

# USC ANNENBERG SCHOOL OF JOURNALISM

Journalism 303  
Broadcast News Reporting  
Spring 2008  
Randy Paige  
ASC 225 Thursdays 7:00-9:40pm  
Office hours: Thursdays following class (9:40 p.m.)

## Course Objectives

Journalists working in broadcast and print share many common elements in the newsgathering and research phases of their work. But once they sit down to write their stories, their work begins to diverge. In fact, broadcast journalists don't *write* their stories, they *produce* them. Writing is just one small part of the story production process. In broadcast journalism, you weave your "writing" together with the audio found at the various locations within your story (natural sound) and portions of the interviews you conduct with the people who are contributing to your story (sound bites). You will learn how to shoot the video, conduct the interviews, capture all of the audio and video elements, then weave them all together in the edit bay to create a story that impacts your viewers. You will also learn how to identify the elements that make up powerful television news stories. We will also spend time examining the ethical framework surrounding broadcast news and your responsibilities as a journalist within that framework. This semester you will learn how to produce powerful news stories for television.

## Required Textbook

Title: Make It Memorable  
Author: Bob Dotson  
Publisher: Bonus Books Inc.  
(Available from amazon.com—I will also make sure one is available on reserve in the Annenberg Research Library)

## Optional Textbooks

ISBN: 0205262589  
Title: Creative Interviewing  
Author: Ken Metzler

Publisher: Allyn & Bacon

ISBN: 0-07-326869-0

Title: Broadcast News Handbook, 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition

Author: C.A. Tuggle

Publisher: McGraw-Hill

Title: Broadcast News Handbook, 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition

Author: C.A. Tuggle, Forest Carr, Suzanne Huffman

Publisher: McGraw Hill

## **DAILY NEWS DIET**

You will be required to watch at least one local and/or national newscast daily. You also will be required to read The Los Angeles Times each day. We will spend time in class examining the manner in which these two media handle the same stories. We will discuss the strengths and weaknesses of newspapers and television in conveying the information. We will also discuss the ethical questions, which arise from this news coverage. There will be periodic quizzes regarding news coverage and ethical issues.

## **ASSIGNMENTS**

You will shoot, write and edit one story without a reporter narration (VO/SOT) and three complete news stories (packaged with a narration track). Each story will be turned in on a mini-DV tape cued to a countdown leader at the start of your story or on a DVD. You may also submit your story as a Quicktime file. A hard copy script is also required and students will be encouraged to e-mail a copy of the script as well.

## **GRADING CRITERIA: ASSIGNMENTS AND VIDEO PACKAGES**

- A. Basic criteria** - You will be graded on clarity, organization, accuracy, fairness/balance, completeness/omissions, grammar, spelling, and ability to meet deadlines. 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, B-, C+, C, C-, D+, D, D- or F). On some assignments we may use a point system, but the points will be translated to a letter grade.

1. "A" stories are accurate, clear, comprehensive stories that are well written and require only minor changes (i.e., they would air). They

are also shot and edited creatively, are well paced, and include good sound bites and natural sound that add flavor, color, or emotion to the story.

2. “B” stories require more than minor editing, and have a few style or spelling errors or one significant error of omission. There may be minor flaws in the composition of some shots or in the editing. Good use of available sound bites.
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. Some sound bites add little or no color – only information that could be better told in the reporter’s narration.
4. “D” stories require excessive 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 a grade of F:
  - Plagiarizing a script, portions of a script, or information from any source – wire copy, feed packages, another reporter’s package or story script. (See B below.)
  - Fabricating (making up) anything that is not true.
  - Staging a scene: When the reporter tells or asks someone to do something specific, unless that is revealed or made obvious in 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.
  - 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.
  - Having someone else shoot your standup (portion of story when the reporter is on-camera) or interviews – (only in cases when the assignment specifically calls for you to shoot your own standup and/or interviews). If your standup is shot by

someone else, be sure to check the shot immediately. You are responsible for the quality, no matter who shot it.

- Promising, paying or giving someone something in exchange for doing an interview, either on or off camera.

## **B. Plagiarism/Academic Integrity Policy**

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

The following is the School of Journalism's policy on academic integrity as published in the University catalogue:

*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 examinations 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.*

## **C. Late assignments**

Core policy is that no late assignments will be accepted, except for verified medical reasons or documented extraordinary circumstances. Meeting deadlines is a journalistic necessity in the real world.

