

JOURNALISM 303, Broadcast Reporting, SYLLABUS
Meets Wednesdays, 9 a.m. – 11:40 a.m., Spring 2008

Instructor: David Dow

Office hours: By appointment and by phone

Course Objectives:

Strong reporting skills are just as essential to broadcast journalism as they are to print or online. The overriding objective of this course is to promote the basic skills and dedication that make for strong television reporting.

We produce and package our broadcast stories differently from our print and online brethren. But we're bound by the same high ethical code and standards of excellence. That will be a thread running through every session of Journalism 303.

Last semester, you learned the basics of writing for broadcast. This semester, you will hone those skills as you acquire additional tools in videography and Avid editing.

You'll be required to propose, research, shoot, write and edit four stories: A VSV (or "VO/SOT") running :45-1:00; two reporter-narrated "packages" running 1:30-1:45 and a final package in the 2:00-2:15 range. These will be different stories from those you produce for your print reporting class. The packages must involve more than one location and a minimum of three interviews.

In addition, there will be occasional in-class or homework writing assignments. Writing is the bedrock skill of all journalism.

You may not aspire to broadcast reporting, but even print reporters often find themselves thrust into broadcast roles in the increasingly fluid, multimedia world of today's journalism. This class is a good opportunity to prepare for a future that is sure to be ever-changing.

Attendance and Deadlines:

Class will begin promptly at 9 a.m. on Wednesdays. Punctuality is essential. Think news. Arriving late for a story could mean missing it.

Similarly, deadlines are inherent in the news business. All assignments in this class must be turned in **at the beginning of the class session in which they're due.** *Missing a deadline is grounds for an "F" on the assignment.*

Attendance is another must. Each class session will build on its predecessor. If you must miss a class, you must alert the instructor **in advance.** You will still be responsible for its subject matter, including homework assignments and reading. *Three unexcused absences will be grounds for a failing grade.*

Textbooks:

Title: *Broadcast News Handbook, 3rd Edition* (From Newswriting course)
Author: Tuggle/Carr/Huffman
Publisher: McGraw-Hill
ISBN: 0205262589

Title: *Creative Interviewing* (Do not buy; assigned chapter(s) will be handed out)
Author: Ken Metzler
Publisher: Allyn & Bacon
ISBN: 0205262589

Dictionary: *Merriam Webster*, www.m-w.com

Handouts:

Editing and Shooting Glossary
Videography
News Editing
Story Idea and Story Development forms
Sample Package (package format)
Eight Tests of a Good TV News Package
On-Camera Standup Check List

Daily News Diet:

A major responsibility of every journalist is to keep abreast of the day's news. Even stories that seem remote in geography or subject matter may engender spin-offs on your beat or in your local coverage area. (e.g., note how many local stores have flowed from the deployment of U. S. troops to the current war in Iraq.) Each student in this course will be required to read, at a minimum, the first three sections of the *Los Angeles Times* and have knowledge of major sports stories (Section D)—the winners of major league titles, for instance. In addition, students should watch at least part of a television newscast each day, alternating local newscasts with network broadcasts. Several times each week, students should listen to a broadcast cycle of an all-news radio station (KNX/1070 or KFWB/980 AM). The first 20-30 minutes of each hour would comprise a radio broadcast cycle.

Quizzes:

Excluding Week 1, there will be current events quizzes, usually composed of 10 questions, **promptly at the beginning of most class sessions.** The questions will be drawn largely from the *Los Angeles Times*, though some may be selected from assigned reading. There will be no make-up sessions for missed quizzes.

Learning Lab Requirement:

All J303 students must fulfill a learning lab requirement, specifically:

Broadcast majors must work a regular shift at Annenberg Television News (ATVN). An ATVN producer will visit the class to explain the sign-up procedure and the duties you can expect. Your attendance and performance will count toward 5 per cent of your J-303 grade.

Print majors have a variety of choices: (1) A regular shift at *The Daily Trojan* or Annenberg Radio News, or (2) an off-campus internship. Where applicable, students must keep copies of their clips and turn them in for review by the J303 instructor. Students who do not have writing assignments (e.g., copy editing) must obtain a letter from a supervisor at midterm and end-of-semester evaluating their performance. Those evaluations will count toward 5 per cent of your J-303 grade.

Class Participation:

Journalism involves a team effort, with each team member contributing. Every student is expected to be a full-fledged participant in this class. That includes arriving on time to all class sessions and engaging fully in class discussions and exercises. Your assigned VSV and packages will be screened in class, and you will be expected to accept and give constructive comment. You will learn from honest, thoughtful critiques, and you will be expected to provide same to your colleagues. Disingenuous flattery doesn't help anyone.

