

USC ANNENBERG SCHOOL OF JOURNALISM
SYLLABUS
Journalism 306: Broadcast Production
Fall 2007

Instructor: Graham Robertson
Adjunct Lecturer, School of Journalism
Class: Wednesdays 11am – 1:40pm
Classroom: GFS 207

COURSE OBJECTIVES

This class is designed to further your video skills, writing, editing and story-telling techniques. You will use what you learned over the previous two semesters about writing and reporting to produce stories that are more complex, yet more compelling with more advanced production techniques.

In order to achieve these goals, advanced writing and production techniques will be stressed in this course. You will be assigned exercises that will make you better writers, reporters and producers. But more importantly, you will learn how to be better storytellers using words and pictures.

Journalism is a highly competitive field that requires knowledge of a broad range of skills. Professionals must be well rounded on current events; locally, nationally and internationally. Professionals must be proficient at researching stories so that they are not only interesting, but fair and accurate. Strong writing and reporting skills are mandatory to work in journalism.

You will work under deadline pressure on in-class assignments. I can't stress this point enough. Homework assignments and your video projects must be handed in on, or before, deadline. If we all have done our jobs, at the end of the semester you will have produced (written, shot and edited) at least four news packages.

Your stories will need to be well researched, written, shot, edited and narrated at a professional level. Your stories will not only be fair and accurate, but also answer these questions: Is it timely? Is it in the proper context? Is it compelling? Does the viewer learn something new or have you provided them with an interesting story?

The style of writing for broadcast journalism differs from business presentations, scientific journals, term papers, etc. But in journalism, as in other professions, proper grammar, punctuation and spelling are mandatory.

And possibly more important than many other professions, attention to detail is important. Even a slight error could cost you your job or find yourself in front of a judge. In class we will review the consequences of mistakes.

With your instructor's guidance, you will test your skills in generating realistic story ideas that can be presented in video form.

You will also test your own skills at the logistics of journalism; how to set-up an on-camera interview and how to ask questions that elicit answers you can use.

But more important tests may be your ability to judge what is news, the diversity of people you choose to interview and determining the ethics of journalism.

In class we will discuss ethics as it relates to the stories you pitch. In addition, you will participate in an ethics exercise.

Don't get frustrated when you are asked to re-write and re-edit your stories. The best journalists will tell you everyone can use a good editor.

While your instructors at USC can teach you the basics of solid journalism; good writing, creative photojournalism and editing techniques, it is up to you to determine if you have the passion, drive and capability to enter the field of journalism.

REQUIREMENTS

You will be expected to research, write and produce at least four news packages (one will be your final project.) You will need the following skills: research, writing, reporting, shooting, editing and narrating. You will be assessed on all the above skills with special attention given to reporting and writing.

You will receive additional instruction in editing for your packages. By the end of the semester you will have turned in a minimum four full packages. (One of them is your final project.) Two can be feature stories, the others need to be event stories or issue-oriented pieces. Your packages will run not less than 1:30 or no longer than 2:15.

Before you begin any of your stories, you will be required to present a detailed "story pitch" to your instructor to determine if there are enough strong elements to qualify your story. Your ideas will be shared with the class for additional input.

Later, you will be required to submit a Story Development Form which outlines the story focus/angle and specific information on interviews to be conducted and contact information. Your Story Pitches and Story Development Forms need to provide specifics. Skimpy or incomplete pitches and/or development forms will lower your project grade.

To insure the accuracy of your work, your instructor may conduct fact checking with your sources.

