

Journalism 120
Writing Across the Media
Fall 2015

Fridays 9 a.m. to 12:50 p.m. in LA4 102

PROFESSOR INFORMATION

Instructor: Todd Henneman
Office: LA4 206F
E-mail: todd.henneman@csulb.edu
Twitter: @ToddHenneman
Office hours: 2 p.m. to 3 p.m. Thursdays and by appointment

OVERVIEW

This hands-on course will introduce the fundamentals of reporting and will hone your writing skills. It will challenge you to improve weekly. And it will emphasize the fundamentals of clear writing.

Journalists learn best through practice. Be prepared to write during lab. Because reporting skills need to be developed in tandem with writing skills, later exercises will involve information gathered outside of class.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

To complete this course successfully, you will learn to:

1. Identify what makes something newsworthiness.
2. Demonstrate the basic skills of newsgathering and writing.
3. Organize information and write stories that appeal to your audience.
4. Use AP style.
5. Critically evaluate differences between print, broadcast and online news media.
6. Work well under deadline pressure and demonstrate professional writing attitudes.
7. Include multiple viewpoints in every story, whenever possible.
8. Recognize the rights and responsibilities of a reporter.

REQUIRED TEXTS

- ◆ Inside Reporting: A Practical Guide to the Craft of Journalism by Tim Harrower (third edition)
- ◆ The Associated Press Stylebook and Briefing on Media Law (2013 edition or later)

RECOMMENDED NEWS RESOURCES

- ◇ Los Angeles Times, www.latimes.com (Limited free online access without a subscription)
- ◇ 89.3 KPCC, www.scpr.org
- ◇ New York Times, www.nytimes.com (limited free online access without a subscription)

COURSE EXPECTATIONS

Reading and homework assignments must be completed before class. In-class assignments are due by the end of the class session, unless told otherwise. Homework assignments are due on the date given when assigned. Each assignment will be returned with comments or explanations. Accuracy is paramount. Your copy (writing) should be free of errors in spelling, style, grammar and facts. **Never make up or fabricate information used in your stories.** Single source stories are unacceptable. You will be expected to follow AP style.

Work will be graded on clarity, accuracy, fairness, AP style, grammar, punctuation organization and the ability to identify newsworthiness and to meet deadlines.

- “A” stories are accurate, clear and well-written and require only minor editing.
- “B” stories require more than minor editing or omit significant information.
- “C” stories need considerable rewriting or have many spelling and style errors.
- “D” stories have so many errors and problems that they should not have been submitted.
- “F” stories have failed to meet the criteria of the assignment or are filled with errors.

CLASS POLICIES

Attendance and late assignments: Attendance is essential. You can miss one class with immunity. Missing more than two consecutive sessions will result in your final grade being lowered by one letter grade, unless the absence is for a documented medical reason (for example, you're sick and have a doctor's note).

If you miss a class when an assignment is due,

- Ask a classmate to turn in your assignment;
- Leave it in my mailbox, and ask for the time of submission to be noted on it.
- Or attach the assignment to an email and send it by the time that day's class begins.

Otherwise, your assignment will not be accepted except in exceptional circumstances that qualify under CSULB policies. Your absence still will hurt your participation score. You cannot makeup quizzes or exams.

Assignment format: The following information should appear in the upper left-hand corner of each page:

Your name

Date, which should be the date that the assignment is due

Name of assignment (Homework 5, for example)

Double space all assignments. Use 12-point type and a standard font. Do not use italics, underline or bold. Use a one-inch margin. Use a left justification, leaving the right margin ragged. Indent the first line of each paragraph, using the Tab key. Type -30- or ### at the bottom of the last page. Not following this format will hurt your grade.

Extra credit: The goal of this course is to prepare you to flourish as a journalist. In the real world, journalists succeed or fail based on their performance. Extra credit undermines this goal. Therefore, I do not offer any.

Email: Check your CSULB email at least daily because it is our primary form of communication.

Class etiquette: Please turn off your phone and refrain from checking social media accounts during class.

