

USC ANNENBERG SCHOOL OF JOURNALISM
SYLLABUS-
Journalism 203 – Broadcast Newswriting
Fall 2007

Teacher: John Cyrus Smith (Mr. Smith)

The best time to reach me is 10am-1pm, every day. You can also get me at work from 6:30pm-7:30pm. I also check my e-mail most every day, usually at night. I am also available to meet with you outside of class, at a time we both find convenient. Contact me if you have questions or are having problems. Don't be shy. I can and will help you. But I can't if you don't contact me. **IF YOU HAVE TO MISS CLASS, YOU MUST CALL MY CELL BEFORE CLASS!**

COURSE OBJECTIVES

Being a good writer is the MOST important skill you'll learn as a journalism student. Good writers get jobs. Together, we're going to learn how to write good, clean broadcast news stories. If you do the work, you will be well on your way to being a good writer by the end of this class. As a TV News Producer, I work with anchors, reporters and writers every day. I make their writing better. I've taught hundreds of students and interns and writers how to be better writers. I can teach YOU to be a good writer IF you make the effort.

That means attending EVERY class and being prepared. It also means completing all reading assignments BEFORE class, and completing assignments ON TIME. In the real world, late assignments are unacceptable. We'll watch real newscasts and real stories so you get a true feel for what you're learning. We'll also do a lot of in-class assignments. Miss the class, you miss the assignment.

Here are a few of the things we will work on this semester:

How to take information (from wire stories, news releases, articles, a speech or meeting, video, or notes, etc.) and determine what is newsworthy and how to turn it into a broadcast news story.

How to recognize the differences between print and broadcast news writing.

Learn about broadcast newsroom structure and the many different jobs available to you.

Learn about and write different types of broadcast news stories... from leads, intros and voiceovers to live shots, VSV's and packages.

Writing in script format. Writing to video. Writing under deadline. Editing.

BIOGRAPHY

I produce the Channel 4 News at 11pm, Monday through Friday. I have produced #1 newscasts in Seattle, Washington, DC, and Los Angeles since 1989. Five years ago I won the Emmy for producing the best one-hour newscast in Los Angeles. I have taught news writing and reporting at USC for five years and have also taught at UCLA and Santa Monica College.

REQUIRED TEXTBOOKS (Bring to class every day)

1. Title: Broadcast News Handbook, Third Edition
Authors: C.A. Tuggle, Forrest Carr, Suzanne Huffman
ISBN: 0-07-352609-6
Web site: www.mhhe.com/tuggle3
2. Title: Course Reader for JOUR 202/203/501
Publisher: USC Bookstore
3. Dictionary: Merriam Webster, www.m-w.com
This is the dictionary that should be used for all assignments, midterms and finals.

DAILY NEWS PROGRAMS

IF YOU WANT TO BE A GOOD JOURNALIST, you need to know the news. Start watching TV newscasts EVERY day. Channels 2, 4, 5, 7, 9, and 11 all have morning and evening newscasts. Watch CNN, Fox News or MSNBC on cable. Listen to KNX AM-1070 or KFWB AM 980 in your car. Read the LA Times, Daily News or OC Register. Watch and read all the news you can. Make news a part of your life. It will help you on quizzes. The writer who knows the news will WRITE better.

QUIZZES

You will be quizzed about news that affects Southern California, the state, the nation and the world. I will give a quiz at the BEGINNING of EVERY class, so BE ON TIME. You can't make up missed quizzes. The quizzes may also contain questions about the various reading assignments and will be graded.

ASSIGNMENTS

Homework needs to be HARD COPY and turned in the day it is due. LATE ASSIGNMENTS MERIT AN "F" BUT STILL MUST BE TURNED IN. I WILL MAKE EXCEPTIONS ONLY IN EXTRAORDINARY CIRCUMSTANCES. I may, at my discretion, give you a chance to re-do some assignments. If you're having problems getting an assignment done, call me. I have saved many a student during the course of a semester, but I can't help you if you don't call.

