

USC ANNENBERG SCHOOL OF JOURNALISM
SYLLABUS
JOUR 309 - Introduction to Online Media
Spring 2008

Instructor: Meriah Doty
Office hours: by appointment

COURSE OBJECTIVES

In Introduction to Online Media you will learn how to tell stories for the Web and also figure out how to post them. Story telling on the Web utilizes many tools: video, hyperlinks, still images, graphics, charts, maps, audio and INTERACTIVITY. There is no limit to the direction online media is going and, importantly, it is in constant flux. Working in this medium, it is important to discover and adapt to change - technical and otherwise. This course will give you a basic understanding, a platform from which you can jump into the online news world.

The classroom will be treated as a real world newsroom wherein students will at any given time take on the role of reporter, blogger, copy editor, photo editor, video editor, graphics designer, videographer, photographer, web developer or senior editor. As in a real newsroom, you will be expected to pitch your ideas, accept public feedback (positive and negative), and critique your classmates. Bring your game face.

OUTCOMES

Ability to develop a basic online story package with multiple elements: story/text; visual (video, photo, graph, chart); audio; interactivity; navigation

1. Complete at least two comprehensive online news feature story packages. I must approve all story packages before beginning work.

Anyone without a camcorder (i.e. undergraduate print majors) can check them out as needed from the ASC Tech equipment room. Camcorders can take both video and still photos (though still cameras with flash are ideal for stills).

You will need to write online-specific headlines, which will differ from print headlines.

Story packages can be based on a completed or in-progress print or broadcast story, or they can be original stories developed specifically for the class. If the online story package is based on a completed or

in-progress print or broadcast story, **you must complete additional reporting**, e.g., more research; interviews; shooting; re-editing. Print or broadcast stories must be the student's original, individual work. University requirement: Students can't complete exactly the same story for two classes - no shovelware.

2. Complete at least three online update/breaking news stories. These can be in-class writing assignments or assignments with a 24-hour window. Examples of update stories: verdicts; increased airport security requirements; storms; news conferences; obits. Some online story assignments can be briefs. Others will be more complex stories requiring you to summarize and link to archived material.

3. Contribute to a class blog.

4. Understand online ethics and basic copyright law.

CLASS MATERIALS

- * Blackboard: 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 should 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 and/or "Building a Web Site For Dummies, 3rd Edition," by David A. Crowder. These books are full of useful information and tips.

REGULAR NEWS READINGS

- * 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)

- * One local news site (like latimes.com/news/local or dailynews.com)

QUIZZES

I will give at least two pop (surprise) quizzes on current events and/or past lessons (keep up with your news readings!) Quizzes may occur during the first 10 minutes of class -- so don't be late! Quizzes may also occur toward the end of class on material covered in that class only (listen to your lessons!) Each quiz is worth a max of 10 points, 1 point for each right answer.

ASSIGNMENT FORMAT

I will instruct you how to build the class site with requirements specific to a hypothetical Web site run by a news organization. You must submit all assignments and exams in the format(s) I provide.

Storyboards: You will turn in storyboards that will lay out all elements of your online story packages. I will give you the storyboard format.

Proof-of-concept: You will be publishing your content through Google's Blogger site. While posting to Blogger is very intuitive, if for some strange reason you do not have enough technical proficiency to fully complete your online story packages, not to worry: All elements of your story packages must be reflected in your storyboards and templates (e.g., "insert expanding timeline with pop-up photos here").

Grading is based on the storyboard, not on the technical execution. However, all elements must be completed, e.g, any video specified must actually be shot and edited, not just described in the storyboard. All video must be edited; no raw tapes/timcode logs accepted. Having said that, I fully expect everyone will be able to execute technically.

Please submit video by uploading to YouTube, Buzznet or any site that provides embed code and doesn't require login for viewing. Your video must be a file type the site your uploading to can use. For example, YouTube accepts .WMV, .AVI, .MOV, and .MPG files.

ASSIGNMENT POLICIES

--Unless specified otherwise, assignments should be turned in at the beginning of class. They will be graded and returned the following week.

- Rewrite policy: I will determine which assignments can be rewritten. The rewrite grade will be averaged with the original grade.
- No late assignments; late assignments get an F but still should be turned in if they qualify for rewrite policy, to get some credit.
- Most assignments should be submitted as a URL to your USC web space. I will specify when printouts/paper copies are needed.
- In the event of a dire technical breakdown that could cause an assignment to be late, alert me immediately so I can work with you on an alternate way to submit your work.

GRADING CRITERIA

A = you're ready for the real world; accurate, clear, comprehensive; includes 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 specifically for a web site format

B = requires more than minor editing, and has a few style or spelling errors; there is at least one significant online element omitted

C = needs considerable editing or rewriting; there are online elements missing or incomplete

D = requires excessive rewriting and has numerous errors; goes little beyond the original print or broadcast story (if there is one); not publishable; should not have been submitted

F = has failed to meet the major criteria of the assignment, has numerous errors (or both); factual error that is material to the story (e.g., inaccurate names of significant people or locations, faulty descriptions, misquotes, faulty logic or math, grossly misleading graphics/charts) merits an automatic F; content from third parties used without attribution may also earn an F

GRADING BREAKDOWN

- 35% -- weekly blog, three 24/7 assignments, quizzes
- 5% -- story pitch one

15% -- story package one
10% -- class participation
5% -- story pitch two
30% -- final package

100% - total

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."

