

**JOURNALISM 315: Reporting for Broadcast, SYLLABUS**  
**Fall 2013**  
**Meets Tuesdays 12:30p - 3:15p**  
**MZ 360**

Instructor: David Dow  
Office hours: 3:30 - 4:30 p.m. Tuesdays (MZ337)  
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**Course Purpose:**

Introduce students to the fundamentals of broadcast journalism. The course includes lectures, texts and practical experience in class and in the field. Though weighted toward radio journalism, the class includes segments on television techniques as well.

The course will cover reporting, writing, production, news judgment and ethics.

**Learning Objectives/Goals:**

- To write, report and produce a five-minute radio newscast covering local, regional, national and international news. There will be newscast exercises leading up to a final newscast project during the Week 15 period counting for 20 percent of the course grade.
- To achieve professional-standard writing skills -- writing that is clear, concise, accurate and conversational. Strong writing ability is just as essential to broadcast journalism as it is to its print and online counterparts.

**Course Requirements:**

- Students will spend three hours a week outside class in writing and other assignments fulfilling the three-hour lab requirement (Hereafter referred to as "simulated KCSN lab project"). There will also be other assignments involving field work.
- Students must be familiar with the KCSN Style Guide. (See below)
- Attendance in class is *required*. Any combination of four unexcused absences and late arrivals will subject your course grade to a one-grade drop.
- There will be weekly, in-class assignments and frequent homework apart from the lab project.
- You will need access to an audio recorder (digital), for use in and out of class and a stopwatch or wristwatch with a sweep second hand.

**Required Texts:**

- KCSN Style Guide (to be distributed in class)
- *Broadcast News & Writing Stylebook*, Robert Papper

**Daily News Diet:**

A major responsibility of every journalist is keeping abreast of the day's news. Even stories that seem remote in geography or subject matter may engender spin-offs in your local coverage area. (Note how many local stories have flowed from U. S. military

involvement in Afghanistan.) Each student in this course is required to read the *Los Angeles Times* (available in MZ and online at latimes.com) and check online editions of at least one other paper (e.g., dailynews.com, washingtonpost.com, nytimes.com).

In addition, you should listen daily to KNX-1070 AM news radio for at least one news cycle (the first 30 minutes of each hour) or NPR, on KPCC, 89.3 FM, either *Morning Edition* or *All things Considered* (afternoons), and at least part of a television newscast, alternating between local and network broadcasts.

### **Quizzes:**

We will begin each class with a news quiz, 5 to 10 questions, which will count toward your final grade. If you miss the start of class, you'll miss the quiz. There are no make-ups. The questions will be drawn largely from major stories of the past week in the *Los Angeles Times*, though some may be selected from assigned reading. Your grades on quizzes will comprise half of the "quiz and class participation" component.

### **Plagiarism and Academic Integrity:**

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 a further explanation of the behavior defined as cheating and details on disciplinary procedures, consult pages 647-648 of the 2012-2014 CSUN catalog, also available online.

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.

### **Cultural Diversity:**

Students in this course are strongly encouraged to broaden their journalistic experience, 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 minority groups. The intent is to ensure that student work reflects the diversity of the community.

### **Grading:**

Students will be graded on their ability to write, report and produce broadcast news that is concise, clear, grammatical, accurate and fair and the ability to meet deadlines. Improvement over the course of the semester will be a consideration.

Grades will be based on the following standards:

- A - Work would be acceptable in a medium market professional environment
- B - With some minor changes, work would be acceptable
- C - With major changes, work would be acceptable
- D - Work has serious problems
- F - Work is not acceptable and should not have been submitted.

**Please note:** Work submitted after a deadline is subject to an "F," as is a story with a significant factual error.

Final grades will be determined as follows:

20% - based on work in the simulated KCSN lab project

45% - based on weekly writing assignments and field assignments

15% - based on weekly quizzes and class participation (involvement in class discussions and exercises.)

20% - based on final project (five-minute radio newscast)

**To move to the next level** in the broadcast sequence (J335, J395B and J415), students must receive a "C" in this class. "C-minus" does not qualify.

The instructor adheres to the university letter grading system as laid out in the CSUN catalog.

### **CLASS SCHEDULE**

(The details in the schedule rundown are as firm as we can make them as this class begins. Adjustments may be necessary to meet student instructional needs and introduce any new materials that may enhance the curriculum.)

#### **Week 1/Aug. 27:**

--Introduction and overview of course. Run-through of syllabus.

--Discussion of simulated KCSN lab project..

--Distribute and discuss KCSN Style Guide (It will be our classroom style guide).

--Writing exercise.

**Homework assignment:** Study KCSN Style Guide

#### **Week 2/Sept. 3:**

-- Quiz: KCSN Style Guide

-- Discussion of broadcast writing basics; differences from print.

-- Introduction to the "reader."

-- In-class writing exercise -- creating "readers."

