

**USC Annenberg School of Journalism**  
**Syllabus**  
**JOURNALISM 202: NEWSWRITING – PRINT**  
**Fall 2007**  
**Room AHF 259, Studio C**  
**Tuesday, 7 p.m. to 9:40 p.m.**

**INSTRUCTOR: Mariel Garza**

**COURSE OBJECTIVES**

My goals are to sharpen your writing and critical thinking skills, as well as teach you about news values/judgment, ethics, and how to accurately write about our increasingly diverse world.

Journalism School Director Michael Parks writes that “good journalism starts with good reporting, but good writing tells the story.” Our Core Convergence Curriculum begins with news writing. We believe it is easier to teach students how to be good reporters after they’ve had a chance to learn about what makes a story newsworthy, what elements should be included in basic news stories, and what elements should be included in specific types of news stories such as trial verdicts and obituaries. That means you will use fact sheets to complete your print assignments.

I expect you to come to class on time, prepared (i.e., having done your readings and homework assignments, and followed the news), and ready to discuss various news-related topics.

Your Broadcast instructor and I will work together to make sure you understand the concepts covered in class, the importance of convergence and how it works, that assignments are logical and clear, and that we are moving at the right pace. You should feel free to talk to either of us at any point during the semester to simply chat or discuss any issues with our classes.

You learn best by doing. So expect weekly in-class and take-home writing assignments. Both types of assignments will use fact sheets, which are in your Course Reader. The in-class assignments will be on deadline. The first half of the semester will emphasize the basics of news judgment, and writing news leads and briefs. The second half of the semester will focus on how to cover specific types of news stories that are commonly assigned to beginning reporters. You will complete at least one reporting assignment outside the classroom.

All homework assignments should be turned in to me at the beginning of class the following Tuesday. I will return your edited homework and in-class assignments by the following class. We will discuss the assignments in class using students' work as examples.

Typing skills are essential in this course. You must be able to use a computer, type fast, and use Microsoft Word. When working on a computer, save often, make a back-up copy of your work, and print it out at various stages of the writing process. Always keep a hard copy. Claims that "the computer lost it" will not be accepted as an excuse.

You must know how to insert accents, tildes and other symbols in Word, or be sure to write them in before turning in assignments. Also, see copyediting/proofreading symbols in AP Stylebook.

**Every student is required to schedule a one-on-one meeting with me sometime during the semester.** You're all welcome to meet with me more often, of course.

### **BIOGRAPHY**

Now, a little about your instructor. I am an editorial writer, columnist and blogger for the Los Angeles Daily News, where I have worked for more than six years. Before joining the opinion pages of the Daily News, I was a reporter covering L.A. City Hall. I am a graduate of the undergraduate journalism department of San Francisco State University (class of 1990). In the 17 years since graduation, I have written for California newspapers both large and small, from the tiny Point Reyes Light to the Los Angeles Times' San Gabriel Valley and from dot-coms to both consumer and trade magazines. I currently also teach journalism classes at California State University, Northridge.

### **REQUIRED TEXTBOOKS**

All textbooks are available at the USC Bookstore. Some may be available at [www.barnesandnoble.com](http://www.barnesandnoble.com) or [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com). All textbooks, including the course reader, are also available on reserve at the Annenberg Resource Center and at Leavy Library.

1. Title: **Inside Reporting/A Practical Guide to the Craft of Journalism**  
Author: Tim Harrower  
ISBN: 0-07-352614-2
2. Title: **Course Reader for JOUR 202/203/501**  
Publisher: USC Bookstore
3. Title: **Associated Press Stylebook (2007 edition)**  
Author: Norm Goldstein  
ISBN: 0-465-00489-X
4. Dictionary: **Merriam Webster**, [www.m-w.com](http://www.m-w.com)  
This is the dictionary that should be used for all assignments, midterms and finals.

## **DAILY NEWS READINGS**

Journalists must know what's happening in the world around them. For the aspiring writer/reporter, reading the newspaper and news Web sites thoroughly every day, listening to radio news, and watching television newscasts, are essential and strengthen your writing skills. Read at least one major daily newspaper, as well as weekly newsmagazines. I recommend the Los Angeles Times, The New York Times, the Wall Street Journal, Orange County Register, Los Angeles Daily News, Newsweek, Time or U.S. News and World Report. For news Web sites, try msnbc.com or cnn.com

## **QUIZZES**

Print newswriting will cover AP style and assignments will be graded for it. We will have eight (8) weekly AP Style quizzes and weekly current events quizzes. A list of AP topics to memorize is in the course reader. Each quiz is worth a maximum of 10 points, 1 point for each correct answer and 1.5 points off for every incorrect answer (if you don't know, don't guess). Both quizzes will be held during the first 20 minutes of class, and can NOT be made-up. If you miss a quiz it will be recorded as an "F."

