Course Objectives
Evidence and Inference is one of the core components of the Master of Arts in journalism. It includes guest appearances by members of the Columbia community and others, including Melissa Harris, Tory Higgins, Kenneth Prewitt, Sudhir Venkatesh, Mary Marshall Clark, and Jessica Ancker.

Equipment
Several of the assignments require digital cameras or recorders, so that you can upload your material on the site. You should all have signed an Equipment Use Agreement form during your introduction that gives you access to the school's extensive collection of equipment (on a first-come, first-serve basis). The equipment room is on the fifth floor, and you can take things out for 24 hours.
Session 1  
Tuesday - September 02, 2008  
Topic:  
Course Introduction  
Class Plan:  
No reading.

Session 2  
Thursday - September 04, 2008  
Topic:  
The Assignments  
Class Plan:  
Guests: Mary Marshall Clark (Columbia), Melissa Harris (Aperture Magazine), Sudhir Venkatesh (Columbia). No readings this week.

Session 3  
Tuesday - September 09, 2008  
Topic:  
Journalism and Epistemology  
Required Readings:  

Session 4  
Thursday - September 11, 2008  
Topic:  
The Perils of Narrative (Evan Cornog)  
Required Readings:  
Session 5
Tuesday - September 16, 2008
Topic:
The Perils of Framing (Nicholas Lemann)
Required Readings:
# George W. Bush, "Address to a Joint Session of Congress and the American People" : (speech given on September 20, 2001)
# George Lakoff, "War on Terror, Rest in Peace" : (from the Rockridge Institute website)
Assignments Due:
# 1. Photo

Session 6
Thursday - September 18, 2008
Topic:
Visual Misperception (Melissa Harris)
Required Readings:
# Richard Whelan, "Robert Capa's Falling Soldier" : (from Aperture, Issue 166. Available here)

Session 7
Tuesday - September 23, 2008
Topic:
People as Scientists (Tory Higgins)
Required Readings:
# Katherine E. Finkelstein, "45 Arrested in a Protest Against Capitalism" : (from the New York Times, November 27, 1999)
Session 8
Thursday - September 25, 2008
Topic:
People as Faulty Computers (Tory Higgins)
Required Readings:
# Walter Kirn, "When All The Lines Disappear" : (from Time Magazine, Monday, April 13, 2004)

Session 9
Tuesday - September 30, 2008
Topic:
What Really Motivates People? (Tory Higgins)
Required Readings:
# Carolyn Kleiner, "Getting in gets harder" : (from the US News and World Report, May 22, 2005)

Session 10
Thursday - October 02, 2008
Topic:
The Search for Truth (Kenneth Prewitt)
Required Readings:
# Max Weber, "Science as a Vocation" : (a lecture given in German in 1918 at Munich University. Available here)
Session 11
Tuesday - October 07, 2008
Topic: Hypotheses (Kenneth Prewitt)
Required Readings:
# Karl Popper, "Science as Falsification" : (originally published in Conjectures and Refutations, 1963)
# Larry Rohter, "In the Amazon: Conservation or Colonialism?" : (from The New York Times, July 27, 2007.)
Recommended Readings:
# A System of Logic by John Stuart Mill :
# An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding by David Hume :

Session 12
Thursday - October 09, 2008
Topic: Study Design (Kenneth Prewitt)
Required Readings:
# Steve Suo, "Unnecessary Epidemic" : (from The Oregonian, Sunday, October 3, 2004. Available here)
# Angela Valdez, "Meth Madness" : (from Willamette Week, March 22, 2006. Available here)
# Stephen Jay Gould, "The Median Is Not the Message. :

Session 13
Tuesday - October 14, 2008
Topic: Causation and Correlation (Kenneth Prewitt)
Required Readings:
# Shankar Vedantam, "Male Scientist Writes of Life as Female Scientist" : (from The Washington Post, July 13, 2006)
# Marcella Bombardieri, "Neuroscientist, Once a Woman, Says He Saw Gender Bias Firsthand" : (from The Boston Globe, July 13, 2006)
# David Rohde and David E. Sanger, "Losing the Advantage: How a 'Good War' in Afghanistan Went Bad" : (from The New York Times, Aug 12, 2007)
Assignments Due:
# 2. Ethnography

**Session 14**
Thursday - October 16, 2008
Topic:
Expertise and Objectivity (Nicholas Lemann)
Required Readings:
# David Hollinger, "What Does it Mean to be 'Balanced' in Academia?" : (from the History News Network)
# Jacques Steinberg, "Fight in Philadelphia Over Schools Takeover" : (from The New York Times, Nov 15, 2001)
# Jacques Steinberg and Diana B. Henriques, "Complex Calculations on Academics" : (from The New York Times, July 16, 2002)

**Session 15**
Tuesday - October 21, 2008
Topic:
Participant Observation (Sudhir Venkatesh)
Required Readings:
# Interview with Adrian Nicole LeBlanc : (from The New New Journalism, edited by Robert S. Boynton, New York, Vintage Books, 2005)

