

**USC ANNENBERG SCHOOL OF JOURNALISM
SYLLABUS**

Journalism 203: Newswriting – Broadcast

Fall 2006 Wednesday 11 a.m. – 1:40 p.m.

RM: ASC 330

Prof. Irv Cuevas

Office Hours by appointment prior to class 10am-11am

COURSE OVERVIEW & OBJECTIVES

PURPOSE: This course will teach students how to write news copy for radio and television broadcasts. Emphasis will be placed on developing the communications tools every journalist needs to enter the broadcast news industry and then to advance and survive through compelling writing and professionalism. This class is an essential building block for any career in radio and television news.

METHODS: The course will consist of lectures, discussions, reading and writing assignments, video presentations, and opportunities for guest speakers. In addition to required texts, subject matter will utilize real-life stories and situations from the KABC-TV Eyewitness Newsroom. Students will be exposed to the concepts of discovering, researching and writing actual news stories.

ASSIGNMENTS: Students will complete classroom and homework writing assignments and participate in discussions about current events and legal, ethical and entertainment considerations that influence the broadcast news process.

EXPECTATIONS: As in the real world of the broadcast industry, completing assignments on time is critical. Students therefore are expected to meet all deadlines. Missed or late assignments will not be accepted.

Attendance, being on time for class, and active participation are important factors in your development and in preparing for the reality of working in a professional newsroom.

COURSE BONUS: While this class is geared to learning or improving broadcast newswriting skills, students will benefit in other academic, social and professional areas in which written and verbal communications skills are important to success. Techniques and methods of expression mastered in this class can be applied in other university and work endeavors.

REQUIRED TEXTBOOKS: All textbooks are available at the USC Bookstore. Some of the textbooks may also be available at www.barnesandnoble.com or www.amazon.com. All textbooks, including the course reader, are also available on reserve at the Annenberg Resource Center (ARC) and at Leavey Library.

Title: Broadcast News & Writing Stylebook 3rd Edition

Author: Robert Papper

Publisher: Allyn & Bacon
ISBN: 0-205-44974-3

Title: COURSE READER: "Newswriting Workbook," with DVD
Publisher: USC Bookstore
ISBN: None

Title: Associated Press Stylebook and Briefing on Media Law, 2004 Edition
Author: Norm Goldstein
Publisher: Perseus Publishing
ISBN: 0738207403

Title: News Reporting and Writing, 10th Edition
Author: Melvin Mencher
ISBN: 0073212768

Dictionary: The following online dictionary will be the official reference for in-class assignments, homework assignments, midterms and finals:
Merriam-Webster, www.m-w.com

NOTE: BRING ALL TEXTS AND MATERIALS TO EVERY CLASS.

DAILY NEWS READINGS/CURRENT EVENTS QUIZZES

It is crucial that you stay abreast of current events by daily attention to television and radio newscasts, newspapers and newsmagazines – all will provide source material for quizzes and assignments. On a daily basis, you should read at least one major newspaper such as the *Los Angeles Times* and/or *USA Today*, watch a local TV newscast and TV stations' news websites, listen to all-news radio and regularly read national newsmagazines.

QUIZZES: Current-events quizzes can be expected weekly during the first 10 minutes of class, necessitating your promptness as if meeting a news deadline. Each quiz is worth a maximum of five (5) points (one point for each right answer, 1.5 points off for each wrong answer to discourage guessing). **THERE ARE NO MAKE-UPS FOR IN-CLASS QUIZZES, NOR WILL QUIZ QUESTIONS BE REPEATED FOR LATE ARRIVALS.**

IN-CLASS & HOMEWORK ASSIGNMENTS

Be ready for in-class assignments and homework each week. This is a writing class, folks. From the outset, you will face manageable deadlines and time-constraints, but we will begin simply and progress through the semester to more challenging assignments as you prepare for the real world of broadcast news.

