

JOURNALISM 210: Writing, Reporting and Ethics II Fall 2009

Instructor: Scott Brown

Class Hours: Wed 7-9:45 pm Room: MZ 360

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

Phone: 818/677-2864 (office); 818/677-3135 (department office)

Messages: 310/208-0717; **do not** leave messages on my office phone

PREREQUISITES: A grade of "C" or better in Journalism 110 or its equivalent.

COURSE OBJECTIVES: Journalism 210 is designed to provide students with further skills in news reporting and writing with an emphasis on covering public affairs beats such as police, courts and government. Other subjects to be covered include political coverage and professional ethics and libel. About eight hours (and likely more) of lab and outside class work are required.

REQUIRED TEXTS:

1. News Reporting and Writing by Melvin Mencher (11th edition)
2. The Associated Press Stylebook and Libel Manual (any recent edition)*
3. Shaking the Foundations (ed. Shapiro)

Recommended: Working with Words: A Handbook for Media Writers and Editors by Brooks, etc. (any edition)

*Required for class.

GRADES: Performance will be based on in-class and outside writing assignments (60%) of overall grade); the midterm and quizzes (20%); a multimedia project related to the course reading text (10%); and homework and class 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 will be graded on a 1-100 point basis and then graded on a curve. A grade of "C" or better is necessary to enroll in further Department of Journalism skills courses.

Generally:

"A" stories are accurate, clear, comprehensive stories that are well written and require only minor editing (i.e., they are publishable).

"B" stories require more than minor editing, and have a few style or spelling errors or one significant error of omission.

"C" stories are stories that need considerable editing or rewriting and/or have spelling, style or omission errors.

"D" stories require excessive rewriting and have numerous errors and omissions, and should not have been submitted.

"F" stories have more than one proper noun misspelled or more than one factual error.

Lastly, the fundamental concern of journalism is accuracy. This course requires that students participate in live news-gathering and in the writing of timely news stories. Indeed, in many respects, this class should be looked upon as a real-life lab. It is for this reason that any factual mistakes or any misspellings of proper nouns on any assignment (i.e., "gross factual errors") will result in an automatic "C" and be graded down from there

COURSE REQUIREMENTS: Students will complete 12-14 news stories (500 words minimum for stories with live reporting), in addition to various other reporting and writing exercises, and a multimedia project related to the semester's reading text. The news stories will be a mix of in-class and out-of-class work. The multimedia project will be detailed further in class. There will be up to three quizzes on material from the texts and lectures. There is a midterm but no final.

Please note that completing the court and government reporting sections of the course requires a great deal of time out of class. Students are advised to consider whether they can commit to completing such work before enrolling in the course.

COPY PREPARATION/COURSEWORK: 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**. Likewise, all stories with live reporting must be turned in with the notes gathered during reporting, and a word count. **Stories will not be accepted unless such notes are attached.**

Unless noted, or in cases of in-class assignments, assigned coursework is due at the start of class (students may turn in work earlier). Otherwise, assignments will not be accepted at any other time and e-mailed assignment also will not be accepted. Late and missed assignments cannot be made up. In-class work, unless otherwise specified, is due at the end of class. There are no extensions for assignments or homework. Please do not ask.

Lastly, as mentioned, stories with gross factual errors will receive an automatic "C " and be graded downward. There is no extra credit work.

CLASS CONDUCT: Computers may not be used during class time to complete homework for this or other classes. Students may not print out work in class and use of computers during class is not permitted, except in cases of in-class work. Thus, unless instructed, all computers must be turned off. There are no private conversations during lectures and cell phones must be shut off.

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 further explanation of what constitutes plagiarism, see the current CSUN catalog. Also, please note that much of the information on the Internet is protected by U.S. copyright laws. Passing this information off as one's own violates the 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. Leaving during the class break nullifies that evening's attendance.

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. This 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.

AND LASTLY... This syllabus outlines the conditions and requirements of the course. Receipt 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.

Jour 210 -- Class Schedule (all subject to change and pending approval of furlough days for faculty)

Additional readings will be emailed. As a result, it is imperative that students regularly check their email so that all reading can be completed before class. Quizzes are both TBA and unannounced.

Week 1 (8/26): Course introduction; review syllabus; story handouts. Reading: Mencher, Chp. 5.

Week 2 (9/2): Review of news and AP style, and grammar; review of story structure; in-class stories. Reading: Mencher, Chps. 6-7.

Week 3 (9/9): Reporting and interviewing techniques; covering the live story; intro to police, accident, fire and disaster reporting. Reading: Mencher, Chps. 14-15.

Week 4 (9/16): Police, accident, fire and disaster reporting (cont). In-class exercise: the breaking story. Reading: Mencher, Chps. 18 & 20.

Week 5 (9/23): Quiz #1; covering courts and the legal system. Reading: none.

Week 6 (9/30): Covering courts and the legal system (cont.). Reading: Mencher, Chp. 21

Week 7 (10/7): Covering courts (cont.). Reading: none.

Week 8 (10/14): Midterm; review of midterm and covering speeches. Reading: none.

Week 9 (10/21): Government reporting. Reading: Mencher, Chp. 16.

Week 10 (10/28): Government reporting (cont.); education reporting. Reading: Mencher, pgs. 478-508.

Week 11 (11/4): Quiz #2; Libel and legal problems; ethical issues. Reading: Mencher, Chp. 25.

Week 12 (11/11): No class. Veterans Day holiday.

Week 13 (11/18): Ethical issues (cont.); begin multimedia projects and readings in "Shaking the Foundations." Readings: Shapiro, pgs. 245-253; 337-352.

Week 14 (11/25): No class. Thanksgiving Day holiday. Reading: Shapiro, pgs. 409-436.

Week 15 (12/2): Quiz #3; multimedia projects; Reading: Mencher, Chp. 27; Shapiro, pgs. 474-487.

Week 16 (12/9): Multimedia work and reading assignments. Reading: Shapiro, pgs. 463-473.

Last assignments due on date of final exam (12/16)