## **D. Rewriting stories**

You will be allowed to rewrite, reshoot, or re-edit assignments to achieve a higher grade. Such rewrites must be done within a deadline to be determined by the instructor, and the two grades will be averaged. This policy does not apply to Package #3 (final exam).

## **COURSE GRADES**

Essays, Quizzes, Class Participation

10%

Homework Assignments	10%
VO/SOT	10%
Package #1 and Story Idea “pitch”	15%
Package #2 and Story Idea “pitch”	20%
Package #3 (Final Project)	30%
Learning Lab or off-campus Internship:	5%

Broadcast majors must fulfill requirement at ATVN.  
 Print majors : DT, Annenberg  
 Radio, or a suitable internship approved by instructor.

### **PROJECT GRADE CRITERIA**

We will factor in expectations along with excellence. In the early projects, we expect you to demonstrate understanding of the principles and techniques covered so far. We will comment on other shortcomings in our critiques as a learning aid, but you will not be penalized for concepts we have not discussed in class or provided in handout materials or required reading. But we also expect you to display basic news writing skills from last semester.

### **ATTENDANCE**

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

### **WRITING COACHES**

Writing coaches are available in ASC 227 during posted drop-in times or by appointment. Writing coaches should be used to review assignments *after* an assignment has been graded and critiqued by the instructor.

Mike Daniels, Broadcast: [danielsm@usc.edu](mailto:danielsm@usc.edu)  
 Bob Berger, Print: [rberger@usc.edu](mailto:rberger@usc.edu)  
 Ed Boyer, Print: [edboyer@ca.rr.com](mailto:edboyer@ca.rr.com)  
 Brad Hanson, Print: [brad.hanson@latimes.com](mailto:brad.hanson@latimes.com)



### **LEARNING LAB / INTERNSHIPS**

Broadcast majors are required to fill a weekly shift at ATVN (Annenberg TV News). Print majors must choose between a regular shift at the Daily Trojan (if one is available), Annenberg Radio, or a news internship approved by instructor. Proof of satisfactory internship work is required.

### **PROFESSIONAL DRESS POLICY**

The definition of “normal business attire” has changed considerably over the past few years, but still requires long pants or a skirt, rather than shorts – and a shirt or blouse with a collar, rather than a T-shirt or tank top. Shoes, no flip-flops.

When giving your e-mail address to a contact or interviewee, please provide your USC e-mail address, not the cutesy one you give to your friends.

In short, make a good impression that reflects well on you and on Annenberg.

### **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 instructor as early in the semester as possible. DSP is located in STU 301. Phone: (213) 740-0776.

### **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.

### **INSTRUCTOR BIO**

Randy Paige is a veteran broadcast journalist who has been reporting in the field for the past 25 years. He has spent the majority of his career as an investigative reporter and has won some of the nation's most prestigious awards, including an Alfred I DuPont Silver Baton, considered the broadcast journalist's version of a Pulitzer Prize, for his exposé on lead contamination in Los Angeles public schools. Paige has also received numerous Emmy awards, a National Headliner Award and he received a Gold Medal as Reporter of the Year at the New York Film Festival. Paige filed stories from the Persian Gulf following the World Trade Center attacks on 9/11. He reported from Saudi Arabia during the first Gulf War, profiled a Holocaust survivor's return to a Nazi death camp in Poland and covered the O.J. Simpson civil trial. He is currently a reporter for KCBS/KCAL TV in Los Angeles. He received B.A degrees in Sociology and Criminology from University of California-Santa Barbara and an M.S. Degree from San Jose State University.

## **CLASS SCHEDULE**

### **Week 1- January 17**

#### **Class Topics:**

Introduction of instructor and students; review syllabus. Discuss differences between broadcast and print stories. Discuss elements of powerful television news stories. We will view "Telling the Truth," a compilation of DuPont award winning stories from 2006. Annenberg techs will discuss mini-DV camcorders (see below).

#### **Homework:**

E-mail me a letter about yourself. Tell me anything you would like to help me understand who you are and your particular interests or goals in journalism. Write it in an easy, conversational style, and make it interesting. Take this opportunity to demonstrate your writing style and storytelling abilities. It will not be graded, but it will be answered. **Due Monday, January 21.**

Research a story about the USC campus tram service and write a 30 to 45 second story about it in conversational broadcast style to be turned in next week.

#### **Readings:**

Most reading assignments are not shown in this syllabus because we want to provide current examples. Such reading material will be distributed in class and/or e-mailed to you as a Microsoft Word attachment.

Ethics: Read an ethics statement prepared by the



Society of Professional Journalists:

<http://www.spj.org/ethicscode.asp>

You can also download a printable PDF copy from that Web site.