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.

MERIAH ON REPORTING/BLOGGING INTEGRITY

If a piece of content in your report or blog is not yours then you MUST attribute the source and/or link to it.

If it's copyrighted material, you cannot use it unless... (a) you have permission from the owner... (b) it very clearly falls under "fair use" laws (to be discussed further in the intellectual property portion of this class).

Because of the nature of the Web, it is easy to steal content from other sites - and it happens very regularly. As an online journalist you must be in the habit of scrutinizing every piece of content you decide to publish or republish.

ATTENDANCE POLICY

You are expected to be in class every week.

If you miss class: It is up to me to determine whether (extenuating circumstances ONLY, prior notice if possible) and how you can make-up assignments, lectures and quizzes. You are responsible for getting the class notes from other students in the class; I will not hold "catch-up" sessions outside of class.

Late assignments will receive an F, but might be able to be turned in under the rewrite policy (the highest grade you would receive would be a C.)

Although the syllabi are similar, every core class is different and you can't make-up a class by going to another.

WRITING COACHES

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

Bob Berger, Print: rberger@usc.edu
Ed Boyer, Print: edjboyer@ca.rr.com
Brad Hanson, Print: brad.hanson@latimes.com
Mike Daniels, Broadcast: danielsm@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.

INSTRUCTOR BACKGROUND

I have a decade of experience in journalism, most of which has been spent online. After graduating U.C. Berkeley in 1998, I moved to Atlanta, GA, to work for CNN. There, I quickly moved from broadcast to the burgeoning online news world at CNN.com. At the No. 1 news web site of the time, I wrote and produced both news and features. In 2004 I moved back to California to write and edit for business-technology magazine and site, The Red Herring. In 2005 I took a job with the site that had usurped CNN for No. 1 position - Yahoo! News -- where I worked for two years as Main Editor. Now, I am Managing Producer at Buzznet.com, a fast-growing Internet media startup.

CLASS SCHEDULE

Week 1 (Jan. 17): Introduction

Online journalism and examples, writing for the Web (voice vs. substance, etc), how to pitch a story, how to handle criticism, discuss/decide (as a group) class blog focus, log on to Blogger

Assignment: Launch blog

Week 2 (Jan. 24): Balancing Online Elements

Weighing when it is appropriate to use a video, graphics, text, links, interactive flash, photographs, timelines, mashups, etc., how to tell stories through these various tools, and how to present them together; discuss user interface, post online

Assignment: blog, in-class exercises

Week 3 (Jan. 31): Writing

Writing headlines, subheads, teases, ledes, SMS text, news tickers, alt text, captions; discuss pitches

Assignment: blog, story project 1 pitch

Week 4 (Feb. 7): Intellectual Property

Present pitches, discuss intellectual property and copyright law (don't learn the hard way), troubleshooting online posting

Assignment: blog, story pitch 1 due

Week 5 (Feb. 14): Art & Project 1

Photo editing, PhotoShop, graphics

Assignment: blog, in-class work time for project 1

Week 6 (Feb. 21): Video & Project 1

Editing, fonting, tapes editing, scripting

Assignment: blog, edit video for project 1

Week 7 (Feb. 28): Audience & Project 1

Get the data, respond to behavior, stay nimble

Assignment: blog, in-class work time project 1

Week 8 (March 6): Business Strategy & Presentations

Present story project 1; if time, discuss SEO, frequency, relevance, design, usability, tags

Assignment: blog, story project 1 due

Week 9 (March 13): Reporting Techniques

One-man-band reporting, blogging, photo essay, interactive reports, data is your friend

Assignment: blog, in-class exercise

Week 10 (Week of March 17 - SPRING BREAK)

Week 11 (March 27): Ethics

Discuss, in-class activity, in-class work time on story pitch 2

Assignment: blog

Week 12 (April 3): Presentation

Present pitches, promoting, teasing, organizing your content

Assignment: blog, story pitch 2 due/approved (time to get working!)

Week 13. (April 10): User Generated Content

Discuss the growing trend, editorial issues that arise, ways to showcase UGC

Assignment: blog, in-class exercise

FRIDAY, APRIL 11 IS THE LAST DAY TO DROP A CLASS WITH THE MARK OF "W."

Week 14 (April 17): Interactivity

Producing interactive features using Flash, JavaScript, video, XML

Assignment: blog, in-class exercise

Week 15 (April 24): Talk Shop & Project 2

Assignment: blog, career advice, in-class work time for final project

Week 16 (May 1): Final Project

Assignment: blog, in-class work time for final project

FINAL PROJECT IS DUE **NO LATER THAN MAY 9, 11:59 P.M.**