Preparation and Submission of Assignments:

The four major assignments of this course (VSV, two packages, one final package) will be submitted on mini-DV tapes, accompanied by a script, raw tapes, tape logs and a list of sources, including those who were not interviewed on camera. The source list should include each person's name, title, organization, phone number and e-mail address. Script formats will be distributed and discussed in class.

Stories can involve subjects on or off campus or a mix of both. Metropolitan Los Angeles is a rich news environment. Students will be encouraged to explore the region's diversity in proposing stories and not limit themselves to the USC campus.

Two story ideas will be submitted—"pitched"-- for each assignment. The stronger of the two, in the student's estimation, will be submitted on a "story development form." The other, or "back-up" story, will be submitted on a "story idea form." Samples of both forms will be distributed in class. The ideas will be discussed in classroom story conferences and one will be assigned for production. The instructor must approve all story assignments.

All stories should be edited in the Avid digital lab (Rm. G40). The lab’s technical staff will be unable to offer any assistance or trouble-shooting for editing performed at any other location.

Course Grading (Weighted):

In-class and homework assignments.....	10%
VSV.....	5%
Package #1.....	15%
Package #2.....	20%
Final package.....	30%
Quizzes, class participation.....	15%
Learning lab.....	5%
	100%

(Note: The quality of the story “pitches” will be factored into the VSV and package grades.)

Grading Criteria: VSV, Packages and Writing Assignments:

A. Basic Criteria: Overall, you’ll be graded on adherence to the basics of good journalism: Clarity, accuracy, organization, fairness/balance, completeness, grammar, spelling and, of course, **ability to meet deadlines.** Grades will also reflect your grasp of the basic tenets of videography and editing.

In addition, the quality of the stories you select will affect your grade. Stories should have broad, engaging appeal and contain multiple elements.

B. Grading Guidelines: In general, letter grades will be assigned according to the following guidelines (Evaluation of journalistic products is inherently subjective. Other, overriding factors could enter the grading process.):

1. “A” stories are accurate, clear, comprehensive stories that are well-written, well-shot and well-produced and require only minor editing or changes. They contain well-selected sound bites that contribute impact and flavor. In sum, they are stories that are “airworthy.” Grades for this level could result in an A or A-.
2. “B” stories reflect solid work but require more than minor editing and have style, grammar or production errors (e.g., video doesn’t match script) or one significant error of omission. Grades for this level of work could result in a B, B+ or B-.
3. “C” stories need considerable editing or rewriting and/or have multiple, grammar, style, production or omission errors. Camera work and editing techniques are mediocre or unimaginative. Sound bites add little impact or flavor. Grades could be C, C+ or C-.
4. “D” stories require excessive reworking, have numerous errors and should not have

been submitted. Camera work is unsatisfactory or fails to show important elements. Grades could be D, D+ or D-.

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.” **So does failure to meet a deadline. It’s Annenberg policy!**

In addition, here are other circumstances that would warrant an “F”:

1. Plagiarizing a script, portions of a script or information from any source. (See policy statement below.)
2. Staging video: Asking a story or interview subject to do something specific (e.g., to light up a cigarette for a story on smoking). “Set-up” shots—wide shots and reverses for an interview—or “walking” shots are a gray area, but are generally accepted.
3. Using video shot by someone else and presenting it as one’s own work. And using video shot for another class in a project submitted for this class.
4. Telling an interview subject what you want him or her to say.
5. Distorting video. Shooting video in one location and presenting it as being another location.
6. Using the camcorder to intentionally intimidate, provoke or incite a person or group of people to elicit more “dramatic” video.
7. Promising, paying or giving someone something in exchange for doing an interview.

USC Annenberg School of Journalism Academic Integrity Policy:

Since its founding, the USC Annenberg 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 an examination or purchasing papers or other assignments will immediately 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.

USC Statement on Academic Integrity:

USC seeks to maintain an optimal learning environment. General principles of academic honesty include the concept of respect for the intellectual property of others, the expectation that individual work will be submitted unless otherwise allowed by an instructor, and the obligations both to protect one’s own academic work from misuse by others as well as to avoid using another’s work as one’s own. All students are expected to understand and abide by these principles. Scampus, the Student Guidebook, contains

the Student Conduct Code in Section 11:00, while the recommended sanctions are located in Appendix A. Students will be referred to the Office of Student Judicial Affairs and Community Standards for further review, should there be any suspicion of academic dishonesty.

Plagiarism:

Plagiarism, as used above, is defined as taking ideas or writing from another and passing them off as one's own. It is a serious violation of the School of Journalism's policy on academic integrity. To reiterate, a student found guilty of plagiarism is subject to dismissal from the journalism major.

