

California State University, Northridge
SYLLABUS
Journalism 210, Writing, Reporting and Ethics II (Class No. 10105)
Fall 2009
Room MZ 360
Thursdays, 7 to 9:45 p.m.

Instructor: **JULIO MORAN**
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CCNMA
USC Annenberg School of Journalism
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Room MZ337

COURSE OBJECTIVE: J210 is designed to develop and expand skills learned in J110, with emphasis on public affairs beats, including police, courts and government. By the end of this course you should be able to report and write a well-researched news story of at least 1,200 words on deadline in a clear, concise, accurate and fair manner.

COURSE DESCRIPTION AND OUTCOMES: J210 is an extension of J110. **You must have passed J110 with a grade of “C” or better. (You must earn a “C” or better in J210 to enroll in J310.)** While J110 focused more on writing, J210 will focus more on reporting, the gathering of information. Most assignments will be **outside** the classroom, most taking place during normal business hours. This class requires a great deal of time outside the class so students are advised to consider whether they can commit to completing assignments before enrolling in the course.

By the end of the semester, you will know what kind of information is needed for various types of stories, where to track down that information, how to hone your interviewing skills, how to find good sources, and how to turn the information you collect into a cohesive and interesting story. You will learn how to think on your feet, develop your critical thinking skills and overcome your fears.

The course will focus on learning by doing. With each assignment, you will be asked to provide a source list so I can spot fact-check your stories for accuracy. A sample form for your source list is attached.

There will **not** be a mid-term test. Instead, you will write a story that will count as your mid-term grade. In lieu of a final exam, there will be a final project due of a 1,200-word hard news feature story about a topic of your choice. I must approve the topic for the final beforehand. You will get story approval by submitting a budget line.

I expect you to come to class on time, prepared (i.e., having done your readings and homework assignments, and followed the news), and ready to discuss news-related issues.

Typing skills are essential in this course. You must be able to write on a personal computer. When working on a computer, save often, make a back-up copy of your work on a disk, and print it out at various stages of the writing process. Always keep a hard copy for yourself. **Claims that “the computer lost it” or “the computer crashed” will not be accepted as an excuse.**

E-MAIL: You should use your CSUN e-mail address rather than a personal e-mail address, which is usually not professional, when corresponding with sources via the Internet.

TEXTS/READINGS:

Required:

1. "Associated Press Stylebook," Norm Goldstein, Editor
2. "Writing and Reporting the News: A Coaching Method," Carole Rich
3. "Shaking the Foundations: 200 Years of Investigative Journalism in America," Bruce Shapiro
4. Los Angeles Times, daily and Sunday editions

Optional:

1. "Creative Interviewing," Ken Metzler
2. "Elements of Style," William Strunk, Jr. and E.B. White

Dictionary: The following online dictionary will be the official reference for in-class assignments, homework assignments, midterms and finals:

Merriam-Webster Dictionary, www.m-w.com

QUIZZES: There will be quizzes weekly on current events or lectures or related reading assignments, including the AP Stylebook. Reporters must know what is happening in the world around them. For the aspiring reporter, reading the newspaper thoroughly every day and watching television newscasts are essential and strengthen your writing skills. Current event quizzes will be taken from the pages of The Los Angeles Times. Quizzes will be held during the first 20 minutes of class. If you are late, you miss the quiz. Missed quizzes, for any reason, can **NOT** be made up. You will receive an "F" for any missed quizzes.

ASSIGNMENTS: There will be some in-class assignments. Much of your time for this class will be spent outside the classroom. With each assignment, you must provide a list of your sources so I can spot fact-check your stories for accuracy. This includes people, web sites, articles or reference books. A sample form for your source list is attached. Class time will be reserved for lectures and discussion of current events and going over assignments. Class participation is important.

COPY PREPARATION: Put the following information in the upper left-hand corner of each page:

Your Name

SLUG – a slug is a 1-2 word description of the story

Word Count – in Microsoft Word, highlight the story, and then click Tools/Word Count.

Date – put the date the assignment is due

Start your story about one-half of the way down the first page to allow space for your grade and the instructor's notes. Be sure to double-space all stories. Use 12-point type and 1.25-inch margins. Do not use italics, underline or bold. If you make last-minute fixes, do so with a black or blue pen or pencil using standard symbols (see Copyediting and Proofreading Symbols in your AP Stylebook). Staple multiple pages in the upper left-hand corner. Type or write "more" at the bottom of each page unless it is the last page, in which case type or write "-30-" or "# # #" at the bottom of the last page

GRADES:

Assignments: All assignments will be edited on a professional basis. Each story will be returned with a grade and written comments and explanations of any editing that is more than routine. Our style guide is "The Associated Press Stylebook and Libel Manual." You may copy edit your assignments by hand prior to turning them in provided it is readable and neat. **Do not use red ink.**

Grades will be based on overall contents and construction of the story. Did you get the lead correctly? Is it well written? Did you get all the information available? Your copy should not contain any errors in spelling, style, grammar and facts. There should not be any omissions, either. **In fact, after the first week, any misspelled proper word (even if it's due to a typographical error) will drop the grade one-half grade on that assignment. A factual error will result in an automatic "F" on that assignment.** Accuracy is the first law of journalism. Professional journalists are expected to get their facts right, to spell and punctuate correctly, and to respect grammar and syntax.

