The James W. Foley Journalism Safety Modules

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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 Nothaft, *Markkula Center for Applied Ethics* 3

"For student journalists, the beats are the same but the protections are different" Stephanie Sugars, *Freedom of the Press Foundation* 4

"J-schools Must Better Prepare Students for Handling Harassment" Marta Hill, *Nieman Reports* 4

SKeyes Press Freedom Tracker 4

Module 2: On Assignment – Mitigating Risk 5

"The importance of undertaking risk assessments: 'No story is worth dying for'" Caroline Scott 5

"U.S Journalist Safety Kit" *Committee to Protect Journalists* 5

"Covering Injustice: Safety Tips for Reporting on Protests" *IWMF* 5

"It's time to change the way the media reports on protests. Here are some ideas." *Nieman Lab* 6

Safety Guide for Journalists *Reporters Without Borders* 6

Aaron Mak Covering Riots in Milwaukee, USA (2016): 3 Parts 6

Module 3: Covering Elections 9

"Covering Elections: Journalist Safety Kit" *Committee to Protect Journalists* 9

"A Complete Guide for Journalists to Successfully Cover Elections" Mustafa Fathy, *IJNet* 10

"Covering the 2024 elections? Here are some tips and resources from IRE experts" *IRE* 10

The Role of Law Enforcement Agents: Ensuring Safety of Journalists during Public Demonstrations and Elections *UNESCO* 10

"12 tips for minding the security of your mobile device when covering elections" Jorge Luis Sierra, *International Journalists' Network* 11

"What journalists need to know to combat information disorder" Amarah Ennis, *IJNet* 11

"How to Cover Election Day and Beyond" Vivian Schiller & Garrett Graff, *Columbia Journalism Review* 11

Module 4: Understanding Journalists' Rights 12

"Lebanon: End use of defamation laws to target journalists and critics" *Amnesty Int'l* 12

A War Without Red Lines: Threats and Risks Facing Journalists in Lebanon *Maharat* 13

"Media Accountability in the MENA Region" *Erich-Brost-Institute* 13

"Legal Agenda: A New Media Law Proposal: Toward Ending the Punitive Approach and Strengthening the Protection of Journalists?" Rana Saghief, *Lebanese International Press* 14

"Guide to Protecting the Press from Legal Accountability" *Al Jazeera Media Institute* 14

Module 5: Working with Sources 15

"When interviewing trauma victims, proceed with caution and compassion" Sherry Ricchiardi, *IJNET: International Journalists' Network* 15

"An editor's sensitive guide to interviewing victims of trauma" Jan Winburn, *Nieman Foundation* 15

"Journalists of Color Face Harassment by Sources" Jane C. Hu, *The Open Notebook* 15

"Interviewing people who have experienced trauma" Qainat Khan, *The GroundTruth Project* 16

"The Art of the Interview: Asking the Hard Questions About the Hard Questions" Ann Friedman, *Columbia Journalism Review.* 16

"How to Conduct Difficult Interviews" Mallory Pickett, *The Open Notebook* 16

Module 6: Photojournalism – Staying Safe 18

"Video & recap: Caring for photojournalists – Preventing burnout, treating trauma and ensuring equity" *The National Press Club Journalism Institute* 18

"Photojournalists: The key to getting published and staying safe" *Thomson Foundation* 19

"#SafetyInFocus: Photojournalists at risk" *Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ)* 19

"'We face a different danger,' war photographer Paul Conroy says" Lucy Westcott, *Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ)* 19

"When Should Journalists Put Down the Mic and Lend Aid?" Patrick L Plaisance, *Psychology Today* 19

"Safety Tips for Travel Photographers (Particularly Women)" Karthika Gupta, *Digital Photography School* 20

"Photojournalists' Social and Economic Rights in Lebanon" Nadine Moubarak, *Samir Kassir Foundation* ... 20

Module 7: Running a Newsroom – Creating a Culture of Safety 21

Risk Assessments (click to open) 21

"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* 21

"Journalists in the Line of Fire: Lessons from the 2024 War in Lebanon" Karim Safieddine, *Samir Kassir Foundation* 22

"Editors' Checklist: Preparing for U.S. protest assignments" *Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ)* 22

"Are Newsrooms Doing Enough to Take Care of Their Journalists' Mental Health and Safety?" Nu Yang, *Editor & Publisher* 22

"Coping with Emotional Trauma in the Newsroom" Kenna Griffin, *Prof KRG: A practical resource for student journalists* 23

Module 8: Diversity in the Newsroom 24

"The cost of reporting while female" Anne Helen Petersen, *Columbia Journalism Review* 24

"Holistic Safety for Women Journalists - Lebanon" *Maharat* 25

"IWMF Emergency Fund" *International Women's Media Foundation* 25

"The Struggles of Women Journalists in Lebanon" Nadine Moubarak, *Samir Kassir Foundation* 25

"Tackling Diversity and Inclusion in the Newsroom" *Global Future Council on Media, Entertainment and Sport* 26

Module 9: Dealing with Online Harassment and Cyberbullying 27

"Online Harassment New Frontline for Journalists, Report Says" Dalia Faheid, *Voice of America* 27

"Patrolling the Trolls: How Journalists Can Cope with Harassment and Threats" Shannon Ramlochan, *Beyond Bylines: Covering the Intersection of Journalism, Emerging Media and Blogging* 27

"Tips and tools for journalists to deal with online harassment" Natasha Tynes, *IJNET: International Journalists' Network* 28

"The column I won't write because of a troll with a gun" Theresa Vargas, *Washington Post* 28

Module 10: Digital Security 29

"How to Dox Yourself on the Internet" Kristen Kozinski, Neena Kapur, & Floyd Muir, *NYT Open* 29

Digital Safety Kit *from Committee to Protect Journalists* 29

"Tips for digital security" Qainat Khan, *The GroundTruth Project* 30

"Journalism School?: Lessons in security they might not teach at your J-school" *Surveillance Self-Defense* 30

"Are You Savvy About Digital Security?" Sarah Wild, *The Open Notebook* 30

Module 11: Self-Care – Addressing Emotional Trauma 31

"For Reporters Covering Stressful Assignments, Self-Care is Crucial" *Center for Health Journalism* 31

"How journalists can take care of themselves while covering trauma" Kari Cobham, *Poynter* 32

"How journalists practice self-care while covering tough stories" Elite Truong, *Poynter* 32

"Covering Trauma: Impact on Journalists" River Smith, Elana Newman, Susan Drevo, Autumn Slaughter, *Global Center for Journalism & Trauma* 32

"Self-care tips for journalists - plus a list of several resources" Naseem S. Miller, *The Journalist's Resource* 32

Module 12: Foreign Conflicts – Staying Safe Abroad 33

Jim: The James Foley Story (2016) *HBO*, Director: Brian Oakes 33

"The Principles: We Must Embed a Culture of Safety in Our Profession" *ACOS Alliance* 33

"A Field Guide for Correspondents" Charles M. Sennott, *The GroundTruth Project* 34

"The Rules of Conflict Reporting are Changing" Janine di Giovanni, *Committee to Protect Journalists* 34