GRADING CRITERIA: ASSIGNMENTS, MIDTERMS, FINALS

You will be graded on clarity, organization, accuracy, fairness, balance, completeness, grammar, punctuation, spelling, and ability to meet deadlines. Most importantly, you will be graded on how well you WRITE and how well you put stories together. I'm a fair grader. When I look back on MY college education, I pretty much got the grades I deserved. If you work hard and complete all the assignments, you'll do well. You'll get the grade you deserve.

"A" stories are accurate, clear, well-written stories that require only minor editing. They have a good lead, all the important facts, the best video and bites, etc. (In other words, I would put them on the air)

"B" stories require more than minor editing, and have a few style or spelling errors or one significant error of omission. They are good stories using good video and sound, but have some flaws.

"C" stories require considerable editing or rewriting and/or have many spelling, style or omission errors. Poor video and sound choices. Incomplete information.

"D" stories require excessive rewriting and have numerous errors, and should not have been submitted.

"F" stories have failed to meet the major criteria of the assignment, have numerous errors or both. A story with a major factual error merits an F.

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

Broadcast majors must work at ATVN. Print students can work at DT, OJR, or an approved off-campus internship. Annenberg Radio News is another option. All core students must have a learning lab by the end of the third week of class.

COURSE GRADES

Assignments	25%
Quizzes/Leads Test	20%
Learning lab requirement	10%
Midterm - Week 8	20%
Final	<u>25%</u>
Total	100%

ATTENDANCE POLICY

Want a good grade? Don't miss class. Be on time. IF SOMETHING COMES UP AND YOU HAVE TO MISS CLASS, YOU MUST CALL ME BEFORE CLASS. Be responsible. I will decide how you can make up an EXCUSED absence. Documented medical emergencies or other circumstances can be considered EXCUSED absences, at my discretion. If you miss a class, you are responsible for getting the class notes and assignments from another student. Bottom line: In the real world, if you're late or don't show up for work, you can lose your job. If you miss three classes, and I am not satisfied with your excuses, you won't pass this course.

WRITING COACHES

See Mike Daniels in ASC 227-9. Or call him @ 310-823-2310 (danielsm@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 – AUG. 29

Class Topic: Introduction to Broadcast News Writing

Intros/Syllabus/Class overview

What is news? What is convergence?

Broadcast vs. Print writing

“Leads” and “Copy” stories

Learning Lab requirement/Internships

Note: Midterm-Week 8, Avid Training- Week 9, Final during Finals week

Homework: Newscast Review (1-2 page analysis of a LOCAL TV newscast)

Homework: 1 copy story (:25-:30 in script form)

Reading: Tuggle: Ch. 1, “Broadcast News Writing; Ch. 3 “Leads”

Handout: RTNDA Code of Ethics (Think of examples)

Handout: “What is News?” and “Formatting Scripts”

Binder: “Basic Rules” Pg. 172

WEEK 2 – SEPT. 5

Class Topic: Broadcast Leads and Copy stories

Introduction to Leads

What makes for a good Lead?

Why the Lead is so important

How broadcast Leads are different than newspaper leads

The next steps... “Copy” stories, “Boxes” and “VO’s”

Homework: “Leads” assignment – 3 leads from stories & 1 (:25) “Copy” story

Readings: Tuggle: Ch 2 “Stories”; Ch 7, “The VO”

Binder: “Leads/Copy Stories” (Pg. 178) “Newsroom Structure” (Pg. 161)

Handout: “How to Write”

WEEK 3 – SEPT. 12

Class Topic: Broadcast Basics-Intro to VO’s

The Rules... Clear, Short, Simple, Conversational, and Accurate

Leads Review/Prep for Leads test

Good Leads, a meaty middle and a solid ending

The next step: Writing to Video – The VO

Quality vs. Quantity -- Telling a story with pictures in: 25

Homework: 1 “Copy” story, (:25); 1 VO (:30) plus Learning Lab info

Readings: Tuggle: Ch. 7, “The VO”

Binder: “Writing to Video” (pg 186); “Common Terms” Pg. 152

Handouts: VO example

WEEK 4 - SEPT. 19

Class Topics: LEADS TEST/Refining the VO/NBC Tour -TBA

Leads Test

Refining the VO

What's really important and how do I write to the video?

