

USC ANNENBERG SCHOOL OF JOURNALISM

Journalism 303 Broadcast News Reporting Spring 2008

Michael Daniels

Office: ASC 227 (ring doorbell if door is closed)

Available all day Mondays, and Wednesday afternoons by appoint



COURSE OBJECTIVES

You will improve your skills in writing and news judgment, and develop an appreciation for television's most vital element – pictures. We will stress the importance of well-composed, compelling video and creatively edited stories that make the best use of your pictures, sound bites, and natural sound. You will put them together in a well paced and logical package that makes the best use of your elements – and you will bind them with words that *enhance* your pictures. You will also develop skills in interviewing for sound bites, researching story topics, and generating and “pitching” story ideas

OPTIONAL TEXTBOOKS

ISBN: 13: 978-0-07-352609-6

Title: Broadcast News Handbook, 3rd Edition

Author: C.A. Tuggle, Forest Carr, Suzanne Huffman

Publisher: McGraw Hill



ISBN: 0205262589

Title: Creative Interviewing, Third Edition

Author: Ken Metzler

Publisher: Allyn and Bacon



DAILY NEWS READINGS AND VIEWINGS

Watch at least one local and/or national newscast daily. Vary the newscasts each day.

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 reporters 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

You will write and shoot three complete packages, plus one V/S/V. The V/S/V will concentrate on shooting *sequences* – several shots of the same general subject to make your point in a more interesting way. The remaining three packages must include at least three sound bites apiece, natural sound full as appropriate, and must contain a reporter standup. All video assignments should be turned in as a mini-DV, cued to countdown leader before the start of your story. Alternatively, you may submit your project on a DVD. A hard-copy script is also required, listing all audio and video elements. A sample script will be distributed to show the format.

GRADING CRITERIA: ASSIGNMENTS AND VIDEO PACKAGES

- 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.)
 - Fabricating (making up) anything that is not true.
 - Staging a scene: 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 – (only in cases when the assignment specifically calls for you to shoot your own standup and/or interviews). If your standup is shot by someone else, be sure to check the shot immediately. You are responsible for the quality, no matter who shot it.
 - Promising, paying or giving someone something in exchange for doing an interview, either on or off camera.

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. 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.

(USC statement on academic integrity is shown on pg. 6 of this syllabus.)

C. Late assignments

Core policy is that no late assignments will be accepted, except for verified medical reasons or documented extraordinary circumstances. Meeting deadlines is a journalistic necessity in the real world.

D. Rewriting stories

You will be allowed to rewrite, reshoot, or re-edit assignments to achieve a higher grade. Such rewrites must be done within a deadline to be determined by the instructor, and the two grades will be averaged. This policy does not apply to Package #3 (final exam).

COURSE GRADES

Ethics Discussions and Essays	10%
Story “Pitches” (Story Idea Forms)	10%
V/S/V USC Tram (shooting sequences)	10%
Package #1 and Story Idea “pitch”	15%
Package #2 and Story Idea “pitch”	20%
Package #3 (Final Project)	30%
Learning Lab or off-campus Internship:	5%

Broadcast majors must fulfill requirement at ATVN.

Print majors : DT, Online Journalism Review, Annenberg Radio, or a suitable internship approved by instructor.

PROJECT GRADE CRITERIA

We will factor in expectations along with excellence. In the early projects, we expect you to demonstrate understanding of the principles and techniques covered so far. We will comment on other shortcomings in our critiques as a learning aid, but you will not be penalized for concepts we have not discussed in class or provided in handout materials or required reading. But we also expect you to display basic newswriting skills from last semester.

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.

WRITING COACHES

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

Mike Daniels, Broadcast: danielsm@usc.edu

Bob Berger, Print: rberger@usc.edu

Ed Boyer, Print: eboyer@usc.edu



LEARNING LAB / INTERNSHIPS

Broadcast majors are required to fill a weekly shift at ATVN (Annenberg TV News). Print majors must chose between a regular shift at the Daily Trojan (if one is available), the Online Journalism Review, Annenberg Radio, or a news internship approved by instructor. Proof of satisfactory internship work is required.

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.



PROFESSIONAL DRESS POLICY

The definition of “normal business attire” has changed considerably over the past few years, but still requires long pants or a skirt, rather than shorts – and a shirt or blouse with a collar, rather than a T-shirt or tank top. Shoes, no flip-flops.

When giving your e-mail address to a contact or interviewee, please provide your USC e-mail address, not the cutesy one you give to your friends.