Module 13: Wrongful Detention, Kidnapping, and Hostage Survival 35

"Journalists Under Attack: Lessons from the Field" Jennifer Dorroh, *IJNet* 35

"10 Years After IS Kidnapping, Journalist Returns to Raqqa" Graham Keeley, *VOA* 36

"German journalist who gave birth as hostage in Syria speaks of ordeal" Philip Oltermann, *The Guardian* 36

"After escaping captivity, American detainees come home to credit penalties" Ali Rogin, *PBS* 36

The Experience of Caitlan Coleman 37

Scenario, In Five Parts: Caitlan Coleman, Afghanistan 37

Module 14: Covering Natural Disasters and Weather-Related Events 41

"Covering a Natural Disaster - a time for credible and useful journalism" *Al Jazeera Media Institute* 41

"This is our Super Bowl: why do reporters go into the eye of the storm?" Luke O'Neil, *The Guardian* 41

"Climate Journalism in Iraq, Morocco, and Yemen in an Era of Misinformation" Earth *Journalism Network* 42

Modified Risk Assessment for Journalists 43

Modified Risk Assessment for Newsroom Managers 44

(Nicole Tung/ASSOCIATED PRESS)

James W. Foley Journalism Safety Modules
An Overview

Since the James W. Foley Legacy Foundation (JWFLF) was founded in the aftermath of 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 training for journalists – primarily freelancers – working in conflict zones. We soon recognized a clear and sobering reality: safety concerns are not limited to journalists working overseas in conflict zones. All journalists, domestically and abroad, need to be prepared to mitigate risks no matter their beat or their location.

JWFLF remains committed to supporting and protecting a free press. JWFLF's efforts include an emphasis on introducing journalism and communications students to safety as a key component of the 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. In 2019, 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.

That same year, Marquette University's Diederich College of Communication piloted the safety modules across their curriculum. Since then, the safety modules have been available to journalism and communications programs, free of charge. Instructors at over 25 colleges and universities across the US have incorporated the safety modules into their 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 were offered to 4 Lebanese universities in the Fall 2023.

The safety modules help educators create a culture of safety. Each module has clear objectives and resources that can be implemented into existing courses. Depending on the instructor's needs and course content, the resources can be incorporated into part of a class period, a full class period, or multiple class periods. Some instructors incorporate resources from one module into their course; others have incorporated materials from multiple modules. Summaries and discussion questions are provided for each linked resource. When implementing the safety module materials, instructors often include one or more of resources in their syllabus. The modules need not be introduced 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), 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." A free press is essential to democracy. 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 that 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 be to articulate and explain why completing risk assessments is an important safety measure for journalists.
3. Students will be able to complete risk assessments.

BE SAFE (Before Everything, Stop Assess Focus Enact)

This introductory module is designed to help aspiring journalists, editors, newsroom managers and other members of the media to develop safe habits. An **easy-to-remember** acronym for students is to **BE SAFE: B**efore **E**verything, **S**top **A**ssess **F**ocus **E**nact. 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*	**B**efore **E**verything: **S**top *Don't rush into a story, interview, situation.* **A**ssess *Where are you going? Who are you interviewing?* *What is your purpose?* **F**ocus *What can go right/wrong.* **E**nact *Your plan.*	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. *From: Society of Professional Journalists Code of Ethics* **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 thoughtful risk assessments can mitigate those threats. Developing safe habits helps journalists think through how to manage risk and respond to any 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 in situations that turn in the blink of an eye. Journalists must be realistic about their physical and emotional thresholds. If any journalist deems the risk too great, the 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 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 a 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 10 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?**

"J-schools Must Better Prepare Students for Handling Harassment" Marta Hill, *Nieman Reports*
Student journalists, like all journalists, are subject to harassment. Students must be prepared to identify and address harassment. This article offers three suggestions for preparing students early in their academic career.

Discussion Questions
1. **What are the three suggestions for introducing the topic of harassment?**
2. **What harassment have your students faced? How did they handle the situation(s)?**

SKeyes Press Freedom Tracker
This website aims to provide reliable, easy-to-access information on press freedom violations in the MENA region, including the number of journalists arrested, physically attacked, equipment seized, and other related incidents in a given year. Students should be aware of the risks journalists face in this region and be prepared to learn how to navigate the world of journalism as safely and confidently as possible.

Discussion Questions
1. **What challenges do journalists in the MENA region face that may differ from those in other parts of the world?**
2. **How can understanding press freedom violations help aspiring journalists prepare for their careers?**
3. **In what ways can journalists protect themselves while still reporting truthfully and effectively?**

Module 2: On Assignment – Mitigating Risk

On any assignment, journalists must be mindful of risks they may encounter. Journalists may face potential dangers when covering ***any*** assignment. Mitigating risk begins with completing pre-assignment risk assessment. In addition, this module includes the following scenario to help students better understand potential threats they may encounter: Aaron Mak of the *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel* covering Milwaukee's 2016 Sherman Park Riots that erupted after the fatal police shooting of a 23-year-old Black male.

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.
3. After reading the scenarios by Tim Mak and Cengiz Yar, students will assess and critique the choice Mak and Yar made while covering potentially volatile situations.

Readings & Resources

"The importance of undertaking risk assessments: 'No story is worth dying for'" Caroline Scott

Scott's central premise is the following: "No story is worth dying for." This article focuses on conflict areas, but the main ideas hold true for ***all*** journalists. Journalists need to take precautions to mitigate risks. This involves completing risk assessments, taking a first aid course, focusing on digital security, dressing appropriately, and maintaining contact with the newsroom or other colleagues. Eric Phillips of *VOA* emphasizes that all members of the reporting team should be present when conducting risk assessments.

Discussion Questions

1. **Why are risk assessments important? How can completing a risk assessment mitigate risk? How do clothing choices factor into a risk assessment/**
2. **How can journalists protect their data? Why carry an emergency contact list?**

"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?**

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

Provides safety tips when covering 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? What precautions were taken? What concerns exist?**

"It's time to change the way the media reports on protests. Here are some ideas." *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 is 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 Guide for Journalists *Reporters Without Borders*
A practical handbook for journalists in high-risk areas, including protests. Includes an Arabic translation for increased accessibility in Arab countries.

Discussion Questions

1. **When covering a protest, the Guide recommends certain preparations (e.g. knowing local conditions, planning exit routes, using protective gear). Based on what you've read, which of these preparations do you think are most critical, and why? Could any of them conflict with journalistic ethics or with the ability to report freely?**
2. **The chapter "Crowds, demonstrations and riots" warns about specific dangers (tear gas, stampedes, rioting, violence from security forces or protesters). How should a journalist balance the need to be close enough to get authentic coverage, with the need to stay safe? What strategies from the Guide might help make that balance work in practice?**
3. **The Guide places strong emphasis on digital safety (secure communications, backing up important documents, minimizing digital footprint etc.). In the Arab world context, where surveillance, internet shutdowns or censorship are more common, which parts of the Guide's digital safety advice are easiest to implement, and which are most difficult? What additional measures might be necessary?**
4. **The Guide talks about psychological trauma – how journalists may be affected by what they see and report (chapter 6). How important is it for news organizations to provide mental health support to journalists, especially in environments of recurring violence or unrest? What kinds of support would be most helpful?**
5. **Looking at the "Planning and Preparation" and "Keeping Safe on Assignment" chapters: what is the role of the employer / media organization vs. the individual journalist in ensuring safety? Where might responsibilities lie, and what are the possible gaps? Could financial, institutional, or cultural barriers prevent these roles from being fulfilled?**

Aaron Mak Covering Riots in Milwaukee, USA (2016): 3 Parts
Aaron Mak, an intern with Milwaukee Journal Sentinel, was attacked while covering Milwaukee's Sherman Park riots. As Mak reflects on covering the riots, consider how a risk assessment may have helped Mak prepare for this situation that spiraled into a riot.

