



**USC ANNENBERG SCHOOL OF JOURNALISM  
SYLLABUS**

**Journalism 203 – Broadcast Newswriting  
Spring 2008  
Wednesdays 8-10:40am ASC 329**

**Instructor: Otis Easter  
CBS2 News Associate Producer**

**Office Hours:** Wednesdays 7:30am, By Appointment

**INSTRUCTOR BIO**

I have more than 17 years in both television and radio news. I have experience as a reporter, anchor, news writer, line producer, field producer and executive producer. My Master of Science degree is from Columbia University Graduate School of Journalism. I have worked my entire career in major cities, including Sacramento, Boston and currently Los Angeles. I am now Associate Producer of CBS2 News at 5 with Paul Magers and Laura Diaz. I have 3 Emmy Awards, Emmy nominations, and the award for Best Newscast of the Year from the Associated Press Television and Radio Association (APTRA)

**COURSE OBJECTIVES**

In this course, you will learn how to write for television news. You will develop skills to write clear, concise, eye-catching copy for broadcast. You will be expected to meet journalistic standards of accuracy, good grammar, fair and balanced reporting and strong attention-grabbing leads. Television News formatting is unique. You will be instructed and drilled on basic broadcast scripts: The 30 second copy story, 35 second voice-over (VO), 45 second voice-over/sound on tape/voice-over (VSV), and the Minute-30 second package (PKG). Throughout the course we will drive home the importance of tools you'll need everyday in a newsroom.

- \*News judgment (what are the most important facts, what should we report)**
- \*Writing on deadline (example: 1 hr for a VSV)**
- \*Writing to time (45 seconds for a VSV)**
- \*Proper punctuation and sentence structure (no run-ons, passive voice)**
- \*Determining what is the lead**

We will also discuss and analyze current topics and news events, ethical questions, etc.

## **REQUIRED TEXTBOOKS**

These can be purchased at the USC Bookstore, or other sources such as Amazon.com. They are also on reserve at the Annenberg Resource Center (ARC) and Leavey Library.

1. **Title: Broadcast News Handbook, Third Edition**  
**Authors: C.A. Tuggle, Forrest Carr, Suzanne Huffman**  
**ISBN: 0-07-352609-6**  
**Web site: www.mhhe.com/tuggle3**
2. **Title: Newswriting Course Reader for JOUR 202/203/501**  
**Publisher: USC Bookstore**  
**IMPORTANT: Please bring this to class every week. Many in-class assignments will be taken from the Course Reader.**
3. **Dictionary: Merriam Webster, www.m-w.com**  
**This is the dictionary that should be used for all assignments, midterms and finals.**
4. **Title: Associated Press Stylebook and Briefing on Media Law (2007 edition)**  
**Author: Norm Goldstein**  
**ISBN: 0738207403**

## **DAILY NEWS PROGRAMS**

Students should watch one local or national news broadcast, daily. Students should also read as much as possible on-line versions of newspapers, magazines, TV and radio stations and networks: For example, Drudgereport.com, LATimes.com, Washingtonpost.com, CBSNews.com, CNN.com....etc.

## **PROFESSIONALISM IN THE CLASSROOM**

**PARTICIPATION IN CLASS WILL COUNT AS PART OF YOUR GRADE.** Discuss, ask questions, debate. I need you to talk back to me, in a good way. Students must turn off cell phones or program them to "silent". Eating and drinking during class are restricted. Students should be respectful at all times. In-class discussions and critiques will hopefully often be robust, and opinionated. But they **must never** turn personal or inappropriate in any way. We are all learning and growing from each other. Feedback should be constructive, and about the work. You are professionals in the making!

## **QUIZZES**

At the beginning of each class there will be a 10 question current events quiz. The quiz will start at 8am SHARP! It will end at 8:10am SHARP! That's the first 10 minutes only!! So don't be late! Consider it a real-life news deadline. We "fade to black" precisely at 8:10am. Each question is worth 10 points. Partial credit is given at the discretion of the instructor. Two or perhaps three questions will be on Journalism basics or from Tuggle book. For example, name "two" commonly misused words, according to Tuggle. Also, there may be basic knowledge questions, such as naming 4 major candidates for President this year?

## **ASSIGNMENTS**

There will be both in-class assignments and homework, weekly.

### **IN-CLASS ASSIGNMENTS:**

You must learn how to write on deadline. It is a basic skill to succeed in journalism, whether you are broadcast or print. In-class writing assignments will have strict time limits. All scripts must be in standard two column format. The left side is for director/editor instructions. The right side is for copy. Do not use proofreading symbols in your scripts. Preferably, you should check your work thoroughly **BEFORE** printing. If you do need to make a change to it after printing, cross out the unwanted portion completely. Then, write the corrected portion, **NEATLY**.

