

SYLLABUS

Journalism 306
Broadcast News Production
Fall 2007
Tuesdays 7-9:40 p.m.
ASC 225

Instructor: Randy Paige

COURSE OBJECTIVES

We have a lot of ground to cover in the next 16 weeks. The process of putting together television news stories requires both art and craft. The craft involves the step-by-step process which nearly all reporters use to produce their stories. The art involves the unique heart and soul you bring to your work. It begins in the way you identify the stories you choose to produce and it carries you through the process of researching, shooting, writing and editing the story. I will show you the step-by-step process of crafting a professional news story that I have learned over the past 24 years of producing stories on a daily basis. You will provide the art (heart). By the end of this semester you will have the knowledge to produce a television news story worthy of any television network or local news organization. We will also spend time on how to “voice over” your stories and how to use “stand-ups” to help tell your story. This semester we will also examine the process of producing a half hour newscast.

We will take time during many class sessions to discuss the ethics that guide us as journalists. Journalism is, after all, more than a profession. It is an essential part of our democracy and as such it carries with it an awesome responsibility to make sure that our stories are fair and accurate and that they provide the essential information we need to make important decisions about our lives.

Required Textbook:

ISBN: 02053335438
Title: Broadcast News Writing Stylebook, Third Edition
Author: Robert A. Papper
Publisher: Allyn and Bacon

Selected Readings: (All available on reserve in Annenberg Research Library)

Title: Make It Memorable: Writing and Packaging TV News with Style
Author: Bob Dotson
Publisher: Bonus Books, Inc.

ISBN: 1-56625-176-1

Title: Write for the Ear, Shoot for the Eye, Aim for the Heart
Author: Al Tompkins
Publisher: Bonus Books

ISBN 0967843200

Title: Power Producer
Author: Dow Smith
Publisher: Radio-TV New Directors Association
(Recommended for students interested in producing news broadcasts)

DAILY NEWS CONSUMPTION

One of the best ways to learn about broadcast news production is to watch a lot of newscasts. Students should plan to watch at least one local and one network newscast every day (Many networks provide their entire half hour newscast for online viewing if the time it airs is not convenient). Students will be required to read at least the first three sections of the Los Angeles Times every day.

QUIZZES AND ETHICS ASSIGNMENTS

There will be a short quiz or ethics essay at the beginning of most class sessions. Quizzes will draw from assigned readings, class discussions and current events. We will also periodically discuss ethical dilemmas facing journalists today and topics will be e-mailed to students at least twenty four hours before those class sessions. Students will be expected to write a short essay detailing their positions on these topics. There will also be timed writing assignments during class that will simulate real world breaking news situations.

STORY ASSIGNMENTS

The majority of your grade will be determined by four major news packages, which will be turned in throughout the semester. The first three stories will be 1:30 to 1:45 in length, the final project running up to 2:15 (with the advance permission of instructor). The completed stories will be turned in as a mini-DV dub, but you will also be required to turn in all research notes, tape logs, outlines and all versions of the script for each story. For the first three assignments, initial drafts of the scripts may be turned

in ahead of time for my comments and suggestions. Changes made in connection with those various drafts may be incorporated into the final script without penalty. You will also learn how to produce a 30-minute newscast, and you will have the opportunity to create a rundown for a particular day's news events and block the stories out on a 30-minute timeline.

GRADING CRITERIA:

A. Basic criteria:

You will be graded on clarity, organization, accuracy, fairness/balance, completeness, grammar, spelling and ability to meet deadlines and required story length. We will distribute a separate checklist showing the exact criteria we will be grading.

Each story will have a letter grade (A, A-, B, B-, C, C-, D, D- or F). On some assignments we may use a point system, but the points will be converted into a letter grade.

