College Journalism Students Get an Inside Look at Life as a Journalist from a Mamaroneck High School Graduate



What does the future hold for journalism? How will artificial intelligence change the way news is reported and produced? What will the job market look like, and which distinctly human skills will matter most?

Those are the kinds of questions an investigative journalist examining the future of the profession might ask. They are also the questions Mamaroneck High School students in a college-credit journalism course recently put to Henry Bova, a 2021 MHS graduate who writes freelance for *The Boston Globe* and *The Rye Record*, turning an exploration of a rapidly changing industry into an exercise in journalism itself.

Bova, who graduated from Northeastern University in 2025, answered students' questions about everything from pitching stories and conducting interviews to finding work after college and navigating an industry being reshaped by social media and artificial intelligence. He also described how his college coursework introduced him to video production, editing and documentary filmmaking, skills he had not initially expected to pursue. He encouraged students to explore different forms of storytelling, noting that the same principles apply across media.

AI and its potential impact on journalism were among the students' most pressing questions. Bova acknowledged that AI can be useful for tasks such as transcribing interviews and reviewing lengthy documents in their research, but emphasized that journalists must carefully check the results. And technology cannot replace the human work at the heart of journalism: interviewing people, finding sources, asking follow-up questions and piecing together complex stories.

More broadly, he said the spread of AI and misinformation has made verification increasingly important. Rather than relying on the first post or video they encounter, journalists must "double, triple check" what they see and dig deeper to establish what is accurate.

Students also wanted to know what it is like to enter the profession today. Bova was candid about the challenges of making a living in journalism, particularly as a freelancer. Full-time, secure positions can be difficult to find, and freelance work often means piecing together assignments from different publications. Building relationships, making connections, continuing to pitch ideas and learning to handle rejection are all part of the process.

For journalism teacher Mary Beth Jordan, Bova's visit allowed students to learn directly from someone working in the field while also connecting with a mentor who had been in their position only a few years earlier.

"Henry brought real-world expertise into the classroom, but what made the experience particularly valuable was how relatable he was to our students," Jordan said. "He was literally sitting where they are not that long ago. They could ask him candid questions about college, the profession, what it takes to get started–even what it's like living in Brooklyn! They could really see themselves through his experience."

That persistence Bova described in building a career also applies to the reporting itself.

Bova explained that journalists may pitch their own ideas, while editors also assign topics or suggest stories. At *The Globe*, he often pitches ideas himself; at *The Rye Record*, he is more frequently assigned stories. A pitch does not have to be exhaustively researched, he told students, but it should have a clear direction and explain how the journalist plans to pursue it.

He also encouraged students not to take rejection personally. Editors may turn down a story because of timing, space or the needs of a particular audience, not necessarily because the idea is weak. One such story began with his interest in long COVID, an issue that had affected people in his own life. Although *The Globe* did not move forward with his original pitch, he kept pursuing the subject and ultimately produced a documentary. The experience illustrated the value of staying with an idea while remaining open to different ways of telling the story.

Bova also described how reporting can take a story in an entirely unexpected direction. He recalled receiving an assignment about a man who had invented an ice cube tray that makes clear ice cubes at home. What initially seemed like a story about a product and its business became a human-interest story about the inventor himself: a lawyer whose fascination with ice cubes led him to fill his garage with failed molds, create a custom license plate and eventually build a successful business. The reporting revealed that the most compelling part of a story is not always the subject that first attracts attention.

Another story began with Bova's own observation that he sometimes felt overwhelmed while walking through supermarkets. Curious about the experience, he researched the subject and found people whose reactions were so intense that they could not go to supermarkets at all. He interviewed a medical expert and people living with the condition, working to understand a complex experience and explain it clearly to readers. The resulting story received enthusiastic responses from experienced journalists at *The Globe*.

The examples reflected Bova's interest in stories that put people and their experiences at the center, while demonstrating the curiosity and persistence that reporting requires. Recalling an interview with George Latimer, Bova explained that a brief comment near the end of the conversation raised questions that became more important than the original assignment. Rather than letting it go, he followed up repeatedly to get more information.

"You have to be very, very thorough and vigilant," he told students, encouraging them not to settle for the easiest version of a story when further reporting might uncover something more meaningful.

Bova offered practical advice about interviewing as well. He prefers to meet people in person when possible, prepares questions in a notebook and records interviews on his phone. Rather than rigidly following a list, he listens closely and lets the conversation guide his follow-up questions. He encouraged students to finish interviews by asking whether there is anything else the person would like to add, whether there is something they wish they had discussed and whether there is someone else the journalist should speak with.

For students considering journalism themselves, Bova's advice was straightforward: gain experience early, join campus publications and extracurricular activities, explore different ways of telling stories and look for opportunities beyond the classroom.

"The best way to be a journalist? Just go out and do it," Bova said.