

Ryerson University School of Journalism

--- JRN 850: Undergraduate Internship ---

F2019 Course outline

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JRN 850 Calendar description:

Internships in journalism and related industries take many forms and occur in many environments. Internships are available in familiar daily newsrooms such as the CBC, CTV, and The Globe and Mail, as well as in organizations including The Huffington Post, Discovery Channel, Today's Parent, Opera Canada, TSN, Daily Xtra and many more, both in Canada and abroad. We also support students wishing to intern in digital marketing, content creation, publishing, and other industries that draw on the skills and knowledge gained in the program.

Departmental consent is required.

Nothing ever becomes real until it is experienced.

-- John Keats (1795-1821)

Focus and scope:

Students in this course will complete placements in journalism or a related industry.

As a senior journalism student, you have studied the tools of the craft at an advanced level. Now you have the opportunity to show what you can do: to understand what's expected of you, and observe what happens in a professional work place.

Internships are completed in one of two ways: either six weeks full time, or 12 weeks part time. This depends on other course work you may require for degree completion.

Internship placements should reflect your interests and experience. Most are arranged before the semester begins and are undertaken in fall, winter or summer.

The School of Journalism must approve all internships.

The minimum total hours required: 210. You may do up to 240 hours if you wish, but only if your other academic responsibilities permit such a commitment. You are not to provide any internship employer more than 240 hours of your labour *unless you are being paid*.

The course is Pass/Fail.

You must register your profile and the details of your internships on the "FCAD Internship Tracker" portal known as FIT.

The link to FIT sometimes changes without notice, but at the time of the preparation of this course outline (late August 2019), the link is:

<https://prod.apps.ccs.ryerson.ca/fcadi/journalism/#/>

You will download, sign (and procure supervisor signature where indicated), and then upload all required legal documents to FIT. This should be done either in advance of your internship or by the end of your first day on placement. Until the documents are uploaded onto FIT, **any hours spent on placement may not be counted** for credit.

More details about FIT appear later in this course outline.

There is no Reading Week in JRN850. Students occasionally try to negotiate a specific arrangement with their internship employer, but that is the responsibility of the individual student. Experience shows such a request is not likely to be accommodated by the employer.

Any requirements for accessibility, as in the case of physical disability for e.g., are to be negotiated between the student and the employer.

The same applies to requirements around religious or spiritual observation.

If in your regular, on-campus coursework you require academic accommodation, you will be familiar with the necessary processes and protocols. In the case of your *off-campus* internship, you are welcome to seek the assistance of Ryerson Academic Accommodation and Support (AAS) in the six months leading up to your placement start date. However, please be aware that internships cannot realistically be considered strictly “academic” in the way that all your other courses can be. Employers are not legally bound by the same regulations and protocols that are in place for on-campus coursework.

Remember, the internship course JRN 850 is not a mandatory course, it is strictly optional. In no way is it a requirement of your degree completion. As such, if any of these inherent limitations regarding accessibility, religious or spiritual observance, and/or academic accommodation impede your ability to participate fully in an internship placement, then please opt instead for on-campus coursework to fulfil the requirements in the final year of your BJourn degree.

Additionally ...

Remember, for as long as your internship lasts, **it is your job**. If you can't get to work because you are sick, or you have a genuine personal emergency, you must tell your workplace supervisor. Please inform me too.

Unfortunately under Ontario law, internships may be unpaid, **as long as they are for academic credit**. Where there is some kind of payment it may not necessarily be in the form of a paycheque (although it's great on those rare occasions when it is!) but may be instead a stipend, such as TTC fare, or a small lump-sum payment at the end.

If you have any concerns about your assigned workplace, the way you are being treated, or the work you're being asked to do, please raise those concerns immediately with me. You are entitled to work in an environment characterised by mutual respect.

As well, Ontario law protects you from unsafe work and gives you three important rights:

1. You have the **right to know** about any hazards at your job and how you can protect yourself;
2. You have the **right to participate** in making sure your job and your workplace are safe and healthy;
3. You have the **right to refuse unsafe work**. No one – not your boss, not your supervisor, not your co-workers – can force you to do a job that is unsafe.