1. "A" stories are accurate, clear, comprehensive stories that are well written and require only minor copy or tape editing (i.e. they could air on a local or network broadcast). They are also written, shot and edited creatively, are well paced and include good sound bites and natural sound that breathes life and emotion into the story.
2. "B" stories require more than minor editing and have a few style or spelling errors and/or one significant error of omission. There may be minor flaws in the composition of some shots or in the editing. Story is complete, accurate and well paced with a clear beginning, middle and end.
3. "C" stories need considerable editing or rewriting and/or have many spelling, style or omission errors. Camera work and editing techniques are mediocre or unimaginative, but passable. Length of the story may be shorter or longer than the assigned length. Some sound bites add little or no color and provide information that could be better told in the reporter's narration.
4. "D" stories require extensive rewriting and have numerous errors, and should not have been submitted. Camera work is unsatisfactory or fails to show important elements.
5. "F" stories have failed to meet the major criteria of the assignment, have numerous errors, or both. A story that has a factual error that is material to the story merits an F. The following are some other circumstances that would warrant an F grade:

the context of the story. (Gray areas will be discussed in class.)
Using video shot by someone else and presenting it as his or her own work (some exceptions will be discussed in class, such as stand-ups when the reporter appears on camera)
Telling interview subjects what you want them to say
Distorting video: shooting video in one location and presenting it as being another location
Using the camcorder to intentionally intimidate, provoke or incite a person or a group of people to elicit more “dramatic” video.

B. PLAGIARISM/ACADEMIC INTEGRITY POLICY

“Since its founding, the USC School of Journalism has maintained a commitment to the highest standards of ethical conduct and academic excellence. Any student found guilty of plagiarism, fabrication, cheating on examinations, or purchasing papers or other assignments will receive a failing grade in the course and will be dismissed as a major from the School of Journalism. There are no exceptions to this policy. Plagiarism is defined as taking ideas or writings from another and passing them off as one’s own; in journalism and in public relations, this means appropriating the words or ideas of another without clear attribution.”

C. LATE ASSIGNMENTS:

D. REWRITING STORIES:

without penalty. This policy does not apply to Package #4 (final exam).

Course Grades:

	10%
Package #1	10%
Package #2	15%
Package #3	20%
Newscast rundown and explanation	10%
Package #4	25%
ATVN Learning Lab	10%

Attendance:

You are expected to be in class every week or to obtain the instructor's approval in advance if you will miss a class, except for verified medical reasons or emergencies.

You will be allowed to edit packages in the Annenberg Digital Lab only if you attend the advanced Avid editing workshop Week 3 and complete required work.

Although the syllabi are similar, every core class is different, so you cannot make up a class session by going to another class in the same sequence, except for the Avid workshop.

Disability Services and Programs:

Any student requesting academic accommodations based on a disability is Required to register with the Disability Services and Programs (DSP) each A letter of verification for approved accommodations can be obtained from DSP. Please be sure the letter is delivered to the instructor as early in the semester as Possible. DSP is located in STU 301. Phone (213) 740-0776

CLASS SCHEDULE**WEEK 1 -- AUGUST 28TH -- INTRODUCTION**

Homework Assignment:

Reading Assignment:

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http://www.spj.org/ethics_code.asp

Also read Chapter 18 in Papper (Broadcast News & Writing Stylebook)
“Ethics and RTNDA Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct”

SEPTEMBER 4TH – The Elements of a Powerful Story

Outline elements that make up a compelling story common to all types of stories
Discuss elements in investigative, general news, special segments and feature stories

How to develop story ideas, cultivate sources, conduct initial research

Once you have a topic, how to identify necessary story elements including interview subjects and broll

How to write a story “pitch.”

Homework Assignment:

Write at least two story pitches and identify in each the elements that will make the story compelling. (Each pitch must involve stories that will be shot off campus, although you may interview a USC expert on campus for your story if appropriate.) The story pitches will be due at the start of class next week. Make sure you also bring supporting documentation for each pitch (newspaper articles, notes of your research, etc) .The more stories you include, the more options you will have when its time to shoot your first story, because one of these story pitches will be later designated as your first story assignment

For each pitch, identify the elements that will be necessary to produce the story, including possible interview subjects, video locations etc.

Make sure the stories can be executed because one of them will be chosen for your first story---Package #1, which will be due at the Week 5 class session on Sept. 25th

Chapter 13 & 14 in Papper book
“Caring and Connecting” and “Story Ideas and the Assignment Desk”

WEEK 3 – SEPTEMBER 11TH -- AVID EDITING IN CLASS WORKSHOP

This session is mandatory. We will meet in the Avid Digital Lab. Room G40 (Garden Level) not in our regular classroom.