Please don't be discouraged if your stories receive low grades at the outset. Your work will improve. Reporting and writing are hard work, but the only way to get better is to keep at it, regardless of the difficulties.

Course: Your course grade will be determined as follows:

Writing Assignments	40 percent
Quizzes	10 percent
Mid-Term	20 percent
Final	30 percent

Generally speaking,
"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 should not have been submitted.
"F" stories have one proper name misspelled or a factual error.

ATTENDANCE: Attendance is required for all classes, particularly since we meet only once a week. If you expect to miss class due to a family emergency, a medical problem, or a religious holiday, you should contact me beforehand by sending me an e-mail or giving me a call). An explanation of why you are missing class does not make it an excused absence. If you miss class you are responsible for contacting a classmate for class notes and any homework assignment. Tardiness is unacceptable. It reflects on your credibility, not only with me but with your sources.

ASSIGNMENTS: Assignments are due **Thursdays at 7 p.m. in class or via e-mail Word attachment**. You must turn in assignments on the day they are due even if you know you will miss class and have contacted me beforehand. You can either give it to another student to hand in for you, leave it in my mailbox by 7 p.m. or send it to me via e-mail attachment. If you miss the 7 p.m. deadline, your grade will automatically be dropped one-half letter grade. The drop in grade will continue for each day it is late. For instance, if your story would have received a B+, it will drop to a B. Missing assignments will receive an "F." **In no case, will an assignment be accepted more than a week late.**

REWRITING ASSIGNMENTS: You may rewrite a homework assignment that received a "D" or "F," to achieve a higher grade. Such rewrites must be completed by the next class following the week graded stories are returned. **In no case will the new grade be higher than a "C."**

EXTRA CREDIT: There is **NO** extra credit for any missed assignments, unless I assign one for the entire class.

PLAGIARISM: The Journalism Department is committed to the highest standards of academic excellence and integrity. Plagiarism and other forms of cheating are not tolerated and anyone caught cheating will receive a failing grade for the class and will be reported to the University for possible further action. Cheating or plagiarism on any exam, quiz or assignment is grounds for an automatic "F." 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 your own violates CSUN's plagiarism policy, and carries the penalties outlined above.

CULTURAL DIVERSITY: Students in this course are strongly encouraged to broaden their journalistic experiences, with the instructor's help, by including in their work people and subjects such as ethnic, racial and religious minorities; the elderly, disabled and poor; gay men and lesbians; and other similar groups. The intent is to ensure that student work reflects the diversity of the community.

JULIO MORAN

Biography

Julio Moran has been Executive Director of the non-profit CCNMA: Latino Journalists of California since June 1, 1997. He also has been an adjunct professor at the USC Annenberg School of Journalism since 1998, and at California State University, Northridge, since 2005.

After stints as a reporter at the Los Angeles Herald Examiner and the weekly San Fernando Sun, Moran in 1979 moved to New York to work as an editor for Nuestro magazine, a national general interest magazine for Latinos. In 1980, he reported on both the Republican and Democratic national conventions. Among the many people he has interviewed are the late Cesar Chavez and actor/activist Edward James Olmos.

In 1981, he returned to Los Angeles to work for the Los Angeles Times as a general assignment reporter. In 1984, Moran was among the team of editors, reporters and photographers that was awarded the Pulitzer Prize for Meritorious Public Service for a comprehensive 21-part series on Latinos in Southern California that ran in 1983. Moran also was on the Metro staff that was awarded Pulitzer Prizes for coverage of the 1992 Los Angeles Riot and the 1994 Northridge earthquake.

In mid-1995, he left the newspaper as part of company-wide downsizing.

Between 1995 and mid-1997, Moran was a freelance writer and a consultant to CCNMA, before being hired as its executive director in mid-1997. In 1998, Moran began teaching news writing and reporting as an adjunct professor at the USC Annenberg School of Journalism. He began teaching at CSUN in 2005.

Throughout his career, Moran has been active in efforts to bring diversity to our nation's newsrooms. In 1982, he served on the planning committee that organized the first national conference for Latino journalists, which was held in San Diego.

He sat on the first Board of Directors of the National Assn. of Hispanic Journalists in 1984, and was elected vice president/print in 1986. He left the NAHJ board in 1987, but returned to the board in 1991, where he served until 1996. That year, NAHJ presented him with its President's Award for Lifetime Achievement.

Moran also sat on the Board of Directors of Unity '94, an umbrella group of the four largest national associations of journalists of color. Unity '94 was a gathering of journalists of color that was held in Atlanta, Ga., in July 1994, and attracted more than 5,000 participants. He remained on the board through June 1996.