## **GRAMMAR/PUNCTUATION/SPELLING**

Assignments will be graded down accordingly. There will be a diagnostic test during the first week of class. The GPS exam is not part of your course grade, but it is a catalog requirement and you must pass it to continue in the School of Journalism. An official GPS exam will be given on two different dates in December during Finals week. If you fail the December test, you can retake it in February 2007 and again in May 2007. If you do not pass the GPS exam by May, you will be dismissed from the School of Journalism. There is a grammar section in the course reader for review.

## **IN-CLASS/HOMEWORK ASSIGNMENTS**

We will be doing weekly in-class assignments on deadline. Students should print out assignments and keep a back-up. **NO MAKE-UPS FOR IN-CLASS ASSIGNMENTS.**

There will be homework assignments every week. If you are having problems with your homework you should contact me immediately by phone or e-mail.

## **ASSIGNMENT FORMAT**

At the top of each page (use the header tool or type manually) type the following information:

Your Name

Instructor Name

Slug – a slug is a 1-2 word description of the story

Word Count – in Microsoft Word, highlight the story, then click Tools/Word Count.

Date – put the date the assignment is due

Start your story about one-half of the way down the first page to allow space for your grade and the instructor’s notes. Be sure to double-space all stories. Use 12-point type and 1.25-inch margins. Do not use italics, underline or bold.

If you make last-minute fixes, do so with a black or blue pen or pencil using standard symbols (see Copyediting and Proofreading Symbols in your AP Stylebook).

Type or write “-30-“ or “# # #” at the bottom of the last page to indicate the end of the story.

### **GRADING CRITERIA: ASSIGNMENTS, MIDTERMS, FINALS**

All assignments will be edited on a professional basis. Each story will be returned with written comments and explanations of any editing that is more than routine. Our style guide will be “The Associated Press Stylebook and Libel Manual.”

Your copy should not contain any errors in spelling, style, grammar and facts. There should not be any omissions, either. **In fact, after the first week, any misspelled proper noun (even if it’s due to a typographical error) or any inaccuracy, may result in an automatic “F” on that assignment.** Accuracy is the first law of journalism. Professional journalists are expected to get their facts right, to spell and punctuate correctly, and to respect grammar and syntax.

Please don’t be discouraged if your writing receives low grades at the beginning of the semester. Your grades will improve. News writing is hard work, but the only way to get better is to keep writing, regardless of the difficulties. I’m more concerned with how you do in the final weeks of the course than how you do in the first weeks of the course. *Grades on assignments in the first four weeks will be weighted less for the final grade for the course. This policy does not apply to tests.*

**Your final exam will be given on Tuesday, Dec. 4. No excuses—except serious illness—will be accepted.**

Your course grades will be determined as follows:

<b>PRINT</b>	
Assignments and leads tests	40%
Current Events Quizzes	5%
AP Stylebook Quizzes	5%
Midterm	20%
Final	<u>30%</u>
Total	100%

Traditional grades and grade point averages are assigned as follows:

“A” stories are accurate, clear, comprehensive stories that are well-written and require only minor editing (i.e., they are publishable).

“B” stories require more than minor editing, and have a few style or minor spelling errors or an error of omission.

“C” stories are stories that need considerable editing or rewriting and/or have many minor spelling and style errors.

“D” stories require excessive rewriting; have numerous minor spelling and style errors, and should not have been submitted.

“F” stories have at least one proper name misspelled, and/or one factual error. A misspelled name would be an example. A wrong intersection in a traffic story would be another.

### **LATE ASSIGNMENTS:**

**No late assignments will be accepted.** Assignments turned in late will be assigned an “F.” You must turn in assignments on the day they are due even if you know you will miss class. To do so, email them to me in an attached Word document. You may only e-mail assignments if you are not going to be in class. No exceptions.

### **REWRITING STORIES:**

Students may rewrite assignments that received an F or a D grade (including late assignments). The highest grade rewritten assignments can get is a “C.” Such rewrites must be completed by the next class session.

### **PLAGIARISM:**

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 catalog:

“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.”

### **ATTENDANCE**

Students are expected to be in class every week and to be on time. More than two unexcused absences will affect your grade. If you must miss class please call or e-mail

me as soon as possible for excused absences. Students are responsible for getting the class notes from other students in the class.

Although the syllabi are similar, every core class is different and students can't make-up a class by going to another core class in the same sequence. For example, if you miss this print class, you can't go to a Wednesday print class.