In the unlikely case of any injury to you, you are covered either by the provincial insurance scheme that covers interns working toward academic credit (known as WSIB), or privately through Ryerson.

You will be required to complete provincially-mandated “work safety training”, delivered through a series of online modules. These modules may be accessed on D2L or FIT (see next section on FIT).

If you are leaving Canada to do an overseas placement, you face additional requirements in terms of safety training and other well-being measures. These are mandatory. Details on the Ryerson International website:

<https://www.ryerson.ca/ri/>

(click “Global Learning”, then “Internships and Placements” as well as “Risk Management Steps”.)

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FCAD Internship Tracker (FIT):

Schools in FCAD that offer internships (which is every school except Performance) use the FIT portal to manage administration and assessment functions. FIT keeps track of the documents (insurance, letter of agreement between employer and student, etc.) that you are legally required to be aware of and attend to. Some are simply FYI; others need your signature; still others require the signature of your placement employer. And one of them (“Letter of Agreement”) must be signed by both of you, ideally at the same sitting.

On the first day of your placement (or even before that, if possible), you will download these documents, procure the necessary signatures, and then upload the documents back onto FIT. As well, toward the end of your placement, FIT will prompt your employer to assess your work. FIT will furnish the form. The employer will fill out the form and upload it. FIT will alert you when you can see it.

Beyond those admin details and legalities, you will also interact with FIT in a few other ways as well:

- i) You’ll be auto-prompted by FIT to check in with me in the early days of your placement. The auto-prompt comes in the form of an email that sounds as though it is coming directly from me, or what I would sound like if I were a robot. The email asks you in general terms if everything is ok, is the work meaningful, and are people helpful and kind. I read all of your responses, but may only respond to those that raise any concern with me;

- ii) there will be a number of “safety check-ins”. That number is generally THREE, but there may be more, depending on the length of your internship. These check-ins require only a minute or two of your time, to tick some boxes and thus communicate that you are feeling safe in your internship environment. Conversely, if you have any concerns or wish to report anything that is making you feel *uncomfortable* or *unsafe*, this is where you will be required to do so.

****And of course at all times you are to communicate directly with me, jagg, in the event that you are feeling uncomfortable or unsafe in your internship****

We are committed to your safety and well-being, but we can't help you if we're not made aware. As such, it is your responsibility to inform us if you are feeling uncomfortable or unsafe.

- iii) In the final days of your placement, you will be prompted by FIT to submit a “Student Reflection”. Unlike the other assignments described later in this outline, **this is submitted through the FIT portal**, and not on D2L. Please do it within a few days of receiving the first prompt, otherwise FIT will continue to send you prompts. And just like all the other elements of the Assessment/Assignment section (see further down), this Reflection is a mandatory aspect of the course, and without having completed it you won't pass.

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Learning outcomes

For the internship to be completed successfully, you will have:

- demonstrated initiative in researching and approaching potential internships;
- demonstrated interviewing skills in securing an internship;
- demonstrated negotiating skills in agreeing mutually acceptable terms with the employer;
- demonstrated clear communication skills with workplace peers, the workplace supervisor, and the Ryerson internship coordinator;
- solved workplace issues encountered during the internship, including managing conflict should it arise;
- illustrated early-career professional competence by contributing meaningfully to workplace production or output;
- abided by professional and ethical guidelines, and fulfilled legal requirements;
- critiqued the internship experience through self-reflection (on FIT) as well as through the completion of the additional required assignments as described in the course outline (see section further down: “Assessment and Assignments”).

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Plagiarism

If an accusation of plagiarism is levelled against you during your internship, it will be the responsibility of the internship employer to investigate, and to apply **due process** to that investigation. If the employer deems that plagiarism has occurred, they may recommend failure, although the final decision on course failure rests with me and not the employer. However the employer is fully within their rights to insist you leave the internship in the case of a proven charge of plagiarism.

