Alumni Weekend 2025

COLUMBIA JOURNALISM SCHOOL

ALUMNI WEEKEND OVERVIEW
Friday, May 2 and Saturday, May 3

FRIDAY, MAY 2
12:00-1:00 PM
World Room

Workshop | Sharpen Your Interview Skills: Tell Me About Yourself

The opening line at most interviews is "Tell Me About Yourself". It is 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 ’02, associate dean of career development at Columbia Journalism School, who trains students and alumni 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 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
Lecture Hall

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: **Shaye Areheart**, director of the Columbia Publishing Program; **Samuel Freedman**, the professor who has taught the Book Seminar at Columbia Journalism School for the past 35 years, and **Jaime Leifer**, publisher at Columbia Global Reports.

Moderator

Samuel Freedman

Professor of Journalism, Columbia Journalism School

Samuel G. Freedman is an award-winning author, columnist, and professor. A former columnist for *The New York Times* and a professor at Columbia Journalism School, 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, Columbia Journalism School &
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.

Jaime Leifer

Publisher, Columbia Global Reports

Jaime Leifer is the publisher of Columbia Global Reports, a nonprofit publishing imprint at Columbia Journalism School that commissions authors to produce works of original thinking and on-site reporting from all over the world on a wide range of topics. For over 20 years, she worked in publicity at PublicAffairs Books, where she

worked with such authors as former President of Brazil Fernando Henrique Cardoso, chess legend Garry Kasparov, and Nobel Prize winners Abhijit Banerjee and Esther Duflo, and published such bestselling titles as Ibram X. Kendi's "Stamped from the Beginning", Shoshana Zuboff's "The Age of Surveillance Capitalism", and Erin Meyer's "The Culture Map". She also worked in publicity at *The New Yorker* magazine and most recently served as the associate publisher of the Basic Books Group at the Hachette Book Group. She graduated from Harvard University and the Columbia Publishing Course in 2001.

1:30-2:45 PM
World Room

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) 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

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
Lecture Hall

Defending Freedom of the Press: A Year of Impact and Our Path Ahead

Over the past year, our School has been on the front lines in defending press freedom and upholding the values that define journalism. Our faculty, staff, and administration have led the community from supporting our student reporters during the Spring 2024 encampment to amplifying faculty expertise and standing firm on the issues of the moment. In this special session, Dean Jelani Cobb will reflect on the impact of this work, both seen and behind the scenes, and discuss the role CJS can continue to play in shaping the future of the press. This conversation will also include a call to action for alumni who want to support this work.

Jelani Cobb

Dean and Henry R. Luce Professor of Journalism

Jelani Cobb joined the Journalism School faculty in 2016 and became Dean in 2022. He has been a staff writer at *The New Yorker* since 2015. He received a Peabody Award for his 2020 PBS Frontline film *Whose Vote Counts?* and was a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize in Commentary in 2018. He has also been a political analyst for MSNBC since 2019.

He is the author of *The Substance of Hope: Barack Obama and the Paradox of Progress* and *To the Break of Dawn: A Freestyle on the Hip Hop Aesthetic*. He is the editor or co-editor of several volumes, including *The Matter of Black Lives*, a collection of *The New Yorker*'s writings on race, and *The Essential Kerner Commission Report*. He is a producer or co-producer on several documentaries, including *Lincoln's Dilemma, Obama: A More Perfect Union*, and *Policing the Police*.

Dr. Cobb was educated at Jamaica High School in Queens, NY, Howard University, where he earned a BA in English, and Rutgers University, where he completed his MA and doctorate in American History in 2003. He is also a recipient of fellowships from the Ford Foundation, the Fulbright Foundation, and the Shorenstein Center at Harvard University's Kennedy School of Government.

5:00-6:00 PM
Lecture Hall

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 and New York University, and wrote a high school investigative journalism curriculum in use by more than 200 high schools. Huseman is a graduate of the Columbia Graduate School of Journalism, where she graduated with honors.

6:00-7:00 PM **Hearst Reception**
World Room

SATURDAY, MAY 3
WORLD PRESS FREEDOM DAY!