Part 1

It is Aug. 13, the last day of your summer internship. But your editor has an assignment. He sends you to the city's predominantly Black and socio-economically underprivileged Sherman Park neighborhood. There had been reports of a fatal shooting in the area. Because you have reported at crime scenes in the past without incident, it seemed like a routine assignment. But when you arrive you learn that the shooter is a policeman, and the victim is a well-liked member of the community. An outraged crowd is forming around the cul-de-sac where the homicide occurred. This did not concern you because you had spent much of the summer covering police brutality protests, all of which had been peaceful.

You begin to suspect that the protest could turn violent when some in the crowd start shoving forward and throwing rocks at the police officers who are guarding the crime scene. In demonstrations that you've covered in the past, making any sort of physical contact with law enforcement is usually an unspoken line that protestors won't cross. The police conducted their on-scene investigation throughout the afternoon, during which time the crowd grew progressively larger and more unruly.

Discussion Question

1. **Should Mak have shadowed an activist? Discuss.**

Part 2

At sunset, the officers place the body into the ambulance, pile into their squad cars, and begin to leave. Just as the last car in the procession is about to pull out of the cul-de-sac, someone runs up and smashes its back window. This emboldens others in the crowd to follow suit, and soon the rioters are smashing and setting fire to parked vehicles and small businesses that line the streets of the neighborhood. You run after the mob to capture video of the turmoil on your cell phone.

You also call your editor and inform him that a riot has broken out. He sends another reporter and a photographer, both white men, to help with the coverage. You meet them at a nearby intersection. Moments later, a phalanx of armored police comes marching down the street behind us. A rioter fires seven gunshots from the other side of the intersection. The police disperse, and you and your colleagues dive behind a Chevy Suburban. Once it seemed like the gunfire ceased, the photographer walks off to take more pictures, while you and the other reporter remain behind the car.

Minutes later, a man shouts, "Get your white ass out of here! You better not let me fucking catch you!" You see a group of around 20 people chase the photographer down the street. You don't have a plan to diffuse the situation, but feel you can't leave your colleague to fend for himself. You decide to run after him and make sure that he isn't assaulted. It may not have been the right call, but you're not sure what else you can do.

The photographer drops the bulky cameras that are around his neck so that he can run faster. Worried that you'll lose all of his work, you run over to retrieve the gear. He stops and looks back, at which point you yell at him to keep running. You realize that picking up the cameras and shouting at him were ill- considered moves that likely endangered both of you. The mob realizes that you are associated with him, and so they begin chasing you.

Discussion Question

1. **When rioting began, how could Mak have mitigated his potential risks?**

Part 3

Because the photographer was a much faster runner, the mob caught up with you first, threw you to the ground and pummeled you. A few onlookers saw what was happening and ran up, yelling, "Stop,

he's not white! He's Asian!" The attackers, after taking a step back to examine you, run off into the night. An activist who had been a source in earlier reporting on police violence comes over to help you get up from the ground and escorts you to a nearby park. Other people you have interviewed in past protests hear about what happened, and they too come over to make sure you are not attacked again. You call an editor and ask her to pick you up. Your two colleagues also managed to run to safety, unharmed, and you meet back at the newsroom.

Discussion Question for Part 3

1. **Do you need to think about how a crowd might react to you based on your gender, race or ethnicity? Is that something to consider in assessing risk?**

THE SAMIR KASSIR FOUNDATION

Module 3: 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 easy-to-follow safety kit, updated in July 2022, 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?**
2. **What precautions can 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?**

"A Complete Guide for Journalists to Successfully Cover Elections" Mustafa Fathy, *IJNet*
This report provides journalists with a comprehensive guide to delivering high-quality, trustworthy election coverage. It highlights essential professional, ethical, and safety practices, emphasizing the need for preparation, contextual understanding, and effective storytelling. By following its guidance, journalists can ensure accurate, objective, and engaging reporting, helping the public make informed decisions while maintaining the integrity of the electoral process.

Discussion Questions

1. **How can journalists balance the psychological and security pressures of covering elections with their commitment to professional standards and objectivity?**
2. **To what extent do electoral maps and political/social analyses help journalists deliver accurate and in-depth coverage? Can such tools ever be considered optional?**
3. **What role do visual storytelling, infographics, and digital videos play in engaging a wider audience and helping them understand election coverage more quickly? How can the form influence the substance of reporting?**
4. **What are the most essential tools and precautions journalists should carry in their bag while covering elections to ensure their safety and successfully complete their work?**
5. **How can journalists leverage small details and human-interest stories on the sidelines of elections to provide a fuller and more relatable picture of the event?**

"Covering the 2024 elections? Here are some tips and resources from IRE experts" *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?**

The Role of Law Enforcement Agents: Ensuring Safety of Journalists during Public Demonstrations and Elections *UNESCO*
About this guide: Designed to provide aspiring and seasoned journalists with tips and precautions to take when covering demonstrations and elections.

Discussion Questions

1. **What are the primary risks journalists face during public demonstrations and elections, and how do these risks vary across different regions?**
2. **How can law enforcement agencies balance maintaining public order with respecting journalists' rights to report freely during protests and electoral events?**
3. **In what ways does the use of non-lethal force by security forces impact journalists' ability to report during demonstrations, and what measures can be implemented to prevent such occurrences?**
4. **What role do international organizations, such as UNESCO, play in advocating for the safety of journalists, and how effective are their initiatives in different political climates?**
5. **How can media organizations and journalists themselves contribute to enhancing their safety during high-risk reporting situations, and what best practices should be adopted?**

"12 tips for minding the security of your mobile device when covering elections" Jorge Luis Sierra, *International Journalists' Network*
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, colleagues, and 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 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 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 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?**

Module 4: Understanding Journalists' Rights

This module emphasizes the importance of understanding journalists' rights as a free and independent press is fundamental to a democratic society. According to **SKEYES Press Freedom Tracker**, there were 86 reported incidents against journalists in 2024, including 23 assaults. 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 law enforcement officers (LEOs) tactics, including kettling, and articulate their rights if stopped by law enforcement.