BIOGRAPHY

Your instructor is a national EMMY Award winning producer for NBC Network News. I have worked for NBC News three times in my career, in Burbank and Chicago. I'm currently a contracted-freelance producer-assignment editor in Burbank. I began working for Los Angeles-based City News Service/Radio News West before I entered broadcasting at an all-news radio station in Phoenix. In local news, I've been a reporter, producer, assistant news director and news director. My local news career has taken me from Phoenix to Syracuse to Seattle. Along the way I've also taught part-time at Arizona State University and Syracuse University. This semester I will begin my seventh year at USC. I hold a B.S. from Northern Arizona University and an M.A. from Arizona State University

RECOMMENDED TEXTBOOKS

ISBN: 0205335438

Title: Broadcast News Writing Stylebook, Second Edition

Author: Robert A. Papper

Publisher: Allyn and Bacon

ISBN: 0205262589

Title: Creative Interviewing, Third Edition

Author: Ken Metzler

Publisher: Allyn and Bacon

(You should have these two books from previous core classes.)

ISBN 0967843200

Title: Power Producer

Author: Dow Smith

Publisher: Radio-TV New Directors Association

(Recommended for students interested in producing news broadcasts)

DAILY NEWS READINGS

As stated above, professional broadcast journalists need to be well-rounded in

current events and general knowledge. You will be expected to read the Los Angeles Times on a daily basis. You need to watch one local and one network newscast every week. You also need to select one network magazine program to view.

OVERALL COURSE GRADING CRITERIA

QUIZZES

Quizzes will begin at 11am SHARP. Your quizzes will be a combination of current events and general knowledge. For the current events quizzes, questions will come from the Los Angeles Times (any day during the week) and one internet site selected by the instructor (Note: I'll probably use MSNBC and/or CNN). Fifty percent will be given for correct answers, fifty percent writing in proper broadcast form. Additionally, occasional questions will come from your assigned readings. Remember, the quizzes are worth 10% of your overall grade. It is important that you take these seriously.

IN-CLASS ASSIGNMENTS

All classes will be a combination of theory and practice. That means every class will involve some type of exercise. We will start by reviewing basic storytelling. You will be given in-class writing assignments. These will be written under deadline pressure. The deadline will be announced at the beginning of the assignment. Failure to meet the deadline will result in an F. In-class writing assignments will be handed back in the next class. Since this is a broadcast course, you will be expected to read your stories out loud. Other students may also be asked to read your completed stories.

HOMEWORK ASSIGNMENTS

Homework is due on the day of class. You must turn in a hard copy. There will be times your instructor will allow e-mailed assignments. Those exceptions will be announced in class. Your assignments will be collected at the beginning of class. Don't wait to come to class to print out your story. The DEADLINE is at one minute after the beginning of class. 11:01am. Missing the deadline will result in an F. But you should still hand in your work, as your instructor will provide notes on how to improve your writing, editing and photography.

The homework outlined in the syllabus and the week-to-week class outlines are not carved in stone. I will be adding and deleting class work and homework assignments depending on your skills and learning requirements. It is up to you to check every week to make sure you know what is expected of you. No homework assignments can be made-up. There is no extra-credit homework. Missed homework assignments cannot be made-up. Homework

assignments will be handed back in the next class.

SCRIPT FORMAT

While each media organization may have different ways to format scripts, this class will adhere to the most commonly used format. Scripts will be split into left and right columns. All reporter/anchor copy will be in CAPS, double-spaced. All sound bites will be clearly identified and written in Upper/Lower case. A sample blank script will be handed out in class.

GRADING FOR IN-CLASS WRITING ASSIGNMENTS:

All work must be turned in by the in-class deadline. That means a hard copy in the instructor's hands. Don't get caught behind other students printing their stories just moments for the deadline. Failure to meet the deadline will result in an F for the assignment.

- A This is for perfect work. That means a story that could go on the air as is. It also means that your writing skill is not only clear and logical but also encompasses good story-telling techniques. Grades for this level work could result in an A or A-
- B This for solid work but needs some editing. Grades for this level work could result in a B, B+ or B-
- C Average work. No factual errors, but needs more editing. Grades for this level work could result in a C, C+ or C-
- D Problems with story structure, facts or grammar. Grades for this level work could result in a D, D+ or D-
- F One or more factual error. Missed Deadline.