Professional Dress Policy:

Reporters are no different from representatives of other organizations. If they are badly or inappropriately dressed, it can affect the impression they make and the results they get. When going on interviews, dress in a manner that fits the situation and shows respect for the interviewee. Flip-flops and scruffy shirts are out. So are revealing necklines and bare midriffs. And never wear an advertisement during an interview or other on-camera assignment—not even a USC sweatshirt.

Diversity:

In addition to being ethical in developing, writing and producing your stories, it is important that you consider diversity. Is the story fair and does it represent all stakeholders in a balanced manner? Are the sound bites you have selected representative of the community involved in the story.

Writing Coaches:

Writing coaches are available in ASC 227 during posted times and by appointment. (Note: They will critique only work that has previously been submitted to this class; no “work in progress.”)

Mike Daniels, broadcast: danielsm@usc.edu

Bob Berger, print: rberger@usc.edu

Ed Boyer, print: edjboyer@ca.rr.com

Brad Hanson, print: brad.hanson@latimes.com

Disability Services and Programs:

Any student requesting academic accommodations based on a disability is required to register with Disability Services and Programs (DSP) each semester. 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.

About the Instructor:

David Dow has been teaching broadcast reporting, production and writing at USC for six years, following a 29-year reporting career with CBS News television and radio. He covered stories in more than two dozen countries, including almost every nation of Latin America.

Domestically, he has covered seven presidential nominating conventions, the campaigns of five presidential candidates, the Rodney King beating trials and ensuing riots and both O. J. Simpson trials (criminal and civil). Dow has done extensive space coverage, including many shuttle flights and unmanned planetary missions.

He is a native Californian and graduate of Stanford University, where he later returned as a Stanford Professional Journalism (now Knight) Fellow. He's co-author of *Cameras in the Courtroom: Television and the Pursuit of Justice* (Rowman & Littlefield).

CLASS SCHEDULE

(The details in the schedule rundown are as firm as we can make them as this class begins. However, we know from experience that adjustments may be necessary to meet student instructional needs and introduce any new materials that may enhance the curriculum.)

(Note: News quizzes will be given promptly at the start (9 a.m.) of most classes, excluding the Week 1 session.)

Week 1, January 16:

Discussion:

- Course expectations
- Syllabus review
- Camera check-out procedures
- ATVN Learning Lab procedures
- How to write a story "pitch"

Exercise: Diagnostic writing exercise

Homework assignments:

- Check out cameras and shoot basic photo sequences
- Prepare two story "pitches" for VSV ("VO/SOT") due at Week 4 session. The story you consider your strongest goes on a "Story Development Form"; the back-up story, on a "Story Idea Form." (Pitches are due at the Week 2 session.)

- Read SPJ Code of Ethics
- Read “Videography” and “Shooting & Video Editing Glossary” handouts

Week 2, January 23:

Due: Two story pitches for VSV assignment.

Discussion:

- Camera (videography) workshop (**Bring camera and tripod to this session**)
- VSV format and style review

Exercise: Story conference, VSV “pitches” assigned in Week 1
(Instructor will review written “pitches” and assign one for VSV production)

Homework Assignment:

- Shoot, write and edit VSV (Due at Week 4 session) running :45 – 1:00.
- Review “News Editing” handout.

Week 3, January 30:

Discussion:

- Elements of a package
- Package format (Hand-out)
- Basics of natural sound (NatSOT)

Exercise: Write a basic package from a story sheet

Homework:

- Finish VSV, running :45-1:00, due at Week 4 session.
- Prepare two story “pitches” for “Package No. 1” assignment. Pitches are due at Week 4 session.

Week 4, February 6:

Due: VSV running :45 – 1:00 (Assigned in Week 2)

Discussion:

- Screen, critique VSV’s
- Critique package (in-class exercise, Week 3)
- Review package format and elements (Hand-out: “Eight Tests of a Good TV News Package”)
- Prepare for Avid package training session (Week 5)

Exercise: Story conference, Package No. 1 story pitches.

Homework:

- Read pages 150 – 168, “Television News Story Forms—The Package,” *Broadcast News Handbook* (Tuggle)
- Begin work on Package No. 1, running 1:30-1:45 (Due at Week 7 class session)

Week 5, February 13:

Avid package training. Class convenes in the Digital Lab (G40).
Completion of this training session is MANDATORY.

Homework:

- Continue work on Package No. 1.
- Read handout: “Writing to Sound Bites”

Week 6, February 20: (Bring cameras and tripods to this session.)