**Session 16**
Thursday - October 23, 2008
Discussion Sessions/Assignments

**Session 17**
Tuesday - October 28, 2008
Topic:
Ethnographic Interviewing (Sudhir Venkatesh)
Required Readings:
# Chicago Interview Notes, Sudhir Venkatesh : (class handout)
Session 18
Thursday - October 30, 2008
Topic: Categories (Sudhir Venkatesh)
Required Readings:
# Adam Sternbergh, "Up With Grups" : (from New York Magazine, March 30, 2006)
Assignments Due:
# 3. Oral History

Session 19
Tuesday - November 04, 2008
Topic: The Evidence of Oral History Stories (Mary Marshall Clark)
Required Readings:
# Ronald Grele, "Oral History Interviewing: The Good Interview" : (manuscript from the Columbia Oral History Office. Available here)

Session 20
Thursday - November 06, 2008
Topic: Interpreting Historical Memory: From Anecdote to Analysis (Mary Marshall Clark)
Class Plan:
The class will discuss the readings on interpreting historical and public memory. For those few who may have completed their interviews, we will draw upon examples to discuss in class.
Assignments:
We will spend the last 15 minutes of the class in groups of four, each consisting of two interviewing teams to discuss interviews completed, strategies for presenting findings in the last class session.
Required Readings:
Session 21
Tuesday - November 11, 2008
Topic:
Interpretation & Presentation (Mary Marshall Clark)
Class Plan:
Each group of four will have 5 minutes to present on the two interviews that were produced. Professor Clark, and a colleague Amy Starecheski, will offer feedback on each group's work by listening and reflecting on all 22 interviews produced. The goal of this session is to explore common ground across disciplinary approaches to interviewing and historical documentation; as well as feedback on individual interviewing techniques.

Session 22
Thursday - November 13, 2008
Topic:
Study Types and Descriptive Statistics (Jessica Ancker)
Additional material:
U.S. Census household income data handout (www.census.gov).
Required Readings:
# Milt Fredenheim, "Merck and Vioxx: The company; A blow to efforts to close in on rivals" : (from the New York Times, Oct. 1, 2004)

Session 23
Tuesday - November 18, 2008
Topic:
Confidence Intervals and Margin of Error (Jessica Ancker)
Additional Material:
Hurricane Rita gif (from www.weather.com) as example of confidence interval/margin of error.
Required Readings:

Session 24
Thursday - November 20, 2008
Topic: Archival Work (Jean Ashton)

This class will be held at the New York Historical Society, 170 Central Park West.

There are no readings assigned for this class.
Session 25
Tuesday - November 25, 2008
Topic:
Literature Reviews and Conflicting Sources (Nicholas Lemann and Evan Cornog)
Class Plan:

The readings are from "Mississippi in 1875. Report of the Select committee to inquire into the Mississippi election of 1875."

The document is available online through the Columbia Library System. Go to the Library website, go to CLIO (the catalog), and do a title search for "Mississippi in 1875." This will pull up an online version, which resides at the University of Michigan, of a very long government report. The readings are both in Volume 2--pages 1021-1045 (Testimony of J.W. Lee) and pages 1050-1086 (Testimony of Reuben Davis).

Alternatively, use the word documents below. They are created from old archival material, so the format is not particularly user-friendly.

Cristina Ergunay, the Journalism School Librarian, will join us for this session.

Files:
# Testimony of J.W. Lee
# Testimony of Reuben Davis

Session 26
Tuesday - December 02, 2008
Topic:
Milwaukee Case Study (Nicholas Lemann and Evan Cornog)
Class Plan:
(readings to come)
Assignments Due:
Archive/scholarly assignment due.
Assignments Due:
# 4. Archive/scholarly

Session 27
Thursday - December 04, 2008
Topic:
On Maps and Images (Jean Ashton)
Class Plan:
There are no readings assigned for this class.
Session 28
Tuesday - December 09, 2008
Topic: Basic Statistical Testing (Jessica Ancker)
Required Readings:
# Jessica S. Ancker, "Types of Medical and Epidemiological Research Studies" : (from Jessica S. Ancker, "Statistics for Writers", unpublished manuscript. Available here)
# Sir Austin Bradford Hill, "The Environment and Disease: Association or Causation" : (from the Proceedings of the Royal Society of Medicine, pp. 295-300, 1965. Available here)
# Jessica S. Ancker, "What a Sample Can Tell Us About the World" : (from Jessica S. Ancker, "Statistics for Writers", unpublished manuscript. Available here)

Session 29
Thursday - December 11, 2008
Topic: Risk, Chance, and Probability (Jessica Ancker)
Class Plan: Please read Gary Stoller's USA Today article, then look at the abstract of the Mangano article it was based on (also see if you can locate the data Stoller talks about, on page 42 of Mangano). Also, take a look through the systematic review about vitamin C. Focus especially on the methods used to draw the conclusions.
Assignments Due: Stats assignment due.
Required Readings:
# RM Douglas et al, "Vitamin C for Preventing and Treating the Common Cold (review)" : (from Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews, No. 3, 2007. Available here)
# Gary Stoller, "Baby teeth offer radioactive clues" : (from USA Today, January 2, 2006)

Session 30
Tuesday - December 16, 2008
Topic: Regression and Correlation (Jessice Ancker)
Class Plan: (to come)

Session 31
Thursday - December 18, 2008
Topic: Final Session (Nicholas Lemann, Evan Cornog)
There are no readings assigned for this class.