

Alumni Weekend 2025

 COLUMBIA JOURNALISM SCHOOL

ALUMNI WEEKEND OVERVIEW MAY 2-3, 2025

FRIDAY, MAY 2

12:00-1:00 PM

Workshop | Sharpen Your Interview Skills: Tell Me About Yourself

The opening line at most interviews is "Tell Me About Yourself". It's your chance to shape the interview and get the interviewer to focus on what you want them to know about you. Learn how to tackle this seemingly simple query with Anusha Shrivastava, J'02, associate dean of career development at CJS, who trains people on improving their interview skills.

Anusha Shrivastava '02

Associate Dean of Career Development, Columbia Journalism School

Anusha Shrivastava is the associate dean of career development at Columbia Journalism School. In this role, she leads the team that organizes the largest journalism career expo in the country and trains students for their professional lives.

Additionally, Shrivastava served as a lecturer for Columbia's Department of Statistics, where she was head of career development and alumni relations. While there, she taught a course on professional development, covering topics including digital presence, negotiation, and mentoring.

Before she transitioned into higher education, Shrivastava spent over 20 years as a business reporter on television, in print, and in newswires in the U.S., Canada, and India. Most recently, she was at *The Wall Street Journal* in New York, where she covered global foreign exchange and credit markets. Her specialties included asset-backed and mortgage-backed securities, derivatives, commercial paper, money market funds, corporate bonds, and the Federal Reserve.

Shrivastava was also an on-air reporter for BBC World's 'India Business Report' in New Delhi and the web editor at *The Globe and Mail* in Toronto. She has worked at the Associated Press in New York, *The Hartford Business Journal* in Hartford, Conn., and *The Republican American* in Waterbury, Conn.

Shrivastava holds a B.A. in Political Science from Hindu College at the University of Delhi, an M.S. in Journalism from Columbia Journalism School, and a Ph.D. in International Relations from Jawaharlal Nehru University.

12:00-1:15 PM

Book Talk | [Between the Covers: A Look Inside Today's Publishing Industry](#)

Like many other parts of the journalistic world, the publishing industry has been grappling with the ongoing digital revolution, the lingering economic effects of the pandemic, the challenge of content produced by AI, and the evolving demography of America's reading and book-buying public. To explore the state of publishing, from the so-called Big Five corporate houses to the exciting alternatives to them, we'll have a conversation between three deeply knowledgeable panelists: Nicholas Lemann, professor and former dean, and the director of the Columbia Global Reports imprint; Shaye Areheart, director of the Columbia Publishing Program; and Samuel Freedman, the professor who has taught the Book Seminar at CJS for the past 35 years.

Moderator

[Samuel Freedman](#)

Professor of Journalism

Samuel G. Freedman is an award-winning author, columnist, and professor. A former columnist for *The New York Times* and a professor at Columbia University, he is the author of ten acclaimed books, including his most current work about Hubert Humphrey, Civil Rights, and the 1948 Democratic Convention, titled "Into the Bright Sunshine: Young Hubert Humphrey and the Fight for Civil Rights."

Freedman was named the nation's outstanding journalism educator in 1997 by the Society of Professional Journalists. In 2012, he received Columbia University's coveted Presidential Award for Outstanding Teaching. His class in book writing has developed more than 100 authors, editors, and agents, and it has been featured in *Publishers Weekly* and the *Christian Science Monitor*. He is a board member of the J. Anthony Lukas Book Awards and a member of the Journalism Advisory Council of Religion News Service.

Panelists

[Shaye Areheart](#)

Director, Columbia Publishing Course &

The Columbia Publishing Course at Exeter College, Oxford

For thirty-one years, Shaye Areheart worked as an editor at Doubleday, now Knopf Doubleday, and the Crown Publishing Group, both divisions of Penguin Random House. She began her career as an assistant to the editor and rose to editor, senior editor, executive editor, editorial director, and publisher. Areheart was given an eponymous fiction imprint in 1999; her authors have included Alice Hoffman, Gillian Flynn, Lisa Unger, Chris Bohjalian, Bill Moyers, George Plimpton, Douglas Adams, Michael Jackson, Ray Bradbury, Barbara Vine, and Jeanne Ray, among others. Long a lecturer at the Columbia Publishing Course during her publishing career, she became its director in 2013 and created its sister course at Exeter College, Oxford, in 2016.