8:00-9:30 AM **Breakfast**
Stabile Center

9:15-10:30 AM **Dean's Panel | Navigating the Crossroads: Free Speech, Institutional Integrity, and the Future of Higher Education and Journalism**
Lecture Hall

This panel discussion convenes Dean Jelani Cobb, Sheila Coronel, Toni Stabile Professor of Professional Practice in Investigative Journalism, Dean of Academic Affairs, Duy Linh Tu '99, and Bill Grueskin, Professor of Professional Practice, to address the escalating crisis confronting higher education and journalism. The panelists will dissect the multifaceted attack on free speech, the profound impact of the current administration's policies, and the resulting implications for Columbia University and like institutions. The discussion will delve into the challenges of maintaining institutional integrity amidst political pressures, the ethical responsibilities of journalists in a polarized landscape, the strategies necessary to safeguard academic freedom, and the vital role of a free press in a democratic society.

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Sheila Coronel

Toni Stabile Professor of Professional Practice in Investigative Journalism; Director, Toni Stabile Center for Investigative Journalism

Sheila Coronel began reporting in the Philippines during the twilight of the Marcos dictatorship, when she wrote for the underground opposition press and later for mainstream magazines and newspapers. As Marcos lost power and press restrictions eased, she reported on human rights abuses, the growing democratic movement and the election of Corazon Aquino as president.

In 1989, Coronel and her colleagues founded the Philippine Center for Investigative Journalism. Under Coronel's leadership, the Center became the leading investigative reporting institution in the Philippines and Asia. In 2001, the Center's reporting led to the fall of President Joseph Estrada. In 2003, Coronel won Asia's premier prize, the Ramon Magsaysay Award.

Coronel has written and edited more than a dozen books on the Philippines, freedom of information and investigative journalism. She has trained journalists around the world and written investigative reporting textbooks for journalists in Southeast Asia and the Balkan region. She speaks frequently at international investigative reporting conferences and writes about global investigative journalism.

Coronel joined the faculty of the Journalism School in 2006, when she was named director of the Stabile Center for Investigative Journalism. In 2011, she received one of Columbia University's highest honors, the Presidential Teaching Award.

Coronel believes we are in a pivotal moment for investigative reporting, one that is ripe with opportunity but also fraught with challenges and threats. Coronel's work outside of the Journalism School reflects her desire to build strong institutions that support free and independent reporting in a turbulent media landscape. She is chair of the Media Development Investment Fund board. She also sits on the boards of the Committee to Protect Journalists, the Columbia Journalism Review, ProPublica, and the Philippine Center for Investigative Journalism. She is also a member and former board chair of the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists.

Her recent work is on the populist Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte and police abuses in the war on drugs.

Bill Grueskin

Professor of Professional Practice

Bill Grueskin's career includes senior print and online editing roles, as well as six years as academic dean at Columbia Journalism School.

He began his journalism career as a reporter and editor at the Daily American in Rome. He then served as a VISTA volunteer and founding editor of the weekly *Dakota Sun* on the Standing Rock Sioux Reservation in North Dakota.

He worked as a reporter and editor in Baltimore and Tampa before moving to *The Miami Herald* where he eventually became city editor. On his first day in that post, Hurricane Andrew hit Dade County, and the Herald's coverage of the storm won the Pulitzer Gold Medal for public service.

Grueskin joined *The Wall Street Journal* in 1995, editing Page One features and projects. In June 2001, he became managing editor of WSJ.com and oversaw the staff during and after the Sept. 11 attacks on the World Trade Center, next to WSJ's offices. While at WSJ.com, the number of subscribers doubled to more than one million, and the site introduced blogs, interactive graphics and video.

In 2007, he was named WSJ's deputy managing editor, overseeing 14 domestic news bureaus and combining print and online editing desks.

He came to Columbia in 2008 as Academic Dean. At the Journalism School, he oversaw a dramatic transformation of the curriculum, designed to give students more flexibility to focus on skills ranging from video to data visualization to long-form digital journalism.

In May 2011, Grueskin, along with Ava Seave and Lucas Graves, co-authored "The Story So Far: What We Know About the Business of Digital Journalism," a report that examines online traffic and engagement patterns, emerging news platforms, paywalls, aggregation, and new sources of revenue.
In June 2014, he was named an executive editor at *Bloomberg*, overseeing efforts to train the global news staff to reach broader audiences across digital platforms.

Grueskin has a B.A. in classics from Stanford University and an M.A. in international economics and U.S. foreign policy from Johns Hopkins' School of Advanced International Studies.

Duy Linh Tu '99

Dean of Academic Affairs and Professor of Professional Practice

Duy Linh Nguyen Tu is a journalist and documentary filmmaker, focusing on science, climate, and the environment. His work has appeared in print, online, on television, and in theaters. He is also the author of *Narrative Storytelling for Multimedia Journalists* (Focal Press).