Readings & Resources

"Lebanon: End use of defamation laws to target journalists and critics" *Amnesty Int'l*
This article about defamation laws reflects the realities when working in the MENA region, including Lebanon

Discussion Questions

1. **How do Lebanon's current defamation and insult laws conflict with international human rights standards on freedom of expression? Should any limits exist on speech critical of public officials?**
2. **The report describes cases where journalists are summoned by security agencies for defamation complaints. How does this practice affect the independence and safety of journalists? What safeguards should exist to prevent such misuse of authority?**
3. **Why do you think defamation laws are applied more frequently to protect powerful individuals rather than ordinary citizens? What does this reveal about the balance of power between the press and the state?**
4. **How do repeated investigations, summons, and "non-repetition pledges" influence journalists' willingness to report on corruption or misconduct? Can such actions be considered a form of censorship? Why or why not?**
5. **Based on Amnesty International's recommendations, what legal or institutional reforms could Lebanon adopt to both protect reputations and uphold journalists' rights? How might civil defamation laws work more fairly than criminal ones?**

THE SAMIR KASSIR FOUNDATION

A War Without Red Lines: Threats and Risks Facing Journalists in Lebanon *Maharat*

The report documents how journalists face threats, harassment, and cyberbullying (for example, having phone numbers circulated).

Discussion Questions

1. **How do these tactics affect journalists' ability to work freely and independently? In what ways do such tactics serve to silence or intimidate dissenting voices?**
2. **How do restrictive laws, defamation statutes, or ambiguous regulations contribute to self-censorship among media professionals? What kind of legal safeguards or reform would help protect journalists from legal harassment in such environments?**
3. **In the context of Lebanon / MENA, how do power imbalances (political, economic, social) shape which stories get covered, which journalists are targeted, and how accountability is enforced? How does a culture of impunity reinforce those imbalances?**
4. **Given that much of the pressure now comes through online harassment, disinformation, social media backlash, etc., how should journalists prepare for and respond to digital attacks? What institutional or collective protections are realistic in the digital age?**
5. **Journalists often must make trade-offs: how much risk to take, which stories to pursue, when to back off. Based on this report, how should journalists weigh risks against their duty to inform the public? What ethical or practical frameworks can help them decide when to proceed or when to pause?**

"Media Accountability in the MENA Region" ***Erich-Brost-Institute***

This report examines media accountability and the role of social media, online actors, financial sustainability and other factors that impact reporters' credibility.

Discussion Questions

1. **The report defines media accountability as "any non-state means of making media responsible toward the public." What are the advantages and limitations of non-state accountability mechanisms (e.g. ombudspeople, press councils, NGO watchdogs) compared to state regulation?**
2. **In the case studies, many countries report that traditional media accountability institutions (press councils, unions, etc.) are seen by journalists as weak, politicized, or untrusted. What factors contribute to the credibility gap between these institutions and the journalistic community?**
3. **The report notes "self-censorship" as a widespread phenomenon across MENA. What contextual pressures (legal, economic, social, political) drive self-censorship? How might accountability mechanisms reduce or exacerbate it?**
4. **The study highlights that social media and online actors have become increasingly important accountability forums in the MENA region. In what ways can citizen feedback, blogs, social media criticism, or crowdsourced fact-checking serve as accountability tools? What risks or drawbacks do they carry?**
5. **The report states that financial sustainability is a major challenge to media accountability—many outlets depend on government advertising or patronage, which can compromise independence. How does media economics affect a newsroom's willingness and ability to adopt accountability practices?**
6. **Across different countries (e.g. Lebanon, Egypt, Jordan), interviews in the report reveal "enabling" and "inhibiting" contextual factors for accountability. Choose a country studied and discuss which contextual factors are most critical there. Do you see parallels in Lebanon or your local context?**

7. **The report argues that journalism education and training should include media accountability as part of the curriculum (e.g. verification, ethics, feedback systems). What elements should a journalism curriculum include to strengthen accountability culture from the start?**
8. **Given the constraints documented (lack of trust, weak institutions, political pressure, economic dependence), what innovative or hybrid accountability models might be realistic in MENA settings? How could a newsroom realistically begin to adopt some of those in a constrained environment?**

"Legal Agenda: A New Media Law Proposal: Toward Ending the Punitive Approach and Strengthening the Protection of Journalists?" Rana Saghief, *Lebanese International Press*
This report examines the following: Media Pluralism; Independence of the National Media Authority; Journalist Protection and Freedom of Expression; Abolishing Criminal Approach and Expanding Permissible Criticism; and Public Media and Media Integrity.

Discussion Questions

1. **How does the draft law promote media pluralism through preventing monopolies and encouraging fair competition? What potential challenges could arise given the allowance of foreign ownership of media outlets or the restrictions on the number of TV and radio institutions a company can own?**
2. **Although the draft law provides for the Authority's independence and immunity for its members, what risks arise from the lack of clear mechanisms to prevent obstruction in forming the Authority or to ensure transparency in member elections? How could the Authority's independence and effectiveness be further strengthened?**
3. **To what extent do the provisions in the draft law adequately protect journalists, their sources, and editorial independence, especially regarding investigations by non-competent authorities? What amendments or safeguards could be added to enhance journalist protection?**
4. **How does moving offenses related to publishing from criminal law to civil courts affect freedom of expression? What challenges could arise in distinguishing between accurate and false information, or between legitimate criticism and defamation?**
5. **What risks are associated with the proposed privatization of the Public Media Company, and how might this affect media integrity and editorial independence? How can the National Media Authority and codes of conduct ensure that media outlets uphold their social responsibility and the public's right to information?**

"Guide to Protecting the Press from Legal Accountability" *Al Jazeera Media Institute*
This report examines media accountability and the role of social media, online actors, financial sustainability and other factors that impact reporters' credibility.

Discussion Questions

1. **What are the legal implications for journalists when handling classified or leaked documents, and how can they mitigate potential legal risks?**
2. **In what ways can journalists protect the confidentiality of their sources, and what legal protections exist for whistleblowers in different jurisdictions?**
3. **How does the guide address the balance between freedom of expression and legal restrictions on criticism of public figures or institutions?**
4. **What steps should journalists take if they are subjected to legal action, such as arrest or trial, in retaliation for their reporting?**
5. **How can journalists navigate the challenges posed by evolving digital laws and online censorship to maintain their legal protection?**

Module 5: 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: International Journalists' Network*

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"?**

"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?**

"Interviewing people who have experienced trauma" Qainat Khan, *The GroundTruth Project*
Provides key considerations for interviewing victims of traumatic events. Consists of two articles that inform journalists of best practices when interviewing victims.

Discussion Questions

1. **What tips are offered for interviewing those who experience trauma?**
2. **What are three things Beth Murphy focuses on in terms of her experiences? What can journalists learn from these experiences? Discuss.**

"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 to complete stories. Feeling anxious or nervous before conducting interviews is normal. One key is to remain open-minded. Avoid heated discussions.

1. **Don't fear the fear!** It's natural to be nervous before an important or difficult interview.
2. **Prepare.** Make sure you have all your facts and reporting in order and that they are accessible to you during the interview if you need them. Then practice the interview as much as you can – map out an interview flowchart and/or role play with a colleague.
3. **Stay calm and stick to the facts.** During the interview, if your interviewee starts to get upset or shut down, ask them to share their concerns. "I can tell you're upset/reluctant to talk about [X]. What specifically are you worried about?"
4. **Make every effort to include all voices in your story.** Don't just send one email and then say the source didn't respond to a request for comment. If you can't get a phone or in-person interview, put serious thought into writing questions for written response. Remember that your questions are on the record; keep them neutral.
5. **No surprises!** If you work with a publication that has a fact-checking department, they run much of your reporting by the source. If you don't have a fact-checking department, a "no surprises" letter that goes through everything you said about that source and gives them a chance to respond can be useful. A "no surprises" phone call

can also be a great idea, but make sure you record it.