### **HOMEWORK ASSIGNMENTS:**

Turn in your homework as a printed copy at the **BEGINNING** of class. Scripts must be in broadcast two column format. You will email some assignments to me as a Microsoft Word document, before the week's class. You will get back your graded assignments with extensive notes, usually within one week. It is your responsibility to have **WORD** on your computer. That includes MAC computers. I can only receive and open **WORD** documents. So, please make sure you have access to **WORD**.

**\*\*\*\*IMPORTANT\*\*\*\***

**IN-CLASS AND HOMEWORK ASSIGNMENTS FOR THE FIRST FOUR WEEKS OF THIS COURSE WILL BE GRADED BUT WILL BE WEIGHTED LESS WHEN DETERMINING THE COURSE GRADE. THIS DOES NOT APPLY TO LEADS TEST OR CURRENT EVENTS QUIZZES.**

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

- A. **Basic criteria** - You will be graded on clarity, organization, accuracy, fairness/balance, completeness/omissions, grammar, spelling, correct broadcast format, and ability to meet deadlines.

Each story will have a letter grade (A, A-, B+, B, B-, C+, C, C-, D+, D, D-, F).

1. "A" stories are accurate, clear, comprehensive stories that are well written and require only minor copy editing (i.e., they would air). Copy matches video.
2. "B" stories require more than minor editing, and have a few style or spelling errors or one significant error of omission.
3. "C" stories need considerable editing or rewriting and/or have many spelling, style or omission errors.

4. "D" stories require excessive rewriting and have numerous errors, and should not have been submitted
5. "F" stories have failed to meet the major criteria of the assignment, have numerous errors, or both. A story that has a gross factual error that is crucial to the story merits an F. **\*\*This includes making one or more serious factual errors in a script---such as inaccurate names of significant people or locations, faulty descriptions of events that occurred, lack of attribution or misquoting people\*\***

**\*\*Note\*\* Plagiarizing a script, portions of a script, or information from any source will also result in a grade of "F"**

## **B. 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."*

## **C. Late Assignments**

**As per Annenberg policy for core classes, NO LATE ASSIGNMENTS WILL BE ALLOWED. Some rare exceptions due to documented (on USC Student Health Center stationery) medical reasons may be granted. ASSIGNMENTS THAT ARE TURNED IN LATE WILL RECEIVE AN "F".**

## D. **Rewriting Assignments**

Students will be allowed to re-write some assignments to achieve a higher grade.

Such re-writes must be done within a deadline to be determined by the instructor, and the two grades will be averaged. This **DOES NOT APPLY** to the current events quizzes, leads test or midterm exam. Note: If you fail to turn in an assignment, but the instructor later allows the class to re-write that specific assignment, you may also do so---but the highest grade you will receive will be a "C".

## **BROADCAST JOURNALISM MAJORS**

Broadcast majors **must** fulfill their learning lab requirement at ATVN. There are no exceptions. ATVN executive producers will be coming to your JOUR 203 class on the first day to explain the ATVN application process.

ATVN will be sending attendance records and ratings to your instructor.

## **PRINT JOURNALISM AND PUBLIC RELATIONS MAJORS**

Contact one of the following organizations. Apply early; spaces are limited. You must have a confirmed appointment by Friday, September 14 to receive full credit.

1. **Daily Trojan** (daily newspaper) – Go to STU 421 and fill out an application.
2. **Annenberg Radio News** - Annenberg Radio News is launching a live web newscast in Fall 2007. The newscast will "air" online at 4 pm on Tuesdays and Thursdays and feature a mixture of headline and in-depth news, as well as web content. ARN will offer a limited number of learning lab shifts to print and public relations newswriting students. Students should have a strong interest in radio news. To be eligible:
  - Students must have a weekly 2-hour block of time **TUESDAY or THURSDAY** between the hours of 10 am and 4 pm.
  - Students must attend training workshops at the beginning of the semester, including Adobe Audition, iNews software and audio board operation.

To apply, e-mail [ascradio@usc.edu](mailto:ascradio@usc.edu) IMMEDIATELY. An application will be e-mailed to you.

3. **Internship at an off-campus news organization** – Print and public relations majors may substitute an internship, if approved by their JOUR 203 instructor. Internships must include newswriting and must be at a news organization; internships at advertising or public relations agencies aren't acceptable.

**Contact Career Development Services for help in finding an internship.**

**Tim Burgess, Director – tburgess@usc.edu**

**Suzanne Alcantara, Associate Director – suzannea@usc.edu**

**Megan Hutaff, Career Advisor – meganh@usc.edu**

Your instructor will let you know what he or she needs you to provide as proof of your work, e.g., clips; letter from your supervisor; weekly journal.

