

Final Report on the Summer Investigative Reporting Course at Columbia University

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I applied for a scholarship to the Summer Investigative Reporting Course without having particularly extensive experience in investigative reporting.

It turned out to be exactly the right choice. In July 2026, on my way to New York, I read the course's prep materials on the plane. I wrote down numerous ideas: how could this or that approach be applied in Finland?

When the course began, we had the opportunity to meet many of the journalists whose work we had read in the preparatory materials. They discussed their reporting projects in detail, and we were free to ask as many questions as we liked. This was one of the most inspiring elements of the course.

The lecturers came from organizations such as ProPublica, *The New York Times*, and *The New Yorker*. In addition to journalists, speakers included a librarian, a database specialist, and a cybersecurity expert, among others.

The range of topics was extensive, covering everything from data analysis and interpreting corporate financial statements to narrative writing and geolocation techniques.

Alongside successful reporting projects, we were also presented with several examples of failures, including cases in which incorrect information had been published or journalists' digital security was compromised. These examples of mistakes were highly educational.

Among the participants were journalists with varying levels of experience in investigative reporting. At times, I wondered how useful the course was for those who already had substantial investigative journalism experience. Personally, I believe the course is best suited to participants who have a strong background in journalism but relatively little experience with investigations.

In addition to the course content itself, the professional networks we built became important. We met colleagues from around the world and formed valuable new connections. The lecturers also encouraged us to get in touch later if we ever wanted advice or guidance.

The course included several discussions of participants' story ideas, but these ideas were not worked forward during the course. In my opinion, it might have been more useful to spend some of that time on practical exercises. These exercises could have been tied to participants'

own reporting projects, allowing people to use whichever tools were most relevant to their work. Instead, the course introduced an endless list of different tools, but there was not enough time to test most of them in depth. Of course, participants can explore the tools independently afterward, but short workshops led by knowledgeable experts could have been valuable. A few lecturers did leave time for hands-on exercises, and those sessions were very useful.

The course provides excellent tools for investigative reporting. However, participants must continue to work actively afterward to truly master the skills and learn how to apply the tools within their own national context. The course is valuable both for aspiring investigative journalists and for all journalists interested in deepening their research and fact-checking skills. I believe the importance of these skills will only continue to grow in the future.