6. **Be kind and fair.** Building relationships with the people you are interviewing can make reporting easier, and might even lead to new stories down the road.

Discussion Questions

1. **How can journalists overcome fear and also 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 6: 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 covering an 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" *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, *Committee to Protect Journalists (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.**

"Photojournalists' Social and Economic Rights in Lebanon" Nadine Moubarak, *Samir Kassir Foundation*

This study aims to investigate the legal and customary grounds that regulate the work of photojournalists in Lebanon, including both freelancers and employees, and both Lebanese and foreign nationals working in the country. The objective is to understand the level of provision of their social and economic rights.

Module 7: 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 not fault or penalize 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. Conflict zones are not the only place where there is risk and danger involved. 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 does Sally Fitton offer for managers and staff completing risk assessments? Why is this an important part of the preparation? Discuss.**

"Journalists in the Line of Fire: Lessons from the 2024 War in Lebanon" Karim Safieddine, *Samir Kassir Foundation*

This report offers a timely, rigorous, and locally-grounded analysis of how journalists in Lebanon were exposed to extreme risks during the 2024 conflict, and yet lacked adequate institutional protection. It documents tangible data (for example: at least 13 journalists killed in Lebanon alone during the September–November 2024 escalation) and maps the structural fault-lines — weak legal frameworks, precarious media employment, insufficient training and equipment, and a largely reactive safety ecosystem. It also lays out actionable recommendations aimed at media organisations, governments, donors and tech platforms.

Discussion Questions

1. **What concrete steps could media organisations and governments take before a conflict escalates, in order to shift from reactive to preventive support for journalists? What barriers might prevent such measures from being adopted?**
2. **How do precarious employment conditions among journalists increase their vulnerability in conflict zones, and what institutional or policy reforms could better protect them?**
3. **In what ways is the Lebanese context unique, and in what ways are the safety issues for journalists similar across the region? What does this imply for region-wide versus country-specific solutions?**
4. **Given the rising role of digital threats (surveillance, hacking, disinformation) against journalists, how should media safety strategies evolve to address online as well as physical risks? Which actors should bear the responsibility?**
5. **How does the safety of journalists connect to broader democratic resilience and public trust in the media? What happens when those protections fail?**

"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 the emotional toll journalists experience. Simple events can evolve into chaotic situations. John Tlumacki covered the Boston Marathon for two decades before the 2013 bombing. Reporters and editors worked on stories like the Marjory Stoneman Douglas school shooting, the Las Vegas concert shooting, the Pulse night club shooting, and wildfires in Northern California. These events

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 Griffin? In what ways did it fail to prepare her for?**
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?**

Module 8: 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 & Resources

"A Gender Balance Guide for Media Organisations (English, Arabic, Burmese, and Russian)"
From *WAN-IFRA*, a practical guide available in Arabic that helps media orgs identify implicit bias; offers tools and strategies to improve gender balance in content, staff, etc.

Discussion Question

1. **What percentage of our sources, bylines, and main characters are women, and which sections show the biggest gaps?**
2. **How often do we use language, images, or portrayals that reinforce gender stereotypes?**
3. **Do we have internal policies or style guides that explicitly promote gender balance in content?**
4. **How do we actively include women's voices and perspectives in stories where they are traditionally underrepresented?**
5. **What metrics do we track to measure progress, and how frequently do we review and act on them?**

"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?**

"Holistic Safety for Women Journalists - Lebanon" *Maharat*

The Holistic Safety for Women Journalists – Lebanon report by Maharat Foundation highlights the unique and multifaceted risks faced by female journalists, including physical threats, online harassment, and psychological pressures. It emphasizes that safety is not only about immediate physical protection but also involves institutional support, inclusive policies, and mental health resources. The report underscores how structural barriers, such as underrepresentation in leadership and unequal access to assignments, exacerbate vulnerabilities for women in the media. By documenting these challenges, it provides practical recommendations for media organizations to create safer and more supportive work environments. Overall, the report serves as a critical resource for promoting gender-sensitive practices and advancing the professional development, well-being, and empowerment of female journalists in Lebanon.

Discussion Questions

1. **What are the primary factors contributing to the underrepresentation of women in leadership positions within Lebanese media organizations, and how does this impact the safety and advancement of female journalists?**
2. **How do gender-sensitive reporting guidelines and institutional policies within media organizations influence the safety and well-being of female journalists in Lebanon?**
3. **In what ways can media organizations in Lebanon enhance their support systems to better address the unique challenges faced by female journalists, both online and offline?**
4. **What role does societal perception play in the challenges faced by female journalists in Lebanon, and how can public awareness be raised to foster a safer environment for them?**
5. **How can international organizations collaborate with local entities like Maharat Foundation to implement effective safety measures for women journalists in Lebanon?**

"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 quality for assistance from IWMF?**
3. **What is the purpose of The Black Journalists Therapy Relief Fund?**

"The Struggles of Women Journalists in Lebanon" Nadine Moubarak, *Samir Kassir Foundation*

This report sheds light on the multifaceted challenges faced by female journalists in Lebanon, including professional discrimination, sexual harassment, and societal pressure. By documenting their experiences, it exposes the structural and cultural barriers that hinder women's equal participation and advancement in the media sector. The report also emphasizes the emotional and psychological toll of these struggles, urging institutions, policymakers, and society to take concrete steps toward gender equality, safer workplaces, and stronger legal protections for women in journalism.

Discussion Questions

1. **What are the main professional barriers that prevent female journalists in Lebanon from achieving equality with their male colleagues?**
2. **How does sexual harassment—both inside and outside the newsroom—**

affect women's careers and mental health?

3. **In what ways do Lebanese media institutions support or fail to protect women journalists from discrimination and abuse?**
4. **How do cultural and social expectations about gender roles influence women's participation and advancement in journalism?**
5. **What changes or policies could help create a safer and more equitable environment for women working in Lebanese media?**

"Tackling Diversity and Inclusion in the Newsroom" *Global Future Council on Media, Entertainment and Sport*

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. **How should media organizations balance the need for diversity with the risk of tokenism, ensuring that diverse voices are genuinely integrated into decision-making processes?**
2. **What are the potential challenges in implementing diversity and inclusion initiatives in newsrooms, and how can these be effectively addressed?**
3. **In what ways can diverse newsrooms contribute to more accurate and comprehensive reporting, and how does this impact public trust?**
4. **How can media organizations measure the success of their diversity and inclusion efforts, and what metrics should be prioritized?**
5. **What role do leadership and organizational culture play in fostering an inclusive newsroom, and how can leaders be held accountable?**

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 9: Dealing with 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 & Resources

"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." Based on a 2015 *Online News Association* conference, 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: International Journalists' Network*

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.**

"The column I won't write because of a troll with a gun" Theresa Vargas, *Washington Post*

Theresa Vargas describes an article about gender, power and motherhood that she has delayed writing because of current dynamics surrounding journalism, including threats from online trolls. Vargas also discusses difficult stories to cover and references the shooting at the *Capital Gazette*.

