

Journalism 210: Writing, Reporting and Ethics II

Fall 2009, Monday, 4-6:45 p.m., MZ 361

Instructor: Tim Whyte

Telephone: Cell 661-305-3462; Business Office 661-297-9498

e-mail: tim@whytehousemedia.com

Office hours: Noon-2 p.m. Monday, 1-2 p.m. Wednesday (MZ337, part-timer office across from third-floor elevator)

Prerequisite: C or better in ENGL 155 or equivalent and a C or better in J110.

Course Description

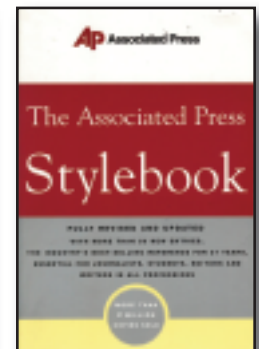
This course will cover the basic skills a news reporter needs, focusing on newsgathering and writing. Includes interviewing, speech/meeting coverage, beat coverage, police, courts, fire, breaking news, preparing news copy, and traditional and electronic information gathering. The course will introduce ethics as part of developing news judgment and learning the values practiced by professional journalists. You will write a great deal in this class, and you are also expected to spend significant time outside class reporting for your writing assignments.

Equipment

- 1) "Inside Reporting," Harrower
- 2) "The Associated Press Stylebook"
- 3) A dictionary (English)
- 4) A storage device to back up your copy (flash drive, etc.)

Lab Fees

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.



Course Requirements

You are expected to have basic typing skills and a functional knowledge of the English language, including spelling, punctuation and grammar. You will be working under deadline pressure and are required to meet deadlines, just as you would if you were working for a newspaper, magazine or website. Work will not be accepted after deadline unless verifiable evidence exists of a legitimate reason. Regular attendance in class is crucial in order to earn a passing grade, as there will be exercises and quizzes during lecture and lab time. If you miss an in-class exercise or quiz, there is no opportunity to make it up.

Academic Integrity

All work must be based on original reporting. The Journalism Department is committed to the highest standards of academic excellence and integrity. Plagiarism and other forms of cheating will not be tolerated. Anyone caught cheating will receive a failing grade in the class and will be reported to the university for possible further disciplinary action. For additional explanation of the behavior defined as academic dishonesty, and a more detailed discussion of disciplinary procedures, consult the current CSUN catalog. Please also remember that 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.

Diversity

As in all courses offered by the Journalism Department, 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.

Quizzes

There will be brief quizzes on each reading assignment. Quizzes may also cover style, grammar and any previous in-class discussions/lectures. Quizzes will be worth approximately 20 points each. Format will be short-answer, and the Associated Press Stylebook is “open” for use during quizzes. No make-ups will be allowed. Your lowest quiz grade will be dropped, so you can miss one quiz without penalty.

Accuracy, Copy Editing and Prep

All copy should be double-spaced and free of typing, spelling and grammatical errors. Your name, date, phone number (or e-mail address) **word count** and story slug must be included in the upper left or upper right corner of all stories. Grades will be markedly lowered if assignments contain an undue number of spelling and grammatical errors.

What to Turn In: You should turn in a **stapled hard copy**.

E-mail

You are welcome to communicate with the instructor via e-mail at any time. However, be forewarned: Assignments will NOT be accepted for credit via e-mail unless the instructor directs ALL students to e-mail an assignment. So, if you are going to miss class and would like to turn in an assignment, you are still responsible for getting a hard copy delivered to the instructor **before** the assignment deadline.

Grading

Grades will be based on a standard percentage scale corresponding to letter grades: 90 percent or better (A) is considered “outstanding”; 80 percent or better (B) is considered good, solid work; 70 percent or better (C) is considered average; 60 percent or better (D) is barely passable; and, grades below 60 percent are considered failure. Any “gross factual error” — a misstatement of fact, misspelling of a proper name, etc. — will result in an AUTOMATIC grade of no better than “D” for the assignment. Your grade will be determined by your percentage of available points. An estimated 900 to 1,000 points will be possible in the entire semester. **Extra credit:** One extra credit opportunity will be offered in the latter part of the semester.

Class Conduct

Except for in-class work, or unless permission is given, computers must be shut off in class. Students who use computers in class will have their overall grade affected. There are no private conversations during lectures and cell phones must be set to “stun,” i.e., silent alert.

Articles

The majority of your grade will be based on writing and reporting assignments. You will be given lab time to work on assignments in class, but you will also need to spend time working on them outside of class. Specific instructions for writing assignments will be provided on an ongoing basis. You will write several news stories and produce a final reporting/writing project. The project, due at the last regular class meeting, will be a package including a main story and sidebars. We may also incorporate additional reporting tools, such as audio and video, and an online presentation of your work. Details of these elements will be announced as they become available.

