

**USC Annenberg School of Journalism**  
**Syllabus**  
**JOURNALISM 202: NEWSWRITING – PRINT**  
**Fall 2007**  
**Room XXXX**  
**Mondays, 9 a.m. to 10:40 a.m.**

INSTRUCTOR: **Anne Reifenberg**

**COURSE OBJECTIVES & SOME OTHER BASICS**

My objectives are straightforward: To sharpen your writing and critical thinking skills and help you learn how to write accurately, concisely and clearly about our increasingly diverse world.

As Journalism School Director Michael Parks says, “Good journalism starts with good reporting, but good writing tells the story.” So at USC, the Core Convergence Curriculum begins with news writing. It’s easier to teach you how to be good reporters after you’ve learned what makes a story newsworthy and how to put a news story together.

The first half of the semester will emphasize the basics of news judgment, and writing news leads and briefs. The second half will focus on how to cover the types of news stories that are commonly assigned to beginning reporters.

Because people learn best by doing, you’ll be given both in-class and take-home writing assignments every week. To complete both types you’ll need fact sheets, which are in your Course Reader. The take-home assignments will be due at the beginning of class the following Monday, and I’ll return your edited homework to you the next week.

Typing skills are essential, and you must be able to operate a computer and use Microsoft Word. (Don’t forget to save often, make back-up copies and print your work out at various stages and to always keep a hard copy for yourself, because “the computer lost it” is no more acceptable as an excuse than “the dog ate it.”) Learn how to insert accents, *tildes* and other symbols in Word or hand-write them before turning in assignments. Please refer to copyediting/proofreading symbols in the AP Stylebook. And don’t use a red pen to make any marks; red is my color.

Your Broadcast instructor and I will work together to make sure you understand the concepts covered in class and the importance of convergence and how it works.

**REQUIRED TEXTBOOKS**

They’re all available at the USC Bookstore and some may be at [www.barnesandnoble.com](http://www.barnesandnoble.com) or [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com). All textbooks, including the Course Reader, are also on reserve at the Annenberg Resource Center and at Leavy Library.

ISBN: 0-465-00489-X

Title: **Associated Press Stylebook and Briefing on Media Law**

Author: Norm Goldstein

Publisher: Perseus Publishing

**BRING YOUR AP STYLEBOOK TO EVERY CLASS FOR USE DURING IN-CLASS ASSIGNMENTS, MIDTERMS AND FINALS.**

ISBN: 0-07-352614-2

Title: **Inside Reporting: A Practical Guide to the Craft of Journalism**

Author: Tim Harrower

Publisher: McGraw-Hill

Title: **COURSE READER: "Newswriting Workbook," with CD.**

Author: Staff

Publisher: USC Bookstore

**BRING YOUR WORKBOOK TO EVERY CLASS FOR IN-CLASS AND HOMEWORK ASSIGNMENTS.**

**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](http://www.m-w.com)**

### **LEARNING LAB REQUIREMENT**

You are required to become a staff member of a campus media organization. Broadcast majors must work for ATVN (Annenberg TV News). Print and Public Relations majors may join the Daily Trojan, Impact or Online Journalism Review. Your learning lab participation will be counted 10% toward your Broadcast newswriting course grade.

### **NEWSPAPER READING REQUIREMENT**

Every member of society, but journalists in particular, should know what is happening in their city, their state, their country----and the rest of the world. You should be reading newspapers and magazines and their websites and watching news broadcasts, and checking in on their websites too. And don't forget the radio or the Daily Show with Joh Stewart. Or the Onion.

For this class though, all you have to do is read the Los Angeles Times every day. I selected The Times not because I work there but because it is the main daily newspaper for the city in which you're living. For added karma, if not credit, also read the New York Times and the Wall Street Journal.

### **IN-CLASS QUIZZES**

There will be weekly AP Style quizzes and weekly current events quizzes and they will take place during the first 20 minutes of class.

If you miss a quiz, your grade will be recorded as an "F." There will be no make-up quizzes.

A list of AP topics to memorize is in the Course Reader.

### **GRAMMAR/PUNCTUATION/SPELLING EXAM**

The GPSE isn't part of your print course grade but is a catalog requirement and you must pass it to continue in the School of Journalism.

The first GPSE will be given during the first day of class. The second will be on two different dates in December during Finals week. If you pass the exam in August with at least a 75, you will not need to re-take the exam in December. If you don't pass the December test, you can retake it in February 2008 and again in May 2008. If you don't pass the exam by May, you will be dismissed from the School of Journalism.

There is a grammar section in the course reader for review.

## ATTENDANCE

You are expected to be in class every week. If you must miss a class please call or e-mail me as soon as possible so I can record an excused absence, and please send me your homework assignments via e-mail by noon Monday.

Note: 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 Tuesday or Wednesday print class.

## WRITING COACHES

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

Ed Boyer, Print: [edjboyer@rr.ca.com](mailto:edjboyer@rr.ca.com)

Bob Berger, Print: [rberger@usc.edu](mailto:rberger@usc.edu)

## 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 or facts. Assignments will be graded down accordingly. 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, 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. Newswriting 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 quizzes.

**Your final exam will be given Dec. 3 during the last week of scheduled classes.**

Your course grades will be determined as follows:

### **PRINT**

Quizzes (Current events, AP Stylebook, readings)	10%
Assignments/Leads test (Week 4)	40%
Midterm - Week 8	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.

