**REALITY CHECK** CHART FOR CHOOSING PROJECTS

- **High importance?**
  - Easy?
  - Hard?

- **Low importance?**
  - Easy?
  - Hard?

See more tips for managing student projects at the end of the presentation.
“REALITY CHECK” CHART FOR CHOOSING PROJECTS

High Importance?

Low Importance?

Easy?

Hard?

Do it!

HUMAN TRAFFICKING
Dangerous perps
Elusive victims
Uncoperative cops
12 student reporters

Tempting
An interesting tale?

Just say NO

How to move it over there?

EARLY PLANNING
Public records
Call the cavalry

MEDIA LAW: PUBLIC RECORDS REQUESTS
70 students filed public records requests with local law enforcement for sex trafficking arrests

DIGITAL NEWS BUREAU: DATA ANALYSIS & VIS
1 student

INVESTIGATIVE REPORTING: CASE ANALYSIS & FIELD REPORTING
12 students

URBAN AFFAIRS: CASE ANALYSIS & FIELD REPORTING IN BALTIMORE
5 students

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Each media law student:
- was given a government agency and set of records to request.
- researched the law to support their argument for disclosure.
- determined where/how to submit the request, sent it and then followed up frequently by phone and email.
- negotiated to lower fees and overcome resistance.
- updated status in a Google Drive.
- wrote a final memo on the legal issues that and what the records showed.

POLICE RECORDS: AN ADDRESS GOLDMINE
DIGITAL NEWS BUREAU: DATA ANALYSIS & VIZ
1 student

Some plusses:
- Hands-on experience using investigative tools and strategies.
- Real-time problem solving guidance from experienced faculty.
- Valuable resource for school projects and professional projects.
- High marks on course evaluations.
- Thank you notes from alums for years to come.

Some minuses:
- Requires intense, sustained organization by the teacher.
- Weak students = gaps in the records.
- You can’t really penalize students for failing to get records – just for failing to try hard enough.
Our Digital News Bureau “correspondent”:

- analyzed a statewide arrest and prosecution database obtained thru FOI
- transformed the statistics into visualizations
- identified trends

Students in the two reporting classes used the law enforcement records, data analysis + their own search through court files to:

- develop case studies
- build a Google Drive database of case characteristics
- identify addresses of trafficking operations for photos
- identify police, attorneys, victims, defendants to interview
- find compelling audio and video

COURT FILES: A MULTIMEDIA GOLDMINE

VIDEO OF A TRAFFICKER BEATING A PROSTITUTE

AUDIO OF VICTIM TELLING HOW SHE GOT TRAPPED

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GENERAL TIPS

Picking the story: For team projects, pick a topic that affects or interests students. Whether team or individual projects, consider student skill level, difficulty, time, importance, budget.

Skill training: Keep lectures brief and focused on one skill each class. Have them use it to advance the story immediately, preferably during class time when you can provide real-time advice and feedback.

Organization: Before each class, have them upload all interview notes and documents to their own folder in Google Drive and share with you.

Writing: Have them write footnoted* stories/scripts early & often. Let them see how dramatically their first story changes as they dig deeper.

*Footnotes help:
- reporters keep track of where they got their information
- you assess the reliability of their information
- the fact checker determine accuracy and spot errors

Footnotes should have links to internet sources + Google Drive documents and notes. Info for human sources: phone, email, link to notes, bio.

Deadline: Set the “final” story deadline at least a month before the last class. Reserve the last month for polish, fact check, data viz, production.

Fact check: Assign each student to do a word-by-word fact check of another student’s story – and give them a grade. I tell the fact-checker and writer that they will get an F as 50% of their grade for the semester if there is an error in the final published version. No penalty if they find the error before publication – to encourage them to be vigorous.

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