

**USC ANNENBERG SCHOOL OF JOURNALISM
SYLLABUS**

Journalism 203 – Broadcast Newswriting

Fall 2007, Wednesday, 12 noon-2:40 pm, 3 pm– 5:40 pm

ASC 330

Lew Rothbart

COURSE OBJECTIVES

This course will teach the basics of broadcast news writing. You will learn how to write mainly for TV news, but the skills will apply to radio news writing as well. By the end of the semester, you should be able to write news broadcast copy that is close to professional standards.

Strong writing is the essential skill for anyone planning to work as a reporter, anchor, producer, or news writer. There are few jobs in a newsroom where writing is not a key element of the job. In any broadcast journalism setting, you will immediately be judged by your writing ability and do not kid yourself, correct spelling counts.

REQUIRED TEXTBOOKS

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 [with DVD—make sure you know how to use the DVD, instructions are in the course reader.]
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.

Optional (recommended)

4. Title: Associated Press Stylebook (Latest edition)
Author: Norm Goldstein
ISBN: 0465004881

DAILY NEWS PROGRAMS & NEWSPAPERS

Watch at least one local TV news program, a national TV news program, and listen to a radio newscast every day. This will also help you prepare for the weekly quizzes on current events. Look and listen for examples of good and poor writing. You will need to develop an “ear” for what works and what does not. Students may be assigned to tape, watch, or report on certain programs, so access to a VCR or DVR is essential.

You should also be reading at least one newspaper a day and I do not mean The Daily Trojan or USA Today. I mean a major paper like the L.A. Times, The Daily News, or the New York Times. You should also try to read a weekly national news magazine such as Time or Newsweek (The National Enquirer doesn’t count.) Other material may also be assigned for reading.

QUIZZES

We will begin each class with a quiz, usually 10 questions. If you are not on time for the start of class, you will miss the quiz and there are no make-ups. The quiz will focus on current major local and national stories, and people making news; nothing obscure. Questions may also come from the assigned reading. If you have been watching, listening, reading, and keeping up on your assignments, you should do fine.

IN-CLASS ASSIGNMENTS

Writing on deadline is part of journalism. As a result, your in-class writing assignments will be graded on whether they are completed in the allotted time, as well as the quality and style of the writing. You will also be expected to work in the correct broadcast form for all assignments (unless told otherwise,) as well on midterms and finals. The form will be discussed in class.

See copyediting/proofreading symbols in the binder. I will be using these same marks to correct your work so be familiar with them so you understand the corrections. Also, if you have already printed out your assignment and discover an error, use these symbols to make any quick corrections of your own. You will not be graded-down for these.

HOMEWORK ASSIGNMENTS

Homework assignments are DUE on the class day listed. They are NOT for the following week. They are due for that class meeting. Note: all binder, textbook, and web readings assigned for that day should be completed *before* each class. Assignments will not be accepted late except under rare circumstances (your excuse better be really good.) Assignments may be sent by email *only* with prior permission.

With approval, students may rewrite assignments that received a “D” or “F.” The recorded grade on the rewritten assignments will be the average between the new and old grades. (An “F” on the original and an “A” on the rewrite would be a “C”.)

I will return your graded assignments on a timely basis with comments and suggested corrections. If you don’t understand a comment or correction, or you disagree, please come and talk to me.

Keep copies of ALL assignments, homework and in-class work, in your computer file, on a CD, or flash drive.

GRADING CRITERIA: ASSIGNMENTS, MIDTERMS, FINALS

Because this is a process of acquiring news judgment and learning a different way of writing, homework and in-class assignments for the first four weeks will not count the full weight as assignments starting from the fifth week on.

This policy does not apply to quizzes or tests.

When your assignments do begin to count at full weight, your grade will be determined by a variety of different measures. Some will count more than others, but all will be a component of your final grade. I will also be judging you individually on how you are improving since starting the class. One extremely low grade will probably not affect your overall grade much and the same for one outstanding grade. But each individual piece does add up and will ultimately affect the total.

