a responsibility to check in on their staff after a story has been covered, especially stories that involve traumatic situations.

Learning Objectives

1. Students will be able to explain how to create a safe, healthy newsroom.
2. Student newsroom managers will be able to complete risk assessments.
3. Students will be able to articulate and implement measures to create a safe newsroom.

Readings/Resources

Risk Assessments ([click to open](#))

Risk assessments help the entire team – journalists, crew members, and newsroom managers – prepare for potential risks. Newsroom managers should complete risk assessments to set the tone for a healthy, safe work environment by showing that he or she has the staff's best interest in mind.

When preparing for an assignment, identify potential risks. The entire team must do their due diligence when assessing the risk/reward of each assignment. Young journalists should talk to peers, instructors and seasoned journalists who worked or reported on similar beats. Risk assessments are dependent upon context and change based on assignment. Risk and danger are not confined to conflict zones. Journalists should take a risk assessment-informed approach to reporting because all reporting carries the possibility of danger. Risk assessments are designed to cover steps taken from the beginning through end of a proposed assignment. Journalists, crew members, and newsroom managers should draw upon their own experiences while also consulting experienced colleagues to more fully understand the risks that may arise.

Think through potential "What if...?" scenarios to help identify and classify potential risks. This includes both possible and improbable threats that may arise when covering an assignment. Ultimately, the most important question a journalist must confront is whether the (potential) risks involved are worth the benefits of covering a situation and completing an assignment.

Discussion Question

1. **Why is it important for newsroom managers to conduct risk assessments before assigning staff members to cover a story? What is the danger of not doing so?**

"Plan for the expected and unexpected: What you need to think about when completing a risk assessment" *Caroline Scott, WAN IFRA: World Association of News Publishers*

This post explains how newsrooms promoting safety habits help protect journalists. Completing risk assessments is essential when creating a strong, cohesive newsroom. Events like the Boston Marathon or the Las Vegas concert can turn dangerous in a moment. Newsroom managers can help set the tone by making sure that risk assessments and safety measures are being taken seriously.

Discussion Questions

1. In addition to physical threats, what risks do journalists face? Why are risk assessments necessary for working safely?
2. What suggestions are offered for managers and staff completing risk assessments? Why is this an important part of preparation? Discuss.

"Journalists should prepare to defend their right to report the news" *Poynter*.

In this short series, the *Poynter* staff provide digestible resources designed "to help newsrooms respond to legal threats and protect their ability to report independently." This includes information all journalists should carry, how newsrooms can respond to threats, how reporters can protect sources, and communicating clearly and transparently with the public.

Discussion Questions

1. Why is it important for newsrooms to have conversations about addressing threats to the First Amendment?
2. What are steps that can be taken to prepare for potential threats journalists -- or the newsroom -- may face?

"Editors' Checklist: Preparing for U.S. protest assignments" *Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ)*

This checklist can be utilized by editors and newsroom managers when staff members cover protests or other large gatherings. Includes strategies for selecting staff, completing risk assessments, ensuring equipment and digital security, knowing journalists' rights, and how to act if stopped by law enforcement.

Discussion Questions

1. What questions should newsroom managers/editors consider when assigning stories?
2. What concerns should newsroom managers consider when staff cover protests?



"Are Newsrooms Doing Enough to Take Care of Their Journalists' Mental Health and Safety?" Nu Yang, *Editor & Publisher*

Examines emotional toll journalists can experience. Assignments can start as simple events, then evolve into traumatic situations. John Tlumacki covered the Boston Marathon for two decades before the bombing occurred in 2013. Reporters and editors, like Julie Anderson, worked on stories such as the Marjory Stoneman Douglas school shooting, the Las Vegas concert shooting, the Pulse night club shooting, and the wildfires in Northern California. Events like this take an emotional toll on journalists. This explores how managers/editors can support staff in seeking needed help by considering what newsrooms do to watch out for the entire team.

Discussion Questions

1. **How are journalists like first responders (police, firefighters, and paramedics)?**
2. **Why didn't John Tlumacki attend counseling after the 2013 Boston Marathon bombing? Does he regret that decision? Would you have attended counseling?**
3. **Julie Anderson mentions adrenaline when covering a story. What happens when adrenaline kicks in? What can happen when adrenaline wears off?**
4. **Kent Porter won a Pulitzer for his photojournalism in covering fires in Northern California in 2017. After this assignment, Porter felt an "overwhelming sense of anger, grief, depression and anxiety." Why? What steps did Porter take to deal with these emotions? How could a newsroom manager support someone in Porter's situation?**

"Coping with Emotional Trauma in the Newsroom" Kenna Griffin, *Prof KRG: A practical resource for student journalists*

Kenna Griffin discusses covering a rape case as a young 21-year-old cub reporter. This experience led to Griffin's involvement with the *Dart Center for Journalism & Trauma* before pursuing a PhD in journalism with an emphasis on studying "the conflict journalists experience when their professional values and their feelings after covering a traumatic story don't align." Griffin includes steps newsroom managers can take to make sure they meet the needs of staff members.

Discussion Questions

1. **How did journalism school prepare Kenna Griffin? In what ways did it fail to prepare her for covering a traumatic story?**
2. **"We're objective, detached professionals. We aren't supposed to feel about the things we cover, but we do." How can journalists balance being objective and detached while also acknowledging journalists are human and experience an emotional toll (PTSD)?**
3. **What can newsroom managers do to help minimize their staff's risk of emotional harm? Does your student newsroom have any protocols in place?**

Module 3: On Assignment – Mitigating Risk

Journalists may face potential dangers when covering **any** assignment. Mitigating risk begins with completing pre-assignment risk assessment to identify potential threats. Risks are not limited to physical safety. Journalists should also consider their psychological and digital security while also being aware of their legal rights and how to protect their reputation.

Learning Objectives

1. Students will be able to articulate potential risks that journalists face in the field.
2. Students will be able to put completed risk assessments into practice.

Readings

"Risk assessments can make journalism safer" Joel Simon, *Columbia Journalism Review*.

Joel Simon discusses training student journalists at the Newmark J-school to conduct a risk assessment before conducting interviews on the street. Simon specifically emphasizes the importance of implementing safety check-ins and completing a risk assessment as part of the assigning process.

Discussion Questions

1. Why are risk assessments important? How can completing a risk assessment mitigate risk?
2. In what ways have the risks to US-based journalists increased? Why is it important to understand the increased risks?
3. Does your student newsroom have risk assessments or safety check-ins? Discuss.

"U.S Journalist Safety Kit" *Committee to Protect Journalists*

This resource offers advice for editors and journalists working in the US. Both physical and digital safety considerations when covering domestic-based assignments are addressed. Without question, the United States has become "an increasingly hostile environment for journalists" as there were "at least 80 assaults against journalists in 2024." The Foley Foundation also recommends having students review *CPJ's Situational Awareness: A Guide for Journalists* as preparation for working on assignment.

Discussion Question

1. What are some considerations that editors should keep in mind when sending members of their team out on assignment?
2. What precautions can journalists take to minimize threats to their physical safety?
3. What precautions can journalists take to minimize threats to their digital safety?

"Safety Resources for Journalists Covering Protests" *PEN America*

A great resource with links to help journalists stay safe while covering protests. In addition to links for direct support, there are resources for the following: Assessing Risk; Physical Safety; Legal Considerations; Digital Safety & Online Abuse Defense; and Psychological Well Being.

Discussion Question

1. Have students covered protests before? What precautions did they take?
2. Why is it important to always start with a risk assessment? Do students have any practice in crafting risk assessments?
3. Review RCFP's **Tipsheet** about what to do before and during a protest. Have any students covered protests? What, if any, strategies did students employ? Discuss.

"Covering Injustice: Safety Tips for Reporting on Protests" *IWMF*

Provides safety considerations for preparing to cover protests, including tips for younger journalists, as media members are increasingly targeted. Covers essentials to bring, how to prepare, what to do when covering the protests, how to respond if stopped by law enforcement, and additional resources.

Discussion Question

1. **Have students covered protests before? If so, what precautions were taken? If not, what precautions would they take and what concerns do they have?**

"It's time to change the way the media reports on protests. Here are some ideas." *Kendra Pierre-Louis, Nieman Lab*

Pierre-Louis examines *how* journalists report on protests. A concern Kilgo shares is – consciously or not – “the press contributes to the political status quo by reinforcing whatever the government thinks.” Be aware of inherent biases, the ways protests are framed, how “to hold powerful people and institutions accountable to the broader public”, racial discrimination within newsrooms, and a tendency to report on extreme/violent protests while neglecting peaceful protests.