Diversity: You are encouraged to broaden your journalistic experiences by incorporating sources or subjects as appropriate from historically underrepresented populations. Examples include ethnic, racial and religious minorities; the elderly; people with disabilities; and gay men, lesbians and transgender individuals.

LEARNING ASSESSMENT

NEWS DECK (4%)

A designated pair of students will make a Storify presentation of the top news stories of the previous week. The two students will oversee a mock "planning meeting" in which classmates will brainstorm ideas for follow-up stories related to the major current events. Details will be given when before students sign up for specific dates.

AP STYLE LESSON (4%)

From a list, you will pick two topics that you think are important for you and your classmates to know. You then will explain the rule to the rest of the class. Details will be given when we reach this portion of the semester.

PARTICIPATION (10%)

Points are awarded for the number of sessions attended over the semester and (separately) for contributing to discussions. Your regular involvement affects your grade. An "A" reflects both near-perfect attendance and regularly participating in discussions, making thoughtful comments that show you have read the material. Merely being present — but not participating in discussions — will not earn an "A" for the participation portion.

WRITING LAB (37%)

Labs will simulate the experience of a professional newsroom. The first lab will not count toward your grade.

EXAMS (45%)

The course has a quiz, midterm and final. Exams must be taken on the scheduled date.

Journalism majors are required to earn a grade of C or higher to pass this course.

ABOUT YOUR INSTRUCTOR

Todd Henneman has degrees from Northwestern University's Medill School of Journalism and the University of California, Los Angeles. He began his career working for regional newspapers owned by the Tribune Co. and eventually became a staff writer for the San Francisco Chronicle. He also has written freelance pieces for clients ranging from the Los Angeles Times to Bark magazine. He also has taught at the University of Southern California and California State University, Northridge. He continues to write for magazines and websites.

CSULB POLICIES

ABSENCES FROM CLASS

Grades in a course may be adversely affected by absences, and students should seek clarification from the instructor regarding the course absence policy. Make-ups usually are granted in strict accordance with CSULB policy, which defines excused absences as (1) illness or injury to the student; (2) death, injury or serious illness of an immediate family member or the like; (3) religious reasons; (4) jury duty or government obligation; (5) CSULB-sanctioned or approved activities [2002-03 Catalog, p. 75]. These and any other requests for an excused absence must be documented.

ATTENDANCE AND PARTICIPATION

Attendance is mandatory. Roll will be taken at the beginning of each class. Attendance and participation affect your grade. If you expect to miss a day for a reason that meets the CSULB policy (see previous paragraph), send me a detailed e-mail message before class begins. At the next class session, you must provide some kind of written confirmation, verifying that the absence meets the CSULB policy.

UNEXCUSED ABSENCES

An unexcused absence means that you did not alert me in advance that you were not coming or did not provide documentation showing that your absence was excused. You are allowed one unexcused absence with no penalty, but two unexcused absences are considered excessive and will reduce your cumulative score by one letter grade. If you miss a lab exercise, quiz or exam, you will receive a score of zero for it.

RESPONSIBILITY FOR COURSE CONTENT

If you must miss a class, you are still responsible for the information. If your absence is excused, I will give you any notes or handouts from that day. If your absence is unexcused, you must get the information or documents from a fellow student.

MAKE-UPS

If you miss the midterm or final, you may make it up only if your reason meets the threshold set by CSULB policy. If your absence is not excused, please don't ask for a make-up. I also reserve the right to compensate students who make the effort to attend class, remain alert and prepared, and fully participate.

SEAT IN CLASS

An enrolled student may lose his/her seat in class if he/she misses the first class meeting without notifying the instructor. At the instructor's discretion, a student who attends the first class but not subsequent classes may also be dropped from the course.

WITHDRAWAL FROM CLASS

Students may withdraw from a class from the third to the 12th week for "serious and compelling reasons." Normally these are defined as anything of import that is beyond the control of the student. This includes, but is not necessarily limited to, death or serious illness in a student's immediate family or a documented change in a student's work schedule. Poor performance, tardiness and unexcused absences are not considered a serious or compelling reason beyond the student's control for purposes of withdrawal.