### **WRITING COACHES**

Writing coaches are available in ASC 227 during posted drop-in times and by appointment.

Bob Berger: rberger@usc.edu

Ed Boyer: edjboyer@ca.rr.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 me as early in the semester as possible. DSP is located in STU 301. Its phone number is 213-740-0776.

## **CLASS SCHEDULE**

**The schedule is subject to change. Readings should be done before class on the date shown.**

### **WEEK 1 – AUG. 28**

#### **Intro to class**

Review Syllabus. What is news?

**In class assignment:** Diagnostic grammar, punctuation, and spelling test  
(This will not be graded. It is a diagnostic tool to see what your writing is like).

**Homework:** Read ethics statement from the Society of Professional Journalists website ([http://www.spj.org/ethics\\_code.asp](http://www.spj.org/ethics_code.asp)) Be prepared to discuss next week.

### **WEEK 2 – SEPT. 4**

#### **Where it all begins**

Basic newsroom structure and ethics; leads, datelines, quotes and attribution, and how to use them.

**Readings:** Harrower, Chapter 1 (The story of journalism) and Chapter 2 (How Newsrooms Work)

**Quiz:** AP Stylebook #1  
Current Events

**Homework:** TBA

### **WEEK 3 - SEPT. 11**

#### **The news lead**

The Five Ws; burying the lead.

**Readings:** Chapter 3 (pp 34-45)

**Quiz:** AP Stylebook #2  
Current Events

**Homework:** Leads writing TBA  
**Reporting basics**

### **WEEK 4 - SEPT. 18**

How journalists get stories; sources, observation and interviewing. Plus, more leads.

**Readings:** Harrower, Chapter 4 (Reporting Basics)

**Homework:** TBA

## **WEEK 5 - SEPT. 25**

### **Leads Test**

Leads/News Judgment Test [this test will take 1 hour]

**Readings:** Harrower, Chapter 3 (pp. 46- 51)

**Quiz:** AP Stylebook #3  
Current Events

**Homework:** TBA

## **WEEK 6 – OCT. 2**

### **Story Structure**

How to organize a basic news brief and story.

**Readings:** Harrower, Chapter 3 (pp. 52-61)

**Quiz:** AP Stylebook #4  
Current Events

**Homework:** Brief writing TBA

## **WEEK 7 - OCT. 9**

### **Covering the news**

What's a beat? Different types of stories. The basic obit.

**Readings:** Harrower, Chapter 5 (pp. 90-93)

**Quiz:** AP Stylebook #5  
Current Events

**Homework:** Obit TBA

## **WEEK 8 - OCT. 16**

### **MIDTERM**

- 1) 100-150 word brief
- 2) 250-word accident story
- 3) 350-400 obit

**Homework:** TBA

## **WEEK 9 - OCT. 23**

### **Speeches and News Conferences**

How to cover speeches and news conferences.  
(mock press conference)

**Readings:** Harrower, Chapter 5 (pp. 102-103)

**Quiz:** AP Stylebook #6  
Current Events

**Homework:** TBA

**WEEK 10 - OCT. 30**

**Government reporting**

What is government and why it matters; Meetings, public documents and more meetings

**Readings:** Harrower, Chapter (104 -107)

**Quiz:** AP Stylebook #7  
Current Events

**Homework:** TBA

**WEEK 11 – NOV. 6**

**Fires, accidents and disasters**

**Readings:** Harrower, Chapter 5 (pp. 94 – 97)

**Quiz:** AP Stylebook #8  
Current Events

**Homework:** TBA

**WEEK 12 - NOV. 13**

**Crimes and Courts**

How to cover crimes, from arrest through the courts system.

**Readings:** Harrower, Chapter 5 (pp. 98-101)

**Quiz:** Current Events

**Homework:** TBA

**WEEK 13 - NOV. 20**

**Getting the Whole Story**

Why is diversity/inclusiveness valuable in stories? Journalist ethics

**Readings:** Course Reader, VI. Diversity, (pp. 85-101), Harrower, Chapter 7 (Law and Ethics)

**Quiz:** Current Events

**Homework:** TBA

**WEEK 14 - NOV. 27**

**Internet journalism; review for final**

**Readings:** Harrower, Chapter 8 (Online reporting)

**Quiz:** Current Events

**Homework:** TBA

**WEEK 15 – DEC. 4**

**Final: Two stories**

- 1) Accident story (250-350 words)
- 2) Local government story (500-600 words)

**FINALS WEEK – Dec. 12-19**

GPS Exam (date and time TBA)