**JCO 4105 PUBLIC AFFAIRS REPORTING**

**COURSE NAME: PUBLIC AFFAIRS REPORTING COURSE CODE: JCO 4105**

**CREDIT UNITS: 4**

**CONTACT HOURS: 60**

**TYPE OF COURSE: CORE**

**Course Description:**

Good journalism is more than just stringing together facts and sentences to make a story. It is fundamentally about defining, understanding and examining the key issues that get into the news. Most importantly, it is also about asking the right questions and holding those responsible accountable through accurate, insightful and analytical reporting. This course enables students appreciate key public issues and to develop journalistic strategies to investigate, report and package them appropriately for inclusion on the media agenda. It equips students with techniques and competencies to identify, analyze, interpret, and report constructively and comprehensively about the significant public issues of the day. Emphasis is on coverage of political, cultural, social, and economic issues that have a measurable impact on public life and policy. The course engages

students in deconstructing and making sense of such concepts as ‘public affairs,’

the ‘public,’ ‘public sphere’, ‘public space’, ‘public interest’, ‘public opinion,’ and

‘public communication’. The course is practical and students are required to produce major reporting projects on selected public affairs issues in the media form, format, and platform of their preference.

**Course Objectives:**

1. To introduce students to key concepts in the analysis of public affairs.

2. To equip students with knowledge of how public issues get onto the media agenda and into the news.

3. To prepare students to ask the right questions about public life.

4. To prepare students to hold those in power accountable to the citizens through accurate, insightful and analytical reporting.

5. To apply various investigative and journalistic research tools and techniques to source for information.

**Course Outline:**

A. Defining public affairs

1. The concept of ‘public affairs’

2. Key concepts: public affairs; the public; public sphere; public space; public interest; public opinion; public communication

3. Understanding public policy and institutions

4. Why cover public affairs?

5. Theories of news: agenda setting; framing; priming

6. Influences on the news

B. Investigative, reporting and interpretive methods

1. Tools and techniques for collecting information.

2. Putting issues in context.

3. Understanding audiences: implications for news and current affairs.

C. Covering public affairs

1. Public services e.g. roads, sanitation

2. Public health

3. Politics e.g. legislation, elections, conflict resolution

4. Human rights, justice, law and order

5. Economics, business, and finance

6. Environment, natural resources, and extractive industries

7. Social issues e.g. education, housing, urbanization

8. Science and technology

9. Sports, culture, and the arts

10. Corruption and public accountability

11. Agriculture and rural livelihoods

D. Covering local government

1. Decentralization policy and law

2. Local government systems and structures

3. Local policy and politics

4. Public expenditure and accountability

5. Telling local stories for national audiences

**Learning Outcomes:**

By the end of the course, the student will:

1. Understand how to monitor the centers of power.

2. Be able to identify critical public affairs.

3. Understand how government and public institutions work.

4. Be able to research, analyze, and report on public affairs informatively and comprehensively.

**Methods of Teaching/Delivery:**

• Interactive lectures

• Brainstorming

• Case studies

• Reporting projects

• Story reviews (print, broadcast, online)

• Group work

**Methods of Assessment:**

• Progressive assessment 100%

**Readings/Reference Materials/Learning Resources:**

1. Killenberg, G.M. (2007). Public Affairs Reporting Now: News of, by and for the People.

2. Kovach, B. & Rosenstiel, T. (2007). The Elements of Journalism: What

Newspeople Should Know and the Public Should Expect.

3. Merritt, D. & McCombs, M.E. (2003). The Two W’s of Journalism: The

Why and What of Public Affairs Reporting.

4. Stovall, J.G. (2009). Writing for the Mass Media, 7th ed.

5. Strunk, W. & White, E.B. (2000). The Elements of Style, 4th ed.