In short, make a good impression that reflects well on you and on Annenberg.

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.

USC STATEMENT ON ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

USC seeks to maintain an optimal learning environment. General principles of academic honesty include the concept of respect for the intellectual property of others, the expectation that individual work will be submitted unless otherwise allowed by an instructor, and the obligations both to protect one’s own academic work from misuse by others as well as to avoid using another’s work as one’s own. All students are expected to understand and abide by these principles. SCampus, the Student Guidebook, contains the Student Conduct Code in Section 11.00, while the recommended sanctions are located in Appendix A. Students will be referred to the Office of Student Judicial Affairs and Community Standards for further review, should there be any suspicion of academic dishonesty.

INSTRUCTOR BIO

Mike Daniels is a veteran Emmy award-winning writer and producer with nearly 40 years experience at KCBS-TV News. He has been teaching broadcast news for 35 years, most of that time at USC, and for the past 12 years, also at Loyola Marymount University. Mike is now retired from CBS, but enjoys teaching and working with students too much

to give it up and just go sailing -- his favorite sport -- although he does manage a day here and there aboard his sailboat.

CLASS SCHEDULE: SPRING 2008

WEEK 1 – JANUARY 16

Class Topics:

Introduction; review syllabus; diagnostic writing assignment. What's expected, and what you should be able to do by the end of the semester.

Discuss the importance of pictures and people in television news stories. View examples.

Homework:

E-mail me a letter about yourself. Tell me anything you would like to help me understand who you are and your particular interests or goals in journalism. You may add anything you'd like to mention. Write it in an easy, conversational style, and make it interesting. We will be making preliminary judgments about your writing and storytelling abilities from this letter. It will not be graded, but it will be answered. Due Friday, January 18.

Research a story about the USC campus tram service and write a 30 to 45 second story about it in conversational broadcast style to be turned in next week.

Readings:

Most reading assignments are not shown in this syllabus because we want to provide current examples. Such reading material will be distributed in class and/or e-mailed to you as a Microsoft Word attachment.

Ethics: Read an ethics statement prepared by the Society of Professional Journalists:

<http://www.spj.org/ethicscode.asp>

You can also download a printable PDF copy from that Web site.



Camcorder Procedures:

Annenberg techs will visit class today to explain operation of the mini-DV camcorder you will be issued for the semester. (You will need to purchase your own external microphone for interviews and a headset.) Check out camera today and practice shooting from a *technical* standpoint. Creative shooting will be covered in class next week.



WEEK 2 – JANUARY 23

Creative camera work. We will explain the photojournalism and videography required in this class. We will provide examples to get you on your way toward pleasing, relevant, and memorable shots. If you need technical assistance to help operate your camera, we will point you in the right direction.

Homework Assignment:

Sequences – (several shots of the same thing from various angles and focal lengths – close-ups, medium shots, and long shots – for the sake of variety.) Board a USC shuttle bus and shoot a dozen or more different shots plus sound bites to provide as much variety as possible. This footage will comprise your first project. Edited V/S/V and script due February 6.



Readings:

Basic Shooting Hints. Guidelines for beginners will be distributed.

WEEK 3 – JANUARY 30

Class Topics:

View and discuss your raw footage of USC tram shot during the past week. What other elements do you think you need in the way of information, sound bites, graphics, etc., for this project?

Discuss the history and importance of pictures and how they relate to words.

Discuss and illustrate the use of a compelling opening shot, and how its choice can affect how story is told and perceived.

View videotape examples of creative shooting and discuss what makes them good.

Class Topics:

Jump Cuts: Why jump cuts are perfectly acceptable and even desired on MTV, but they are almost never tolerated for news. Hint: Fantasy vs. Reality. View examples. We will continue this discussion for the next couple of weeks because jump cuts seem to confuse or perplex many students.

Homework:

Write and edit a story about the campus shuttle, based on video you have shot and information you have gathered. Script example will be explained in class.

Fill out a Story Idea Form for a story you would like to shoot for Package #1. Stories shot on campus are permitted, but off campus stories are encouraged. Be realistic in what you will be allowed to shoot. Obtain advance permission from those in charge of the area

and/or event you propose to shoot. (Notice that the word is *shoot* – not *film*.) Attach any additional materials from your research. And be sure to “sell” me on your idea. Describe why this is a story that belongs in our news broadcast, and how you are going to make it come alive. Story proposal is due next week. You may bounce ideas off me by e-mail before then. Hint: Don’t tell me you “want to find out if...” Finding out (whatever) is not your story. Find out *first*. Then, if you think what you found out will make a good story, pitch it on that basis.