[Nicholas Lemann](#)

Joseph Pulitzer II and Edith Pulitzer Moore Professor of Journalism; Director, Columbia Global Reports; Dean Emeritus, Columbia Journalism School

Nicholas Lemann was born and raised in New Orleans. He began his journalism career there as a 17-year-old staff writer for an alternate weekly paper called the *Vieux Carre Courier*. He graduated from Harvard College, where he was president of The Harvard

Crimson, in 1976, magna cum laude in American History and Literature. He has worked as a reporter and editor at The Washington Monthly, Texas Monthly, The Washington Post, The Atlantic (where he was a national correspondent from 1983 to 1999), and The New Yorker (where he has been a staff writer for twenty-five years), and contributed to many other publications. From 2003 to 2013 he was dean of Columbia Journalism School, leading a period of significant growth and change for the school, and since then he has been a professor there. At Columbia, he has also helped launch Columbia Global Reports, a publishing venture that he continues to lead, Columbia World Projects, and the Knight Columbia First Amendment Institute. He is currently one of three co-chairs of the university's antisemitism task force. His books include *The Promised Land* (1991), *The Big Test* (1999), *Redemption* (2006), *Transaction Man* (2019), and, most recently, *Higher Admissions* (2024). He is a member of several honorary societies, including the American Philosophical Society, the New York Institute for the Humanities, the Society of American Historians, the American Academy of Political and Social Science, and the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, where he serves as co-chair of the academy's Commission on Reimagining Our Economy.

1:30-2:45 PM

Spring Lecture | When Humans Listen: How to Use Behavioural Science to Understand News Engagement

This interactive workshop highlights what behavioral science can teach us about what does and does not work in getting news consumers to engage with content, truthfulness, and credibility of news reporting. One of the greatest contributions of behavioral science over the past few decades has been the realization that simply providing people with information is not sufficient to change beliefs or even behavior. This insight puts a dent in common approaches, such as fact-checking. But how can information become a catalyst for change in a polarized political landscape? What do we know about how humans listen? In this workshop, we will play through some known mechanisms that shape how news consumers use information and look at recent research to help us understand what information can and cannot do (and what harm it might cause). The workshop concludes with a set of tools that journalists can use when seeking to engage their audiences.

A Columbia Journalism School Alumni Association Signature Event

Mareike Schomerus '98

Vice President, Busara Center for Behavioral Economics

Mareike Schomerus is vice president at Busara, a leading behavioral research organization in the Global South, and a visiting lecturer at UChicago's Harris School of Public Policy. Schomerus was a journalist with ARD, BBC, Deutsche Welle, and others, working on news, current affairs, and documentaries from Europe, North America, and Africa. Now based in Nairobi, Kenya, Schomerus focuses on the intersection of social, political, and behavioral science, researching evidence-based policy and the mental models that shape it, behavioral mechanisms in how humans engage with information, and behavior and post-conflict recovery, for which she has developed a body of work on the 'mental landscape'.

She is the author of *Lives Amid Violence: Transforming Development in the Wake of Conflict* (Bloomsbury, 2023, open access here) and *The Lord's Resistance Army: Violence and Peacemaking in Africa* (Cambridge University Press, 2021) as well as the co-editor of volumes on African secessionism and South Sudan's borderlands (Palgrave Macmillan). She was formerly Director of Programme Politics and Governance at ODI in London and has consulted for major international organizations, such as the United Nations and the World Bank.

Schomerus holds a bachelor's degree from Smith College, a master of science degree in Journalism from Columbia Journalism School, and a Ph.D. from the London School of Economics and Political Science.

2:45-3:30 PM
Stabile Center

With Afternoon Tea with the Alumni Board

An afternoon tea, hosted by the alumni board, will be held in honor of this year's alumni award recipients directly following the Spring CJS Signature event. All are welcome.

2:45-3:30 PM
Pulitzer Hall

Building Tours (1)

Embark on a sentimental journey through Pulitzer Hall with students, catching up on new developments while reflecting on your own J-School experience.

3:30-4:45 PM

Workshop | Trauma-Aware Reporting: Looking Out for Our Sources and Ourselves

Join the Dart Center for Journalism and Trauma for a workshop on navigating the challenges of reporting on people affected by violence and crises, and on maintaining our own resilience amid a turbulent time.

