

**USC ANNENBERG SCHOOL OF JOURNALISM  
SYLLABUS**

**Journalism 203 – Broadcast Newswriting  
Fall 2007 Tuesday, 9am-11:40 am  
Room AHF 259**

**Stacy Scholder**

I have an office at ATVN (Annenberg TV News), where I am the Associate Director of the student newsroom. We do a live newscast Monday through Thursday at 6pm, so talking with me later in the afternoon may not be the best time, depending on what's going on in the news.

The best time to reach me is during the day, Monday through Thursday between 9am and 1pm. But feel free to check in with me, because I may have time later in the day as well. I also check my email daily and will try to get back to you. The best time to make an appointment to see me is any day (Mon-Thurs.) before 1pm.

**COURSE OBJECTIVES**

This course will teach the basics of broadcast news writing. You will learn how to write in a journalistic style, mainly for TV, 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 essential 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 that will influence the speed and direction of your career path.

Here are a few things we will work on this semester-

How to take information (from wires, news conferences, news releases, video, officials) and determine what is newsworthy.

How to write a broadcast story that is accurate, fair, clear, and interesting.

Learn about and write different types of broadcast news stories, including leads, VO's, VSV's, and Pkgs.

Learn to write in script format, to write to video, and to write under deadline.

**REQUIRED TEXTBOOKS**

1. Title: Broadcast News Handbook, Third Edition  
Author: C.A. Tuggle, Forrest Carr, Suzanne Huffman  
ISBN: 0-07-352609-6
2. Title: Course Reader for JOUR 202/203/501 with DVD. Make sure you know how to use this media. Instructions are in the course reader.  
Publisher: USC Bookstore

3. 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.

Other books we will use but are not required:

4. Title: Broadcast News and Writing Stylebook, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition  
Author: Robert Papper  
ISBN: 0-205-44974-3
5. Title: Associated Press Stylebook (2004 edition)  
Author: Norm Goldstein  
ISBN: 0465004881

### **DAILY NEWS READINGS & VIEWINGS**

You should 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.

Watch a 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. Try to remember them and share them in class. 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, DVR or TIVO is essential.

### **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. If you have been watching, listening, reading, and keeping up on your assignments, you should have no problem.

### **IN-CLASS ASSIGNMENTS**

Writing on deadline is part of journalism. As a result, your in-class writing assignments will be graded on the timeliness of how they are completed 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 as on midterms and finals. The form will be discussed in class.

## **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, so it's very important to LOOK AHEAD to see what you need to get done for the week ahead. Note: all textbook, handout, and web readings assigned for that day should be completed *before* each class. Assignments will not be accepted late except under rare circumstances. Assignments may be sent by email *only* with prior permission.

With approval, students may rewrite assignments that received a low grade. 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 see me.

## **ATTENDANCE**

You are expected to be in class and on time every week. You cannot be late on a story and you should not be late to class. There will be quizzes and viewings at the beginning of class and students who miss them will be unable to complete those assignments. The material will not be repeated for late arrivals and the missing work will count against your grade.

There will be timed assignments that can **only** be completed in class. Because many videos will be viewed and written in class, make-up assignments for the in-class work will **not** be possible. Bottom line- if you miss too many classes, you won't pass this course.

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 your regular Tuesday broadcast class, you can't go to a Thursday broadcast class with another instructor.

This syllabus is subject to change, depending on the availability of guest speakers and the progress of the class during the semester. If you do miss a class, it is your responsibility to find out if any of the assignments have changed and to get class notes from a fellow student. If you have any questions or problems about anything in class, please email me at [scholder@usc.edu](mailto:scholder@usc.edu). You can also see/phone me in my office at ATVN(ASC G24A). If I am busy or not there, leave a message with your name and number and a couple good times to call you back.

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

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

Homework assignments through week four (including assignments you return in week five) will not count the full weight. 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, style, production, and creativity.

If you are concerned about your grade at any point during the semester, please contact me to arrange a time to discuss it.

Note: The Final for this class is scheduled for the following date and time:

Tuesday, Dec 18, 9 am – 11:40 am, AHF 259

Please do not be discouraged if your writing receives low grades at the beginning of the semester; your grades will likely improve as the class progresses. News writing is an acquired skill and 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 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 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. Any internship must have the approval of the instructor.