WEEK 4 – FEBRUARY 6

Avid Workshop:

Class meets today in Digital Editing Lab.

You will learn how to edit packages with a narration track.

Editing techniques for packages are different from V/S/Vs.

Avid training is mandatory.



Assignment Due:

V/S/V due today. Be sure to include story script with all narration and sound bites shown, and an OTS graphic to go with anchor lead-in. View and critique edited clips of shuttle bus. Note how even such mundane activities can (and must) be made interesting for television news. Even though your tape will be edited, your script must also describe the pictures used as shown on sample script.

Homework:

Read chapter 16 of Metzler’s *Creative Interviewing* on “Interviewing for Broadcast.”

We will be discussing it in class next week.

Complete a Story Idea Form with substantiating additional documents for your first package. It should not be just a simple event, although an event can be included in your story with other elements. Story “pitch” is due February 13. You may submit more than one proposal.

WEEK 5 – FEBRUARY 13

Class Topics:

Interviewing Techniques: We will discuss guidelines and suggestions for getting good sound bites. This subject needs more than one class, so we will discuss it in more detail next week.

The importance of sound – both natural (ambient) sound and sound bites. What is the purpose of a sound bite? What makes a sound bite compelling? Use of music.

Personalizing stories. The more far-reaching and general the story, the greater the need to focus on how it affects individuals. We will view and discuss several examples of stories that were personalized to their great advantage.

Assignment Due: Story Idea Form for package #1. You may submit more than one proposal. Edited package is due March 5.

WEEK 6 – FEBRUARY 20

Class Topics:

Interviewing Techniques – part two. Being a good listener. Value to eye contact.

Discuss ethical guidelines and view recent examples of questionable actions.

Reporter Standups: Differences in types and difference between live and packages.

Developing a critical eye and ear for reporter packages. Discuss elements listed in Grading Criteria.

Homework Assignments:

Complete editing on Package #1. Project is due next week. I will be available on campus all day Monday, February 25, if you would like to share your video and/or script idea with me, or bounce around some ideas. Please make an appointment.

WEEK 7 – FEBRUARY 27

Class Topics:

View and discuss several television news stories. What makes some good? What makes some bad? What could be improved? Personalizing your story: Find a “real person” to help advance your story. Guidelines will be distributed and discussed.

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



Production Meetings: Make an appointment for a one-on-one meeting with instructor Friday, March 1 or Monday, March 3 to view and/or discuss Package #1, which is due next week. Individual meetings are not mandatory, but strongly recommended.

WEEK 8 – MARCH 5

Class Topics:

Package #1 due today. Submit mini-DV or DVD of your edited clip, cued to countdown leader before the start of your story, plus a complete script in accordance with the format shown on sample script distributed in class. We will view and discuss each project in class.

Homework:

If you are going to a college-type “spring break hangout” this year, you may want to consider taking your camera along and doing your second package on spring break activities at whatever location you are visiting. If so, be sure to submit your story pitch on a Story Idea Form *before* next week so we can approve it before you leave. Hint: It needs to be more than a “look-how-much-fun-we’re-having” piece. Look for problems, noise, complaints from locals, underage or irresponsible drinking, etc. In other words, make it a news story, not a frivolous feature.

Students planning to do a campus story during spring break for the second package should turn in their Story Idea Form in class next Wednesday, March 12. Edited clip with script is due Week 12.

WEEK 9 – MARCH 12

Class Topics:

Advanced Interviewing. Good interviews usually are the result of good preparation. Decide whom to interview, and know why you are interviewing that person. Have a purpose. Then, do more careful listening than talking. We will provide examples of good interviewing techniques.

In-Class Assignment: Interview a classmate. Listen very hard to what he or she is telling you. Then, just have a conversation to draw out material. Additional guidelines for successful interviewing and more reading material will be distributed in class.



Homework Assignment: Before you leave for spring break, organize your next story for shooting so you can hit the ground running when you return from vacation. Package #2 is due Week 12, April 2.

Sign up for individual meeting with instructor to discuss midterm status.

WEEK 10 – MARCH 19

If you are shooting a spring break story, be sure to get all significant sides. As with many stories, there may be more than just pro and con. Students at a popular spring break resort may want total freedom, police may want to crack down hard, but merchants may say, “let the kids have fun (and spend money), but don’t let them tear up the town.”