Tu is the Dean of Academic Affairs and Professor of Professional Practice. He teaches reporting and video storytelling courses and graduated from the program.

10:30-11:45 AM
World Room

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

1:00-3:00 PM
Room 607C

DocFest Screening Room

Tide and Time
Directed by Naeem Amarsy ’24 and Natalie Ruiz-Pérez ’24
As he approaches his 85th birthday, a famous nature conservationist reflects upon his legacy of preserving the disappearing ecosystem of New York City’s largest wetlands.

On Our Block
Directed by Astrid Useche ’24 and Chloe Barlow ’24
The decade-long turf war between “The 900” and “The Hoolies” in Bed-Stuy didn’t start with Wesley Jeffreys and Jason Bostic, but they’re determined it ends with them. The two former rivals embark on an unprecedented journey, guided by a former Bloods member turned mentor, to end the gun violence and hate tearing their community apart.

1:30-3:00 PM
Pulitzer Hall

Building Tours (2)

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

1:30-4:30 PM
Brown Institute

Alumni Weekend Photo Booth

2:30-3:45 PM
Lecture Hall

Ida B. Wells Lecture | Deadline Democracy: How Hostility to Mainstream Media and Social Media Are Strangling the Fourth Estate

In this timely conversation, award-winning journalist and media entrepreneur Soledad O'Brien examines the existential crisis facing modern journalism. Drawing on her extensive experience across multiple news platforms, O'Brien reveals how the twin challenges of administrative hostility and the shift of younger audiences to social media have created a perfect storm for an already cash-strapped industry. She offers a candid assessment of journalism's future and proposes innovative solutions to preserve this vital pillar of democracy.

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 national Hearst political magazine program. She was inducted into the Broadcasting and Cable Hall of Fame in May 2023.

O'Brien's work has been recognized over the years with ten 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.

SO'B Productions has two projects debuting in 2025, the Netflix documentary film "The Perfect Neighbor," which premiered at the Sundance Film Festival, and the HBO documentary short, "The Devil is Busy." This year, Soledad also reported a documentary on Latino voters, *"War on La Radio," and "The End of Affirmative Action."* Her podcast, *"Who Killed JFK,"* co-hosted with Rob Reiner on IHeartthat was named by Apple as one of its best shows for 2024 with 9 million viewers.

Previously, she led SO'B Productions' efforts on 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 award and streams on HBO. She works with major foundations such as the Ford Foundation, the Kresge Foundation, and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation to create award-winning content on topics like hunger, race, and education.

Soledad has a national impact through her podcasts, social media, speeches, and books, including her critically acclaimed memoir "The Next Big Story," and her 1.4 million followers on social media. She has given Congressional testimony on media disinformation. She was a founding anchor at MSNBC, anchored at NBC's "Weekend Today," anchored CNN's morning show for more than a decade, and was a correspondent for HBO RealSports. Her documentary and long form work has appeared on Netflix, CNN, Nat Geo, BET, CBS, Paramount +, Peacock, and HBO.

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.

Vladimir Duthiers '17

Host of CBS Mornings

Vladimir Duthiers is a featured host of CBS MORNINGS and is part of the team delivering the first look at the day's top stories. The award-winning journalist joined CBS News in 2014 and has interviewed high-profile politicians, business leaders and celebrities. He has reported from multiple countries in Africa, Europe, the Middle East & Asia and was part of the team that won two Emmy Awards for its coverage of the 2010 Haiti earthquake. In 2014, Duthiers won a Peabody Award for his reporting of the

kidnapped Nigerian schoolgirls. He began his news career with “Amanpour” and “Anderson Cooper 360” at CNN in 2009.

Duthiers graduated from the University of Rhode Island with a B.A. in political science and from Columbia University with an M.S. in journalism.

Evening Receptions

4:00-5:30 PM	Class of **1975** 50th Reunion	**Knight-Bagehot, 7th Fl.**
4:00-5:30 PM	Class of **2000** 25th Reunion	**Room 607C**
4:00-5:30 PM	**J-Ten** Reception *Classes 2015-2025*	**Brown Institute**
4:00-5:30 PM	**Affinity Group** Reception	**World Room**

(Open to all. Journalism alumni of color, disabled, LGBTQ+, women, working professionals 55+, and veterans' attendance encouraged.)