Discussion Questions

1. **How does framing of protests impact narrative? Should journalists be aware of this?**
2. **Why are word choice and passive vs. active voice important when describing the actions of police officers and protesters?**
3. **What other concerns are addressed? List and discuss.**

"Safety & Arrest Response Protocols for Journalists" *The Pivot Fund Staff*

The Pivot Fund staff created this useful one-pager for journalists who will be covering protests, court proceedings, policing, immigration, and/or other government actions. Journalists' preparation should include thinking through seven steps: (1) Pre-Assignment Safety Planning; (2) If a Journalist is Detained or Arrested; (3) Legal Response; (4) Public Response & Solidarity; (5) Internal Care & Protection; (6) Industry Coordination; and (7) Long-Term Preparedness.

Discussion Question

1. **Why is it important to think through each of these seven steps? Are there any other steps that could or should be added to this list? Discuss.**

"Journalists Under Attack: Lessons from the Field" *Jennifer Dorroh, IJNet*

Threats do not just exist abroad. Journalists experience similar dangers in the US. Freelancer Linda Tirado lost sight in an eye when shot with a foam bullet by Minnesota State Police. Branden Hunter had tear gas in his eyes when Detroit Police confronted him with a shotgun. Despite identifying themselves as press, police threw a tear gas canister at Hunter and colleagues. Tips include assessing risks in advance, emotional self-care, digital security, and how to cover a protest.

Discussion Questions

1. **What precautions should be taken before covering events that have the potential to turn violent?**
2. **How can journalists mitigate risk while on the scene?**

Module 4: Covering Immigration (incl. ICE)

This module focuses on mitigating risk when covering U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE). Covering U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) is fraught with risk for even the most seasoned journalists. Whether covering ICE on campus or in the community, student journalists are working a beat that can be physically risky and emotionally charged with legal gray areas. Journalists anticipating covering ICE should think beyond their reporting skills. When preparing, they must think about their physical, emotional, and digital security as well as their legal rights and maintaining trauma awareness for those they are covering.

Student journalists can help mitigate risk when covering ICE by thinking about campus and community policies and laws, how to protect their sources, knowing their rights, how to interview sources experiencing trauma, dealing with misinformation, potential online harassment and pressure from the college or university administration, and how to write rigorous and accurate stories about immigration.

Learning Objectives

1. Students will be able to identify specific challenges when covering ICE.
2. Students will develop strategies for mitigating risk when covering ICE.
3. Students will recognize the importance of completing risk assessments.
4. Students will be more equipped to protect themselves, their sources, and their equipment when covering ICE.

Readings/Resources

"A Legal FAQ on 'ICE Raids' for Student Journalists" *Student Press Law Center (SPLC)*

The Student Press Law Center (SPLC) addresses questions that student journalists may have about covering the complexities of immigration on campus and in the community. This resource will help students understand legal aspects, ethical responsibilities, and other best practices for protecting their sources. In addition, SPLC provides a link to a webinar about covering high school and the community. Many of the same considerations apply to college campuses.

Discussion Questions

1. What should students know about covering immigration, especially about the rights of ICE agents to enter non-public areas of campus?
2. What is FERPA? What should journalists know sharing student information?
3. Is ICE permitted to access journalists' notes or unpublished photos to assist their investigations? Can journalists be compelled to reveal a confidential source?
4. Should journalists promise to keep their sources' identities confidential?

"Immigration Reporting Legal Guide" *Reporters Committee for Freedom of the Press*

This three-part resource aims "to assist members of the press in navigating legal issues that may arise during the course of that coverage, while also explaining some of the tools that the press and the public can use to monitor the government's actions in this area." Part I deals with Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests; Part II examines access to immigration proceedings; and Part III considers observing and recording immigration enforcement on the ground.

Discussion Questions

1. What should journalists know about the FOIA process when covering immigration?
2. Do journalists have access to immigration proceedings? Are there any limits?
3. What rights do journalists have when covering immigration enforcement? Explain.

"In Minneapolis, journalism students are learning to report under pressure amid an immigration surge" [Al Tompkins, Poynter](#).

Before covering immigration protests and enforcement in Minneapolis, University of Minnesota journalism professor, Regina McCombs, and four students participated in Hostile Environment and First Aid Training (HEFAT), which is usually training for journalists in conflict zones. Despite concern the training might overwhelm students, McCombs felt this training was essential. This article then shares safety guidance University of Minnesota's Hubbard School of Journalism and Mass Communication created for students interested in covering immigration. This includes "deeper conversations about the difference between the role of journalists and that of bystanders who document moments of violence."

Discussion Questions

1. **What is the difference between someone in the crowd recording video and audio vs. someone practicing journalism? Why is this distinction important?**
2. **If University of Minnesota student journalists choose to cover immigration, what are the protocols they must follow? Does your school/newsroom have similar protocols?**
3. **What are different angles journalists can pursue to shed more light on immigration?**

"Inside a Minneapolis Newspaper's Coverage of the ICE Raids" [The Editors of Aperture](#)

This resource focuses specifically on staff photojournalists from *The Minnesota Star Tribune*. Katie Rausch, assistant managing editor for photography, is interviewed about how the Star Tribune prepared and supported journalists covering Operation Metro Surge in Minneapolis and St. Paul as well as discussing the essential role local photographers play in regional and national media.

Discussion Questions

1. **What internal conversations about safety for staff and sources took place in the newsroom? What role did the app Signal play in mobilizing their team?**
2. **How does Rausch respond to the question about tension between protecting undocumented people and the demand for ICE agents to remove masks? Discuss.**

"Filming ICE is legal but exposes you to digital tracking" [Nicole M. Bennett, The Conversation](#)

In this resource, Nicole M. Bennett, a researcher who studies the intersection of data governance, digital technologies and the U.S. federal government, examines the legality of filming while also considering "the wider surveillance ecosystem" and how "video can challenge power [and]...also attract it." Bennett also points that a journalist's right to record can be "uneven across jurisdictions and vulnerable in practice." Perhaps most importantly, Bennett notes that multiple "incidents underscore that documentation isn't risk-free. There is an additional layer of safety beyond the physical to take into account: your increased risk of digital exposure. The legal right to record doesn't prevent your recording from becoming data that others can use."

Discussion Questions

1. **What steps can journalists take to protect themselves and reduce their digital exposure when recording immigration interactions?**
2. **What strategies does Bennett offer for creating context as opposed to viral clips?**
3. **What are suggestions for securing footage? Why should you keep your phone locked whenever possible? How can a photographer edit for privacy?**

Module 5: Covering Elections

This module focuses on mitigating risk – physically, mentally, and digitally – when covering elections. When covering elections, journalists must make intentional choices to protect themselves, their colleagues, and their sources. Election coverage involves many challenges, and journalists covering elections – domestically and abroad – face unique circumstances.

Deepening political polarization has led to increased fearmongering and disinformation. The stakes have increased, and the upcoming U.S. elections will have ramifications not only domestically, but globally. As such, the media plays an essential role in the implementation of fair and free democratic elections. With this additional pressure, covering elections can be demanding, stressful, and, at times, dangerous for reporters. Journalists should familiarize themselves with election issues and laws – local, statewide, and national – when reporting.

For journalists covering elections, situational awareness is of the utmost importance. Completing a risk assessment is essential for those working individually or with a team. Given the heightened security surrounding elections, press cards and IDs, whether visible or concealed, should always be readily available. When on assignment, journalists should identify exit routes and trust their guts if and when disturbances arise. Whenever possible, journalists should strive to never travel alone, and should inform colleagues, newsrooms managers, and/or family of assignment locations and arrival and departure times. Stress levels may elevate quickly so journalists should monitor not only their personal concerns, but also the concerns of those they work with. Lastly, journalists are encouraged to use secure apps and social media accounts that do not delve into their personal lives.

Learning Objectives

1. Students will be able to identify specific challenges, including the spread of misinformation and disinformation, when reporting on elections.
2. Students will develop effective strategies for assessing and mitigating risks when covering elections.
3. Students will recognize the importance of completing risk assessments before covering elections and/or other political gatherings.
4. Students will be more equipped to protect their mobile devices when covering elections.