### **Camcorder Procedures:**

Annenberg techs will visit class today to explain operation of the mini-DV camcorder you will be issued for the semester. (You will need to purchase your own external microphone for interviews and a headset.) Check out camera today and practice shooting from a *technical* standpoint. Professional news videogr will be in class next week to discuss shooting techniques.



## **Week 2- January 24**

### **Class Topics:**

Professional news videographer Kris Smith will be in class to demonstrate shooting techniques. We will view samples of excellent videography and Kris will cover all of the basic elements including how to shoot sequences, avoid jump cuts, how to shoot powerful opening and closing sequences, how to light and shoot interview subjects, how to choose the proper angles to maximize the impact of your story.

### **Homework Assignment:**

Board a USC shuttle, shoot a variety of sequences capturing natural sound, video B-roll and sound bites. You will use this video to produce your first VO/SOT with edited video and script due February 7<sup>th</sup>.

## **Week 3 - January 31**

### **Class Topics:**

The elements of a powerful news story will be discussed. What makes one story merely informative and another unforgettable? What are the elements of a powerful print story? Are these the same elements as those of a powerful television news story? We will view examples and discuss the strengths and weaknesses of print and broadcast journalism.

We will also view and discuss the raw footage of the USC tram that you shot last week. What kinds of shots are the most effective? What is a sequence? Which types of shots make the best opening shots, which types of shots make the best closing shots?

How is natural sound helpful in telling your story? We will also discuss jump cuts, which are usually avoided in broadcast news.

**Homework:**

Write and edit a VO/SOT on the USC campus shuttle. Bring the edited story and hard copy of script to class next week. You will read your story in class while we watch your video and listen to your sound bites (in other words, you will “anchor” your own story).

Fill out three story idea forms (Provided via email and hardcopies of forms will be distributed in class) outlining topics you would like to choose from for Package #1 which will be due March 6<sup>th</sup>. Before filling out the form, research each story idea to make sure the story is viable. The story may be shot on campus but off campus stories are encouraged. Obtain permission from those who are involved in the story and/or event to shoot the story. Bring the completed story idea forms to class and be prepared to “sell” your story ideas. What makes it a good story? What are the important elements? Why does it belong in the newscast? You will pick the best of these story ideas for Package #1 due March 6<sup>th</sup>.

**Reading Assignment:**

Make It Memorable, Bob Dotson  
Section One (Pgs. 7-39)

**Week 4 – February 7**

**Avid Workshop:**

Class meets today in Digital Editing Lab.  
You will learn how to edit packages with a narration track.  
Avid training is mandatory.

**Reading Assignment:**

Make It Memorable, Bob Dotson  
Section Two (Pgs. 41 – 70)

**Homework:**

Complete your three story idea forms. They are due in class next week.

**Week 5 - February 14**

**Class Topics:**

We will discuss the necessary preparation required before you begin to shoot your story, which includes identifying the necessary elements, finding the proper interview subjects, identifying the best locations to shoot b-roll and interviews. We will also discuss other

visual elements that can help to tell your story including home video, family photos and naturally occurring music. We will also discuss the use and misuse of music.

**Assignment Due:**

Your completed story pitch forms are due in class today. One of those pitches will be selected for your first self-contained story, Package #1.

**Reading Assignment:**

Make It Memorable, Bob Dotson  
Section 3, Reporter's Checklist (Pgs. 73 – 103)

**WEEK 6 – February 21**

**Class Topics:**

The art of the interview: We will discuss how to prepare and execute good interviews for your stories.

Stand-ups: Stand-ups are a tool that can be invaluable in storytelling. We will discuss when and how to use them.

Natural Sound--- Natural sound can breathe life into your story by bringing the viewer there and allowing the viewer to experience the story as well as to watch it. We will discuss the importance of the use of natural sound in broadcast news stories.

**Homework Assignment:**

Continue to work on Package #1, it is due in two weeks.

**Week 7 – February 28**

**Class topics:**

Story checklist: Do you have all of the elements you need to tell your story? What is your opening sequence and your closing sequence? Do your sound bites add to the story? Have you gathered all of the visual and audio elements that can help to tell your story? Are you ready for your final edit? We will discuss these topics and we will view examples of powerful television news stories.

**Homework Assignment:**

Complete the editing on Package #1. The project is due next week in class.

## **Week 8 - March 6**

### **Class Topics:**

Show and Tell: Package #1 is due today. Submit mini-DV or DVD of your completed story, with the tape cued up to the countdown before the start of your story. Also submit a hard copy of your script. We will watch and discuss the stories today in class.