All assignments will be judged first on their accuracy. Then they will be evaluated for grammar, spelling, style, production, and creativity.

If you are concerned about your grade at any point in the semester, please contact me to arrange a time to discuss it, usually before or after class since I don't have regular office hours on campus.

Don't be discouraged if your writing receives low grades at the beginning of the semester, your grades will likely improve as the class progresses. News judgment and writing are acquired skills and the only way to get better is to keep writing, regardless of the difficulties. I am more concerned with how you do in the final weeks of the course than how you do in the beginning.

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., “ready for air.”)

“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.

FYI: The following are some circumstances that would warrant an F:

- Plagiarizing a script, portions of a script, or information from any source (i.e., wire copy, feed packages, another student's story script).
- Making one or more serious factual errors in the script, including (but not limited to) inaccurate names of significant people or locations, faulty descriptions of events that occurred or misquoting people.

Plagiarism/Academic Integrity Policy

Plagiarism is defined as taking ideas or writings from another and passing them 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 assignment 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 news writing 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. A limited number of print/PR majors may also be accepted at Annenberg Radio News. Students must apply and be accepted at all campus news organizations.

COURSE GRADES

Assignments	25%
Current Event Quizzes	10%
Standardized Leads test - Week 4	10%
Learning lab requirement	10%
Midterm - Week 8	20%
Final	<u>25%</u>
Total	100%

ATTENDANCE POLICY

Students are expected to be in class every week. If you miss a class, you are responsible for getting any class notes from other students in the class. I will decide whether and how you may make-up any missed assignments. I will not be holding any separate "catch-up" sessions outside of class.

In-class assignments and quizzes can't be made-up. Late assignments will receive an F, but might be able to be turned in under the rewrite policy (the highest grade the student would receive would be a "C.")

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

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 I have graded them and made suggested corrections.

Broadcast writing coach:

Mike Daniels: 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, 213-740-0776.

CLASS SCHEDULE:

WEEK 1 – AUG. 29 Getting Started

Class Topics:

Introduction, review syllabus

Circulate contact list

Basic differences between print and broadcast style, why convergence.

Basic writing form

Newsroom organization

ATVN executive producer class visit to talk to broadcast majors.

Simple writing assignment

Notes:

-Learning Lab requirement, see Learning Lab flyer.

-Avid editing session in Week 10 is mandatory and can't be made up. If you don't come to this session, you won't be able to complete your Avid editing assignments.

-Reminders: Leads test-Week 4, Midterm-Week 8

Final: 12 noon class Wednesday, Dec 12, 12 noon-2:40 pm

3 pm class Wednesday, Dec 12, 3 pm-5:40 pm

Note: This is different than the posted University Finals Schedule

Check homework assignments and readings due for next week's class and ask any questions NOW.

WEEK 2 – SEPT. 5 Basic Rules for Broadcast Writing
News Quiz – be prepared this week.

Class Topics:

Fundamentals of journalistic writing: Who, What, When, Where, Why, How
What makes a good story, How to approach a story, Say what you mean
Ethics and Attribution
More on TV news script format and abbreviations, Handling numbers

Homework Assignments due for THIS class:

Write a brief (:20-:25) copy story on story “E. Zoo” from the fact sheet section of the Newswriting Workbook, page 227. This should be written in broadcast style and format.

Readings to be done for THIS class:

RTNDA Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct. You can find this on the RTNDA website at <http://www.rtnda.org>.
Broadcast News Handbook, Chap. 1 – Characteristics of Broadcast News Writing, Chap. 2 – Selecting Stories and Starting to Write.