Readings/Resources

"Covering Elections: Journalist Safety Kit" [Committee to Protect Journalists](#)

This safety kit contains essential information and advice for covering elections. According to *CPJ*, "During elections, journalists frequently cover rallies, campaign events, and protests, which can increase their risk of being attacked, harassed, and detained. CPJ Emergencies has compiled an Election Safety Kit with information for editors, reporters, and photojournalists on how to prepare for elections and how to mitigate physical, psychological, and digital risk." Topics in this safety kit include editor's safety checklist, risk assessment, physical safety, psychological safety, and digital safety.

Discussion Questions

1. Who should complete a **risk assessment**? Why is completing a risk assessment important and necessary?
2. What precautions should journalists take to mitigate risks to themselves and others?
3. What responsibilities do newsroom managers have when sending out reporters to cover political rallies and elections?

"Advice for reporters covering unrest during elections" Jorge Luis Sierra, *IJNet*

This resource covers identifies some risks and threats that journalists may face when covering political rallies and election events in the United States. The author, Jorge Luis Sierra, draws upon his experience training journalists in Latin America, Africa, and the Middle East. Sierra points out that the same dangers that journalists face around the world are becoming more common in the U.S.

Discussion Questions

1. What are some physical insecurities journalists covering elections in the United States face?
2. What practical advice can journalists preparing to cover elections implement?

"Covering the 2024 elections? Here are some tips and resources from IRE experts" *Investigative Reporters & Editors (IRE)*

Natalia Contreras, Anna Massoglia, and Derek Willis offer their insights on covering the 2024 elections. This brief handout offers seven tips to younger journalists covering elections, perhaps for the first time. The tips, ranging from the importance of fact-checking to gaining an understanding of how elections are run, offer several jumping off points for robust discussions about how to cover elections.

Discussion Questions

1. What tips do the three experts offer young journalists when covering elections? Explain.
2. Why is it important for journalists to know how elections are run?
3. Why should journalists covering local elections connect with election officials?

"What journalists need to know about the laws on covering elections" Amy Sherman, *Poynter*.

This resource explains the important role journalists play in providing accurate reporting to help the public understand elections. Aldana Vales writes, "When a journalist is covering the process of voting — whether it's for mayor, governor or senator — the goal is the same: show the public the truth about the administration of elections. Accurate reporting about elections helps reduce the spread of unfounded rumors." This article delves into the rights journalists have, the types of records that are public, and laws related to covering election-related protests.

Discussion Questions

1. What rights do journalists have when covering elections?
2. What laws journalists should be aware of when covering election-related protests?
3. How does understanding election law constitute a safety issue for journalists (both their own safety and the safety of others)?



"Election Legal Guide" from *Reporters Committee for the Freedom of the Press*

About this guide: *"This guide was originally authored in 2020 by Reporters Committee attorneys Sarah Matthews and Gunita Singh, legal fellows Audrey Greene and Kamesha Laurry, and legal interns Emma Lux and Shontee Pant. It was updated in 2024 by legal fellows Zach Babo, Julia Dacy, Mayeesha Galiba, and Daniela Wertheimer."*

This election legal guide, which can be studied in full or in sections, is an invaluable resource for journalists covering elections. The guide provides "a general summary of information about campaign events, exit polling, newsgathering in or near polling places, ballot selfies, and access to ballots and election records. The subsequent sections provide more specific information on each of the following battleground states: Arizona, Florida, Georgia, Michigan, Minnesota, Nevada, New Hampshire, North Carolina, Ohio, Pennsylvania, and Wisconsin."

Discussion Questions

1. **What political events (rallies, elections, etc.) do journalists have the right to attend and cover?**
2. **How do election laws vary from state to state? Why is this important to know?**

"12 tips for minding the security of your mobile device when covering elections" Jorge Luis Sierra

Digital security is an important safety aspect – and one that may be overlooked – when covering elections. Journalists should take extra precautions to protect their mobile devices. According to this article, "Journalists covering elections in difficult environments marked by violence and censorship face significant risk of being attacked by state or non-state actors who are able to intercept their mobile phone communications, uncover data pertaining their sources, and learn about their investigative activities." Journalists covering elections in the United States are not immune to these risks.

Discussion Questions

1. **What steps can journalists take to protect their mobile devices?**
2. **Are students currently taking any of the steps outlined in this article to protect their mobile devices? Should these steps be followed at all times?**
3. **Why is protecting mobile devices important – for journalists, their colleagues, and their sources?**

"What journalists need to know to combat information disorder" Amarah Ennis, *IJNet*

This article focuses on misinformation, disinformation, and malinformation. Unfortunately, according to Dr. Claire Wardle, the co-director of the Information Futures Lab at Brown University, these terms are often viewed interchangeably. Wardle argues that journalists should understand how these terms differ. If there is a lack of familiarity, "journalists can unwittingly play a role in spreading disinformation on a wider scale."

Discussion Questions

1. **Why is it important for journalists to understand the distinction between mis-, dis-, and mal-information? How is this a safety concern?**
2. **How can "bad actors" use journalists to spread bad information? How can journalists prevent this? Do Wardle's examples relate to election coverage?**

"How to cover Election Day and beyond" Vivian Schiller & Garrett M. Graff, *Columbia Journalism Review*.

This resource considers the important role that journalists play in the public sphere. Schiller and Graff get right to the point: "Americans think about elections wrong; they aren't only about tallying votes to declare a winner. Elections in a democracy are just as much about convincing the loser that he or she actually lost—and that the process was free, fair, and secure enough that the loser can accept the result as legitimate." From there, Schiller and Graff explain the importance of not just **what** journalists cover regarding elections, but **how** they cover elections. This includes the importance of the language used, an understanding of election calendars, an awareness of when votes are counted, not parroting claims of fraud and/or premature announcements of victory or defeat.

Discussion Questions

1. Why is the language journalists use during election coverage so important?
2. Why is it important to fact-check - and not just parrot - what campaign representatives say?
3. When should election results be known (e.g., should election results be known the night of the election, within a few days, a week)? Why is this an important issue to consider?
4. How can journalists hold election officials accountable?
5. What other advice is offered to help prepare journalists?



Credit: JILLIANCAINPHOTOGRAPHY/Adobe Stock

Module 6: Reporting Abroad (incl. Conflict Reporting)

The purpose of this module is to prepare undergraduate and graduate student journalists who are interested in reporting abroad, particularly in conflict zones. This includes risk assessment strategies, tools, and applications created to help journalists in the field. To start, journalists must consider the types of conflicts they feel capable of covering. For many newly minted journalists, freelancing abroad may be a way to start their career as a foreign correspondent. Of course, this choice comes with great risk. Journalists must recognize that realities on the ground are often shifting, that there are ways to help prepare for conflict reporting, and that steps must be taken to safely build a career as a foreign correspondent.

Learning Objectives

1. Students will be able to identify the preparation needed before reporting from a conflict zone and analyze the enhanced risks journalists in conflict zones face.
2. Students will be able to explain what HEFAT training is and where HEFAT courses can be taken.
3. Students will be able to explain the concept of "ground truth," especially when covering conflict.

Readings/Resources

Special Presidential Envoy for Hostage Affairs (SPEHA)

The Special Presidential Envoy for Hostage Affairs (SPEHA) is appointed by the President and reports to the Secretary of State. SPEHA's mission is to lead and partner with a coalition of government and private sector organizations to secure the freedom of U.S. national hostages and wrongful detainees held abroad, support their families, and end hostage-taking and wrongful detention. When Americans are held hostage (by a non-state actor) or wrongfully detained (by a government), SPEHA "coordinates the Department of State's diplomatic, family, congressional, and external engagements related to hostage-taking and wrongful detention abroad."

According to the SPEHA's office, journalists always follow **Duty to Warn** alerts from the U.S. Intelligence Community (IC). Duty to Warn alerts aim "to proactively warn Americans overseas about threats to their safety. When the IC learns of credible and specific information indicating an impending threat of intentional killing, serious bodily injury, or kidnapping, it has a duty, in coordination with U.S. government partners, to warn the potential victim, or those responsible for protecting the potential victim, as appropriate." In a very real sense, this is like 911 calling you. Should a loved one suspect their loved one has been arrested or detained overseas, the first step is to call the overseas citizen services office or contact the nearest embassy or consulate.

Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP)

This free service allows U.S. citizens and nationals traveling and living abroad to enroll their trip with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. The Foley Foundation strongly recommends journalists working and/or traveling abroad enroll in the STEP program.