Word counts, sources and notes: The article word counts are targets and there is some “wiggle room.” If an assignment is within 10 percent of the assigned word count (either above or below), your grade will not be affected. If a story is more than 10 percent too long or too short, points will be deducted at the instructor’s discretion. Unless otherwise indicated, all stories must include at least three “live” sources. The instructor reserves the right to request photocopies of your original interview or coverage notes, and your grade may be impacted if notes are unavailable when a writing assignment is due. (You may turn in the originals if you wish, but photocopies are preferred.)

READING: Reading assignments should be completed before the class meeting for which they are listed. The following reading list under “course schedule” may be modified as deemed appropriate by the instructor.

A typical **class meeting** schedule: Lecture/discussion, followed by quiz, followed by individual writing lab work or assigned exercises.

NOTE: A significant percentage of your semester grade will be based on work that must be done outside class hours — for example, covering a City Council meeting or a court hearing.

Course Schedule

(Subject to change, PENDING approval of furlough days for faculty)

- **Week 1, Aug. 24:** Course introduction; review syllabus; in-class copy markup exercise.
- **Week 2, Aug. 31:** Journalism History and “How Newsrooms Work”
Reading: Harrower, Chapters 1 and 2
- **Sept. 7:** No class, Labor Day Holiday
- **Week 3, Sept. 14:** Newswriting Basics
Reading: Harrower, Chapter 3, pages 34-45
- **Week 4, Sept. 21:** Newswriting Basics, Take 2
Reading: Harrower, Chapter 3, pages 46-64
- **Week 5, Sept. 28:** Reporting Basics
Reading: Harrower, Chapter 4
- **Week 6, Oct. 5:** Beat coverage
Reading: Harrower, Chapter 5, pages 90-99
- **Oct. 12:** No class due to faculty furlough.
- **Week 7, Oct. 19:** Beat coverage, Take 2
Reading: Harrower, Chapter 5, pages 100-110
- **Week 8, Oct. 26:** Law and Ethics
Reading: Harrower, Chapter 7; SPJ Code of Ethics (student should find the SPJ Code of Ethics online).
- **Week 9, Nov. 2:** Beyond Breaking News; Opinion Writing
Reading: Harrower, Chapter 6
- **Week 10, Nov. 9:** Online Reporting and Multimedia Tools
Reading: Harrower, Chapter 8
- **Nov. 16:** No class due to faculty furlough.
- **Week 11, Nov. 23:** Broadcast Journalism (and, Multimedia Tools...)
Reading: Harrower, Chapter 9
- **Week 12, Nov. 30:** Public Relations & Semester Review
Reading: Harrower, Chapter 10
- **Week 13, Dec. 7:** Extended semester review quiz; and, lab time for semester project.
- **Week 14:** No final exam, but semester projects due to instructor no later than **5 p.m. on Monday, Dec. 14**

Journalism 210: Objectives

STUDENTS' LEARNING OBJECTIVES –

To successfully complete this course, students will:

- Expand professional competency in reporting and writing through more challenging assignments;
- Focus on ethical issues in myriad journalistic situations;
- Prepare for reporting in the beats associated with public affairs journalism, including public safety, courts, municipalities and other government institutions and issues;
- Increase proficiency in using the resources available, including the Oviatt Library, the Internet and other human, paper and electronic sources;
- Explore techniques used in broadcast news, online news, new media and public relations writing, among other formats;
- Develop the ability to generate ideas and write feature stories;
- Analyze and write news stories based on statistics and technology;

SKILLS

As students move to J310 or J315, they should be able to:

- Develop and use diverse human, paper and electronic sources;
- Understand fundamental media law, such as libel, privacy, decency, copyright;
- Grasp Freedom of Information Act concepts, including how to use public record, open meeting and shield laws in California;
- Employ more advanced editing techniques and use of “Associated Press Stylebook” rules;
- Know and utilize the professional ethics codes and practices.

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■ It is also desirable for students to explore online story/package production using basic multimedia reporting/writing techniques.

OUTCOME

■ To ensure that our majors can perform in J310 or J315, the J210 students should report and write a minimum of six to eight off-campus stories, including coverage of municipal government (neighborhood/city/county), public safety (police/fire), courthouse (civil/criminal cases), education (K-12/college), and related beats. They may also experiment with enterprise (sports/lifestyle), specialized beats (religion/business), features and opinion writing.