Moran is a graduate of Pepperdine University in Malibu, Calif., where he earned Bachelor of Arts degrees in journalism and history in 1978. In 1996, he completed the Maynard Institute for Journalism Education's Management Training Center program at the Kellogg School of Management and the Medill School of Journalism at Northwestern University in Evanston, Ill.

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COURSE SCHEDULE:

(Readings are to be done prior to the class on the indicated date. Homework is due the following week unless otherwise indicated. **The syllabus will be flexible and is subject to change consistent with the class's progress or the availability of speakers or extenuating circumstances. PENDING APPROVAL OF FURLOUGH DAYS FOR FACULTY.**)

Week 1 (Aug. 27): Course Overview/Syllabus Review

AP Stylebook; grammar, punctuation and spelling; story structure; news judgment

Homework: check the corrections in the Los Angeles Times from Aug. 28-Sept. 2. Analyze the nature of the corrections. Are they for names, facts, photo captions or other errors? Do the errors affect credibility? Turn in a list of at list 10 corrections and be prepared to discuss in class next week.

Week 2 (Sept. 3): Computer-Assisted Reporting/Media Ethics/ Accuracy and Libel

Searching Web sites for information and background. Plagiarism, privacy, code of ethics, legal issues, malice. Presentation by CSUN librarian.

Quiz: TBA

Readings: Rich: chapters 15-16

SPJ Code of Ethics ([http://www.spj.org/ethicscode.asp?](http://www.spj.org/ethicscode.asp))

Homework: Find demographics for the San Fernando Valley. List 10 key attributes for the Valley and provide five stories ideas based on those attributes.

Week 3 (Sept. 10): Interviewing/Gathering Information

Finding stories, observations, listening, note-taking, recorders, attribution

Quiz: TBA

Readings: Rich: chapters 5-7 and 24

Homework: Interview a newsworthy resident or business owner. Note: You cannot interview someone you know well or are related to. Write a 300-500 word story.

Week 4 (Sept. 17): Covering Press Conferences, Part I

Covering speeches and news conferences

Quiz: TBA

Readings: Rich: chapter 20

Homework: Watch "Meet the Press," "Face the Nation" or another weekend news interview television show and write a 300-500 word story about one of the issues discussed on the program.

Week 5 (Sept. 24): Covering Speeches, Part II

Quiz: TBA

Readings: Rich: chapter 20

Homework: cover a speech on or off campus. Write a 300-500 word story..

Week 6 (Oct. 1): Covering City Council Meetings, Part 1

Discussion of City Council, Local politics, Making dull material interesting

Quiz: TBA

Readings: Rich: chapters 18 and 21

Homework: Story on a City Council meeting. 300-500 word story.

Week 7 (Oct. 8): Covering Local Government, Part II

Expanding beyond agenda items, analysis and Interpretation

Quiz: TBA

Readings: Rich: chapters 18 and 21

Homework: Write an analysis/interpretation or follow-up story on a City Council action. 800-1,000 words. Story due Oct. 22. **THIS STORY IS YOUR MID-TERM TEST.**

Week 8 (Oct. 15): NO CLASS

Homework: work on mid-term City Council analysis story.

Week 9 (Oct. 22): Covering Crime, Disasters and Weather

Accidents, fires, crimes, cops, floods

Quiz: TBA

Readings: Rich: chapter 22 and 23

Homework: Write a crime story based on a police report after visiting a police station

Week 10 (Oct. 29): Courts

(PROPOSALS FOR FINAL PROJECT DUE)

Criminal procedure, judicial system, criminal vs. civil courts, preparing to cover a trial

Quiz: TBA

Readings: Rich; chapter 22

Homework: Cover a court proceeding. 300 to 500 words

Week 11 (Nov. 5): Covering Education Part 1

How is the Board of Education similar/different than the City Council?

Quiz: TBA

Readings: Rich: chapters 20 and 21

Homework: Write an analysis/interpretation education story. 500-800 words. Due 11/19

Week 12 (Nov. 12): Covering a multicultural community

How do race, gender, geography, class and age affect how stories are written and how they are perceived by society?

Quiz: TBA

Readings: Rich: chapter 17

Homework: Write a 500-word story regarding diversity

Week 13 (Nov. 19): Writing the long story; Feature and Specialty Reporting

Organization and approach to writing the long story.

Entertainment, sports, consumer affairs are all specialty reporting. How are they different from hard news stories?

Homework: Work on Final project

Week 14 (Nov. 26 NO CLASS Thanksgiving Recess

Week 15 (Dec. 3): Review

Review for final project

FINAL (Thursday Dec. 10 -- Turn in your Final project story via e-mail by 8 p.m.

1-1-1-1-1
SOURCELIST
J-302
Name
Date

INTERVIEWS
Name

Title

Telephone Number

E-mail Address

WEB SITES
URLs

BACKGROUND MATERIAL

Name and date of publication; story headline; byline.