Hostile Environment First Aid Training (HEFAT)

Hostile Environment First Aid Training (HEFAT) is designed for those operating or working in hostile or high-risk environments who also require advanced trauma medical training. This training is suitable for everyone travelling to, living, or working in high-risk locations and optimized for frontline organizations such as international media, NGOs, aid agencies, CONDO personnel, and oil and gas industry staff. Some organizations, like the [International Women's Media Foundation](#), offer HEFAT training as well.

Jim: The James Foley Story (2016) HBO, Director: Brian Oakes

Created by Brian Oakes, this documentary examines Jim's life from small-town New Hampshire to the frontlines in Libya and Syria. Oakes explores Jim's motivations for reporting from the front lines

as well as his desire to return to conflict reporting after being abducted and detained in Libya. Instructors may consider showing the first half of the documentary, which concludes with Jim's abduction in Syria, or watch the documentary in its entirety. ***Jim: The James Foley Story* is available on HBO and Amazon.**



Discussion Questions

- 1. What preparations can be taken before going to a combat zone, areas with civil unrest, or other dangerous situations? What are the risks and how can they be mitigated? What is HEFAT training?**
- 2. What were James Foley's motivations for reporting from Libya and Syria? How do those motivations align with students' motivations to become conflict journalists?**
- 3. What is a 'black hole' in news reporting? Discuss.**

"The Principles: We Must Embed a Culture of Safety in Our Profession" *ACOS Alliance*

A Culture of Safety Alliance (ACOS) encourages the news industry to protect journalists it hires, staff and freelancers, and encourages journalists to learn best practices to protect themselves when on assignment.

Discussion Questions

- 1. What principles/practices should journalists follow to mitigate risk? Discuss.**
- 2. What principles and practices should editors and news organizations follow to help protect journalists, particularly freelancers? List and discuss.**

"A Field Guide for Correspondents" *Charles M. Sennott, The GroundTruth Project*

Charlie Sennott, founder of *The GroundTruth Project* and friend and colleague of James Foley, describes the importance of 'ground truth' when reporting. This is both an exciting and dangerous time to be a journalist overseas. Instructors and students should download "A Field Guide for Correspondents" to use as a resource when planning to work in dangerous areas here or abroad.

Discussion Questions

- 1. What is "ground truth"? Why is 'ground truth' necessary for a free press? Discuss.**
- 2. What is the risk of NOT being on the ground covering stories? How do we determine if the dangers/threats are too great to cover a story? Discuss.**

"Tips for Independent Media Facing Security Risks" *SembraMedia, IJNet*

Reporters and editors share experiences and tips for dealing with dangerous situations, including a well-planned strategy, never traveling alone, and not always trusting authorities (balance listening to authority figures with an understanding of journalists' rights and the limits of power the authority figure holds). First, understand the assignment's timeline and expense plan, including if hotels are safe, the transportation methods, and advanced knowledge of the location. Next, check if security is reliable, if communication lines are open, and the best (safest) hours to work. Lastly, establish a chain of response if threats arise and government contacts are needed. Other tips: scout locations beforehand, keep to a schedule, and maintain regular contact with the newsroom.

Discussion Questions

1. What steps, in addition to risk assessments, can journalists take to mitigate risks when in new or dangerous locations?
2. What else can journalists do to help mitigate their risk?

"Nothing to Declare: CPJ's advice for journalists crossing a U.S. border" *CPJ*

This resource points out the difficulty in providing uniform safety advice on digital security when crossing the U.S. border because each person may experience different security risks. When completing a risk assessment for work that involves crossing the border, CPJ recommends that journalists take "into consideration immigration status, travel history, reason for visiting the U.S., and the data stored on their devices." While journalists have rights, CPJ notes that "refusal to cooperate with CBP [Customs and Border Protections] requests may result in continued questioning, travel delays, confiscation of equipment or, in some cases, denial of entry into the U.S. for noncitizens."

Discussion Questions

1. What precautions should journalists take before traveling? What can you do to prepare your devices?
2. What should journalists prepare for when they are at the border?
3. After crossing the border, what steps can be taken? Should journalists reach out to their tech department? Where can they report their experiences if their devices have been tampered with?

"Insurance" *A Culture of Safety Alliance (ACOS)*

Reporting abroad, especially in conflict zones, may bring additional safety, legal, and digital risks. Journalists, especially freelancers who may lack news organization support, planning to report abroad should be sure to acquire and/or review their insurance plans to make sure they cover everything from accidental death/disability to emergency evacuation to medical costs and repatriation.

Discussion Questions

1. Why is it important to purchase and/or update insurance policies before accepting an assignment abroad?
2. What types of insurance coverage are available? Discuss need as well as cost.



Photo by Dan Shakal

Module 7: Photojournalism – Staying Safe

Photojournalists have several distinct risks they may face in the field. To capture images of people, disasters, riots, etc. in real time, photojournalists often put themselves in situations where the subjects and conditions can change in an instant. Photojournalists may have limited peripheral vision and be less aware of changes taking place around them when it comes to situational awareness. Like all reporters on assignment, photojournalists have multiple responsibilities: themselves, their subjects, and their equipment. Photojournalists must be intentional when it comes to mitigating physical risks and protecting their equipment.

Learning Objectives

1. Students will be able to identify and explain specific risks that photojournalists face.
2. Students will be able to implement best practices to protect themselves and their equipment.

Readings/Resources

"Video & recap: Caring for photojournalists – Preventing burnout, treating trauma and ensuring equity" *The National Press Club Journalism Institute*

Burnout and trauma are examined by Nicole Frugé, director of photography at the *San Francisco Chronicle*, Rich Glickstein, a photojournalist, trauma therapist, and social worker, and Michael Santiago, staff photojournalist at Getty Images. Tips on preventing burnout, treating trauma, and ensuring equity as well as ensuring equity for photojournalists are covered by this panel. Video coverage is linked.

Discussion Questions

1. When can photojournalists do to prevent burnout and protect their mental well-being?
2. Why is the issue of equity important when considering the role of photojournalists?



"Photojournalists: The key to getting published and staying safe" Glenn Edwards, *Thomson Foundation*

Photojournalist Glenn Edwards shares his experience as a photojournalist, mostly in Africa. His assignments included covering protests and most recently he has photographed the Black Lives Matters demonstrations in his native Wales. Edwards talks about how to get work, what to do once you get an assignment, and safety protocols you should follow when on the job.

Discussion Questions

1. According to Edwards, whether a demonstration is at home or in another country, if you don't know the details of the story, and reasons behind the protests, how can you convey this in your photographs?
2. Consider the following: Why are you going? Who are you there for? Discuss.
3. Finally, when it comes to safety (risk assessment and equipment safety), what questions should photojournalists be prepared to answer? List and discuss.

"#SafetyInFocus: Photojournalists at risk" *Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ)*

Six short videos (2-3 minutes each) on the risks of being a photojournalist. Each covers a different topic: personal safety, financial safety, injury and trauma, sexual harassment, digital security, and risk assessment. Includes statistics from 500 photojournalists surveyed about safety.

Discussion Question

1. Students and instructors can watch videos in class (or as an assignment) and then discuss. Why are these topics important for photojournalists? How can addressing these issues provide photojournalists with another level of safety?

"'We face a different danger,' war photographer Paul Conroy says" Lucy Westcott, *CPJ*

British war photographer Paul Conroy recounts his last assignment with reporter Marie Colvin in Syria in 2012. Conroy discusses the biggest issues for photojournalists and their safety, what safety training they receive, if any, and what needs to be done to better support photojournalists. Conroy notes journalist and photojournalist safety have changed since 2012 and how he protects himself on assignment.

Discussion Questions

1. What are the biggest safety issues that photographers face?
2. What type of training does Conroy wish he had received? What is "mission creep"?
3. How has the landscape for photographer safety changed in the past several years?
4. Are photographers well-equipped for digital threats? How can photographers better prepare themselves?

"When Should Journalists Put Down the Mic and Lend Aid?" Patrick L Plaisance, *Psychology Today*

Addresses questions that arose about photojournalists responsibility in the aftermath of Hurricane Henry. "Most journalists are loathe to become part of the story they're covering...: adhering to the role of impartial observer is usually a critical component of the notion of journalistic credibility. Bearing witness is a moral imperative deeply embedded in journalistic DNA. And yet it is often not so simple. Stepping out of one's role should not be taken lightly, of course. At the same time, the value of that role may be outweighed by circumstances in which others might face imminent danger where the journalist can safely provide aid."

