

USC ANNENBERG SCHOOL OF JOURNALISM
SYLLABUS
Journalism 308 – Introduction to Online Media
Fall 2007

Instructor: Steven W. Johnson

BIOGRAPHY

Steven Johnson is a Senior Producer with the Walt Disney Internet Group, working with Disney Family.com and its affiliated products. Previously, he was a Senior Producer with the Los Angeles Times website, working with the online arts and entertainment coverage. Before, that he was Public Relations manager for the L.A. Opera. His experience crosses a several disciplines and include classic print writing and editorial, online technical production and design, video and multimedia production, marketing and public relations, plus his current focus with WDIG, interaction design and new product development.

COURSE SPECIFICS AND OUTCOMES

Through this course, you will acquire the skills to develop a basic online story package with multiple elements, including text, visuals (video, photos, graphics, etc.), audio, interactivity and navigation. You will:

Complete at least three online news feature story packages (approved by the instructor before work begins):

- Story Project 1: Print or broadcast-based online story package. You will take a completed or in-progress print or broadcast story and develop a full online story package. This will likely require additional reporting (more research, interviews, shooting, re-editing). Stories must be original, individual work. University policy prohibits the use of the exact same story for two classes.
- Story Project 2: An original online story package developed, reported, written and edited specifically for this class.
- Final Project: Your choice of an original package or one already completed or in-progress.

Complete each weekly assignment. Some may be brief; some may be complex. Understand online ethics and basic copyright law.

CLASS MATERIALS

USB flash drive: Although not required for in-class work or homework, you will find it convenient to have a flash drive to organize and transport files and assignments. Be sure to label your flash drive so it can be returned if you lose it.

AP Stylebook: Your work is expected to conform to AP style. You may wish to bring your stylebook to class.

REGULAR NEWS READINGS

You already are expected to keep up with local news by following the Los Angeles Times, either in print or online. In addition, you should regularly visit:

A mainstream, print-oriented national news site (like nytimes.com).

A mainstream, broadcast-oriented national news site (like cnn.com).

One or two non-traditional information sites (like slate.com or etonline.com).

GRADING

Criteria

Projects earning an “A” are professional and ready to publish; they are accurate, clear and comprehensive, and include multiple online elements. Headlines and text are well-written and require only minor editing for AP style, grammar/punctuation/spelling and consistency. Visual or audio elements are relevant (e.g., no video just for the sake of having video), and edited or cropped effectively and appropriately.

Projects earning a “B” require more than minor editing, and have a few style or spelling errors. There is at least one significant online element omitted.

Projects earning a “C” need considerable editing or rewriting. There are online elements missing or incomplete.

Projects earning a “D” require excessive rewriting and have numerous errors. They likely go little beyond the original print or broadcast story (if there is one), or are sloppy and/or unprofessional. They are not publishable and should not have been submitted.

Projects earning an “F” have failed to meet the major criteria of the assignment, have numerous errors or both. They may be misleading or contain content from third parties used without attribution. They are not publishable and should not have been submitted.

COURSE GRADES

Weekly assignments	20%
Preparation/participation/quizzes	15%
Story package 1	15%
Story package 2	20%
Final story package	30%

Assignments and projects will be judged on elements including text, visuals (photos, graphics, video), interactivity, navigation and adherence to assignment specifics. Design and color decisions will be judged on appropriateness and usage of concepts discussed in class. Because the class is cumulative, students should demonstrate an understanding of all previously covered concepts in each assignment, even if the assignment does not specifically address those issues.

Assignments and projects are to be turned in on time and in a professional manner, edited to AP style, and by the assigned deadline (some projects may be time-specific). Late or incomplete work will be marked down. Students should turn in each assignment as specified – some may be sent by e-mail, some turned in as hard copy, some posted to your Web space. Do not remove materials from your Web space until you have received confirmation from your instructor that the material has been graded.

ATTENDANCE

Attendance is expected. If a class is to be missed:

For illness: The student must leave an e-mail message at steven.w.johnson@usc.edu or a phone message at 310-429-0475 prior to the start of class or the absence will be considered unexcused.

For reason other than illness: The instructor's approval before class day must be sought.

If an absence is unexcused, material missed – including quizzes, in-class assignments or other work – cannot be made up, and your participation mark will be affected.

PLAGIARISM / ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Plagiarism is defined as taking ideas or writings from another and passing them off as one's own; in journalism, this includes appropriating the reporting of another without clear attribution. The following is the Annenberg School of Journalism's policy on academic integrity as published in the University catalog:

“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 immediately receive a failing grade in the course and will be dismissed as a major from the School of Journalism. There are no exceptions to the school's policy.”

ACADEMIC ACCOMMODATIONS

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; phone 213-740-0776.