CLASS PARTICIPATION

You will find in broadcast journalism that it is a team effort to get a news program on the air. The best place to start exercising teamwork is right here in this class. You will be called upon to read your in-class writing and homework writing assignments out loud in class. Students will critique your stories and your completed packages. You are also expected to provide quality critiques for your fellow students.

We will also discuss what role journalism plays in our society. We will talk about the roles ethics and diversity play in our selection of stories and how we report, write and use visual images.

GRADING PHILOSOPHY FOR PRODUCED WORK

The goal in the class is to prepare you for the real world of journalism. We all expect to see improvement as the semester continues. If you show improvement, low grades at the beginning of the semester will count less when calculating your final grade. The grade definitions listed below are only a guideline for your instructor.

For three of the Packages, you will receive a provisional grade for reporting/writing and production. You will be allowed to re-write, re-shoot and/or re-edit your projects for one full grade improvement. You will have one week in which to make the improvements. (This will not be possible for your Final Project.)

The Basic Criteria to be used: Students will be graded on clarity; fluidity, logic, accuracy; fairness/balance; completeness/omissions; AP style, grammar, punctuation and spelling; ability to meet deadlines.

GRADING FOR PRODUCED PROJECTS

While your video projects will receive one grade, your instructor will be looking at your Reporting and Production capabilities. Editorially, you will be graded on content, which consists of your reporting and writing skills. For the Production portion of the grade, your instructor will consider your projects' shooting, editing and narration.

If you fail to turn in a videotape for any of the required Package assignments you will automatically receive an F.

The complexity of the stories you select will also affect your grade. You should plan to produce hard-edged stories. To be considered for a grade of A or B, your stories should have many layers/elements (we will discuss this at length in class). A simple story, well executed can only earn you a C+ or less

Turning in a script, but failing to provide a tape will result in an F
The highest grade possible for turning in a script, but with an incomplete tape or unedited tape will be a D.

- A. Basic criteria - You will be graded on clarity, organization, accuracy, fairness/balance, completeness/omissions, grammar, spelling, and ability to meet deadlines. We will distribute a separate checklist showing the exact criteria we will be grading.

Each story will have a letter grade (A, A-, 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:

Plagiarizing a script, portions of a script, or information from any source – wire copy, feed packages, another reporter’s package or story script. (See B below.)

Staging video: When the reporter tells or asks someone to do something specific, unless that is revealed or made obvious in the context of the story. (Gray areas will be discussed in class.)

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 standup (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 standup and/or interviews).

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

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."

ETHICS

All work must meet the highest ethical standards. Ethics applies to the responsible and moral use of information, insures that your facts are correct and accurate, that your sources are reliable, that your language is not prejudicial and that your story is fair and balanced.

J-306 BROADCAST GRADES

Current Events Quizzes	10%
Package #1	10%
Package #2	15%
Package #3	20%
Newscast blackout & explanation	10%
Final package	25%
ATVN Learning Lab	10%
TOTAL:	100%

ATTENDANCE

Class begins at 11am SHARP. Quizzes will begin when class begins. So don't be late. You can't afford to get zeroes on the Quiz portion of your grade. Being on-time will also get you into the good habit of being punctual, something that is required of professional journalists.

Since many of the classes will have in-class writing assignments, you should plan on attending every class. Other than cases of emergency, you will need to contact me prior to your absence. If the emergency occurs on the day of class, you need to call me at work, on my cell phone or at home. This is another area I cannot stress enough. Attendance is important to your grade. Make-up assignments will not be given for in-class work or quizzes. In cases when an excused absence has been granted due to an emergency, you will be permitted to make up missed homework assignments only by the next class session. You will not be allowed to make up any in-class assignments or quizzes with extra homework assignments. You are not allowed to make-up a class by going to another core class in the same sequence.