Discussion Questions

1. "During a civil rights march in the early 1960s in Selma, Alabama, a photographer for Life magazine witnessed sheriff's deputies shoving children to the ground. The photographer stopped taking photos and went to help the children. Later, Martin Luther King, Jr. heard about the incident and spoke with the photojournalist. 'The world doesn't know this happened, because you didn't photograph it,' he said. 'I'm not being cold-blooded about it, but it is so much more important for you to take a picture of us getting beaten up than for you to be another person joining in the fray.' Discuss the journalist's decision and MLK, Jr.'s response.
2. What are the three guidelines that media researcher Roger Simpson offers? List and discuss. Do students agree or disagree with Simpson?

"Safety Tips for Travel Photographers (Particularly Women)" *Karthika Gupta, Digital Photography School*

Tips include doing research before traveling, insuring camera gear and other equipment, and keeping an updated itinerary with friends and family. Blend in as much as possible. Looking like a tourist and a photographer is not helpful. Dress like the locals and plan where to go ahead of time so as to not look out of place. Trust your instincts (being safe is more important than a photo opportunity) and carry personal protection equipment like pepper spray or a Swiss army knife.

Discussion Question

1. What safety measures can – and should – photojournalists (particularly women) take? List and discuss.



SIMON KLINGERT (PHOTO COURTESY HBO)

Module 8: Understanding Journalists' Rights (Legal)

This module emphasizes the importance of understanding journalists' rights as a free and independent press is fundamental to a democratic society. According to **US Press Freedom Tracker**, there were 352 reported incidents involving journalists in 2025, including 195 assaults and 37 reports of damaged equipment. Journalists must make informed choices when covering protests, including what access they do and do not have and what to do if they are detained by law enforcement officers. Knowing their legal rights allows journalists to perform their important work more safely and can help de-escalating confrontation.

Learning Objectives

1. Students will be able to explain the rights of journalists.
2. Students will be able to explain various tactics law enforcement officers (LEOs) use, including kettling, and articulate their rights if stopped by law enforcement.

Readings/Resources

"What some reporters get wrong about the First Amendment" Jonathan Peters, *Columbia Journalism Review (CJR)*

Peters shares responses from 11 law professors and attorneys regarding common misconceptions about what is/is not protected under the First Amendment and other laws. Topics include news gathering protections, social media content, access to newsgathering on private property, etc.

Discussion Questions

1. Do members of the press have the same rights as the general public?
2. Do journalists have the right to republish something from *Facebook*, *Instagram*, etc.?



"Journalists, attacked by police and rioters alike, must build local bridges" Joel Simon, *Columbia Journalism Review*.

Simon examines how frayed relationships between journalists and law enforcement over the past decade have contributed to aggression towards members of the press. Simon notes that growing hostility towards traditional media has made covering protests increasingly dangerous.

Discussion Questions

1. What is "kettling" and why should journalists be aware of this law enforcement tactic?
2. What can journalists and organizations do to stem the rise in violence towards the media? (**CPJ Safety Advisory: Covering U.S. protests over police violence**).

"Press arrests used to silence protest coverage in 2025" from Stephanie Sugars, *Freedom of the Press Foundation* (US Press Freedom Tracker)

In 2025, "more than 30 journalists detained, nearly all released without charges or with them quickly dropped." Most were released without charge, and many others had their charges dropped. In addition to time spent being detained and/or fighting charges ultimately dropped, deadlines were missed and work time interrupted.

Discussion Questions

1. According to this resource, covering what type of event leads to the most arrests? What are some reasons for the high(er) rate of arrests?
2. Discuss the experience of journalist Steve Held. What would you do in that situation? What do you think about his assessment of law enforcement's intent?

"Police, Protesters and the Press" *Reporters Committee for the Freedom of the Press (RCFP)*

This 12-page document "aims to help journalists understand their rights at protests and avoid arrest when reporting on these events. It summarizes the legal landscape and provides strategies and tools to help journalists avoid incidents with police and navigate them successfully should they arise." Journalists must familiarize themselves with their rights. This resource answers questions about rights, and what to do if detained and/or arrested.

Discussion Questions

1. What rights do journalists have under the First Amendment? Discuss.
2. What is a "Terry Stop"? Why is it essential that journalists know this information?
3. What is the Privacy Protection Act of 1980 and how does this relate to journalism?

"Student journalists covering protests face unprecedented violence from police" Joe Severino, *Student Press Law Center (SPLC)*

Severino lists several examples of student journalists being targeted and/or assaulted by law enforcement officers. Student journalists must remember they face the same risks as their professional counterparts. Severino examines the importance of journalists knowing their rights and provides steps to ensure safety.

Discussion Questions

1. What threats and dangers have student journalists encountered covering protests?
2. In addition to knowing media rights, what can journalists do in emergency situations?
3. What should journalists do if denied access or asked to disperse with general public?
4. What can journalists do when covering possible law enforcement abuses?

Module 9: Self-Care – Mental Health and Emotional Trauma

This module introduces emotional self-care for journalists. Included are emotional self-care techniques and strategies for young journalists to practice. Emerging journalists should be thinking about their own mental well-being from the start, and should not consider it a failing to feel overwhelmed by stories they cover. Journalists are not immune to trauma and are not expected to be superhuman. Journalists must recognize that when they cover stories, what they witness becomes a part of them. It is normal to feel the weight of the stories covered. Photojournalist Nicole Tung describes how journalists become “intimate chroniclers” when covering stories. Journalists’ close proximity to emerging stories and firsthand accounts can result in emotional and mental trauma. This trauma must be addressed.

Learning Objectives

1. Students will be able to articulate why it is important to focus on their self-care and the self-care of their colleagues, especially after covering potentially traumatic events.
2. Students will be able to practice various strategies to protect their mental health and avoid burnout.
3. Student newsroom managers will create a plan for checking in on their staff, especially after covering potentially traumatic events.

Readings/Resources

"For Reporters Covering Stressful Assignments, Self-Care is Crucial" Catherine Stifter, *Center for Health Journalism*

This article provides examples of stories that elicited emotional responses from the journalists covering them and identifies warning signs of trauma that journalists can look for in themselves and in their colleagues. The article offers strategies for dealing with traumatic experiences, including avoiding isolation, practicing self-care, and practicing mindfulness. Sifter also notes the warning signs can be physical, behavioral, and/or psychological.

Discussion Questions

1. What is “vicarious stress” or “compassion fatigue”? What are some signs or symptoms?
2. What are the coping strategies that clinical social worker Thom Sterling offers to alleviate on-the-job stress?
3. What are different warning signs to look for when dealing with self-care issues?



Image by [chenspec](#) from [Pixabay](#)

"How journalists can take care of themselves while covering trauma" Kari Cobham, *Poynter*

Framed around the experience of Jareen Imam in the aftermath of *Capital-Gazette* shooting. Like first responders, journalists need to make sure they are taking care of their own well-being. This involves coping techniques and being open about the trauma that many journalists witness and/or experience.

Discussion Questions

1. What advice and reminders are offered for dealing with stress, depression, and trauma? List and discuss. What techniques and strategies are the most useful?
2. All journalists are different. How can we address stress, depression, and trauma knowing there are different thresholds for all journalists? Have students create a plan for themselves.

"How journalists practice self-care while covering tough stories" Elite Truong, *Poynter*

Advice from three experienced writers particularly geared towards female journalists and journalists of color. Provides journalists with strategies for dealing with emotional stress.

Discussion Questions

1. How can journalists, particularly women and journalists of color, deal with emotional and mental stress?
2. Why is dealing with emotional and mental stress important? What are the risks if emotional and mental stress are not addressed?

"Self-care tips for journalists - plus a list of several resources" Naseem S. Miller, *The Journalist's Resource*

Provides insights and tips on how journalists can protect their mental health. This includes building resilience, recognizing signs of trouble. A list of resources is included.

Discussion Question

1. Which self-help tips are most effective during the following phases of an assignment: Before a potentially traumatic assignment? On the job? After the job? Why? Explain.
2. What strategies do your students employ during stressful situations? Discuss.

**Good journalism should challenge people,
not just mindlessly amuse them.
~~ Carl Bernstein**

Module 10: Working with Sources

As students learn how to work with their sources, precaution and preparation remain an essential element of journalist safety, especially with the changing political climate where journalists are targeted and harassed. Just like performing a risk assessment before covering a story, journalists should consider in advance how they plan to work with their sources. This includes if a source may be hostile. Remember, the purpose of an interview is not to debate a source, but to gather information. Journalists must strive to remain level-headed. In addition, journalists not only have a responsibility for their own safety, they have a responsibility for the safety of their sources. This includes taking into consideration their sources' emotional well-being. Journalists must have the best interests of their sources in mind and make efforts to ensure to avoid or minimize re-traumatization when covering a story and/or interviewing victims.