WRITING COACHES

Writing coaches are available in ASC 227 during posted drop-in times and by appointment. Note: Writing coaches will only review assignments after an assignment has been graded/marked-up by the instructor.

Print writing coaches:

Bob Berger: rberger@usc.edu

Ed Boyer: edjboyer@ca.rr.com

Broadcast writing coach:

Mike Daniels: danielsm@usc.edu

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CLASS SCHEDULE

Each week, the class time will be divided as necessary between topical lecture/discussion, and practical instruction targeting the skills needed for assignments. The order of one or more of the topics may shift due to the availability and schedule of some guest speakers.

Week 1 – Aug. 29

Course Introduction

Class Topics: Course overview; syllabus. News and information sites; writing for online; blogs. Using screenshots and other tracking for your reporting. Overview of major projects including **Story Project 1**, **Story Project 2** and **Final Assignment**.

Skills: Screenshots. Understanding URLs. Viewing the source code.

Homework Assignment: Write an Internet autobiography. Keep a one-week journal of your online wanderings. Log *everything*. Put it in a format you can replicate for two more assignments. Write a brief background of your own Internet experience, then offer a meta-analysis of your data. Use screenshots to illustrate your narrative.

Week 2 – Sept. 5

Who's Your Audience?

Class Topics: Sample Internet autobiographies. Discussion of metrics. Writing for the Web. Further discussion of Story Project 1 assignment.

Skills: Begin learning basic HTML, page layout, *wireframing*. Activate your USC account. How to upload content.

Homework Assignment: Buzzword bingo. New media jargon; print and broadcast translations. Look up definitions; track prevalence in media.

To do: Study for buzzword bingo quiz on Sept. 12. Decide on Story Project 1 topic; email proposal.

Week 3 – Sept. 12

The Not-So-Lawless Internet

Class Topics: Ethics, intellectual property and copyright law; plagiarism, fair use, and open source. Brief introduction to blogs, WIKIs, UGC and interactivity online.

Skills: Continuation of basic html, page layout, wireframing, plus introduction to images and graphics.

Homework Assignment: Take basic HTML template and use it to post a news brief to your own webpage.

To do: Visit online awards coverage of the Emmys Sunday night, Monday morning.

Week 4 - Sept. 19

That's Infotainment!

Class Topics: Emmys wrap-up. The move towards infotainment and what it might mean for journalism. Copyright concerns and privacy rights as they relate to digital images.

Skills: Photoshop images, online photo galleries, javascript.

Homework Assignment: Create a narrative photo gallery in html and upload to your site. Write captions.

To do: Bring to class next week three examples of online community *other than* YouTube, MySpace, Flickr or Facebook.

Week 5 - Sept. 26

It Takes Village

Class Topics: In-depth discussion of community, including blogs, WIKIs, User Generated Content and other interactive media. Story Project 1 check-in.

Skills: Colors and fonts, plus web design tips to help with your site.

Homework Assignments: Choose three finalists for the Online News Association Awards in different categories. Score them using the ONA rubric.

Week 6 – Oct. 3

Still Haven't Found What You're Looking For?

Class Topics: Presentation of select ONA Awards finalists, discussion. Search engines and search engine optimization (SEO).

Skills: Review of skills needed to create required Story Project 1 components including wireframes, basic HTML and Photoshop.

Homework Assignments: For next week, finish Story Project 1!

Week 7 – Oct. 10

Convergence - Part 1

Class Topics: Tour of the Los Angeles Times newsroom as it undergoes convergence. Brief discussion of ONA winners announced on Oct. 9. How'd the predictions go? Story Project 2 assignment details handed out.

Homework Assignments: Log another complete week in your journal of online wanderings. Write the second chapter in your Internet autobiography.

Week 12 - Nov. 14 Is There Really Such a Thing as Web 2.0?

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

Class Topics: Web design, new product development, and emerging distribution technologies and revenue streams. Go over **Final Project** requirements.

Skills: An introduction to CSS.

Homework Assignments: Story Project 2 due. Add a stylesheet to your growing site.

To do: Email **Final Project** proposal and wireframes for approval.

Week 13 - Nov. 21

Happy Turkey Day

Class Topics: NO CLASS MEETING THIS WEEK

Homework Assignments: Post your nomination for our Online Turkey Awards.

Week 14 - Nov. 28

On Deadline

Class Topics: In-class time devoted entirely to consultation on final projects, skills, collaboration, and review, plus anything we didn't quite get to in the weeks prior.

WEEK 15 - Dec. 5

FINAL PROJECTS DUE AT THE START OF CLASS.

Class Topic: Presentation and discussion on the future of online storytelling.

FINALS WEEK – DECEMBER 6-13

Any rewrites, revisions or resubmissions will be due on the scheduled exam time.