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Investigative Journalism Summer School
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Investigative Journalism Summer Workshop, Columbia University

What

Investigative Journalism Workshop in Columbia University in New York. Three weeks course in July 2012. There were 21 staff writers and editors from 10 countries, from 6 continents.

Lectures

There were approximately 60 lecturers – both from school and outside speakers. We covered almost everything from getting ideas and finding stories to visualization: finding sources, data journalism, IT and mobile security, social media, law issues... We also discussed about current issues such as presidential elections and campaign financing in USA and race and ethnicity in journalism. Only area we didn't cover was writing – which was smart because most of us don't work in English.

The highlights

The best lecture was given by a private detective – and ex-journalist – who taught us how to persuade a stranger for your source, how to interview people and how to make people to leak the information you need. Senior Investigative Projects Editor Blake Morrison from Thomson Reuters and two investigative journalists David Barstow and Andrew Lehren from The New York Times were also great and inspiring.

It was also useful to get known colleagues from all over the world. That network is very useful.

What to improve

Sometimes teaching was a bit old-fashioned. A lot of basic lectures: a lecturer spoke and we listened to. I would like to have had more practical training and hands on exercises, especially on databases and information search.

To whom

On the whole the course was great! I would recommend Columbia University Investigative Summer Workshop to any political, business or crime journalist. Also the course would be very useful for foreign correspondents or sport journalists!