Learning Objectives

1. Students will examine different methods of working with sources depending on the situation.
2. Students will be able to explain how to work with sources who have experienced trauma.
3. Students will be able to identify how race and gender may impact how sources respond to questions from journalists.
4. Students will be able to articulate why it is important to avoid re-traumatizing victims as they put these skills into practice.

Readings/Resources

"When interviewing trauma victims, proceed with caution and compassion" Sherry Ricchiardi, *IJNET*

Discusses how to proceed when working with sources/victims of trauma. There is an embedded video, "Getting it right – ethical reporting on people affected by trauma," where victims and survivors discuss how the media treated them.

Discussion Questions

1. According to Buttry, how should journalists approach trauma victims? Discuss.
2. What rules does Sherry Ricchiardi follow when interviewing trauma victims? Discuss.

"An editor's sensitive guide to interviewing victims of trauma" Jan Winburn, *Nieman Foundation*

Winburn points out that early in her career, there was little to no discussion about covering trauma or about the impact that can have on victims of trauma. Winburn has noticed positive changes over the past two decades as well and offers this advice to students: "We do not get through our lifetimes without experiencing loss. Trauma is central to human existence. And central to journalism, because it is the journalist's duty to inform, to give voice not just to opinion, but to people's lived experience. Sometimes that means illuminating the landscape of tragedy and trauma."

Discussion Questions

1. According to Winburn, how can journalists help to empower trauma victims?
2. Is it ethical and morally sound to request interviews with trauma victims?
3. What can journalists do to avoid leaving trauma victims "in a dark place"?

"Interviewing in the aftermath of trauma" Kimina Lyall, *Global Center for Journalism & Trauma*

The resource points out "there is no infallible method for interviewing survivors and witnesses to trauma. Each case is unique and presents its own challenges." Discusses what journalists should know beforehand, how to prepare for an interview with trauma victims, how to act during an interview, and what to do after the interview is completed.

Discussion Question

1. What should journalists know before interviewing trauma victims?
2. How can journalists prepare for an interview with trauma victims?
3. What can journalists do before *and* after an interview? Why is this important for both the journalist and the victim?



"Journalists of Color Face Harassment by Sources" Jane C. Hu, *The Open Notebook*

Examines the toll harassment takes on journalists of color by explaining how microaggressions of racism build up and ultimately wear down those on the receiving end. Delves into the role editors and newsrooms can play in supporting journalists of color.

Discussion Questions

1. How are "microaggressions" defined? Is there a clear line between these pinpricks of racism and a source being friendly or cordial?
2. How should journalists of color respond? Is there a correct – or best – way to respond to "microaggressions"? What is the risk of *not* responding?
3. What responsibility does a newsroom manager have in identifying and address issues of racism? How can newsrooms support journalists of color who experience harassment?

"The Art of the Interview: Asking the Hard Questions About the Hard Questions" Ann Friedman, *Columbia Journalism Review*.

Discusses how to deal with hostile sources, including asking the hard questions. Important steps to asking good questions are provided. When considering these steps, discuss how to respond if asking hard questions leads to push back from sources.

Discussion Question

1. What advice does this article offer in terms of how to ask the hard questions? Do you agree with these steps? Why or why not? Discuss.

"How to Conduct Difficult Interviews" Mallory Pickett, *The Open Notebook*

Offers firsthand accounts of conducting difficult, tense interviews. Recounts how journalists overcame fears and uncertainties and pushed forward to complete stories. Feeling anxious or nervous before conducting interviews is normal. Remain open-minded, avoid heated discussions.

Discussion Questions

1. **How can journalists overcome fear and be prepared and calm when interviewing trauma victims?**
2. **Why is it particularly important to be both kind and fair when interviewing trauma victims?**
3. **Why does Martha Mendoza argue that "interviews with the main subject of an investigative story shouldn't be about fact-finding"?**



ALEXANDER HONG/SENIOR STAFF

**I don't think a tough question
is disrespectful.**

~Helen Thomas, White House Press Corps

Module 11: Diversity in the Newsroom

To highlight the importance of a diverse newsroom and recognize that female and minority journalists face heightened and more aggressive targeting. Diversity in newsrooms lags behind overall diversity in the workplace. An encouraging trend shows younger newsroom employees “show greater racial, ethnic and gender diversity,” according to Pew Research Center. However, 77% of newsroom employees are non-Hispanic whites and nearly 48% are non-Hispanic white males. Lack of diversity impacts how stories and beats are covered. Another pressing issue involves female and minority journalists being targeted far more than non-Hispanic white male colleagues.

Learning Objectives

1. Students will be able to articulate the importance of having a diverse newsroom.
2. Students will be able to explain why “parachuting” into communities may lead to less access and trust, and how biases – implicit or explicit – may impact how stories are covered.

Readings

"Five decades after Kerner Report, representation remains an issue in media" Darren Walker, *Columbia Journalism Review*

Explores racial and gender dynamics that exist in many newsrooms. The 1968 Kerner Report identified a “lack of adequate representation among the people assigning, reporting, and editing media coverage.” Considers how and why women and people of color comprise a smaller percentage of employees in the newsroom than in the overall workplace and how being more frequently threatened and harassed can lead to even further isolation.

Discussion Question

1. **Why should newsrooms more accurately reflect the diversity of our country?**
2. **Walker notes that “people who are underrepresented in the media have a very different view of its coverage than people who are overrepresented.” What does Walker mean by this? What are the consequences?**

"The cost of reporting while female" Anne Helen Petersen, *Columbia Journalism Review*

This article examines the various challenges, obstacles, and threats that women journalists face in the industry. As Meg Dalton notes, “Over the course of nearly 200 years, female journalists have been under threat because of their gender, race, beat, views, and coverage.” Peterson provides several examples of women journalists covering various beats in different parts of the country and the world. The article examines how women journalists receive threats that feel very personal and often include death threats. When considering the important role that women journalists play, Peterson notes, “The question isn’t our capacity to do it. The question is, at what cost?”

Discussion Questions

1. **How does increased online harassment impact the work done by women journalists and impact the stories they choose to work on?**
2. **According to Nadra Nittle, what are the three themes of reporting as a woman?**
3. **Why does Imani Gandy say, “I don’t know how any woman of color can have their DMs open”? Do students agree with this assessment?**

"Why going solo is a risk for female reporters in the US and Canada" Lucy Westcott, *CPI*

Lucy Westcott describes the experience of a female journalist on a solo assignment. The story involved reporting on a man known to target and attack young women. The journalist felt she had

no choice but to accept the assignment. According to Westcott, many female and gender non-conforming journalists “lacked support or empathy from editors, who appeared to have an attitude of do the job or move aside, no matter the risk.” Jason Reich, VP of corporate security at *The New York Times* and former director of global security at *BuzzFeed*, notes, “It’s a problem that we’ve created what I consider a false dichotomy between a conflict zone, and everything else, which is [considered] safe. It’s an outdated model.” Many female journalists believe the risks they confront need to be taken more seriously by newsroom editors.

Discussion Questions

1. What are some of the risks that female journalists face?
2. What are some safety training gaps identified in this article?

"IWMF Emergency Fund" *International Women's Media Foundation*

Established in 2013, *IWMF* Emergency Fund provides female journalists direct lines of support. *IWMF* teamed up with *The Black Journalists Relief Fund* to create the *IWMF* U.S. Journalism Emergency Fund and Black Journalists Therapy Relief Fund. Find joint application form [here](#).

Discussion Questions

1. What resources does the *IWMF* Emergency Fund provide for women journalists?
2. What criteria must be met for women journalists to qualify for assistance from *IWMF*?
3. What is the purpose of **The Black Journalists Therapy Relief Fund**?

"Journalists of color are part of the story of racism in America. That raises tough questions on the job" Tracy Potts, *Center for Health Journalism*

Potts notes, “Issues of racism, discrimination and police brutality...are deeply personal for journalists of color. This moment raises new questions about how we do our jobs.” Potts explores the difficulty as well as the necessity to have journalists of color covering important stories that deal with race and racism.