Discussion:

- Effective sound bites and how to write to them.
- Basics of shooting, delivering on-camera “standups”

Exercise: Practice shooting “standups”

Homework:

- Finish Package No. 1 (**Due at Week 7 class session**)
- Read “Learning to Listen,” Chapter 10, *Creative Interviewing* (Metzler)

Week 7, February 27:

Due: Package No. 1, running 1:30-1:45 (Include aircut, script, raw tapes, tape logs and source list).

Discussion: The “how-to’s” of **effective interviewing** (Includes video: “The Big Question” from CBS Reports documentary, “Breaking the News”; may also include sample of Sunday interview shows, “Meet the Press” and “Face the Nation,” often good models of tough, thorough interviewing)

Exercise: Preparing for the “big interview”—What would you ask Mr. Newsmaker?

Homework:

- Prepare two story pitches for Package No. 2. (**Due at Week 8 session**)
- Read “Why We Fight,” Chapter 13, *Broadcast News Handbook* (Tuggle/Carr)

Week 8, March 5:

Due: Two story pitches for Package No. 2

Discussion:

- Screen, critique Package No. 1 submissions from last week
- Ethics issue: Video news releases: To use or not to use? (Hint: Think truth in packaging.)

Exercise: Story conference, Package No. 2 story pitches. As before, the instructor will select one of the stories for production.

Homework:

- Begin work on Package No. 2, running 1:30-1:45, **due at the Week 11 class session.**
- Read “Enhancing Meaning through Stress and Intonation,” Chapter 5 from *Broadcast Voice Handbook* (Utterback). (Chapter will be handed out in class)

Week 9, March 12:

Discussion:

- Fine-tuning television packages under deadline pressure.
- Honing the “cosmetics” of television reporting – voice, delivery, style

Exercise:

- Video case studies: Screen and discuss samples from video series “Before and After: Strategies for Better Storytelling.”
- Possible voice/delivery exercise

Homework:

- Complete work on Package No. 2, running 1:30-1:45, due at the Week 11 class session.
- Read: “States Rights,” pages 100-110, Chapter 7, *Cameras in the Courtroom: Television and the Pursuit of Justice* (Cohn and Dow) (Class handout)

Week 10: SPRING BREAK

Week 11, March 26:

Due: **Package No. 2**, running 1:30 – 1:45, with script, aircut, raw tapes, tape logs and source list.

Discussion:

- Broadcast coverage of public affairs, including courts and city councils
- Possible guest speaker

Exercise: Writing exercise – a court case

Homework: Prepare two story “pitches” for Package No. 3 (Final Project). “Pitches are due at the Week 12 class session. **Final project is due no later than 4 p.m., Wednesday, May 7th.**

Week 12, April 2:

Due: Two story “pitches” for Package #3 (Final Package running 2:00 – 2:15)

Discussion:

- Screen, discuss Package No. 2, submitted last week.
- What we learned and haven’t learned in producing two packages

Exercise: Story conference re. two pitches for Package No. 3. Instructor will select one for production of J303 final project.

Homework: Begin work on Package No. 3 (Final project), running 2:00-2:15, **due no later than 4 p.m., Wednesday, May 7th.**

Week 13, April 9:

Discussion:

- Television correspondents are reporters, too: Developing sources, “go-to” interview subjects, and use of anonymous sources. When do you trust the internet?
- Discussion of shield laws

Exercise: TBA

Homework:

- Continue work on Package #3 (final project), 2:00 – 2:15, due May 7th.
- Read “The Care and Feeding of Television Live Shots.” Chapter 12, *Broadcast News Handbook* (Tuggle).

(FRIDAY, APRIL 11: THE LAST DAY TO DROP A CLASS WITH A MARK OF “W.”)

Week 14, April 16:

Discussion:

- The “whys” and “hows” of television “live shots.”
- The strengths and drawbacks of live television.

Exercise: Performing a “live shot”

Homework:

- Continue work on Package #3, due May 7th.
- Read “The Brave New World of Multimedia Convergence,” Chapter 14, *Broadcast News Handbook* (Tuggle/Carr)

Week 15, April 23:

Discussion:

- “...Brave New World of Multimedia Convergence”—reading assigned last session.
- A day in the life of a modern major market newsroom: Screen Learning Channel video, “Breaking News.”

Exercise: Live shot exercise No. 2 (graded)

Homework: Complete work on Package #3, 2:00–2:15, due no later than 4 p.m., May 7th.

Week 16, April 30:

Discussion: Wrapping it up.

- Review essentials of a “model” package
- Individual consultations on final packages
- Possible outside speaker on “Whither Goest Broadcast News?”

Homework: **Complete work on Package No. 3, 2:00-2:15, due no later than 4 p.m., Wednesday, May 7th.** (Must submit script, aircut, raw tapes, tape logs and source contact list.)