### **WRITING ASSIGNMENT FORMAT**

The following information should be in the upper left hand corner of each page:

Your Name

My 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 instructor notes. Be sure to double-space all stories. Use 12-point type—preferable Times, Times New Roman or Ariel font—and 1.25-inch margins. Do not use italics, underline or bold.

Indent the first line of each paragraph five spaces or half-inch. Use a left justification, leaving a ragged right margin. Do not break words at the end of lines. Put two spaces after the period of each sentence.

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).

Staple multiple pages in the upper left-hand corner.

Type or write “-30-“ or “# # #” at the bottom of the last page.

### **LATE ASSIGNMENTS**

Any assignments turned in late will be given an “F.”

You must turn in assignments on the day they are due even if you know you will miss class and have contacted me beforehand. Send it to me via e-mail attachment. The story must arrive by the beginning of that day’s class session.

### **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 taking ideas or words 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.”

## **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 and is open 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday. The phone number for DSP is (213) 740-0776.

## **STRESS AND ANGST**

Students are under a lot of pressure. If you start to feel overwhelmed, it is important that you reach out for help. A good place to start is the USC Student Counseling Services office at 213-740-7711. The service is confidential, and there is no charge.

## **CLASS SCHEDULE**

The schedule is subject to change.

### **WEEK 1 – AUG. 27** **What's News?**

We'll review the syllabus, talking about using the AP Stylebook and I'll take your questions

**In-class writing assignment:** (This will not be graded. It is a diagnostic tool to evaluate your writing).

**Homework:** Read ethics statement from the Society of Professional Journalists  
([http://www.spj.org/ethics\\_code.asp](http://www.spj.org/ethics_code.asp))

**Quiz:** GPS Exam

### **WEEK 2 – SEPT. 3** **IS A HOLIDAY but you have homework for the week anyway**

**You should have read the following before today's class (or, in this case, before the NEXT class):**

Harrower, Chapters 1 (The Story of Journalism), 2 (How Newsrooms Work), 3 (Newswriting Basics), and 8 (Online Reporting/media convergence)

AP Stylebook: Topics 1

**Homework:** TBA

### **WEEK 3 - SEPT. 10** **Newsrooms, Story Structure, Leads, Quotes, Attribution** **And** **The News Lead**

**You should have read the following before today's class**

Harrower, Chapters 3 (Newswriting Basics) and 4 (Reporting Basics).

AP Stylebook: Topics 2

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

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

**Homework:** TBA

**WEEK 4 - SEPT. 17**

**Leads/News Judgement Test**

**You should have read the following before today's class**

Harrower Chapter 3 (Newsriting Basics)

AP Stylebook: Topics 3

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

**Homework:** TBA

**WEEK 5 - SEPT. 25**

**Story Structure, Briefs, Short Stories**

**You should have read the following before today's class**

Harrower, Chapter 3 (Newsriting Basics)

AP Stylebook: Topics 4

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

**Homework:** TBA

**WEEK 6 – OCT. 2**

**More Story Structure, Briefs, Short Stories**

**You should have read the following before today's class**

Harrower: Chapter 3 (Newsriting Basics)

AP Stylebook: Topics 5

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

**Homework:** TBA

**WEEK 7 - OCT. 9**

**Writing an Obituary**

**You should have read the following before today's class**

Harrower: Chapter 5 (Covering the News/writing obituaries)

AP Stylebook: Topics 6

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

**Homework:** TBA

**WEEK 8 - OCT. 15 MIDTERM**  
**Three Stories**

**Homework:** TBA

**WEEK 9 - OCT. 22**  
**Speeches and News Conferences**

**You should have read the following before today's class**

Harrower: Chapter 5 (Covering the News/covering speeches)  
AP Stylebook: Topics 7

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

**Homework:** TBA

**WEEK 10 - OCT. 29**  
**Covering City Council and Other Meetings**

**You should have read the following before today's class**

Harrower: Chapter 5 (covering the News/covering meetings)  
AP Stylebook: Topics 8

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

**Homework:** TBA

**WEEK 11 – Nov. 5**  
**Fires, Accidents and Disasters**

**You should have read the following before today's class**

Harrower: Chapter 5 (Covering the News/covering accidents, disasters and fires)

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

**Homework:** TBA

**WEEK 12 – NOV. 12**  
**Crimes and Courts**

***AND NOTE THAT NOVEMBER 16 IS THE LAST DAY TO DROP A CLASS WITH A MARK OF "W"***

**You should have read the following before today's class**

Harrower: Chapter 5 (Covering the News/covering crimes and courts)  
**Quiz:** Current Events

**Homework:** TBA

**WEEK 13 - NOV. 19**

**Getting the Whole Story/Features**

**You should have read the following before today's class**

Harrower: Chapter 6 (Beyond Breaking News)  
Course Reader: Diversity section

**Quiz:** Current Events

**Homework:** TBA

**WEEK 14 - NOV. 26**

**Online Reporting/Law and Ethics**

**You should have read the following before today's class**

**Readings:** Harrower: Chapter 8 (Online Reporting) and 7 (Law and Ethics)

**Quiz:** Current Events

**Homework:** TBA

**WEEK 15 – DEC. 3**

**FINAL:** two stories