### **Assignment Due:**

Package #1 due today

### **Homework:**

Complete three more story idea forms for Package #2, which will be due April 3<sup>rd</sup>. If you are going on a spring break vacation, you may want to bring your camcorder along to produce a story involving a topic that may be related to spring break. "How I Spent My Spring Vacation" is not a viable news story, but a story about excessive alcohol/drug use, impact on local communities due to noise and disruption, or some other issue oriented topic may be a possible story subject. Plan on bringing in your completed story idea forms into class next week.

## **Week 9 March 13**

### **Class topics:**

Story outlines: We will discuss the technique of using a story outline before you write your script to help identify story flow, pacing and completeness. The outline will include transcriptions of sound bites, stand-ups, use of natural sound, music, etc.

The press conference: How to get information from people who do not want to give it. We will have an in class exercise to demonstrate how to get information from news sources (police, investigators, homeland security, etc) adept at concealing information.

### **Homework:**

Complete outline for Pkg #2, outline due in class March 27th

Complete research and begin shooting Package #2, which will be due April 3<sup>rd</sup>.

## **Week 10 - March 20**

Spring Break -- You may want to take the opportunity to shoot elements of Package #2.

## **Week 11 – March 27**

### **Class topics:**

Outline for Package #2 is due today. We will review outlines and discuss progress of Package #2.

Storytelling structures: We will discuss several structures that can be effective in organizing the information in your story. Bookends: the technique of personalizing your story subject while preserving the impact of the big picture. The Restart: Opening montage of your strongest elements, followed by a standup or narration that focuses the story.

### **Assignment Due:**

Outline for Package #2 due today.

### **Homework Assignment:**

Complete final edit on Package #2, due next week.

## **Week 12 -- April 3**

### **Class topics:**

Show and Tell: Package #2 is due today. We will view and discuss the stories in class.

### **Assignment Due:**

Package #2 is due today.

### **Homework Assignment:**

Complete at least three story idea forms, one of these stories ideas will be chosen for the final project. The other two stories will be used as back-ups in case the first choice falls through. Remember, the final project is 30% of your grade. Choose wisely.

## **Week 13 – April 10**

### **Class Topics:**

Investigative Reporting: We will discuss the role of investigative reporting in our society and we will view examples of investigative stories. How do you go about finding, researching, and producing powerful investigative stories? We will discuss where to look and how to execute this premier form of broadcast journalism.

### **Assignment due:**

Story idea forms are due in class today for final project, Package #3

### **Homework Assignment:**

Continue research and begin shooting Package #3

## **Week 14 - April 17**

### **Class Topics:**

Feature Reporting: We will discuss the power of the feature story, focusing on stories that illustrate the power of the broadcast news story by profiling ordinary people. We will examine how natural sound, creative videography and strong writing comes together to tell unforgettable stories.

### **Homework Assignment:**

Continue producing final project.

## **Week 15 - April 24**

### **Class Topics:**

With the final project due just two weeks from now, we will take the opportunity to recap the important elements in television news stories, and I will hand out a checklist for students to use as they check off the elements for their final project. We will discuss opening sequences, natural sound, choosing sound bites, the use of stand-ups, incorporating moments, and other visual elements including home videos, family photos, naturally occurring music, and the closing sequence.

We will also discuss the progress of the final projects to help students deal with the inevitable last minute glitches that threaten to impact their stories.

**Homework Assignment:**

Continue producing final project

**Week 16 - May 1****Class Topics:**

The modern television newsroom: Economic imperatives are changing the face of American journalism. What is the new landscape that will accommodate the new journalists? In this last class session before the final project is due, will view a recent Frontline documentary produced by former 60 Minutes producer Lowell Bergman, entitled: "News War: What's Happening to the News?" We will then discuss the implications for student journalists preparing for careers in news.

**Homework Assignment:**

Complete final project, due in class next week, May 8<sup>th</sup>

**Week 17 - May 8****Class Topics:**

This is the final class of the semester . Final projects are due in class today. No extensions are permitted except for verifiable emergencies. Please submit the mini-DV cued up to the countdown lead-in to the story, or a DVD copy of the story, along with a hard copy script. We will celebrate the end of the semester with a final Show and Tell session for those students who would like to share and watch final projects. (This final Show and Tell session is not mandatory.) Congratulations! You can head off to your summer vacation knowing that you now know how to produce a professional broadcast news story. Your new career awaits!