Discussion Questions

1. **Why are women and journalists of color targeted by online trolls? What role does gender play? Discuss.**
2. **What do you think about Vargas's decision to reply to most emails, even those that contain racist sentiments? Discuss. How would you react/respond to such emails?**

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, former editor-in-chief, *Time*

Module 10: 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

"How to Dox Yourself on the Internet" Kristen Kozinski, Neena Kapur, & Floyd Muir, *NYT Open*
This article from *NYT Open* examines doxxing (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. **What steps do "doxxers" take to expose their targets?**
3. **How can this free, publicly available program from *NYT Open* help journalists limit their online footprint and dissuade doxxers?**
4. **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 *from 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.**

"Tips for digital security" Qainat Khan, *The GroundTruth Project*
Digital security is a basic requirement for all journalists. Tom Lowenthal, staff technologist at the *Committee to Protect Journalists,* provides baseline precautions journalists can take to protect their devices and their communications.

Discussion Questions

1. **What precautions can help journalists protect their devices? Discuss.**
2. **What are some specific steps journalists can take to protect their communications?**

"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.

"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 11: Self-Care – Addressing 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" *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?**

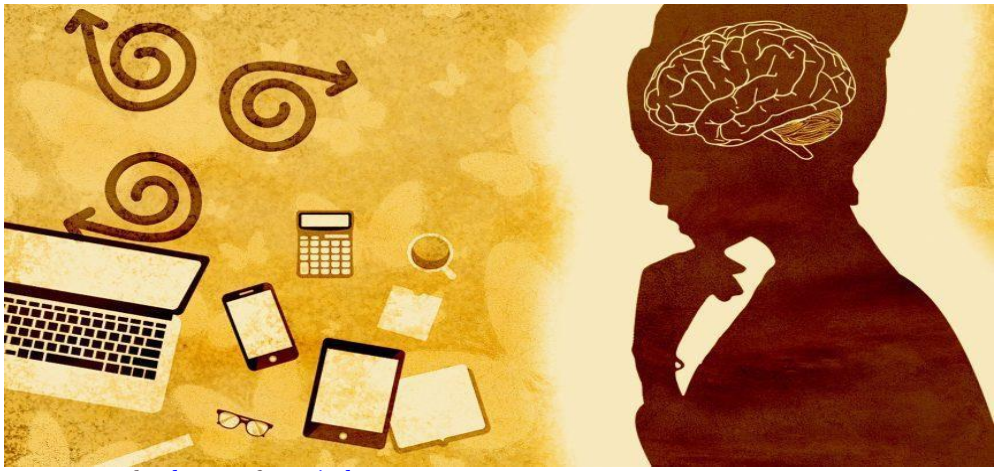

Image by chenspec from Pixabay

"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?**

"Covering Trauma: Impact on Journalists" River Smith, Elana Newman, Susan Drevo, Autumn Slaughter, *Global Center for Journalism & Trauma*
Provides an overview of current research on the occupational hazards for journalists covering traumatic events, the risk factors that aggravate those effects, and some suggestions for mitigating those factors.

Discussion Questions

1. **What is Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and how does it impact journalists?**
2. **What are the risk factors for PTSD, and what are some protective factors for PTSD?**

"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, and offers an extensive list of self-care resources for journalists.

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.**

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

Module 12: Foreign Conflicts – Staying Safe Abroad

The purpose of this module is to prepare students 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. This module, gleaned from the James W. Foley Journalist Safety Guide, examines realities on the ground, ways to prepare for conflict reporting, and steps for safely building a career as a foreign correspondent.

Learning Objectives

1. Students will be able to identify the preparation needed before reporting from a conflict zone.
2. Students will be able to explain what HEFAT training is and where HEFAT courses can be taken.
3. Students will be able to understand and explain "ground truth" as described by Charles Sennott.
4. Students will be able to articulate their own interest in covering conflict zones while also beginning to understand and explain their own risk threshold.

Readings & Resources

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 Hostile Environment and Emergency First Aid 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? What are the consequences of a 'black hole'?

"The Principles: We Must Embed a Culture of Safety in Our Profession" *ACOS Alliance*
Formed in 2015, A Culture of Safety Alliance (ACOS) encourages the news industry to protect journalists it hires, both staff and freelancers, and encourages journalists to learn best practices in protecting themselves while on assignment. The "Freelance Journalists Safety Principles" were launched in February 2015.

Discussion Questions

1. **What principles/practices should journalists follow to mitigate dangers? 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/executive director 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.**

"The Rules of Conflict Reporting are Changing" Janine di Giovanni, *Committee to Protect Journalists*

Examines the death of Marie Colvin, a 58-year-old Irish American reporter killed by a rocket blast in Syria. An experienced conflict journalist, Colvin's death served as a wakeup call to many conflict journalists. According to di Giovanni, Colvin's death signified a change in how conflicts are covered. Being experienced, prepared, and brave no longer was enough to protect conflict journalists.

Discussion Questions

1. **What changes have made conflict journalism increasingly more dangerous? Discuss.**
2. **One controversial step that di Giovanni "gingerly" suggested was to have a system of journalistic accreditation. What do students think about this type of system? What, if any, steps can journalists take to stay safe in light of the increasing dangers they face?**

Photo by Dan Shakal

Module 13: Wrongful Detention, Kidnapping, and Hostage Survival

The goal is to help students think about the risks involved when covering stories – domestically or abroad – in areas that may be unfamiliar and/or fraught with danger. Included are tips for addressing security risks as well as strategies and techniques if wrongfully detained, kidnapped, or held hostage. This may be a difficult topic to cover, but students and instructors should not shy away from thinking through these worse case scenarios. Included in this module is a five-part, firsthand scenario from Caitlan Coleman, who was abducted and held hostage for five years by the Haqqani Network in Afghanistan. Caitlan shares specific details about things she would have done differently, strategies that helped her and her family survive, and information about the reintegration process upon her rescue and return home.

Learning Objectives

1. Students will be able to explain what they should do if they are wrongfully detained by law enforcement officers.
2. Students will be able to analyze the enhanced risks that journalists covering conflict zones face.
3. Students will demonstrate a basic ability to think through steps to take in the unfortunate event that they are abducted.

Readings & Resources

"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). Ernesto Aroche, *Lado B*'s editor and founder, offers a pre-reporting security strategy. 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 if needed. Other tips include scouting locations beforehand, keeping to a schedule, and maintaining 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?**

"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 can be taken before covering events that can turn violent?**
2. **How can journalists mitigate risk while on the scene?**

"10 Years After IS Kidnapping, Journalist Returns to Raqqa" Graham Keeley, *VOA*
Spanish journalist, Marc Marginedas, returned to Raqqa ten years after being abducted and held hostage by Islamic State militants.