Discussion Questions

1. How can journalists balance personal opinion and lived experience when covering stories? What is appropriate and what crosses the line? Discuss.
2. Potts raises the following question: “Should I use my experiences to ask questions that may not otherwise be asked or pursue stories that might never be assigned?” Discuss.
3. What is the difference between “bias” and “perspective”?

"Journalists of color facing racism head-on: 'It kind of rips you apart'" April Simpson, *Current: News for People in Public Media*

Firsthand accounts from journalists of color, ranging from feeling uncomfortable to physically and emotionally threatened. Includes a discussion about journalists of color covering certain stories.

Discussion Questions

1. Should journalists avoid certain stories because of race or ethnicity?
2. Do journalists need “special training” to cover specific stories/events?
3. What are the benefits of having a diversity of journalists covering events? Discuss.

"Journalism for Black Lives: A Reporting Guide" *The Movement for Black Lives and Free Press*

Four-page reporting guide considers the Society of Professional Journalists’ Code of Ethics in

examining how journalists can provide “ethical journalism by bringing truth to light and shifting power away from the anti-Black status quo, and into the hands of communities fighting to build a shared future.” Focuses on journalists’ willingness and ability to do the following: (1) Seek Truth & Report It, (2) Minimize Harm, (3) Act Independently, and (4) Be Accountable.



Discussion Questions

1. Ethical reporting on Black uprising, oppression, and despair means going beyond capturing powerful images and stories. What does this mean and what tactics are offered to achieve this?
2. What does it mean to “parachute” into a community? Why is this problematic?
3. Why is “framing” important when journalists file their stories?

"Resources for trans journalists to stay safe and thrive in the newsroom" [Nazlee Arbee, IJNet](#)

Nazlee Arbee notes many trans and gender diverse media workers experience financial inequality and various forms of workplace discrimination, but that is just the tip of the iceberg. Arbee lists resources to help trans media workers navigate the challenges they encounter, including support networks, mental health resources, and other supportive organizations.

Discussion Questions

1. What support networks exist for trans media workers? How can this help address the isolation trans media workers may face?
2. Why might trans media workers need legal support? What issues may be specific to trans media workers?
3. What particular threats might trans media workers face? What safety support is available for the trans community?

Diversity is essential to the success of the news industry, and journalists must include diverse voices in their coverage in order to reach a broader audience. We have stories to tell, but many in our audience have stopped listening because they can tell that we're not talking about them.

~~ Gwen Ifill

Module 12: Digital Security

This module focuses on the importance of securing electronic devices that store personal and work-related data. Students should develop a heightened awareness about how to protect data and how to determine the level of security needed in different situations. One thing to keep in mind is that **nothing digital is ever completely safe**. The safest way to get and protect information is to meet face-to-face, but that is not always possible. Encryption tools may mitigate risks associated with digital communications, but they do not prevent them. Digital security is essential for journalists. And while it is true that most journalists will never be targeted with something like Pegasus Spyware, all journalists face some level of digital security threats. Journalists everywhere should evaluate their own digital security practices. If students – and instructors – have not thought about digital security, now is the time to take that into consideration. Newsroom leaders and instructors have a responsibility to make digital security awareness an important, visual part of their newsrooms or classrooms. Like personal and mental safety, digital safety is not an afterthought, but an essential part of journalism.

Learning Objectives

1. Students will be to explain the importance of digital security to protect their data.
2. Students will practice “doxxing” themselves to understand what information about them is available online.
3. Students will be able to create a digital security plan that helps them protect their online presence, their data, and their sources.

Readings/Resources

"Digital security resources for journalists" *Nieman*

According to Nieman, "Now more than ever, journalists need to adopt strong digital security measures to protect their work, their sources, and themselves." This resource provides links to tools and protocols that journalists can employ to keep their data, devices, and contacts as safe as possible. Included are resources from the Electronic Frontier Foundation, Global Investigative Journalism Network, Committee to Protect Journalism, and more.

Discussion Question

1. **What should journalists be aware of regarding digital security? Suggestion: assign specific links to students and have them report back to the class.**

"How to Dox Yourself on the Internet" *Kristen Kozinski, Neena Kapur, & Floyd Muir, NYT Open*
This article from *NYT Open* examines doxing (online attacks that expose personal information). Doxxing, or doxing, can intimidate and silence journalists. *NYT Open* offers ways for journalists to proactively limit the amount of personal information available on the internet. This includes identifying steps “doxxers” take to find personal information and then offers “a formal program that consists of a series of repeatable steps that can be taken to clean up an online footprint.” *NYT Open* has publicly released this program, free of charge, for individuals to promote general online hygiene.

Discussion Questions

1. **What is “doxing”? How is doxing used to silence and intimidate journalists?**
2. **How can this program from *NYT Open* help journalists limit their online footprint and dissuade doxxers?**
3. **Ask your students to utilize this program to identify their online footprint. Did they find it valuable? Will they utilize it moving forward? Why or why not?**

"Digital Safety Kit" *Committee to Protect Journalists*

This kit helps journalists protect themselves and their digital content from attack. According to Committee to Protect Journalists, "Journalists should protect themselves and their sources by keeping up to date on the latest digital security news and threats such as hacking, phishing, and surveillance."

Discussion Question

1. What should journalists be aware of regarding digital security? List and discuss.

"Journalism School?: Lessons in security they might not teach at your J-school" *Surveillance Self-Defense*

This reading covers "Lessons in security they might not teach at your j-school." There are 10-linked lessons to protect digital data. Select lessons based on course objectives. Topics include:

- (1) Your Security Plan; (2) Communicating with Others; (3) Creating Strong Passwords; (4) How to: Delete Your Data Securely on macOS; (5) How to: Delete Your Data Securely on Windows; (6) How to: Delete your Data Securely on Linux; (7) Keeping Your Data Safe; (8) Protecting Yourself on Social Networks; (9) How to: Circumvent Online Censorship; and (10): What Should I Know About Encryption?

"Are You Savvy About Digital Security?" *Sarah Wild, The Open Notebook*

"Many journalists mistakenly believe that their stories are not sensitive enough to warrant increased digital protection." Unfortunately, this is a misconception. All digital communications, including email, texting, instant messaging, and voice-over-internet services, team collaboration tools (such as Slack), and social media applications, are vulnerable to digital threats, including viruses, eavesdroppers, and hackers. This resource provides useful techniques and strategies to protect digital communications.

Discussion Questions

1. What is the benefit of **Signal** when delivering communications?
2. What is threat modeling? How does threat modeling protect journalists and sources?
3. What high-impact steps protect journalists and sources from digital attacks? Discuss.



Thapana Onphalai / Shutterstock

Module 13: Online Harassment and Cyberbullying

This module is designed to assist journalists in recognizing safety risks associated with online harassment and cyberbullying. Most young journalists have grown up with social media as an omnipresent part of their lives and have some familiarity with online harassment and cyberbullying. But how will young journalists react when harassment and cyberbullying is directed at them? Journalists must recognize that internet anonymity enables mean-spirited, dangerous trolling without risk to the perpetrators. When should journalists respond, and when should journalists ignore? When should journalists inform the newsroom manager – or authorities – about harassment? The resources below focus on the online harassment and cyberbullying of journalists, in general, as well as more specifically on female and minority journalists.

Learning Objectives

1. Students will be able to better define the difference between online trolling and harassment that should be reported to the newsroom and/or authorities.
2. Students will have considered the similarities and differences that journalists receive based on various factors, including race, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, etc.
3. Students will be able to articulate what steps they should take if they are the victims of harassment or cyberbullying.

Reading(s)

"How can I protect the journalists in my newsroom from online harassment?" *PEN America*

With the anonymity of the internet, online harassment of journalists and newsrooms continues to increase. In a 2024 report, the International Women's Media Foundation "found that nearly one-third of respondents reported facing or being threatened with digital violence." This resource offers ways that all newsrooms can create **a culture of safety** that protects staff and freelancers from online abuse. Sample newsroom protocols are available as well.

Discussion Questions

1. What are the three essential steps newsrooms can take to protect their staff from online abuse? Does your student newsroom have steps in place?
2. How does digital security connect to online harassment? Why should journalists be sure to stay updated about digital security matters?

"Online Harassment New Frontline for Journalists, Report Says" *Dalia Faheid, Voice of America*

According to Faheid, "[A] global survey of more than 700 journalists who identify as female, found 73% had experienced some form of online violence, with threats of physical or sexual violence most common." This can have a devastating impact on individual journalists, specifically, and on journalism, generally. With the anonymity of the internet, online harassment continues to increase.