Bruce Shapiro

Executive Director, Dart Center for Journalism and Trauma

Bruce Shapiro is Executive Director of the Dart Center for Journalism and Trauma, a project of the Columbia University Graduate School of Journalism encouraging innovative reporting on violence, conflict, and tragedy worldwide. An award-winning reporter on human rights, criminal justice, and politics, Shapiro is a contributing editor at *The Nation* and U.S. correspondent for Late Night Live on the Australian Broadcasting Corporation's Radio National. He is an Adjunct Professor and Senior Advisor for Academic Affairs at Columbia, where he teaches journalism ethics. His books include *Shaking the Foundations: 200 Years of Investigative Journalism in America* and *Legal Lynching: The Death Penalty and America's Future*. Shapiro is a recipient of the International Society for Traumatic Stress Studies Public Advocacy Award for "outstanding and fundamental contributions to the social understanding of trauma." He is a founding board member of the Global Investigative Journalism Network.

5:00-6:00 PM

Hearst Lecture | Rebuilding Audience Trust by Focusing on Local Policy

In an era of growing skepticism toward the media, rebuilding audience trust is one of journalism's most pressing challenges. This lecture will explore how a deep, consistent focus on local policy can help restore credibility and engagement with communities. Drawing on case studies from Votebeat's reporting that have successfully implemented this approach, we'll discuss practical strategies for investigative reporting on local governance, how to make policy coverage accessible and engaging, and why

emphasizing local and state policy—rather than national political controversies—can build stronger relationships with diverse audiences.

Jessica Huseman '15

Editorial Director, Vote Beat

Jessica Huseman was previously the lead elections reporter for *ProPublica* and helped manage the Electionland project for three federal election cycles, sharing information and tips with hundreds of newsrooms across the United States. She is an award-winning educator, has taught at Columbia Journalism School, New York University, and wrote a high school investigative journalism curriculum in use by more than 200 high schools. Huseman is a graduate of Columbia Graduate School of Journalism, where she graduated with honors.

6:00-7:00 PM

Hearst Reception

SATURDAY, MAY 3

WORLD PRESS FREEDOM DAY!

9:00-10:30 AM

Breakfast

Stabile Center

9:30-10:30 AM

Building Tours (2)

Pulitzer Hall

Last chance to join students for a nostalgic tour of Pulitzer Hall, revisiting your J-School memories while discovering the latest changes!

10:30-11:45 PM

AI Workshop | Three. It's a magic number.

For the third year running, we're diving into the intersection of AI and journalism at Alumni Weekend. Our journey began with the basics of Large Language Models (LLMs), exploring their capabilities and limitations. Last year, we leveled up — delving into creative ways to access these tools, whether through platforms like Google Sheets or Open Source models you could run yourself. We also had a group exercise using LLMs to analyze data.

This year, we've already set the stage with three virtual sessions focused on AI in the newsroom, tackling everything from ethical challenges to hands-on story production techniques. Now, for Alumni Weekend 2025, it's time to bring it all together in person. We'll reflect on how newsrooms across the country are using LLMs right now: What have you used an LLM for? Where are they reliable and where are they frail? What workflows have proved useful?

Then we'll shift gears and look ahead. Together, we'll experiment with Open Source LLMs and LLM-based agents, reflecting on how they might be applied in journalism. (This is still a fast-paced field and if something breaks between now and our weekend, we might shift topics.

Mark Hansen, Ph.D.

David and Helen Gurley Brown Professor of Journalism and Innovation; Director, David and Helen Gurley Brown Institute of Media Innovation

Mark Hansen joined Columbia Journalism School in July 2012 and took on the position of inaugural director of the East Coast branch of the Brown Institute for Media Innovation.

Before joining Columbia, he was a professor at UCLA, holding appointments in the Department of Statistics, the Department of Design Media Arts, and the Department of Electrical Engineering. He was also a Co-PI for the Center for Embedded Networked Sensing, an NSF Science and Technology Center devoted to the study of sensor networks. Before UCLA, Hansen was a Member of the Technical Staff at Bell Laboratories in Murray Hill, New Jersey.