You should be able to type and know Microsoft Word. You should printout all your assignments and keep a backup. **THERE ARE NO MAKE-UPS FOR IN-CLASS ASSIGNMENTS, LATE ASSIGNMENTS ARE NOT ACCEPTED AND WILL RECEIVE A GRADE OF “F”. HOMEWORK ASSIGNMENTS ARE DUE AT THE BEGINNING OF CLASS, AND CANNOT BE SUBMITTED BY E-MAIL.**

If you are having problems with your assignments or homework, feel free to contact me.

GRADING CRITERIA: ASSIGNMENTS, MIDTERMS, FINALS

Your assignments are graded on clarity; organization; accuracy; fairness/balance; completeness/omissions; AP style, grammar, punctuation and spelling; and ability to meet deadlines. Each story will have a point total and a letter grade: A, A-, B+, B, B-, C+, C, C-, D+, D, D-, F.

1. “A” stories are accurate, clear, comprehensive stories that are well written and require only minor editing (i.e., they would air).
2. “B” stories require more than minor editing, and have a few style or spelling errors or one significant error of omission. Voiceovers include appropriate b-roll. VSVs and packages also include good sound bites and natural sound that add flavor, color, or emotion to the story. Stories are written in appropriate broadcast format and meet time requirements.
3. “C” stories are stories that need considerable editing or rewriting and/or have many spelling, style or omission errors. B-roll and sound bites add little or no color—only information that could be better told in the script or reporter’s narration.
4. “D” stories require excessive rewriting and have numerous errors, and should not have been submitted.
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”.** A misspelled name would be an example. A wrong intersection in a traffic story would be another.

COURSE GRADES

Assignments: in-class, homework, ethics	25%
Current events quizzes	10%
Standardized Leads Test – Week 4	10%
Learning Lab Requirement	10%
Midterm - Week 8	20%
Final - Finals Week 12/6-13	25%
Total	100%

REWRITING STORIES:

As a way to learn from mistakes, students may be allowed to rewrite assignments, including those that received an F for factual errors, to achieve a higher grade. Such rewrites must be done within a tight timeframe, perhaps overnight, and the two grades will be averaged. And at instructor's discretion, late assignments or assignments not turned in on deadline, which automatically received an "F" grade, may be rewritten, but only eligible for a highest grade of "C". No rewrite policies apply to the midterm or final exams.

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, and 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 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."

LEARNING LAB REQUIREMENT

All core newswriting students must become a staff member of a campus media organization by the end of the third week of class.

-- Broadcast majors must fulfill their requirement at ATVN. Print and public relations majors can work at the Daily Trojan, Online Journalism Review or an off-campus internship.

ATTENDANCE

As in a working newsroom, or any workplace, class attendance is an absolute. It is necessary to assure you don't miss quizzes, video presentations, and in-class assignments.

You are expected to be in class every week, and must get approval in advance if it is absolutely essential that you miss a class. There should be no assumption you will be able to make-up assignments or lectures, and it is your responsibility for getting the class notes from other students in the class. Separate "catch-up" sessions outside of class are not possible, nor is it allowed to make-up or catch-up by attending another core broadcast class.

An unexcused absence is one in which the student simply doesn't show up for class and hasn't contacted the instructor in advance.

Documented medical emergencies or other circumstances can be considered excused absences rather than unexcused absences based on the instructor's discretion. Students can get medical documentation through the USC Student Health Center.

It can be concluded that you will affect your course grade by excessive absences or tardiness.

WRITING COACHES

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

Mike Daniels, Broadcast: danielism@usc.edu

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 me as early in the semester as possible. DSP is located in STU 301. Its phone number is 213-740-0776.

CLASS SCHEDULE

WEEK 1 – AUGUST 23

Class Topics:

Course introduction, syllabus & policy review, overview of convergence core, plagiarism
Styles of writing: Broadcast versus print and online
Current events assessment/Discussion

In-Class Writing Assignment:

Basic writing orientation

NOTE: Final exam for this course will be during University Finals Week.