Here is a breakdown of your final grade:

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

### **WRITING COACHES**

Writing coaches are available for both broadcasting and print.

Mike Daniels is the broadcast writing coach. He is available in ASC 227 during posted drop-in times and by appointment. A writing coach should be used to review assignments AFTER an assignment has been graded/marked-up by the instructor.

Broadcast:

Mike Daniels: [danielsm@usc.edu](mailto:danielsm@usc.edu)

Print:

Bob Berger and Ed Boyer

### **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. The phone number is 213-740-0776.

## **CLASS SCHEDULE**

### **WEEK 1 – AUGUST 28**

#### **Class Topic: Introduction to Broadcast News Writing**

Introduction, review syllabus, class overview

Basic differences between print and broadcast styles

What is news? Why convergence?

“Leads” and “Copy” Stories

Learning lab requirement, ATVN executive producer class visit

Notes:

-Learning lab requirement; see learning lab flyer.

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

-Reminders: Leads Quiz-Week 4; Midterm-Week 8

Final: Tuesday, Dec. 18, 9 am-11:40 am, AHF 259

#### **Readings:**

None for today's class. See next week's assignment to see what's due that week.

#### **Homework:**

None for today's class. See next week's assignment to see what's due that week.

### **WEEK 2 – SEPT. 4**

#### **Class Topics: Broadcast Writing Basics, Copy Stories, Leads**

Fundamentals of journalistic writing: Who, What, When, Where, Why, How

What makes a good story

How to approach a story

Leads: What makes a good lead? Why the lead is so important

How broadcast leads differ from print leads

More on TV news script format and abbreviations

Handling numbers

Attribution

#### **Readings to be done for THIS class:**

Handout: RTNDA Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct (Papper Pgs 174-177)

Tuggle: Chapters 1 and 2; Course Reader pgs. 9-15 (Ten Secrets to Writing Well), pg. 57 (Broadcast vs. Print Style)

Optional - Papper: Chapter 3 – Words, Chapter 4 – Phrases and Phrasing

**Homework Assignments due for THIS class:**

Write a brief (:20-:25) copy story from the Fact Sheet section of the Course Reader (pg 232-233.). You can choose from the following: D. Wind; E. Zoo; F District Attorney; G. Laundromat; I. Fire. This should be written in broadcast style and format.

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. 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?

**In-class Assignments:**

Writing in broadcast style: Examples  
Practice writing leads

**WEEK 3 – SEPT. 11****Class Topics: Adding the Visual – VO’s**

Leads review/Prep for leads quiz  
Writing in the active voice  
Writing to video and graphics  
Telling a story with pictures in :25-:30  
Compare written info/story with VO on the air

**Readings to be done for THIS class:**

Tuggle Chapters 3, 4, and 7(pgs, 99-111); Course Reader Pgs. 186-191  
Optional - Papper: Chapter 6 –Leads and Endings; Chapter 12-TV: Working with Pictures

**Homework Assignments due for THIS class:**

Write 3 leads from 3 different stories; write 1 :20-:25 copy story

**In-class assignments:**

Rewriting sentences  
Writing a voice-over (VO) story

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

### **Class Topics: Leads Quiz, Writing to Video**

Leads Quiz

What's really important

Conversational writing (writing how you talk)

### **Readings to be done for THIS class::**

Tuggle: Chapter 7 (pgs. 112-129); Course Reader pgs. 216-223.

Handout: TV Scripts and Supers (Papper Chap. 29)

Optional - Papper: Chapter 7-Stories

### **Homework Assignments due for THIS class:**

Write a 30-second VO for TV

Head-on Crash (from CD or DVD in Course Reader, pg. 271.) Story should include on-camera lead-in and be in broadcast form.

### **In-class assignments:**

In-class assignments done today count at full weight.

Examples and exercises (referencing video)

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

### **Class Topics: Refining the VO, Adding Sound**

Making your words complement/enhance the pictures

How sound fits into the story

Writing into the SOT

Avoiding the "echo effect"

Natural sound – NATVO, SOTVO

Ambient sound – making the VO come alive

### **Readings to be done for THIS class:**

Tuggle: Chapter 6, Chapter 8 pgs.131-top 139; Course Reader pgs. 192-197

Optional - Papper: Chapter 8-Working with and Gathering Bites, Actualities and Natural Sound

### **Homework Assignments due for THIS week:**

[Homework assigned for this week counts at full weight.]

