

Journalism 210  
Writing, Reporting and Ethics II  
Professor Bob Rawitch, Spring 2009  
7 p.m.- 9:50 Tuesdays  
MZ362

## **Course Description**

Journalism 210 is a core course for majors and affords student an opportunity to expand on strengths developed in Journalism 110 to enhance their professional competency in writing and reporting through coverage of public affairs beats, including police, courts and government. Writing primarily for print, students also will study techniques used in broadcast news, online news, new media and public relations formats. Ethics is emphasized in the course that requires off-campus reporting and exposing students to statistical journalism instruction. Six hours of classroom and outside lab activity is required each week. Majors must maintain a “C” or better to move on in the program.

**Prerequisites: Word processing proficiency; C or better in Journalism 110 or the equivalent.**

## **Instructional Goals**

To teach—through learning activities and exercises, topical news discussions, demonstration, lectures, possible field trips, reporting/research and story assignments—what constitutes quality journalism at this level and why it matters that students develop a love of learning, especially of journalism’s purpose and principles in a 24-hour, technology-driven news environment. It is critical for students to understand the importance of media literacy in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, as well, particularly as they struggle to explain and interpret the complex issues in American society today.

## **Students’ Learning Objectives**

To successfully complete this course, students will:

- Expand professional competency in writing and reporting through more challenging assignments than were experienced in Journalism 110.
- Focus on ethical issues in myriad journalistic situations.
- Preparing for reporting in the beats associated with public affairs journalism, including public safety, courts and municipalities.
- Increase proficiency in using an expanded range of resources, including the Internet.
- Develop the ability to generate ideas and write feature stories
- Hone news judgment and acquire the values practiced by professional journalists
- Stretch their critical thinking skills with an emphasis on reading and understanding quality reporting and writing.
- Pay attention to current events.

## **Academic Integrity**

The Journalism Department of California State University, Northridge is committed to the highest standards of academic excellence and integrity. Plagiarism and any other form of cheating will not be tolerated. Anyone caught cheating will be reported to the dean of students and will receive a failing grade in the class. Further, the professor may recommend suspension from the university. For a further explanation of the behavior defined as cheating, and a more detailed discussion of disciplinary procedures, consult the CSUN catalog. Please also remember that U.S. copyright laws protect much of the information posted on the Internet. Passing this information off as your own is a violation of CSUN's plagiarism policy, and carries the penalties outlined above.

## **Contact Information**

10 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., Winner & Associates, 310-432-7770  
Evenings/Weekend, 818-886-1432; Email: [brawitch@winnr.com](mailto:brawitch@winnr.com)  
Office Hour: 6 p.m. to 7 p.m. Tuesdays in part timers office 3<sup>rd</sup> Fl. Manzanita Hall

## **Required Texts**

- "Writing & Reporting News", 5<sup>th</sup> Ed. Carol Rich,
- "Writing War: The Best Contemporary Journalism About Warfare and Conflict from Around the World" by Clint Willis. "
- "Associated Press Stylebook," Perseus Publishing, 2008 Ed.
- "Working With Words," 5<sup>th</sup> Ed. Brooks, Pinson and Wilson
- You will be expected to read the L.A. Times daily to prepare for weekly news quizzes and to study how stories are written and reported.

## **Course Requirements**

There will be a news quiz or other kind of quiz nearly every week and 8-10 writing assignments of 500 words or more. For writing assignments, students must include their original raw reporting notes with each assignment. These notes should include all information used in stories, plus sources' names and contact information, if feasible. Stories will not be graded unless complete notes are attached.

There will be both a mid term and a final exam, in-class writing assignments and mostly out-of-class assignments that most often will take place during normal business hours. Students who work day-time hours may need to make arrangements with their employers. I will try to give at least one week's advance notice for such assignments, but that will not always be possible.

## **Grading**

Final grading will follow the university catalog and use the plus and minus system. A = outstanding; B= good, solid work; C – average work; D =barely passing; F = failure. Each written assignment or news quiz will be scored from 0-10. A = 9-10; B = 8; C=7; D

=6; F=0-5. Deadlines in journalism are critical. **Therefore, writing assignments must be completed on time and any writing assignment that includes a misspelled name or a misidentified title automatically will receive a score of 5 or an F.** Frequent and substantive grammatical errors also will cause a lower grade on writing assignments. Writing assignments will be judged on whether they address all elements of a news story: writing, organization, factual accuracy, and AP style. In calculating your final grade, your lowest (or missed) news quiz will be dropped. Improvement demonstrated in later writing assignments and participation in classroom discussions will also be taken into consideration.

There will be an opportunity for extra credit assignments potentially to replace a missed assignment or to improve your grade.

## **Attendance**

Most classes will involve lecture, discussion and often writing assignments. Since we meet only once a week for nearly three hours, it is therefore important that you not miss a class. If you are going to miss class, please send me an email before hand or leave a message for me at the journalism office, 818-677-3135. We will start class promptly at 7 p.m. and you are expected to be here and ready to start work. Since a weekly news quiz is usually the first thing, if you are late you are likely to miss questions and do poorly on the quiz. Therefore, plan for bad traffic and/or parking problems.

You cannot make up a missed in-class writing assignment. University policy defines an excused absence as illness/injury, family death/emergency, religious holiday, jury duty/other government obligation or a CSUN-sanctioned activity. Requests for excused absences must be documented before being considered. If you do miss a class, get notes from a classmate as well as any out-of-class assignment. A missed out of-of-class assignment can only be made up if you experience a certifiable medical emergency or a verifiable death in your immediate family. Obligations from outside jobs unfortunately cannot be accepted. Letting the professor know the reason for missing a class in advance by way of an email or phone call will be a factor in whether a makeup assignment is allowed or a late assignment accepted.

## **Classroom Conduct**

Use of cell phones and related devices in class is prohibited, except in emergency situations. Please advise the professor in advance should such a situation arise. To avoid disturbing the class, turn them off before class starts. Also, refrain from using classroom desktop computers for any reason unless we are doing an in-class writing assignment. Classroom participation in discussion is highly encouraged, but please avoid chit-chat amongst classmates. It is disturbing and a distraction to fellow students and the instructor.

## **Diversity**

Students in Journalism 210 are strongly encouraged to broaden their journalistic experiences 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 greater community covered by the news media.