In-class Assignments:

Writing in broadcast style: Examples and practice

WEEK 3 – SEPT. 12 –Leads & Adding the Visual
News Quiz

Class Topics:

Leads: Difference between print and broadcast leads. Hard, soft, feature
Timeliness, Writing in the active voice, Writing to graphics (OTS) and video

Homework Assignments due for THIS class:

Watch a local TV news broadcast (“news,” not Entertainment Tonight or “The Insider.”)
Find a single story in the newspaper the next day or off the web (from a reputable news agency, e.g. AP, Reuters, L.A. Times website.) Write a single page (in regular essay style) comparing the coverage of that story with how TV news covered the same story. Don’t tell me what the story was about, tell me which do you think did a better job? Why? How were they different? Which gave you a better sense and understanding of the story? Which seemed more factual? Which kept your interest?

Readings to be done for THIS class:

Broadcast News Handbook, Chap. 3-Writing Great Leads and Other Helpful Tips, Chap. 4-Deadly Copy Sins and How to Avoid Them.
Writing Hints, Broadcast vs. Print, Mike Daniels, page 78 in the Workbook.

In-class assignments:

Rewriting sentences
Writing a voice-over (VO) story

WEEK 4 - SEPT. 19 Leads Test & More VO
News Quiz

Class Topics:

LEADS TEST

Writing to video, using natural sound

Homework Assignments due for THIS class:

Write a 30-second VO. Head-on Collision (from CD in Work Book. Fact sheet on page 266 in the Work Book.) Story must be in broadcast form and include on-camera lead-in. Story should be about :30 total including the on-camera lead-in. Do this as a “paper cut.” You decide the order of the video and list it opposite your copy on the left-hand side of your script.

Readings to be done for THIS class:

Broadcast News Handbook, Chap. 7, Television News Story Forms, The VO. (Don’t dwell on the “Graphics” section in this chapter, we will deal with that later.)

In-class assignments:

Examples and exercises (referencing video)

WEEK 5 - SEPT. 26 More Writing to Video, Adding Sound
News Quiz

Class Topics:

[In-class assignments done today count at full weight.]

Making your words match the pictures, “Touch & Go” writing

When not to write anything, let the pictures tell the story.

Homework Assignments due for THIS class:

[Homework assignments turned in today count at full weight.]

Watch a regular national newscast (one of the network newscasts from New York: CBS Evening News, NBC Nightly News, ABC World News Tonight, or FOX, not the “The Daily Show” or “Access Hollywood.”) Then watch a local newscast (one of the L.A. stations.) Do a one-page summary comparing the two. Don’t tell me what stories each covered; tell me how the newscasts differ in style, substance, format, graphics, story count, and story length.

Readings to be done for THIS class:

Broadcast News Handbook, Chap.8, Television News Story Forms-The VO/SOT
Multicultural Sensitivity, in the Workbook, page 80.

In-class assignments:

Homework discussion. How the newscasts were different and why.

Writing into and OUT of sound bites.

Listen to the sound before you write, use it as a source

WEEK 6 – OCT. 3 More Sound
News Quiz

Class Topics:

Listen to the sound, don't just lift it
Letting the sound do the work for you, add video
When you don't have supporting video, use of file, graphics

Homework Assignments due for THIS class:

:35 VSV Fireworks Sales (CD from the Workbook, info on page 394 of the Workbook)
Do this as a "paper cut" indicating the video opposite your script. Include on-camera lead

Readings to be done for THIS class:

Broadcast News Handbook, Chap. 8, Writing Radio News
Broadcast News Handbook, Chap. 7, section on graphics

In-class assignments:

Discussion of Fireworks assignment
Viewing tapes and writing into sound

WEEK 7 – OCT. 10 Fire and Disaster Stories
News Quiz

Class Topics:

What to say and when to say it
Dealing with victims and their families
Review for midterm.

Homework Assignments due for THIS class:

:45 VSV Disaster: Hillside Falls (from CD in Workbook, info on page 267 in Workbook.) Do as a "paper cut." Include on-camera lead

Readings to be done for THIS class:

Broadcast News Handbook, Chap. 5 Interviewing: Getting the Facts and Feelings, Chap. 13 "Why We Fight."