PROFESSIONAL DRESS POLICY

We've discussed how important it is for journalists to have a well-rounded base of knowledge to be successful. It is also important that you represent yourself and your organization well. Remember, reporters are no different from representatives of other organizations. You need to appropriately dressed to

make a positive impression on people. Otherwise, your result could turn out badly. When going on interviews, dress in a manner that fits the situation and shows respect for the interviewee. Flip-flops and scruffy shirts are out. So are revealing necklines. And never wear an advertisement during an interview or other on-camera segment--not even a USC sweatshirt. If you are not using your USC account as your primary e-mail address, make sure you are not sending interview requests to potential interview subjects with e-mail address such as pinklady@ aol.com

WRITING COACH

Writing coaches are available in ASC 227 during posted drop-in times and by appointment. Writing coaches should be used to review assignments AFTER an assignment has been graded/marked-up by the instructor.

Mike Daniels, Broadcast Writing Coach
Phone: 310-823-2310
E-mail: danielism@usc.edu
Office: ASC 227

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 – AUGUST 29

Class Topics:

Review Syllabus

Discuss photography and editing training (**FYI, Avid editing sessions are mandatory and can't be made up**)

General knowledge quizzes

Camera Check out procedure
ATVN Learning Lab Requirement explained

Homework Assignments:

Write package from hand-out
Prepare Story Pitches for Project #1

WEEK 2 – SEPT 5

Class Topics:

Current Events Quiz
Review Story Pitches for Project #1
Review examples of packages with many elements
Review the differences sound bites and quotes
In-class writing assignment

Homework Assignments:

Write package from hand-out
Prepare Story Development Form for Project #1

WEEK 3-SEPT 12

Class Topics:

Meet in the Avid lab for Edit Training. This is mandatory to continue in the class. No make-ups available.

Homework Assignments:

Complete Package #1

WEEK 4 - SEPT. 19

Class Topics:

Current Events Quiz
Package #1 Due/Review in Class

Homework Assignments:

Prepare Story Pitches for Package #2
Writing Assignment

WEEK 5 - SEPT. 26

Class Topics:

Current Events Quiz
Review Story Pitches for Package #2
Guest Speaker

Homework Assignments:

Prepare Story Development Form for Package #2

WEEK 6 – OCT 3

Class Topics:

Current Events Quiz
Review Story Development Form for Package #2
Discuss use of Natural Sound in Packages

Homework Assignments:

Complete Package #2

WEEK 7 – OCT. 10

Class Topics:

Current Events Quiz
Package #2 Due/Review in class
Discuss use of graphics in packages

Homework Assignments:

Prepare Story Pitches for Package #3
Writing Assignment

WEEK 8 - OCT. 17

Class Topics:

Current Events Quiz
Review Story Pitches for Package #3
Ethics Exercise

Homework Assignments:

Prepare Story Development forms for Package #3
Writing Assignment

WEEK 9 - OCT. 24

Class Topics:

Current Events Quiz
Review Story Development forms for Package #3
Producing a television newscast

Homework Assignments:

Complete Package #3
Block a television newscast

WEEK 10 – OCT 31

Class Topics:

Current Events Quiz
Package #3 Due/Review in Class
View local television newscasts

Homework Assignments:

Prepare Story Pitches for Final Package
Writing Assignment

WEEK 11 – NOV. 7

Class Topics:

Current Events Quiz
Review Story Pitches for Final Package
Review packages from smaller markets

Homework Assignments:

Prepare Story Development Forms for Final Package

WEEK 12 - NOV.14

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

Class Topics:

Current Events Quiz
Review Story Development Forms for Final Package
In-Class exercise

WEEK 13 - NOV. 21-NO CLASS

WEEK 14 - NOV. 28

Class Topics:

Current Events Quiz _
Discuss Final Package progress
Guest Speaker

WEEK 15 – DEC 5

Class Topics:

Review for Final Package
Current Events Quiz

Homework:

Finish final Project

FINALS WEEK – DEC 12
FINAL PROJECT DUE – 5:01 pm.