WEEK 11 – MARCH 26

Class Topics:

Graphics: Television’s insatiable demand for pictures often requires graphics to explain or clarify complex points or ideas, such as maps to locate an event, words and/or numbers against an appropriate background to highlight a quote or significant statistical information, and artist’s drawings for things not yet built, or crime suspects not yet caught. Handling numbers.



We will explore the wide field of graphics, which is gaining in importance, not only for television news – but with growing demands of the Internet for well-designed graphics that create interest and communicate, rather than graphics that razzle-dazzle and confuse.

In-Class Assignment: From the story distributed in class, design and roughly sketch two graphics that would accompany a television copy story (reader). You will be graded on your creativity and ability to communicate your idea, not on your artistic skill.

WEEK 12 – APRIL 2

Class Topics:

Package #2 due today. Submit mini-DV or DVD of your edited clip, cued to countdown leader before the start of your story, plus a complete script in accordance with the format shown on sample script distributed in class. We will view and discuss each project in class.

Discussion:

Story Ideas. Some students have trouble coming up with many (or even any) good ideas for class assignments, which foreshadows trouble later in the real world of news. This morning we will all share some thoughts on where and how to find stories. Hint: Waiting for a lightning bolt of inspiration to strike has proven unreliable in the past.

Homework Assignment:

Research and prepare a Story Idea Form for your final project. The “pitch” and project combined accounts for 30 percent of your course grade. The story idea is due next week. The final project mini-DV or DVD and full script – is due Wednesday, May 7 at 9 a.m.

WEEK 13 – APRIL 9

Class Topics:

What is the “right” or “best” way to do a story? If you watch three competing news broadcasts on the major network-owned stations in succession, you may see the same story reported three different ways.

Viewing and Discussion: We will view and discuss such competing coverage. What was good about one piece that was not shared by the others? Hint: The “best” pieces go the extra mile and cover more than just the event.



Assignment Due:

Story Development Form outlining final project story elements, research, documents, video, interviews, contacts, graphics. Remember: this project counts 30% of your grade.

WEEK 14 – APRIL 16

Class Topics:

Changes, changes, changes. One of the fascinating things about news and language is what was “in” last year, may be out this year – and vice versa. In the past few years, *google* became widely recognized as a verb, and last year *podcasting* entered the language with listings in several dictionaries. Reporters need to keep up with what’s common, whether it’s in the dictionary yet or not. (Check out: www.wordspy.com)

Today, we will explore some of those changes, and also look at some things that have taken place in the television news business just since the start of the semester. As this syllabus is written in early January, few can predict what they will be; however, we can safely predict there *will* be changes. And enough to fill a full class discussion.

We will also explore some things that have *not* changed over decades. We will view a Channel 2 News series exploring the problems of television news, produced a quarter-century ago. If you ignore the quaint technology of clickity-clacking teletype machines and old-fashioned typewriters instead of computers, you will find the basic concerns of journalism were much as they are today.



WEEK 15 – APRIL 23

Class Topics:

Back to basics. In our drive to move forward, we may have given short shrift to some issues that might have troubled you last semester in Broadcast Newswriting. Perhaps those issues have clarified themselves for you this semester. But just to be sure that we send you on well prepared, we have set aside this day to be certain you are up to speed. If it sounds dull – perhaps a good class to miss – don't. There's going to be a quiz.

On the plus side, you know by now I try hard to have interesting lectures with good graphic and video examples. Why would this week be different?

Homework:

Not to be a nag, but this is to remind you I'm available to view the raw video for your final project, or bounce around a few ideas. But you need to make an appointment to ensure I'll be available for you.

WEEK 16 – APRIL 30

Class Topics:

Where do we go from here? Recent trends in broadcast news and how they portend what may be happening next. Hint: "Portend," like "foreshadow" used earlier in this syllabus, has a negative connotation. But good things are happening too, which we will explore.

My Turn:

About all those ethics questions you faithfully answered week after week: Today, I get to weigh in with my views. Hint: They won't be remarkably different from most of yours.

FINAL PROJECT – MAY 7

Viewing:

Final projects are due at 9 a.m. today. No extensions are permitted except for verifiable emergencies. Please submit your edited mini-DV or a DVD, the mini-DV of your raw video if I have not seen it, and a complete hard-copy script.

Wrap party: Fresh pastry from the Viktor Bénes bakery in Marina del Rey will be provided.

