

Instructor: David Medzerian

COURSE OVERVIEW

This class – your introduction to online journalism – concentrates on the journalism involved in Web work, and the processes involved in putting together online news and information sites. In addition to covering principles of reporting, writing, editing and presentation viewed through a web prism, it also covers principles of design, including graphics, typography and color usage as a necessary foundation for exploring web work as journalists. You will develop a critical vocabulary, basic understanding and solid foundation of what works well on the web and why, and the basic skills necessary to edit, produce and write for online information sites.

Students will do this through a series of in- and out-of-class exercises, including the production of content and pages for a laboratory online news site called “The L.A. Pilot.” Some exercises will require students to act as reporters; others will have students be editors and/or producers. This work will complement the work you are doing in your core print and broadcast courses. Students are not expected to learn how to create web sites from scratch, but will master the technical basics and editorial skills required of journalists working for online news sites such as nytimes.com or cnn.com.

Although expectations may vary somewhat for broadcast and for print students, all students will be expected to produce work of publishable quality. This includes professionalism in presentation, editorial decisions, editing, spelling and grammar. Work produced for The L.A. Pilot and for other class assignments is expected to be of the quality seen in comparable professional sites, and will be graded accordingly.

Specific assignments, readings and weekly subjects may be revised as the course progresses.

INSTRUCTOR BACKGROUND

Your instructor is the Team Leader for Newsroom Technology at Freedom Orange County (publisher of The Orange County Register, OC Post, SqueezeOC, Orange County Home magazine, Excelsior del Condado de Orange and 25 weekly newspapers) as well as technical liaison to KDOC-TV. Previous experience includes: correspondent for the Orange County NewsChannel; reporter, copy editor and design editor at The Miami Herald; copy editor at the Sun-Sentinel, Fort Lauderdale, and at Knight-Ridder’s experimental Viewtron project in Miami Beach; and news production assistant at WCAU-TV, Philadelphia.

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 at least six online update/breaking news stories. These may be in-class writing assignments or assignments with a 24-hour window. Some may be brief; some may be complex.

Understand online ethics and basic copyright law.

CLASS MATERIALS

Blackboard: Blackboard is an online class resource that has copies of assignments, lecture notes and other class materials for working with The L.A. Pilot. An online tutorial is available on the first page. Students can sign into Blackboard by visiting blackboard.usc.edu.

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.

Readings: Specific readings, accessible online, will be assigned occasionally.

Optional: "The Non-Designer's Web Book," by Robin Williams and John Tolett. This book is full of useful information and tips.

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 tmz.com or slate.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.

Calculation:

“Update” projects 20 percent

Preparation/participation/quizzes 15 percent

There will be quizzes. They usually will be unannounced and at the start of class.

Story package 1 15 percent

Story package 2 20 percent

Final story package 30 percent

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 dmedzerian@ocregister.com or a phone message at 714-796-7789 prior to the start of class or the absence will be considered unexcused.

For reason other than illness: Instructor 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."

INTERNSHIPS

The value of professional internships as part of the overall educational experience of our students has long been recognized by the School of Journalism. Accordingly, while internships are not required for successful completion of this course, any student enrolled in this course who undertakes and completes an approved, non-paid internship during this semester shall earn academic extra credit herein of an amount equal to one percent of the total available semester points for this course.

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

CLASS SCHEDULE

Week 1 (Aug. 30): Class introduction

News and information sites; writing for online; blog discussion; request web account
Assignment: Blogs, site critique, bio

Week 2 (Sept. 6): Fundamentals

Inventory and story map; introduction to HTML and Dreamweaver; activating your USC web account; posting online
Assignment: Make a page

Week 3 (Sept. 13): Guest speaker

Week 4 (Sept. 20): Intellectual property

Intellectual property and copyright law; online production tools; more Dreamweaver and file management; more posting online
Assignment: Post a page

Week 5 (Sept. 27): Collaboration

Discussion and in-class exercise
Assignment: Story Project 1

Week 6 (Oct. 4): Links

Links as journalism; in-class work time for Story Project 1
Assignment: Continue Story Project 1

Week 7 (Oct. 11): Design and typography

Story Project 1 due; fundamentals of design and typography; elements of visual journalism; design basics
Assignment: Story Project 2

Week 8 (Oct. 18): Ethics

Discussion; in-class work time for Story Project 2
Assignment: Continue Story Project 2

Week 9 (Oct. 25): Informational Graphics

Story Project 2 due; discussion
Assignment: Graphic

Week 10 (Nov. 1): Photo basics (photography, editing, usage) and guest speaker

Discussion

Assignment: TBA

Week 11 (Nov. 8): Color and Photoshop

Introduction to color theory; Photoshop basics; making a banner

Assignment: Photoshop

Week 12 (Nov. 15): Broadcast web sites

In-class exercise

Assignment: Final Project assigned

Week 13 (Nov. 22): Thanksgiving

Bring a turkey

Week 14 (Nov. 29): Final Project

In-class work time for Final Project

Assignment: Continue Final Project

Week 15 (Dec. 6): Last class

Final Project due; Discussion