Discussion Questions

1. What are some ways that journalists, particularly female journalists, respond to online harassment, particularly with the threats include sexual or physical violence? Discuss.
2. How can individual journalists, newsrooms, and the authorities combat this increase in online harassment? What measures should be taken? Discuss.

"Patrolling the Trolls: How Journalists Can Cope with Harassment and Threats" *Shannon Ramlochan, Beyond Bylines: Covering the Intersection of Journalism, Emerging Media and Blogging*
Describes online harassment journalists may face and provides steps to take when harassment

occurs. Addresses the various levels of harassment journalists confront, including “doxing.” This resource also identifies the difficulty of ‘avoiding’ social media when it is such a large part of contemporary journalism.

Discussion Question

1. What is “doxing”?
2. What steps should journalists who experience online harassment take? Discuss the importance of each step and how they can be implemented.
3. How can journalists safely manage social media? Is it realistic to simply ignore social media threats? Discuss.

"Tips and tools for journalists to deal with online harassment" [Natasha Tynes, IJNET](#)

Provides steps for dealing with online harassment and includes links to apps that can block trolls while acknowledging the important role that social media plays for journalists. Also considers ways to distinguish between harassment and criticism.

Discussion Question

1. What advice does Michelle Ferrier of the *Daytona Beach News Journal* have for journalists facing online harassment? List and discuss.



**Freedom of the press is not just important
to democracy, it is democracy.
~Walter Cronkite**

Module 14: Covering Natural Disasters and Weather-Related Events

The goal is to make sure young journalists are aware of the dangers involved with covering natural disasters and other weather-related events. Covering any type of weather-related disaster can prove to be very difficult for everyone in the newsroom. Young journalists should learn how to protect themselves, and also how to be sensitive to those who are victims of these events. If these are local events, journalists might not only be covering the story, they may be part of the group that is at risk.

Learning Objectives

1. Students will be able to articulate the steps they should take before covering a natural disaster or weather-related event.
2. Students will be able to explain the dangers that can present themselves when there is a natural disaster or weather-related event.
3. Students will be able to create a plan, including a checklist of necessities, if tasked with covering an extreme weather event.

Readings/Resources

"Resources for journalists covering the environment or extreme weather" CPJ

These resources from CPJ are intended to help journalists covering climate change and/or extreme weather mitigate physical, digital, and psychological threats. According to CPJ, "Whether you're a reporter on the frontlines of extreme weather events like fires and flash floods or an environmental journalist digging into stories of corruption, poor governance, bad business, or the science of the climate crisis, the list of potential risks is long."

Discussion Questions

1. What, if anything, did students find surprising or unexpected regarding the various threats journalists face when covering weather-related stories?
2. What are some things that might be overlooked when journalists are heading out to cover weather-related events? Why do you think these things may be overlooked?

"Covering extreme weather: What to avoid and how to get it right" Chloe Reichel, *The Journalist's Resource*

Reichel goes through a series of "what to avoid" and "how to get it right" observations when reporting on extreme weather. The target audience is climate change/environmental reporters and offers suggestions on how to report accurately on weather-related issues, including focus areas, how to ask probing questions, language used in reporting, and providing context.

Discussion Questions

1. What are some suggestions that Reichel makes? Are these suggestions useful?
2. Why is it important to be careful when connecting extreme weather instances more broadly with climate change?

"This is our Super Bowl: why do reporters go into the eye of the storm?" Luke O'Neil, *The Guardian*

Considers why journalists travel into dangerous weather situations and the risks faced.

"Destruction and mayhem are simply more interesting for viewers, most of whom are far from the storm themselves, to look at than a talking head simply reading off a list of facts. It's pretty clear that networks wouldn't be broadcasting so much of this stuff if there wasn't a big audience for it."

Discussion Questions

1. Why is it dangerous to cover extreme weather when citizens remain indoors and/or evacuate? Discuss.
2. Strassman asks, "Why would you have reporters standing potentially in harm's way who are telling people to do exactly the opposite?" Discuss.
3. What precautions can journalists take when preparing to cover natural disasters/extreme weather? Discuss.

"Hurricanes & Other Natural Disasters" [RTDNA](#)

This handy one-pager provides a guideline for newsrooms to follow with covering hurricanes and other natural disasters. RTDNA suggests that a good guideline when covering natural disasters "is to overreact in the newsroom and under-react on air or online."

Discussion Questions

1. Why does RTDNA suggest a good guideline when covering natural disasters "is to overreact in the newsroom and under-react on air or online"? Do you agree?
2. Discuss the importance of being prepared for each of the following: Before a Disaster, Coverage Tone, Coverage Expectations, and Accuracy of Reporting.

"10 Investigative Questions to Ask after a Natural Disaster" [Rowan Philp](#)

Philp provides 10 thoughtful questions "for investigative editors and reporters to ask - of their sources, and of themselves." The article also highlights the importance of reporting from the field, displaying empathy, and continuing to generate new, creative questions when investigating weather-related stories.

Discussion Questions

1. What did you think about the questions posed by Philp? Are they all equally important to consider? What questions resonated with you?
2. Did you find any of the questions surprising or, perhaps, something you had not thought of?

Journalism can never be silent: that is its greatest virtue and its greatest fault. It must speak, and speak immediately, while the echoes of wonder, the claims of triumph and the signs of horror are still in the air.

~~ Henry Anatole Grunwald, *Time*



Modified Risk Assessment for Journalists

Assignment outline

- To identify risks, you need to outline your project. Before beginning your risk assessment, it is important to write an assignment outline. Identify and list the key elements of your project: interviews, travel and actions that are vital to your plans.

Locations and brief schedule

- Where are you going, when, and for how long?

Assignment details

- Give specific details of what you intend to cover to complete your assignment. What will you film, photograph, record, write about to make your piece? Including relevant meetings, sequences, interviews and locations. This is the basic foundation of your risk assessment and will provide a clear idea of what you want to achieve and how you want to achieve it.

Project specific risks

- Is this a sensitive topic?
- Are you covering a high-risk location, activity or event?
- Who will you be meeting, and might they be at risk if they talk to you?
- Is your security threatened by talking to specific people, visiting or working in a specific area?
- More than anything, effective risk management is about asking questions, listening to the answers, and working within the realm of the possible. Seek advice from experienced journalists, if possible.

Travel Risks

- Have you made travel arrangements? Plan and research the safest means of travel.
- Have an alternative plan in case you need to adjust travel arrangements or if you do not feel comfortable with your initial plan.

Profile Risks

- This is not about how you perceive yourself, but how others may perceive you. Be aware of your image and presence online. The same questions apply to those accompanying you.
- Is there an increased risk as a result of your gender, age, ethnicity, religious beliefs or nationality? What about those accompanying you, and how does your profile affect them?



Modified Risk Assessment for Newsroom Managers

Before sending a reporting team into the field, the newsroom manager should complete the following:

Assignment outline

- What is the project? Is the story sufficiently newsworthy to justify the risks to our reporting crew? Does the situation require that I send a two-person crew to ensure safety?

Location/schedule

- Does the journalist and/or crew know the neighborhood? Has a timeline been established for when the assignment will be happening and how long it should take?

Assignment Details

- What will need to be done to complete this project? Provide specific details about your expectations for your journalist and/or team. This is similar to what is expected when a journalist does his or her own risk assessment. Is it situation-safe for live transmission?
- Does your reporter know how to assist your photojournalist by maintaining a broad view of the entire scene while the photojournalist concentrates on collecting images?
- Does the crew know the procedure to stay in contact with the assignment desk?

Project Specific Risks

- Do I need to hire private security? Is there a heightened risk due to the equipment my crew needs to carry, and if so, what can I do about it?
- Are there health hazards for the reporting crew? Do they need gloves, respirators, safety masks? Is there a need for personal protection equipment (helmet, flak jacket, gas mask etc.)?
- Are sources at risk because of the presence of a journalist and/or crew?

Travel Risks

- Has the crew made travel arrangements? Should I send the crew in an unmarked vehicle?
- Does the crew have an evacuation plan? Does a member of the team – other than the driver – have an extra key for the news vehicles?

Profile Risks

- Is there any heightened risk due to the gender, ethnicity, or nationality of the crew? Have I thought about the emotional safety of my crew? Have you briefed your crew on whether to wear their identification badges in view or hide them if they want to blend in?

In Loving Memory of James Wright Foley