Discussion Questions

1. **How does Marc Marginedas' decision to return to Raqqa challenge common perceptions of trauma and recovery among journalists?**
2. **What ethical considerations arise when journalists document their own experiences of captivity and survival?**
3. **In what ways does the documentary "Return to Raqqa" contribute to the broader understanding of the Islamic State's impact on individuals and communities?**
4. **What role does forgiveness play in the healing process for both victims and perpetrators, as suggested by Marginedas' reflections?**
5. **How can Marginedas' experience inform current discussions on the safety and protection of journalists in conflict zones?**

"German journalist who gave birth as hostage in Syria speaks of ordeal" Philip Oltermann, *The Guardian*
Janina Findeisen discusses her survival after being abducted in Syria while filming a documentary. Findeisen, seven months pregnant at the time, said the risks did not concern her. This was her last project before the baby came. Findeisen recounts how she and her driver were ambushed and kidnapped when crossing the Turkish border. As time passed, Findeisen maintained hope she would be home to deliver her baby. Eventually, her kidnappers blackmailed a doctor to deliver her child. After giving birth, she received better treatment, including receiving chocolates, juice, a teddy bear, and the best diapers in Syria. Findeisen was freed by another group of Islamists in September 2016.

Discussion Questions

1. **What strategies and techniques for survival did Findeisen employ while in captivity? Was escaping using scavenged tools a real possibility or an effort to feel in control?**
2. **What type of impact would the captors' early threat of beheading followed by the showering of gifts after Findeisen gave birth have?**

"After escaping captivity, American detainees come home to credit penalties" Ali Rogin, *PBS*
This examines, among other things, the credit penalties *Washington Post* reporter Jason Rezaian has dealt with since returning from captivity in Iran. Rezaian needed over two year to fix his downgraded credit report and to find someone at the IRS to help expunge records from when he was held hostage. Reports show this is common when people return home after being detained or held hostage. Although the IRS tries to track individuals held overseas, the US government classifies hostages and detainees differently. Rachel Briggs, founder of Hostage US, says, "Whether it's Evin Prison in Tehran or a boat off the coast of Somalia, the experiences of recovery are pretty much identical." Rezaian does not blame anyone in particular, but notes survivors need to be given the best chance at surviving when they return home.

Discussion Question

1. **What unforeseen obstacles do former hostages face when home from captivity? Discuss.**

The Experience of Caitlan Coleman

Caitlan Coleman and her former husband were abducted while backpacking in Afghanistan in 2012. At the time of her abduction, Caitlan was pregnant. During the next five years while being held by the Haqqani network, the Colemans had three children. The family was routinely moved to various locations in Afghanistan and Pakistan until October 2017 when they were rescued by Pakistani forces in Kurram Agency, Pakistan. In the five-part scenario below, Caitlan reflects on her experience. Includes discussion questions and suggested responses.

Scenario, In Five Parts: Caitlan Coleman, Afghanistan
Part 1: How to Avoid Being Taken Hostage (A Reflection)

When my former spouse and I crossed into Afghanistan, we found ourselves, admittedly, in way over our heads. Though we had done a fair amount of backpacking, including in other Central Asian countries for the previous few months, this was an entirely different world. I didn't speak any local languages, was unfamiliar with local customs, and to make things worse, I stuck out, even more so than the backpacker or NGO worker I occasionally passed on the streets. This was because I was wearing traditional Muslim clothing, but from the wrong Muslim culture. In Afghanistan, women wear either a hijab (hair covering) or a full body covering called a burqa. What I had was something called a jilbab, popular in the Gulf states, also a full body covering, but largely unknown amongst the women of Afghanistan. I was warned by a couple of the locals who offered shelter, but we didn't listen.

The day of my hostage taking, my former spouse negotiated a cab taking us out of the US controlled North Afghanistan, into Ghazni province, of Taliban controlled South Afghanistan. We were the only occupants of the cab, which was odd as anyone offering cab rides wants to stuff their car or van with as many paying passengers as possible. The cab ride was entirely uneventful through Kabul province, and even the US troops that manned the checkpoint between Kabul and Ghazni didn't question us or warn of any potential hazards.

How I was captured is a testament of what not to do more than anything else. Here are some things I should have done (or considered) that could have made a significant difference:

Preparation and Prior Research Becoming familiar with the geopolitical and local situation in Afghanistan, as well as the culture. I could have avoided wearing the wrong style of clothing, and kept a lower profile. Have a plan of what types of situations are safe.

Situational Awareness At times, we did feel uncomfortable about situations. There's no guidebook that covers all the warning signs; however, some questions you can mentally be asking yourself can help:

- Is this situation the norm for the culture, environment and location?
- Is there something about the situation that doesn't seem rational or make sense?
- Is somebody offering me something that seems too good to be true? If so, what is their motive?
- What is the demeanor of those around me? Are people taking a lot of interest in me, or going about their business? Do the people I am interacting with seem nervous? Or overly generous?

Be Flexible Enough to Quickly Change Plans Practice being able to walk away and adjust your plans when alarm bells go off. If there is an intent to abduct you, the abductors also have a plan, and if you go off-script, they must as well. Many walk away instead.

Don't Assume You'll Be Warned of Dangerous Situations Take into account warning that an area is dangerous, but don't assume everything is fine if you aren't warned. US soldiers at a checkpoint between Kabul and Ghazni province never questioned our trip into Taliban territory or warned us to not proceed. Within an hour of leaving the US checkpoint, we were abducted at gunpoint.

Have a Contingency Plan Always have a safety plan in place, or an exit strategy. Be able to tailor your safety plan to the current situation.

Discussion Questions for Part 1

1. **What would Coleman do differently? Does anything stand out?**
2. **Caitlan identifies five things she felt could have helped. What are they? List and discuss.**

Part 2*:* Initial Captivity (The First Days)

A lone figure on the side of the road, holding an assault rifle, surrounded by vast, open landscape punctuated with rock formations. When I spotted him, I filed him away as part of the landscape. Seconds later, I heard the resounding crash of his AK-47 on the hood of the taxicab we were riding in.

I started to go into shock, unwilling to grapple with this reality. The taxicab driver pulled off the road and into a gulch where another man was waiting there for us. The two men made the taxi driver climb into the trunk, and they climbed into the front, driving the taxi at breakneck speed. The next few hours felt like days and months and years of life going by. I barely moved, frozen to my seat. Mentally, I remained calm. I didn't feel the panic and fear that I would have expected (that came later, and many times). I instinctively knew that to survive, I could not panic, or give way to my emotions.

What I could not grapple with in those first hours was the enormity of what was happening. This wasn't a little mishap, an adventure gone awry that we could laugh about the next morning. Narrowing my mind was a coping skill to manage the panic, but it would have benefited me to have more presence of mind. Things to remember if captured:

- **Hostage takers are often nervous, suspicious, terrified, and having second thoughts**. Do not make them more nervous. This is not a moment for heroics.
- **Observe what you can and file it away in your mind**. If they blindfold you, don't try to fight it. If they restrain you, don't try to break free. If spoken to, cooperate without saying too much.
- **Use coping strategies**. Pray, use grounding techniques, and/or breathing exercises. Have a mentally rehearsed reaction strategy for a crisis situation.
- **Keep hydrated and eat when food or drink is available**. There's no guarantee there will be a regular schedule. During captivity, there was an ever-shifting dynamic of feast or famine.
- **Something to hold onto:** You are stronger than you know.