Hansen has been a long-standing visiting researcher at the New York Times R&D Lab, a late-career intern at the Marshall Project, and a consultant with HBO Sports. Hansen teaches mainly advanced data analysis and computational journalism at Columbia. In 2018, Hansen's Computational Journalism course at Columbia Journalism School contributed to the original reporting for the *New York Times* piece, [The Follower Factory](#), which exposed the bot economy behind the sale of fake followers on Twitter. In July 2018, the article was cited by Twitter as the reason for its "purge" of tens of millions of suspicious accounts.

Hansen holds a B.S. in Applied Math from the University of California, Davis, and a Ph.D and M.A. in Statistics from the University of California, Berkeley. He has been awarded eight patents and has published over 60 papers in data science, statistics, and computer science.

12:00-2:00 PM
[Low Library](#)

[Alumni Awards Luncheon](#)

The Columbia Journalism School Alumni Awards Ceremony will recognize and celebrate the outstanding achievements of alumni with distinguished careers in journalism, notable contributions to journalism education, or achievements in related fields.

This event promises to be an inspiring experience, fostering connections across generations and rekindling the spirit of our shared commitment to truth and information. Honorees include:

Alumni Award Honorees

Frances Dinkelspiel '86, co-Founder, Berkeleyside

Robert Lipsyte '59, Author and Columnist, The New York Times

Ann M. Simmons '88, Former Moscow Bureau Chief, Wall Street Journal

First Decade Alumni Award Honoree

Alejandra Ibarra Chaoul '17, Executive Director, Defensores de la Democracia

2:15-4:00 PM

[DocFest Screening Room](#)

2:30-3:45 PM

[Ida B. Wells Lecture | Title TBA](#)

[Description TBA](#)

Soledad O'Brien

Documentarian, Journalist, Author, and Founder of Soledad O'Brien Productions

Soledad O'Brien is an award-winning documentarian, journalist, speaker, author, philanthropist, and founder of Soledad O'Brien Productions, a media production company dedicated to telling empowering and authentic stories on a range of social issues. She anchors and produces "Matter of Fact with Soledad O'Brien," a Hearst

political magazine program seen in 95% of the country. She was inducted into the Broadcasting and Cable Hall of Fame in May 2023.

Soledad has a national impact through her podcasts, social media, speeches, and books, including her critically acclaimed memoir *The Next Big Story* and her 1.3 million followers on X. She gave Congressional testimony on media disinformation. She has anchored shows and specials on CNN, MSNBC, Nat Geo, BET, ABC, and CBS, co-anchored NBC's Weekend Today, and reported long-form journalism for PBS NewsHour, Scripps News, and HBO Real Sports.

Her upcoming projects include the documentary short, "The Devil is Busy" about life for the security guard at an abortion clinic following the demise of Roe vs. Wade, and the documentary War on La Radio for Scripps News documentary show "In Real Life." Her recent work includes the top-rated IHeart podcast "Who Killed JFK " with Rob Reiner and her documentary "The End of Affirmative Action" which streamed on CBS, Paramount +, and YouTube. She is the Executive Producer of the Peabody-Award-winning documentary, "The Rebellious Life of Rosa Parks" which premiered at the Tribeca Film Festival and streams on Peacock, and the multi-part series "Black and Missing", which won the Independent Spirit and NAACP awards and streams on HBO. Soledad O' Brien Productions has also produced documentaries for Discovery Plus, CNN, BET, PBS, and others. She also works with major foundations, like the Ford Foundation and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation to produce impactful documentaries on topics like hunger, race, and education.

O'Brien's work has been recognized with four Emmy awards, three times with the George Foster Peabody Award, four times with the Gracie Award, which honors women in media, twice with Cine Awards for her work in documentary films,, twice with Telly Awards, and with an Alfred I. DuPont Award.

She runs the PowHerful foundation with her husband which has helped dozens of young women get to and through college and connects thousands of others with assistance through regional mentoring conferences.

Evening Receptions

4:00-5:30 PM Class of **1975** 50th Reunion

4:00-5:30 PM Class of **2000** 25th Reunion

4:00-5:30 PM **J-Ten** Reception *Classes 2015-2025*

4:00-5:30 PM **Affinity Group** Reception
(alumni of color, disabled, LGBTQ+, women, working professionals 55 and over, and veterans)