

Investigative Journalism

So You Want to Be a Journalist · By Simon Townsend · 1 min read

You as an investigative journalist

Being an investigative journalist is exciting, prestigious, well-paid - and important work.

Such work goes only to experienced senior journalists. Sometimes, senior experienced journalists undergo a university course in investigative journalism, or a law course or private investigator course in addition.

Courses in investigative journalism give working journalists and journalism students advanced research skills that enable them to find, get and then interpret information.

Understanding complex cases of political crooks, import frauds, consumer rackets, internet rip-offs, tax rorts and so on are not straightforward tasks.

Journalists are required to work within the law and to respect the legal and moral rights of other people.

A lot of your work involves the slow, frustrating process of obtaining documents under Freedom of Information (FoI) laws.

Accordingly, these kind of issues are studied throughout such courses, including privacy and ethical behaviour (when gathering information) and accuracy and fairness (when presenting the material obtained).

Courses are usually built around a series of guest lectures and workshops.

This enables students to hear first-hand from people who manage some of the information you may be seeking and from journalists who have built a reputation for successfully getting and using that information.

Investigative journalism is VERY tough work and only for those who are proven researchers and writers, with a reputation for persistence and accuracy.

Reprinted from The Wonderful World of Journalism. Written in the spirit of Simon Townsend's journalism craft advice. Visit simontownsendjournalist.com for the full archive.