Homework Assignment:

Finish editing the package you started in the in-class Avid editing workshop. Deadline is next Tuesday (Students who have not completed editing the workshop package will no be allowed to edit any additional class projects on the Avid computers). Take care in balancing audio levels between reporter narration and background ambient sound.

Story subject for Package #1 will be assigned to each student from pitches provided in Week #2

Begin shooting Package #1

WEEK 4 – SEPTEMBER 18TH -- STORY PRODUCTION OVERVIEW

Each element in story production will be examined: opening shot, closing shot, interviewing techniques, writing in and out of sound bites, natural sound, etc,

Discussion of progress of Package #1

Stand-ups as storytelling tools

Tricks in tape logging, preparation for writing

Writing the lead—

In-Class Exercise: Writing Assignment On Deadline

Finding the lead and writing in a hurry

Homework Assignment:

Read handout from Bob Dotson’s Make It Memorable

Finish editing Package #1 due next week running 1:30

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WEEK 5 – SEPTEMBER 25TH -- SHOW AND TELL

Homework Assignment

**Package #2, which is
due at the start of class on Week 8 and is to be 1:30 – 1:45 in length**

WEEK 6 – OCTOBER 2ND -- The Reporter On Camera

Homework Assignment:

WEEK 7 – OCTOBER 9TH – STORY OUTLINE AND PACING

Homework Assignment

WEEK 8 – OCTOBER 16th – THE HEART OF THE STORY: THE PEOPLE

Homework Assignment:

rd edition of the L.A. Times

RD -- PRODUCING NEWSCASTS

Homework Assignment:

WEEK 10 – OCTOBER 30 -- SHOW AND TELL PACKAGE #2

Homework Assignment:

Package #3, which is due at the start of class on Week 12, November 20th and is to be 2:00 in length and should involve multiple locations and interviews

would you use, how much time would you allow for each choice? Be prepared to support your opinions at the next class session on November 6th

WEEK 11 – NOVEMBER 6TH -- PRODUCING NEWSCASTS:

What is news? We will view newscasts from the three local network owned stations on the same day to compare and contrast their coverage. Why are some stories considered news on one station while neglected on another? What stories would you include if you were the show producer?

Homework Assignment:

Complete writing and editing Package #3 which is to be 2:00 in length and is due at the beginning of class on November 20th

WEEK 12 – NOVEMBER 13TH – SHOW AND TELL #3

Each student must bring a completed mini-DV copy of Package #3, along with scripts, notes, logs and story outlines

View and discuss Package #3

Homework Assignment:

Write 5 more story pitches, and detail the elements in each pitch that make the story compelling.

For each pitch, identify the elements that will be needed to tell the story, including sound bites, broll, etc.

You will pick one of these stories as your final assignment for **Package #4, which is due November 20th and is to be 2:00 in length and should involve multiple locations and interviews**

WEEK 13 -- NOVEMBER 20TH – LIVE REMOTES AND BREAKING NEWS

We will view examples and discuss strategies for reporting live from breaking news locations

We will videotape “live” shots in class, in a simulated breaking news situation and demonstrate techniques that will help students stay calm under pressure

Discussion of final project

Homework Assignment:

Continue work on final project due by 7 p.m. December 18th

WEEK 14 – NOVEMBER 27TH, STRATEGIES FOR FINDING YOUR FIRST JOB

How to put together a strong resume tape

The value of internships and networking

Discussion of final project

Homework Assignment:

Continue work on final project due 7 p.m. December 8th

Bring to class next week an outline and/or a first draft of your script for your final project. Make sure outline includes description of opening and closing sequences, sound bites transcribed, stand-ups, narration, etc

Bring to class a video excerpt from your final project to show in class

WEEK 15 – DECEMBER 4TH – FINAL CLASS SESSION – LAST REVIEW OF ELEMENTS FOR FINAL PROJECT

View video excerpts from final project

Discuss outlines and first draft scripts. What’s missing? Which elements can still be found to make the story powerful and compelling

Homework Assignment:

Complete final project due in classroom 7 p.m. December 18th

**WEEK 16 – DECEMBER 11TH -- FINAL PROJECT MUST BE DROPPED OFF
NO LATER THAN 7 P.M. IN CLASSROOM.**