

BROADCAST NEWS PRODUCTION

# SYLLABUS

Annenberg School of Journalis

Journalism 306

Wednesday 9-11:40 a.m.

ASC 225



## FALL 2007

# USC ANNENBERG SCHOOL OF JOURNALISM

**Journalism 306  
Broadcast News Production  
Fall 2007**

Michael Daniels



## **COURSE OBJECTIVES**

You will be putting together everything you have learned during the past two semesters about writing and reporting, while advancing and refining your stories by emphasizing solid production techniques. We will provide plenty of space for your own style as long as you do not violate any of the basics. We will stress clear, conversational writing; well-composed, compelling video; and creatively edited stories that make the best use of your pictures, sound bites, and natural sound – all put together in a well-paced and logical manner that makes good use of your best elements. Please see separate sheet on how this news production course differs from your broadcast news reporting class last semester.

## **COURSE DESCRIPTION**

At the end of the semester, broadcast production students should be able to research, write, report, shoot, and edit professional television packages with graphics and special effects as appropriate. This class will emphasize reporting the context crucial to more complex stories, and will build on the basic newswriting and reporting classes. Students should have mastered professional interviewing skills to elicit strong sound bites, and to shoot interviews in a visually compelling manner. Students also should have honed their video photojournalism skills to shoot creative sequences, not simply a variety of different elements. Their editing skills on the Avid software should match basic professional standards both creatively and technically.

All students, whether interested in reporting or producing, should have a clear understanding and appreciation of the major role production plays in reporting television news, and a full understanding of the production skills and knowledge required for both reporters and producers. Class and homework exercises should emulate real-world situations to prepare students for the final upper-division capstone classes of reporting or producing.

## **COURSE OUTCOMES**

1. Following current events and being able to find a local angle to a national or international story.
2. Writing, reporting, shooting, and editing stories under tight deadlines.
3. Advanced photojournalism: Students should have a high appreciation for the power of pictures in television news. They should have the ability to recognize the most memorable and compelling video to help tell the story. Students should also be able to personalize a story with at least one central character.
4. Researching stories: Students should be able to go beyond the basic information provided by their instructors, editors or interviewees. They should be able to write a story “pitch” proposal based on the information they discover. A skimpy or incomplete Story Idea Form will affect your project grade.
5. Reporter stand-ups: Students should be able to produce meaningful stand-ups that advance their stories both journalistically and visually.
6. Producing news broadcasts: We recognize that most producing opportunities, aside from on-air reporting, are in producing entire news broadcasts. Annenberg broadcast majors should be able to understand the challenges of putting together a television news broadcast intended for a mass audience in Los Angeles. This means students should be able to start thinking in terms of news judgment, setting realistic time allotments, orderly presentation of ideas, pacing, style, and several other areas of production necessary for a journalistically sound and creatively compelling newscast.
7. Producing specialty segments, such as sports and weather. How those segments may be changing as people get information from other sources – the Internet, ESPN, the Weather Channel, Blackberrys, PDAs, text messages, etc.
8. Live reports. Students should be able to report and/or introduce a story live at the scene and interact with the anchor. This skill is critical for a television news journalist. (In-class assignment only.)
9. Graphics: Students should be knowledgeable in the types of graphics available, and be able to incorporate them into complex stories to aid understanding.
10. Ratings and Research: Familiarity with ratings and sampling techniques. What ratings can tell a producer, and what they cannot.

Students should have completed two reporter packages for homework assignments by midterm. Length: 1:30 to 1:45. No package the entire semester should exceed 1:45 *in advance.*

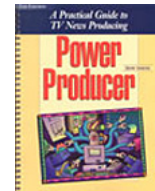
### **RECOMMENDED TEXTBOOKS**



Author: Ken Metzler  
Publisher: Allyn and Bacon  
(*You should have these two books from previous core classes.*)



TV New Directors Association  
(*Recommended for students interested in producing news broadcasts*)



## **DAILY NEWS AND VIEWINGS**

Watch at least one local and/or national newscast daily. Vary the newscasts each day to gain an appreciation for differing styles and news judgments.

We also strongly urge you to view “CBS Sunday Morning” as you can. This early-morning Sunday show features some of the best-produced and most creatively shot news stories on television. We will be viewing and discussing some of the stories in class.



## **ETHICS DISCUSSIONS**

We take a break from current-events quizzes this semester and shift instead to real-world ethics issues that television news producers confront daily. We will e-mail you the ethics question of the week at least 24 hours before class to give you enough time to digest the issue. All ethics issues will be current.

Turn in your comments in writing. Late papers are not accepted. You will be graded both on your participation and on the logical structure and thoughtfulness of your answers.



## **ASSIGNMENTS**

## **GRADING CRITERIA: ASSIGNMENTS AND VIDEO PACKAGES**

### **A. Basic criteria**

, B+, B, B-, C+, C, C-, D+, D, D- or F). On some assignments, we may use a point system, but the points will be translated to a letter grade.

1. “A” stories are accurate, clear, comprehensive stories that are well written and require only minor copy editing (i.e., they would air). They are also shot and edited creatively, are well paced, and include good sound bites and natural sound that add flavor, color, or emotion to the story.
2. “B” stories require more than minor editing, and have a few style or spelling errors or one significant error of omission. There may be minor flaws in the composition of some shots or in the editing. Good use of available sound bites.
3. “C” stories need considerable editing or rewriting and/or have many spelling, style or omission errors. Camera work and editing techniques are mediocre or unimaginative, but passable. Sound bites add little or no color – only information that could be better told in the reporter’s narration.
4. “D” stories require excessive rewriting and have numerous errors, and should not have been submitted. Camera work is unsatisfactory, or fails to show important elements.
5. “F” stories have failed to meet the major criteria of the assignment, have numerous errors, or both. A story that has a factual error that is material to the story merits an F. The following are some other circumstances that would warrant a grade of F:

Using video shot by someone else and presenting it as his or her own work.