Write a :25-:30 VO (from Course Reader – story TBA)

### **In-class assignments:**

Homework discussion

Writing into and OUT of sound bites

Listen to the sound before you write

## **WEEK 6 – OCT. 2**

### **Class Topics: Refining the VSV**

Picking the best sound and setting it up

Letting the sound do the work for you

### **Readings to be done for THIS class:**

Tuggle: Chapter 8 pgs. 139-146; Chapter 9 pgs. 155-163

### **Homework Assignments due for THIS class:**

:40-:45 VSV Fireworks Sales (CD or DVD) \*\*

### **In-class assignments:**

Discussion of Fireworks assignment

Viewing tapes and writing into sound

## **WEEK 7 – OCT. 9**

### **Class Topics: Review for Midterm**

What to say and when to say it

Fires and disasters

Dealing with victims and their families

### **Readings to be done for THIS class:**

Course Reader pgs. 198-203

Tuggle: Chapter 5 – Getting the Facts and the Feelings

Optional - Papper: Chapter 13 – Caring and Connecting \*\*

### **Homework Assignments due for THIS class:**

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

:40-:45 VSV Disaster: Hillside Falls (CD/DVD) \*\*

### **In-class assignments:**

Write VSV (Source material TBA)

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

### **Class Topics: MIDTERM**

:30 VO from raw tape with tape log

:45 VSV from raw tape with tape log

### **Readings:**

None for this week. Study for Midterm.

### **Homework Assignments to be done for THIS class:**

Write VSV (:40-:45)

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

### **Class Topics: Review Midterm; Breaking News and Updates, and News Conferences**

Individual review of class grade and progress

Covering the Big Stories

Breaking News and Updating Stories

### **Readings to be done for THIS class:**

Course Reader pgs. 204-207, 213-215

Tuggle: Chapter 13 – Why We Fight

### **Homework Assignments due for THIS class:**

:45 VSV Rain Melrose (CD/DVD) \*\*

### **In-class assignments:**

VSV TBA

## **WEEK 10 – OCT. 30**

### **Class Topics: Avid editing session, Digital Lab, G-40**

Class meets today in the Digital Editing lab

### **Readings to be done by THIS class:**

Tuggle: TBA

### **Homework Assignments due for THIS class:**

:45-:50 VSV Crossing Guard Hit (CD/DVD) \*\*

## **WEEK 11 – NOV. 6**

### **Class Topics: Writing Packages**

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

### **Readings to be done for THIS class:**

Course Reader pgs. 224-229  
Tuggle: Chapter 9 (review and finish pgs. 147-168)  
Optional - Papper: Chapter 11 – TV:Story Forms

### **Homework Assignments due for THIS class:**

Avid editing assignment

### **In-class assignment:**

View raw tape and write package (TBA)

## **WEEK 12 - NOV. 13**

**FRIDAY NOVEMBER 16: LAST DAY TO DROP A CLASS WITH A MARK OF "W"**

### **Class Topics: Putting Packages Together**

What elements make a good package  
Get it on first, but first get it right

### **Readings to be done for THIS class:**

Tuggle: Chapter 12 – The Care and Feeding of Television Live Shots

### **Homework Assignments due for THIS class:**

Package 1:00. Encino Apartment Explosion (CD/DVD) \*\*

## **WEEK 13 - NOV. 20**

### **Class Topics: Crimes and Courts**

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

**Homework Assignments to be done for THIS class:**

View coverage of a court case in a TV newscast. Critique and tell what you would do to improve it.

**Readings to be done by THIS class:**

Course Reader pgs. 208-212

Tuggle: Chapter 13 Why We Fight pgs. 237-255

Handout: Papper: Chapter 21 – Crime and Legal

**In-class assignment:**

VSV or package on court case

**WEEK 14 - NOV. 27**

**Class Topics: Odds and Ends**

Details that can make a difference

Refining VSV's and Packages

**Readings to be done by THIS class:**

TBA

**Homework Assignments to be done for THIS class:**

TBA Writing Assignment

**WEEK 15 – DEC. 4**

**Review for final.**

**FINALS WEEK**

**Final:** Tuesday Dec 18 9 am – 11:40 am AHF 259

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 your classes.

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