**\*\*IMPORTANT: ALL STUDENTS MUST BE SIGNED UP FOR THE ATVN LEARNING LAB REQUIREMENT BY FRIDAY FEBRUARY 1ST \*\*\***

### **COURSE GRADES**

Assignments (In-class, homework, ethics assignments)	20%
Leads Test (2/6)	10%
Midterm (3/5)	20%
Current Events Quizzes	10%
Class Participation	10%
ATVN/Learning Lab requirement	5%
Final Exam (5/7)	<u>25%</u>
Total	100%

### **ATTENDANCE**

Students are expected to be in class every week. Instructor and student will jointly determine how - or if - the student can make-up missed assignments or lectures. If for some reason you are very late to class, be courteous and remain after class to discuss the reasons for your tardiness with the instructor.

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 a student misses this Wednesday class, he or she simply can't go to another Wednesday Broadcast News Writing class as a substitute.

Documented medical emergencies or other circumstances will be considered excused absences.

**\*\*IMPORTANT—WE WILL HAVE AN EDIT TRAINING SESSION ON WEDNESDAY MARCH 26TH. THE CLASS WILL MEET IN ASC G40 THAT DAY. ATTENDANCE IS MANDATORY AND THERE WILL BE NO MAKEUP SESSIONS. YOU MUST ATTEND THIS SESSION IN ORDER TO TO USE THE EDIT LAB AND COMPLETE CERTAIN CLASS ASSIGNMENTS.\*\***

## **WRITING COACHES**

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

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

**Ed Boyer, Print:** [ediboyer@ca.rr.com](mailto:ediboyer@ca.rr.com)

**Bob Berger, Print:** [bberger@usc.edu](mailto:bberger@usc.edu)

## **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 – January 16**

#### **Class Topics:**

- Introduction/Review syllabus
- Practice current events quiz (not graded)
- Television news---what makes a story newsworthy? The importance of *people*; view video examples
- Class handout/scripting basics and terms—copy story, vo, vsv, package--view examples
- In-class timed writing assignment (not graded)
- ATVN Executive Producer explains Learning Lab sign-up.

#### **Reading/Homework Assignments:**

(\*Note some reading assignments are not shown in this syllabus because they will be very current; they will be distributed in class and/or emailed to students.)

**\*\*Write a short 1-2 page autobiography (single spaced, Word document). Give me any details you want (family, hobbies, sports/activities, likes/dislikes, etc) but be sure to tell me what your career goals are. \*\*Email this to me by Noon Tuesday 1/22\*\***

For 1/22, read Chapters 9A thru 9E in the USC Course Reader  
---Read Chapters 1, 2, 3, 4 in Tuggle book

### **WEEK 2 – January 23**

**\*\*GRADED CURRENT EVENTS QUIZZES BEGIN WITH THIS CLASS SESSION\*\***

#### **Class Topics:**

- Basic broadcast writing rules/terms
- Leads; difference between print & broadcast leads---view examples
- TV copy stories
- Basic newsroom structure
- Video samples
- In-class timed writing assignment

#### **Readings/Homework Assignments:**

- For 1/30, find **TWO** short newspaper stories and re-write them as broadcast copy stories (Attach the newspaper story to your broadcast script)
- Read Chapters 9F thru 9-I (eye) in USC Course Reader
- Read Chapters 5, 7, and 8 in Tuggle book

### **WEEK 3 – January 30**

**\*\*YOU MUST BE SIGNED UP FOR LEARNING LAB BY FEB 1<sup>ST</sup> \*\***

#### **Class Topics:**

- More on leads—how to recognize the lead of a story; how to write an effective lead; view examples
- Covering/writing the basic broadcast stories: crime, fire
- Writing VOs; matching copy and video; view examples
- Where do we find news?
- In-class timed writing assignment

#### **Readings/Homework Assignments:**

- For 2/6, write :30 broadcast copy stories on the following (found in USC Course Reader):

Shots Fired page 361  
Armed Robbery page 362  
Child For Sale page 364

- Read Chapters 9J, 9K and 9L in USC Course Reader
- Submit two campus story ideas; detail what the story angle is; who would you interview for the story; what video would be needed to tell the story (Use Story Idea Form that will be distributed in class)

## **WEEK 4 – February 6 \*\*ALL ASSIGNMENTS NOW COUNT AT FULL WEIGHT \*\***

### **Class Topics:**

#### **\*\*Leads Test\*\***

- More on writing VOs (including logging tapes and time codes)
- More on covering/writing basic broadcast stories: courts, meetings, features (view examples)
- Review story ideas (homework)
- In-class timed writing assignment