Homework Assignment Due Next Week:

Introductory personal profile: Your “who, what, when, where & why” (Use handout as guide)

Readings For Next Week:

Papper: Chapters 2/Readability & 3/Words, Chapter 6/ Leads pp. 53 – 66 and Ethics statement: RTNDA code: pp. 174-177

WEEK 2 – AUGUST 30

Class Topics:

Current events quiz

Fundamentals of writing in broadcast style

The 5 W's

Radio vs. TV Newswriting

The all-important Lead

In-Class Writing Assignment:

Write leads and broadcast style sentences

Homework Assignment:

Write a short reader in broadcast style 5-7 sentences: Facts from Course Reader

Readings: Papper, Chapter 4/Phrases & Phrasing & Chapter 5/Sentences

BE SURE TO SIGN UP FOR LEARNING LAB BY NEXT WEEK

WEEK 3 - SEPT. 6

Class Topics:

Current Events Quiz

The use of words--Clear, concise, correct, conversational

“Tight” and powerful writing & Problem words, slang and jargon

In-Class Writing Assignment:

Writing exercise to bring these rules into play, and crafting a simple V/O

Review for Leads Test (Using text & examples)

Homework Assignment: Write one broadcast style lead from five news stories from a major newspaper of the week. Thus, you hand in five different leads, and a copy/clipping of source material.

Readings: Papper, Chapter 11/TV Story Forms pp. 108-110, Chapter 12/TV: Working with Pictures pp. 119-124 & Chapter 29/TV Script Form & Supers pp. 258-262

WEEK 4 - SEPT. 13

Class Topics:

LEADS TEST (first hour of class)

Present tense writing, Active vs. passive voice

What to look for in news video, “logging” video timecode
Explanation of V/O script format

In-Class Writing Assignment:

Writing to Video/To be chosen from Course Reader & DVD source material
(Note: In-class assignment grades start counting at full-weight this week.)

Homework Assignment: Rewrite :30 sec V/O story from this week’s in-class assignment (note: counts for full-weight)

Readings:

Papper, Chapter 8/Sound bites & Actualities pp. 86-92, & Review Chapter 12 & 29 from week 3

WEEK 5 - SEPT. 20 Note: In-Class and Homework assignments grades now count at full weight.

Class Topics:

Current events quiz

TV scripting terminology

The use of sound bites

Explanation of V/S/V scripting format

In-Class Writing Assignment:

V/S/V Chosen from Course Reader/DVD

Homework Assignment:

Write :40 second V/SV– Story to be chosen from Course Reader/DVD

Readings:

Associated Press Stylebook: Briefing on Media Law: Introduction, p. 338; chaps. 1 through 4; p. 354; chap. 9

WEEK 6 - SEPT. 27

Class Topics:

Current Events Quiz

Writing for the ear and the eyes, painting a word-picture

In-Class Writing Assignment:

Writing a V/S/V – Story to be chosen from Course Reader/DVD

Homework Assignment:

:40- :45 sec VSV: Story to be assigned from Course Reader/DVD

Readings:

In place of readings, write a brief paper (no more than 2 double-space pages) on an ethical issue you see in broadcast news coverage. Can be opinion-oriented, and suggest possible solution(s).

WEEK 7 - OCT. 4

Class Topics:

Current Events Quiz

Analyze/Critique homework from previous week

Review for midterm

In-Class Writing Assignment:

Write under “test deadline”, a V/O, and a V/S/V ... chosen from Course Reader/DVD

Homework Assignment:

Review writing skills and practice V/O and V/S/V techniques

Readings:

Papper: Review chapters already covered for midterm

WEEK 8 - OCT. 11

MIDTERM

Homework Assignment:

Screen a TV newscast (of at least 30 minutes). Listen and watch carefully to scripting, video choices, story selection/placement, word usage, etc. You might want to tape it, so you can better analyze it. Take brief notes on at least 10 observations to be turned in next week, and discussed in class. Identify station, date/time of newscast.