Conversational Writing (Writing How You talk)

The Next Step: Adding Sound

Homework: 2 VO's (:30)

Readings: Tuggle Ch. 4 "Sins"

Handout: VSV Example

Binder: "Adding Sound to Broadcast News Stories", Pg. 192

WEEK 5 - SEPT. 26

Class Topic: Adding Sound to TV News Stories/Possible NBC Tour

A New Element: Sound and the VSV

"Bites" and "Actualities" - "The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly"

How Sound Fits Into the Story-Writing into the SOT

Natural and Ambient Sound - The "NATVO" or "SOTVO" – Giving the VO "Life"

Homework: Your First VSV (:40-:45)

Readings: Tuggle: Ch. 8 "The VSV"

Handout: "The Dazzling Dozen"

Binder: "Fire Stories", Pg. 198

WEEK 6 – OCT. 3

Class Topic: Refining the VSV

Good vs. Great VSVs

Picking good bites and setting them up

Homework: 1 VSV (:35-:40)

Handouts: Re-read "How to Write", "Writing to Video", "Adding Sound"

Readings: Tuggle: Ch. 11, "Producing TV News For TV"

Binder: "Disaster Stories" Pg. 202

WEEK 7 – OCT. 10

Class Topic: Midterm Preview

Homework: 1 VSV (:35-:40)

Readings: Tuggle: Ch. 12 "Live Shots"

Binder: "Speeches and Meeting" Pg. 204

WEEK 8 - OCT. 17

THE MIDTERM

Homework: 1 Ethics Paper (2 pages)
Readings: Tuggle: Ch. 9 “Packages”
Binder: “Crime Stories” Pg. 208

WEEK 9 - OCT. 24

Class Topic: Midterm Review and AVID TRAINING (MANDATORY)
Homework: Avid editing assignment – midterm story
Readings: Tuggle: Ch. 14, “Brave New World of Media Convergence”
Binder: “Updates and Breaking News” Pg. 213

WEEK 10 – OCT. 31

Class Topics: Intro to Packages
From VO to VSV to PKG
Elements of a package (The PKG, The Leads/The Tag/The Cut Sheets
Packages and Inserts and Live Shots
Speeches and Meetings

Homework: 1 edited VSV :45-:50; Study PKG examples
Readings: TBA
Handout: “Writing Packages for Television”

WEEK 11 – NOV. 7

Class Topics: Putting Packages together
The Reporter
Picking SOTs and NATs
Outlining the PKG
The SVSVSVSVS
Crime and Courts

Homework: Your first PKG (Short lead, 1:20 PKG)
Readings: Tuggle: Appendix B, “Legal and Privacy Facts”

WEEK 12 - NOV. 14

FRIDAY, NOV. 16: LAST DAY TO DROP A CLASS WITH A MARK OF "W"

Class Topics: Graphics for TV News

Maps and Full screens and Reveals

Making graphics make sense

Homework: Graphics Assignment

Readings: TBA

WEEK 13 - NOV. 21

Class Topics: Writing Better Packages

Homework: 2nd Pkg.

Readings: TBA

WEEK 14 - NOV. 28

Class Topics: Putting it all together

Homework: 3rd Pkg.

Readings: Tuggle, Ch. 15, "So You Want a Job?"

WEEK 15 – DEC. 5

REVIEW FOR FINAL

FINALS WEEK – DECEMBER 6-13

Date and Time subject to change (The below date and time is different than the official USC Finals schedule)

9am class: Wed., Dec. 12, 9-11:40 AM

Noon class: Wed., Dec. 12, 12-2:40 PM

Notify your academic advisor (Annie Mateen or JaBari Brown) if you have a conflict with the exam date above. Your academic advisor will verify your class schedule/final exam conflict and will let you know when to take the exam. Finals will only be rescheduled for class conflicts. Do not make any nonrefundable travel plans until you know your complete finals schedule for all of your classes.

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