Telling interview subjects what you want them to say.

Distorting video: shooting video in one location and presenting it as being another location.

Using the camcorder to intentionally intimidate, provoke or incite a person or a group of people to elicit more “dramatic” video.

Having someone else shoot your stand-up (portion of story when the reporter is on-camera) or interviews – (but only in those cases when the assignment specifically calls for you to shoot your own stand-up and/or interviews).

Promising, paying or giving someone something in exchange for doing an interview, either on or off camera.

### **Plagiarism/Academic Integrity Policy**

them off as one's own. Plagiarism is a serious violation of the School of Journalism's policy on academic integrity. 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:

**S**ince 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. Plagiarism is defined as taking ideas or writings from another and passing them off as one's own; in journalism and in public relations, this means appropriating the words or ideas of another without clear attribution.

### **Late assignments**

#### **D. Rewriting stories**

policy does not apply to Package #4 (final exam).

### **COURSE GRADES**

Ethics Discussions	10%
Package #1 (Coastal Cleanup)	10%
Package #2 (Catalina Field Trip)	15%
Package #3 (Multi-shoot preferred)	20%
Newscast blackout and explanation	10%
Package #4 (Final Project – Multishoot required)	25%
ATVN Learning Lab:	10%
	<hr/>
	Total: 100%

### **ATTENDANCE**

You are expected to be in class every week, or obtain the instructor's approval in advance if you will miss a class – except for verified medical reasons or emergencies.

You will be allowed to edit packages in the Annenberg Digital Lab only if you attend the advanced Avid editing workshop Week 2 and complete required work.

Although the syllabi are similar, every core class is different, so you cannot make up a class session by going to another class in the same sequence, except for the Avid Workshop.

### **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 instructor as early in the semester as possible. DSP is located in STU 301. Phone: (213) 740-0776.

## **CLASS SCHEDULE**

### **WEEK 1 – AUGUST 29**

**Class Topics:**

you should be able to do by the end of the semester. What constitutes good production?  
Photojournalism: Discuss the importance of pictures and sound in news packages.

Discuss the importance of “people” in television news stories. View examples.  
Going beyond the obvious and required elements for a memorable story. View examples.

**Homework:**

**Readings:**



[http://www.spj.org/ethics\\_code.asp](http://www.spj.org/ethics_code.asp)

The ethics code of the Radio-TV News Directors Association is in Papper, page 278-281.

**WEEK 2 – SEPTEMBER 5**



**Homework Assignments:**

**WEEK 3 – SEPTEMBER 12**

**Class Topics:**

**Homework Assignment:**



**WEEK 4 – SEPTEMBER 19**

**Class Topics:**

**WEEK 5 – SEPTEMBER 26**

**Class Topics:**

**Homework Assignment:**

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**Reading:**

**WEEK 6 – OCTOBER 3**



**SATURDAY, OCTOBER 6**

in San Pedro at 7:30 p.m. Cost: \$59.00 round trip.  
Directions and suggestions will be give in class.



**WEEK 7 – OCTOBER 10**

**Class Topics:**

View and discuss the visual elements and sound bites shot at the Catalina “Buccaneer Days” story. Compare your material with the elements shot by your classmates.

Discuss “focusing” a story. Discuss “team coverage”.



**Homework Assignment:**

Make appointment with instructor to view your raw tape before writing and editing story. Mini-DV of edited story, and script with all cues, are due next Wednesday, October 17. You may include “pool footage” of the bar activity from the mini-DV, shot by a designated classmate, which will be available for checkout in the Digital Editing Lab.

**WEEK 8 – OCTOBER 17**

Completed Package #2 (Catalina story) to be viewed, discussed, and critiqued in class. Explanation of what will be required for Package #3 (multishoot) to be shot off campus.

Start working on a proposal for Package #3. Fill out a Story Idea Form to be e-mailed ASAP, or turned in next week at the latest. You may propose more than one story. Each proposal will be answered. Package #3 is due November 14.

Purchase and at least skim through the L.A. Times of next Wednesday, October 24. Bring that edition to class that day and be prepared to discuss which stories you propose including in your newscast, and *why*

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## Los Angeles Times

*why*

*used*

*placement*

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View local newscasts of the three major network-owned stations to compare and discuss. We may spread these viewings over two weeks to allow more time for discussion. Unless there is a single, overriding story that day, you may be surprised how different they are. Discuss why there is such a difference between newscasts.

Complete editing on Package #3.  
Mini-DV of package is due next Wednesday.



**WEEK 11 – NOVEMBER 7**

**Class Topics:**

View and discuss several television news stories. What makes some good? What makes some bad? What could be improved?

Ratings and Demographics. How they affect news judgment and news production.

Diversity coverage. How to avoid stereotypes; when and how to describe members of minority groups such those shown below. View and discuss examples.



**WEEK 12 – NOVEMBER 14**

**Class Topics:**

Package #3 is due. View, discuss, and critique in class.

**Homework Assignment:**

Early Birds: Meet with instructor this week to discuss your final project. Come with your Story Idea Form. We will give immediate feedback so that you can begin work on the final package immediately.

**NOVEMBER 16 – LAST DAY TO DROP A CLASS WITH MARK OF “W”**

**WEEK 13 – NOVEMBER 21**

**HAPPY THANKSGIVING**



**CLASS CANCELLED**

**WEEK 14 – NOVEMBER 28**



**Class Topics:**

**Homework Assignment:**

**WEEK 15 – DECEMBER 5**

**Class Topics:**



**Homework Assignment:**

**WEEK 16 – DECEMBER 12**