

JOURNALISM 110: Writing, Reporting and Ethics I Fall 2009

Instructor: Scott Brown

Class Hours: Tue/Thu 2:00 - 4:45 pm Room: MZ 360

Office Hours: Tue & Wed 6-7 pm; Thu 12-2 pm Office: MZ 337

Phone: 818/677-2864 (310/208-0717 for nights & messages; **do not** leave messages on my office phone)

PREREQUISITES:

A grade of "C" or better in English 155 (or its equivalent) and basic typing ability.

COURSE OBJECTIVES:

Journalism 110 is designed to provide students with the skills to report and write news stories. Subjects to be covered include reporting, interviewing, note-taking, copy preparation, writing, editing, news judgment, and professional ethics. At least six hours of classroom and lab work are required.

REQUIRED TEXTS:

1. "Reporting for the Media" by Bender, et. al. (9th edition)
2. "The Associated Press Stylebook and Libel Manual" (any recent edition)*
3. "Working With Words: A Handbook for Media Writers and Editors" by Brooks, et. al. (any edition)
4. The New York Times daily edition*

Recommended: "Shaking the Foundations" (ed. Shapiro)

*Required for every class.

GRADES:

Performance will be based on in-class and outside writing assignments (65% of overall grade); the midterm, final exam and news (and other) quizzes (25%); and class attendance and participation (10%). Writing assignments will be given letter grades. Quizzes will be graded on a 1-100 point basis and then averaged at the end of the semester. The midterm and final will be graded on a 1-100 point basis and then graded on a curve. There are very limited (repeat: very limited, meaning "almost no") opportunities for extra credit work. A grade of "C" or better is necessary to enroll in further Department of Journalism skills courses.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

Approximately 20 reporting and writing exercises, as well as various out-of-class assignments that stress fieldwork such as reporting on live events, interviewing, and public affairs reporting.

Weekly news quizzes will cover current events and quizzes will be given on the course readings and lectures.

Please note that the fundamental concern of journalism is accuracy. For this reason, any assignment with factual errors or misspellings of a name or a place will receive an automatic "C" and be graded down from that point. Also, an undue number of grammar errors will result in an automatic fail for that assignment. The grammar policy will be explained more thoroughly in class.

COPY PREPARATION/HOMEWORK:

Copy should be DOUBLE-SPACED and free of typing, spelling and grammatical errors. Your name, date and story slug should be in the upper right-hand corner. Stories that are not double-spaced will not be accepted. Late and missed assignments cannot (repeat: cannot) be made up.

Unless noted, or in cases of in-class assignments, assigned coursework is due at the beginning of each class (students also may turn in work earlier). Otherwise, assignments will not be accepted at any other time. Students may not print out assignment during class and use of computers during class is not permitted, except in cases of in-class assignments.

There are no extensions for assignments or homework.

CLASS CONDUCT:

- Computers may not be used during class time to complete homework for this or other classes. Unless instructed, all computers must be turned off.
- Cell phones must be turned-off.
- There are no private conversations during lectures.
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PLAGIARISM:

Plagiarism and other forms of cheating are not tolerated and anyone caught cheating will be reported to the University for possible further action. Cheating and plagiarism on any exam, quiz or assignment also is grounds for an automatic failure. For a more detailed explanation of what constitutes plagiarism, see the current CSUN catalog.

Much of the information posted on the Internet is protected by U.S. copyright laws. Passing this information off as your own is a violation of CSUN's plagiarism policy and carries the penalties outlined above.

ATTENDANCE:

Attendance is mandatory and tardiness (entering after class has begun) is a basis for grading. More than two absences will affect the final grade. Two instances of lateness comprise one absence. Unless there are extenuating circumstances, missed daily assignments cannot be made up. In-class work, unless otherwise specified, is due at the end of class. Homework will consist of readings and assignments based on weekly topics and recent news events.

DIVERSITY:

Students in this course are strongly encouraged to make every effort, with the instructor's help, to include people and subjects in their assignments that have been overlooked by the mainstream media. Such people include ethnic, racial and religious minorities; the elderly, disabled and poor; gay men and lesbians; and similar groups. The intent is to ensure that student work reflects the diversity of the community.

LAB FEE:

You are required to pay a \$5 lab fee by no later than the third week of class or your records will be encumbered and you will owe an additional \$10 Business Obligation Fee. Receipts for payment of this fee can be turned in to the instructor or to the department office.

AND LASTLY:

This syllabus outlines the conditions and requirements of the course. Acknowledgement of it implies an agreement to abide by the standards set forth within. It is up to all students to familiarize themselves with the course syllabus and to refer to it regarding class procedures.

JOURNALISM 110: COURSE OUTLINE (subject to change and pending approval of faculty furlough days):

Written assignments and homework will be announced weekly.

Week 1 (8/25-27): Course introduction; review of syllabus; preparing copy; introduction to news and news judgment. Reading: "Reporting for the Media," Chps. 6 (read this first) & 2.

Week 2 (9/1-3): Grammar review; introduction to leads & news writing style. Reading: "Reporting..." Chps. 3 & 7.

Week 3 (9/8-10): More grammar review and leads; story structure and inverted pyramid. Reading: "Reporting..." Chps. 4 & 9.

Week 4 (9/15-17): More leads and stories. Reading: "Reporting..." Chp. 5.

Week 5 (9/22-24): Introduction to reporting; conducting oneself as a reporter; interviewing techniques; note-taking. Reading: "Reporting..." Chp. 11.

Week 6 (9/29-10/1): More reporting and interviewing techniques; note-taking and handling quotes; reporting ethics; in-class interviewing practice. Reading: "Reporting..." Chp. 10.

Week 7 (10/6-8): Out-of-class exercise; more reporting & interviewing techniques. No reading assignment.

Week 8 (10/13-15): In-class exercises; reporting and writing the news story; breaking news stories. No reading assignment.

Week 9 (10/20-22): Midterm and review of midterm.

Week 10 (10/27-29): Follow stories and beat reporting; introduction to police and crime reporting. Reading: "Reporting..." Chps. 14 & 16.

Week 11 (11/3-5): Writing accident and fire stories, and obituaries. Reading: "Reporting..." pgs. 398-408 & Chp. 12.

Week 12 (11/10-12): Covering news conferences and speeches. Reading: "Reporting..." Chp. 13.

Week 13 (11/17-19): Introduction to broadcast writing. Reading: "Reporting..." Chp. 18.

Week 14 (11/24-26): Introduction to public relations writing. Reading: "Reporting..." Chp. 19. Thanksgiving Holiday.

Week 15 (12/1-3): Public relations writing (cont.); libel and ethics. Reading: "Reporting..." Chps. 20-21.

Week 16 (12/8): Review for final. Final exam (Thursday, 12/10; 3-5 pm).