In-class assignments:

:50 VSV Fire Engine-Car Crash, includes on-camera lead

WEEK 8 - OCT. 17 Midterm
NO News quiz

Class Topics:

MIDTERM

:30 VO from raw tape with tape log, indicate video on left side of page

:45 VSV from raw tape with tape log, indicate video on left side of page

Both should include on-camera lead

Reading:

None for this week. Study for Midterm

Homework Assignments to be done for THIS class:

Alternate lead writing: Find a print story (newspaper, online, or wires) and give me 3 alternate leads.

WEEK 9 - OCT. 24 Writing Packages
News Quiz

Class Topics:

Review midterm test.

Individual review of class grade and progress

Homework Assignments due for THIS class:

:45 VSV Rain Melrose (CD in Workbook, info on page 270 in Workbook)

Readings to be done for THIS class:

Broadcast News Handbook, Chap. 9 Television News Story Forms-The Package

In-class assignments:

Writing a package. How is it different? Use of on-camera bridges and standups.

Write a simple package, video to be provided.

WEEK 10 – OCT. 31 Avid Editing
NO news quiz

Avid editing session, Digital Lab

Wed., Oct. 31, 12-2:40 PM – Meet in Digital Lab, ASC G-40

Wed., Oct. 31, 3-5:40 PM – Meet in Digital Lab, ASC G-40

Homework Assignments to be done in this class:

Avid editing assignment – midterm story

Readings:

None

**WEEK 11 – NOV. 7 The World We Live In
News Quiz**

Class Topics:

View and critique packages, what works, what doesn't
Feature stories, long form
Use of special editing techniques
Structure your story for balance and interest

Homework Assignments due for THIS class:

Write a 1:15 –to- 1:30 package on the Metrolink Crash, from CD in the Workbook, info on page 380. Time should include your bridge or tag. Also include anchor lead-in, but that does not count against your package time.

Readings to be done for THIS class:

The Broadcast Handbook, Chap. 14 The Brave New World of Multimedia Convergence.

In-class assignment:

View "Outfoxed"
Time permitting: View raw tape and write package - Brush Fire

Check homework assignments and readings due for next week's class and ask any questions NOW.

WEEK 12 - NOV. 14 Going Live

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

News Quiz

Class Topics:

Live shots - Get it on first, but first get it right.
Checking your facts and sources. Careful who you put on the air.
Examples

Homework Assignments due for THIS class:

Package 1:00. Encino Apartment Explosion (CD in Workbook, info on page 312 in the Workbook)

Readings to be done for THIS class:

The Broadcast Handbook, Chap. 12 The Care and Feeding of Television Live Shots

Check homework assignments and readings due for next week's class and ask any questions NOW.

WEEK 13 – NOV. 21 The Whole Newscast
News Quiz

Class Topics:

Producing a TV newscast. How it all fits together: leads, grouping stories. Why newscasts at different times are different, who is watching.
Talent balance, story balance, front loading, deliver what you promise
The newscast rundown

Homework Assignments due for this class:

Watch two local television newscasts (either an hour or half-hour) and write a one-page critique on how they differ: style, content, talent, teases, production techniques.

Readings to be done for THIS class:

The Broadcast Handbook, Chap. 11, Producing TV News

WEEK 14 - NOV. 28 Legally Speaking
News Quiz

Class Topics:

Crimes and courts
Rules of coverage
Make it interesting, coming up with visuals
Be innovative, creative, but fair
Libel and slander

In-class assignment:

VSV or package on a court case

Homework Assignments due for THIS class:

View coverage of a court case in a TV newscast. Write a one-page critique and tell what you would do to improve it.

Readings to be done for THIS class:

The Broadcast Handbook, Appendix B Legal and Privacy FAQs

WEEK 15 – DEC. 5 Review
News Quiz

Review for final.

FINALS WEEK – DEC. 12 Final

The Final will consist of two :45 VSVs. They should include on-camera leads.

Finals Schedules (NOTE: The Final will be during Finals Week, but will NOT follow the official USC finals schedule. It will be on our regular class day and meeting time.)

12-2:40 PM ASC 330

3-5:40 PM ASC 330

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 re-scheduled 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.