**Homework assignments:** Write two :20-:30 readers: Read *Broadcast News & Writing*, (Papper), Chapters 3, 4 and 5.

#### **Week 3/Sept. 10:**

-- News quiz (including questions from Papper assignment)

-- Further discussion of broadcast style and techniques

-- In-class writing exercise and critiques.

**Homework assignment:** Write two :20 - :30 readers. Read chapters 6, 7, and 8 in Papper book. Bring a copy of the day's *Los Angeles Times* to the Week 4/Sept. 17th class.

#### **Week 4/Sept. 17:**

--News quiz (including questions from Papper assignment)

--Introduction to the 5-minute radio newscast--components, structure, goals-- and the role of sound and interviews.

--In class team assignment: Using today's *Los Angeles Times*, select stories and outline a 5-minute newscast.

**Homework assignments:** Read chapters 9 and 10 in Papper. Record an interview and

natural sound (NatSOT). Watch CBS's "Sixty Minutes" at 7 p.m. Sunday, Sept 22., and write a one-page analysis of major interviews in the program.

**Week 5/Sept. 24:**

- News quiz, including questions from Papper assignment
- Play and critique interviews and sound assigned in Week 4.
- Creating a wraparound ("wrap"). Discussion with examples and classroom exercise.

**Homework assignment:** Write two wraparounds using sound from first interview.  
Read chapter 11 in Papper book.

**Week 6/Oct. 1:**

- News quiz, including questions from Papper assignment
- Play and critique wraparounds assigned last week.
- Discussion: Weaving NatSOT into wraps, with examples
- In-class exercise: Writing wraps with NatSOT.

**Homework assignment:** Produce a wrap with an interview and NatSOT.

**Week7/Oct. 8:**

- News quiz
- Play and critique wraps assigned last week.
- In teams, using online material, create a 5-minute newscast

**Homework assignment:** Listen to "World News Roundup-Late Edition" (4 p.m., weekdays, KNX - 1070 AM) at least once this week and write an analysis of it.

**Week8/Oct. 15:**

- News quiz
- Writing exercises
- Possible guest speaker (Bob McCormick/KNX)

**Homework:** Read chapter 12 in the Papper book ("TV: Story Forms")

**Week 9/Oct. 22:**

- News quiz, including questions from Papper Chapter 12
- Introduction to **television** news writing--differences from radio, the power of pictures, forms and formats (including samples).
- In-class TV writing assignment.

**Homework:** Write TV script using file video.

**Week 10/Oct. 29:**

- News Quiz
- Read and critique TV scripts
- Basics of TV news production -- laying out television newscast
- The broadcast voice --primer in reading/speaking for broadcast

**Homework:** Find a story, record appropriate interview(s) and produce two wraps.

**Week 11/Nov. 5:**

--News quiz

--Play and critique wraps

--In teams, using online material, produce a 5-minute newscast

**Homework assignment:** Read Chapter 18 in the Papper book ("News, Weather and Sports.")

**Week 12/Nov.12:**

--News quiz

--Discussion: Writing for the "other sections" of a newscast -- weather, sports and business.

-- Writing exercise in sports and business writing.

**Homework assignment:** Cover a sports or business event and write a one-minute wrap.

**Week 13/Nov. 19:**

--News quiz.

--Play, critique sports/business wraps.

--Discussion -- What we've learned; where we go now--advanced radio/TV skills

**Homework assignment:** Produce a wrap ( subject of your choice) that may be used in next week's newscast exercise.

**Week 14/Nov. 26:**

--News quiz

--Individually, write/produce a 5 minute radio newscast -- (prep. for final project.)

**Week 15, Dec. 3rd:**

-- Final project: Write/produce 5-minute radio newscast (Counts 20 % of course grade.)

**Week 16, Dec. 10th:**

-- Review of course material.

-- Discussion: The future of broadcast journalism.

**Journalism Program Mission and Objectives:**

The Department of Journalism strives to prepare its students to become well-educated, principled citizens who are capable of initiating careers as skilled journalists, public relations practitioners and other related communication professionals. Here are the key learning objectives:

- Achieve the ability to report and write for diverse publics, using proper grammar and punctuation, word usage and spelling, sentence and storytelling structures across multiple journalistic formats.
- Attain competency in gathering and analyzing information, using reporting techniques such as interviewing, observation and researching primary and secondary sources.
- Acquire expertise in thinking critically and creatively and independently

- Demonstrate an understanding of professional ethical principles and work ethically in pursuit of truth, accuracy, fairness and diversity.
- Develop flexibility in working in evolving mass communication media and environments using a variety of technologies and techniques.
- Understand the historical, theoretical, legal and societal contexts within which journalists and public relations practitioners work, while serving a range of local to global publics.

**About the instructor:**

David Dow has been teaching broadcast reporting, production and writing for 10 years, following a 29-year reporting career with CBS News television and radio. He covered stories in more than two dozen countries, including almost every nation of Latin America. He is a former Stanford Professional Journalism (now Knight) Fellow and co-author of *Cameras in the Courtroom: Television and the Pursuit of Justice* (McFarland).

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