Discussion Question(s) for Part 2

1. **Caitlan describes her initial reaction when first abducted. What stood out? She also provides strategies to use right from the beginning of captivity. What are they, and why are they important? Would can be added, if anything, to this list?**

Part 3: Managing for the Long Haul

The first four to five days after being taken hostage, we were transported across Afghanistan, crossing the border into a region of Pakistan known as Wakiristan. This journey was difficult, frightening, and full of uncertainty. Then, I was deposited without ceremony in a locked room inside what appeared to be a repurposed abandonment. There was no answer about 'what comes next.'

Over the days, months, and years to come, I learned to combat the deprivation of stimulation by finding ways to keep busy and stimulated, and to modify my perspective to make the intolerable became tolerable. Boredom became a surprisingly frequent challenge.

There was no "normal" the next five years. At times, our captors were kind, and quick to ensure I had everything I needed. Sometimes it was overwhelming just how much of their supplies were shared with us. Once I was even gifted costume jewelry, and a couple of times a bottle of perfume. To counter that, sometimes we went months where the most basic necessities – medicine, toilet paper, food – were hard or impossible to get. We would receive a pen and a notebook, or a flashlight, then someone would decide that was a bad idea and confiscate them. Stockpiling became essential to survival.

As the months turned to years, thinking about freedom became an impediment. Too often, we were told we were weeks, or in one case, just one or two days away from going home. At first, I believed the captors and when the crushing disappointment and letdown came, it was overwhelming. To overcome the boredom and lack of stimulation, I developed mind games and fantasies, developed and stuck to a routine, kept up with physical exercise, and mentally strategized requests for materials to entertain or stimulate (I call this "captor politics").

Equally important, I resolved to never let a "no" or a bad turn of events cause discouragement, and I continually planned and worked to improve my situation. This required that I avoid dwelling on the past or the future. This allowed me to prepare for anything and maintain hope, even if the scale of that hope was constantly changing. I accepted that this was not just captivity, this was my life.

Discussion Questions for Part 3

1. **Caitlan addresses the boredom that comes with captivity. What did Caitlan do to help pass the time and deal with this boredom?**
2. **Caitlan concludes Part 3: "I accepted that this was not just captivity, *this was my life*." What was the importance of looking at her captivity from this perspective?**

Part 4: Release/Rescue

Two days before our release, the guards told us we were going to be transferred. This was so common that I had developed a routine for "transfer days." We were taken to a location about an hour away, and I waited patiently for some hint of whether this was a short- or long-term location. The second night, they brought us cooking supplies, which suggested it was long-term.

The following morning, a frantic young guard barged in shouting, "Transfer! Transfer!" I rolled my eyes and began preparing for another transfer. Shortly after, two strangers arrived and we were drugged with ketamine, which had happened only once before. Despite the ketamine, I was aware of the sleek, shiny new black SUV we were in the trunk of. Before long, I was fully awake. Previously, the captors drove old Toyota Corollas and pickup trucks. In this new SUV, everything seemed a little bit off.

On the drive, I spotted a Shell gas station. Since leaving Kabul five years ago, I had seen no modern

shops or amenities. Now we were on a highway, passing Shell stations. But driving towards what? We were heading to Kohat, a small Pakistani city. Our SUV was stopped at a checkpoint and when the driver stepped out, I heard an argument. Another captor jumped into the driver's seat and we sped off at top speed. We were now in the middle of a high-speed car chase, and I could hear gunfire around us. After our captor tried escaping with several sharp turns, the tires were shot out and we came to a halt. We remained in the trunk as the captors argued. Ultimately, the captors fled.

Several minutes of uncertainty followed, as hazy figures circled our vehicle. Who were they? After seeing a police cap, we decided our best course of action was to start shouting. Fortunately, the men identified themselves in broken English as Pakistani ISI officers, and told us they were there to help us. We were loaded into their SUVs and taken to a police station. We were finally free.

Discussion Question for Part 4

1. **At this point, Caitlan's reflection suggests that captivity had become a series of routines, even when moved from one location to another. What does this suggest about the things that can be controlled when held hostage?**

Part 5: Returning Home

The part of being held hostage that is not often discussed is the challenge of returning and reintegrating into your former life, after captivity. I was a hostage for five years, and the experience altered the course of my life. It also altered my connection to the world I left behind irreversibly.

Early on, government officials explained reintegration would not be simple. For five years, I waited and prayed to be reunited with family and friends, and they had waited just as long to be reunited with me. But our expectations for that moment existed in a vacuum, isolated from each other. I felt like a time traveler, walking into my world five years in the future. Over those five years, I experienced things unimaginable to those back home, who still held an image of me from five years before.

Another challenge involved navigating the world of responsibilities that being free entails. Regaining control of my life has been wonderful, but there are details that are less wonderful. Problems can arise with the IRS, banks, and credit card companies. Medical and mental health issues must be addressed. Employment can be hard to find and there may be a dependence on family. These new demands can prove overwhelming and social interactions can lead to a feeling of overstimulation. Simple things can no longer be taken for granted.

Things to keep in mind about the return and reintegration process:

- Avoid holding on to expectations about what reconnecting with family will look like.
- Ask for help to figure out the logistics of your needs upon returning home.
- Expect to take things slowly when you return.
- Make your needs known -- Communication is key to taking back control of one's life.
- Do not ignore the need to process trauma. Finding a professional to guide the process is essential.

Discussion Question for Part 5

1. **Caitlin discusses difficulties reintegrating into society, including things she did not initially consider. What difficulties does Coleman address?**
2. **What are some important things to consider when reintegrating into society after being held in captivity? List and discuss.**

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 to protect themselves and 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

"Covering a Natural Disaster - a time for credible and useful journalism" *Al Jazeera Media Institute*

This report is essential because it highlights the ethical challenges journalists face during natural disasters, particularly in the context of the 2023 earthquakes in Turkey and Syria. By promoting responsible and compassionate reporting, it provides guidance for media professionals navigating the complexities of disaster coverage. Emphasizing factual accuracy and the well-being of victims, the report ensures that journalism upholds its integrity while serving the public interest during times of crisis.

Discussion Questions

1. **How can journalists balance the need for compelling storytelling with the ethical obligation to protect the dignity of disaster survivors?**
2. **What challenges do journalists face in verifying information during the chaos of a natural disaster, and how can they overcome them?**
3. **In what ways can journalists' emotional responses to disaster coverage influence their reporting, and how should they manage these emotions?**
4. **How can journalists ensure cultural sensitivity when reporting on disasters in diverse regions, such as the Middle East?**
5. **What are the ethical considerations for journalists when shifting from immediate disaster reporting to long-term recovery and rebuilding stories?**

"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 to provide reports. "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." Discuss where and when to draw the line when it comes to covering extreme weather.

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 covering extreme weather?**

"Climate Journalism in Iraq, Morocco, and Yemen in an Era of Misinformation" Earth *Journalism Network*
An in-depth list of resources to track flooding, rain, storms, hurricanes, volcanoes, droughts, etc. This website has links to over 200 valuable weather-related resources.

Discussion Questions

1. **What are some useful resources that students should consider if they are assigned to cover an extreme weather event?**
2. **What are some things that a newsroom manager should consider before sending members of the team out to cover a weather-related event?**

James Wright Foley
1973-2014

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 your 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?