As a senior student, you already know plagiarism is a serious offence. As a reminder of how seriously the university takes plagiarism, see the newly updated Senate Policy 60:

<https://www.ryerson.ca/content/dam/senate/policies/pol60-effective-Fall2019.pdf>

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Assessment and Assignments

Please note that because this course is Pass/Fail, the employer assessment and the required student assignments are not weighted *per se*; they must **all** be completed in order to pass the course.

NB: In your other course outlines, i.e., those that apply to your regular, on-campus academic courses, there is reference to Senate Policy 133, which mandates that 20% of grades and/or assignments should be returned prior to the drop date of the particular semester (e.g., in the fall semester that is around mid-November). Please note that due to the nature of the internship course, this policy does not apply.

1. Workplace assessment (supervisor to complete):

Toward the end of your internship, your workplace supervisor will receive, via FIT, an assessment form. They are to complete the assessment within a week of the final day of your internship. Please note: you must have ensured early in your placement that the **supervisor's contact information has been entered correctly on FIT**. That's because the person you have named, and whose contact information you have supplied, is the one who will receive the auto-prompt to complete the assessment. It gets very awkward if the information is wrong. Plus it won't reflect well on you at the very moment your supervisor is about to write your assessment.

You will receive an auto-prompt from FIT when you are able to view the supervisor's assessment of your work.

Here's a link to a .pdf version of the questions the employer will answer. (Your supervisor will fill in the answers on a google form, so what you're seeing here isn't

what your employer will see; they'll see boxes to tick and that sort of thing. I've just rendered it into a more legible text-based form. The content is of course identical.)

<https://tinyurl.com/y288b38t>

2. **Student reflection (to be submitted on FIT; due within a few days of the end of your placement. FIT will continue to send you prompts until you complete the reflection. For my purposes, it is due 10 December 2019.)**

As described above in the section on FIT, but here again, ICYMI:

*In the final days of your placement, you will be prompted by FIT to submit a "Student Reflection". Unlike the other assignments described later in this outline, **this is submitted through the FIT portal**, and not on D2L. Please do it within a few days of receiving the first prompt, otherwise FIT will continue to send you prompts. And just like all the other elements of the Assessment/Assignment section ... this Reflection is a mandatory aspect of the course, and without having completed it you won't pass.*

3. **Post-placement assignments (submit on D2L; due 10 December 2019)**

Choose ONE of the following:

- i) *Create from your internship experience a section to add to the online portfolio you are building for future prospective employers. Think of it as a bit of personal branding for your professional website (i.e., the one you allow prospective employers to link to, or will in future). Use your online skills and knowledge, plus some creativity in online production, and get some extra bang out of your internship buck. Meaning: make it into something that might help you get a job later on.*

**** OR ****

- ii) *Create an infographic that reflects the work you did during your placement.*

**** AND FINALLY****

4. **Short review of your placement (submit on D2L; due 10 Dec 2019):**

This assignment fulfils two functions of equal importance:

- i) *Quality control. If your placement fell short of your expectations, I want to know how and why. Placement employers have certain obligations to their student interns, and I*

need to know these obligations are met. Conversely, perhaps you had a fantastic placement in which you learned tons of stuff and made friends and contacts! I want to know that too.

ii) It's also a way for you to pay it forward: we'll make these reviews available (anonymously) on the internship website. Students coming after you will appreciate your frank and honest comments as they scope out potential placements for themselves.

- *Word count: not more than 100.*

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email accounts:

“Your Ryerson e-mail account is the only means by which you will receive university communications.”

That's the policy, period. If you miss emails from me or from the university, that's 100% on you.

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In general

I am looking for **professionalism** and evidence that you have learned from the experience, no matter how it went. You will probably have a great experience, **but even if you don't**, that won't necessarily have a negative impact on the pass/fail outcome. It will come down to how you have comported yourself in the workplace, and the maturity and professionalism you brought to bear in dealing with any conflict or difficulties that may have arisen. And of course that you have completed all the assignments as outlined above.

It is possible to fail an internship. Repeated or sustained “unprofessional behaviour” would be the way to do that. What constitutes such behaviour would be determined by the placement employer in consultation with me.

For the record, in the four years that I have overseen approximately 360 undergraduate internships, there has been only one failure. Our students – you people – are pretty much amazing, and employers know that.