### **Reading/Homework Assignments:**

- For 2/13, write :35 VOs on the following (found in USC Course Reader):
  - Pilot Arrested page 282
  - Head On Crash page 271
- Read Chapters 7 and 8 in Tuggle book

## **WEEK 5 – February 13**

### **Class Topics:**

- Review Leads Test
- Writing VO/SOT/VOs, including selecting and writing to SOTs (view examples)
- Writing Breaking News (view examples)
- In-class timed writing assignment

### **Readings/Homework Assignments:**

- For 2/20, write :45 broadcast VO/SOT/VO on the following (found in USC Course Reader):
  - Obadiah's Rescue page 274
- Read Chapters 5, 12 and 13 in Tuggle book

## **WEEK 6 – February 20**

### **Class Topics:**

- More on VO/SOT/VOs
- More on covering basic broadcast stories—exercising restraint with sensitive stories; ethical dilemmas (view examples)
- News Franchises and Beats—(view examples)
- In-class timed writing assignment

### **Readings/Homework Assignments:**

- For 2/27, write :45 VO/SOT/VO on the following (found in USC Course Reader):
  - Griffith Park Brush Fire page 349
- Read for Midterm Review: TBA

## **WEEK 7 – February 27**

### **Class Topics:**

- Review for Midterm Exam
- In-class timed writing assignment

### **Readings/Homework Assignments:**

- For 10/17, write :45 VO/SOT/VO on the following (found in USC Course Reader):  
Poolside Bear page 284

## **WEEK 8 – March 5**

### **Class Topics:**

#### **\*\*Midterm Exam\*\***

- You will have entire class to finish. No current events test.

### **Readings/Homework Assignments:**

- For 3/12, write :45 VO/SOT/VO from Tuggle CD-Rom Story #5 RV Drug
- Homework reading assignments will be distributed in class: avoiding stereotypes

## **WEEK 9 – March 12**

### **Class Topics:**

- Review Midterm Exam
- Ethics dilemmas for reporters and producers; including avoiding stereotypes, the importance of diversity of sources
- In-class timed writing assignment

### **Readings/Homework Assignments:**

**\*\*\*Ethics writing assignment TBA— must be emailed to me by noon Tuesday 3/18\*\*\***

- For 3/19, Write :45 VO/SOT/VO on the following (found in USC Course Reader):  
Downed Horse page 281 **must be emailed to me by noon Tuesday 3/18\*\*\***

- Homework reading assignments will be distributed in class

## **WEEK 10 – SPRING BREAK NO CLASS!!**

## **WEEK 11 – March 26**

**\*\*MANDATORY EDIT TRAINING--MEET IN ASC G40 AVID EDIT LAB\*\***

### **Class Topics:**

**\*\*Edit training in ASC G40; mandatory attendance--no makeup sessions**

---Also: importance of nat sound in editing (view example)

### **Readings/Homework Assignments:**

---For 4/2 Complete editing assignment from training session

## **WEEK 12 – April 2**

### **Class Topics:**

--Writing packages

--Editing; view examples of good and bad

--Ethics and Editing; manipulation of video and sound bites

--In-class timed writing assignment

### **Readings/Homework Assignments:**

---For 4/9, Write 1:30 PKG on the following (found in USC Course Reader):

Burbank Metrolink Crash page 285

---Read Chapter s 12 and 14 in Tuggle book

## **WEEK 13 – April 9**

**\*\*FRIDAY, APRIL 11: LAST DAY TO DROP A CLASS WITH A MARK OF “W”\*\***

### **Class Topics:**

--More on writing packages—feature, medical, political, etc.

--In-class timed writing exercise

### **Readings/Homework Assignments:**

---For 4/16, Writing and reading assignments TBA

## **WEEK 14 – April 16**

### **Class Topics:**

- View Long Format Story-telling
- In-class timed writing assignment

### **Readings/Homework Assignments:**

- For 4/23 Writing and reading assignments TBA

## **WEEK 15 – April 23**

### **Class Topics:**

- Investigative Reporting/Writing, “Good and Bad”—view examples
- In-class timed writing exercise

### **Readings/Homework Assignments:**

- For 4/30 Writing and reading assignments TBA

## **WEEK 16 – April 30**

### **Class Topics:**

- Review for Final Exam
- In-class timed writing assignment

**\*\*IMPORTANT\*\*      FINAL EXAM  
                                 WEDNESDAY MAY 7  
                                 8-10:40am**

**\*\*IMPORTANT\*\* Do not make any nonrefundable travel plans until you know your complete finals schedule for all of your classes.**