Readings: TBA

WEEK 9 - OCT. 18

Class Topics:

Current events quiz

Review midterm exam

Discuss previous week’s homework

Begin individual students to assess your course performance to date

Homework Assignment:

:55 - 1:00 sec V/S/V/S/V From Course Reader/DVD

Readings:

Mencher, Chap. 9 Broadcast News Writing pp. 233-243

WEEK 10 - OCT. 25

Class Topics:
Avid Editing Session 11 -1:40 pm Digital Lab

Homework Assignment:
Avid Editing Assignment

Readings:
Instead of readings, write another brief paper (similar to week 6) on an ethical and/or controversial issue facing radio/TV/internet news.

WEEK 11 - NOV. 1

Class Topics:
Current events quiz
Continue individual student meetings

In-Class Writing Assignment:
Write a :25 sec reader from mock news conference conducted in class today
Write a :30 V/O from mock news conference/Video “shot-sheet” to be provided

Homework Assignment:
Write a :40 sec V/S/V from mock news conference conducted in class today. (Different script from your in-class assignments)

Readings:
Course Reader: pp. TBA

WEEK 12 - NOV. 8

NOVEMBER 10: LAST DAY TO DROP A CLASS WITH A MARK OF "W"

Class Topics:
Current Events Quiz
Dealing with press releases, video news releases, separating news from puff/commercialism

In-Class Writing Assignment:
Write various readers and V/O's from news releases, handouts, VNR's

Homework Assignment & Reading Assignment: TBA

WEEK 13 - NOV. 15

Class Topics:
Current events quiz

Matching words and video, choosing appropriate SOT/Utilizing appropriate Text chapters and handout material with tips

In-Class Writing Assignments:

Writing leads from “dictated” story info

Homework Assignment:

V/S/V : TBA

Readings:

Papper, Chapter 27 – Sports & Chapter 28 – Weather: Concentrate on opening pages of each chapter, and briefly familiarize yourself with terms

WEEK 14 - NOV. 22

Current Events Quiz

In-Class Writing Assignments:

Write V/O and V/S/V as prep for final

Readings:

Begin reviewing semester readings, especially weeks 1 through 6

WEEK 15 – NOV. 29

REVIEW FOR FINAL EXAM

Write under “test deadline”, a reader ; a V/O ; and a V/S/V ... chosen from Course Reader/DVD

**WEEK 16 – DECEMBER 6 11 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. FINAL EXAM
ASC 330 (Student Services must handle any conflicts.)**

Note: The Grammar, Punctuation and Spelling Examination will also be during finals week.

INSTRUCTOR'S BIO:

My broadcast journalism career began just as you are now doing – in a University classroom. An “Introduction to Broadcasting” course sparked my interest, and led to a double major in Broadcasting & Journalism and a minor in Public Relations at the University of Southern Mississippi.

After graduation, there were jobs in several small markets, where I developed and polished writing, reporting and on-camera skills. My first “big” market TV job was Atlanta’s WSB-TV – as a reporter and weekend anchor.

Next, I moved into public relations management with United Airlines, which brought me to Los Angeles. Because of company-wide layoffs, I returned to my first love, TV News, and a position as Field Producer/Reporter with NBC News-Burbank Bureau.

There was excitement, glamour and travel involved – and a few terrifying moments as part of a news-crew on the receiving end of machine gun fire as we covered the civil war in El Salvador (the shooting was captured on videotape, and perhaps we can screen it this semester).

For a number of reasons, it became time to return to local news at KABC-TV – as Assignment Editor, Producer and Newswriter. In addition, during the last eight years, I have returned to campus, as adjunct professor at the University of Southern California and California State University-Fullerton (where I also pursue a master’s degree in communications).

Throughout my career(s), writing and expression of ideas have been critical to day-to-day performance, success and advancement. I will share with you the realities of broadcast news I have experienced, and I believe that what we accomplish this semester will prepare you for success in your chosen careers.

August 2006