REPEAT / DELETE

Any student who receives a grade of D, F, WU or NC must retake this course for a passing grade before being eligible to enroll in JOUR 311, which is the gateway to most upper division journalism courses. Under the university's repeat/delete policy, your failing grade will be erased one time from your transcript when your passing grade is added.

CSULB CHEATING/PLAGIARISM/FABRICATION POLICY

CSULB takes issues of academic dishonesty very seriously. If you use any deceptive or dishonest method to complete an assignment, take an exam or gain credit in a course in any other way, or if you help someone else to do so, you are guilty of cheating. If you use someone else's ideas or work and represent it as your own without giving credit to the source, you are guilty of plagiarism. This does not apply if the ideas are recognized as common knowledge, or if you can show that you honestly developed the ideas through your own work. Any instructor can show you the correct ways of citing your sources, and you should use quotation marks, footnotes or endnotes and bibliographic references to give credit to your sources according to the format recommended by your instructor.

RESPONSES, PENALTIES AND STUDENT RIGHTS

Students should consult the appropriate sections of the Catalog for examples of cheating, fabrication and plagiarism, and instructor and/or CSULB response options in such circumstances. The Catalog also outlines student rights. Any instance of academic dishonesty may result in your immediate expulsion from the class with a grade of "F" and/or other sanctions, as the instructor deems appropriate.

STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

It is the student's responsibility to inform me within the first two weeks of the semester of the need for a reasonable accommodation because of a disability. Disabled Student Services (5-5061) evaluates students' needs and provides resources.

CLASS SCHEDULE

(subject to change)

Week 1

Aug. 28

Course overview: We'll do introductions, review syllabus, discuss expectations.

Nature of news: We'll explore these questions: What is news? What's "soft news"? We'll sign up for pairs for News Deck Presentation assignment.

In-class exercise: news value (ungraded; for discussion purposes)

Reading: Chapter 2 (Harrower)

Week 2

Sept. 4

News Deck Presentation Pair 1

News writing basics: We'll discuss the role of facts and opinions in journalism and what a *lead* is. We also will talk about the details of the AP Style Lesson assignment.

Reading: "Freelance reporter fired after comments at Vernon council meeting" (posted online)

Practice Lab (ungraded): You'll be given two short exercises to practice writing leads in class.

In-class exercise: I read until ...

Reading: Pages 35 through 43 and 56 through 59 in Chapter 3

Week 3

Sept. 11

News Deck Presentation Pair 2 and the first AP Style Lesson.

Moving past the point: We'll explore the Inverted Pyramid.

Lab 1: We'll work on identifying a focus for a story and applying the Inverted Pyramid.

Reading: Complete the exercises on page 64 of Chapter 3; the answers are on page 307.

Nut graphs and beyond: We'll look at other types of leads and look at the "nut graph."

Reading: Pages 44 through 49 (Harrower)

Week 4

Sept. 18

News Deck Presentation Pair 3 Second AP Style Lesson

Lab 2: We'll use delayed leads and nut graphs in our writing

Reading: "Bloomberg News reporter had 18 ledes ready for Supreme Court rulings" (posted online)

Nut graphs and beyond: We'll look at more examples of delayed leads.

Week 5

Sept. 25

News Deck Presentation Pair 4 and third AP Style Lesson

Lab 3: We'll transform delayed lead stories into inverted pyramid stories and vice versa.

AP Style Quiz

Story organization and story structure

We'll talk about breaking news, determining what information you need and organizing it.

Reading: Pages 50 through 55 and 58 through 61 (Harrower)

Week 6

Oct. 2

News Deck Presentation Pair 5 Fourth AP Style Lesson

Lab 4: You'll write a story using the "Kabob" structure.

Let's talk: We'll build our confidence about interviewing sources and about getting attribution right.

Reading: Pages 76 to 89 in Chapter 4

Week 7

Oct. 9

News Deck Presentation Pair 6**Fifth AP Style Lesson****Review for midterm****Lab 5:** We'll practice interviewing and then write a short story based on the interview.**Reading:** Pages 68 through 71 in Chapter 4 (Harrower)**Media law and ethics****Reading:** Chapter 7 and page 200-201 in Chapter 10 (Harrower)**Week 8**

Oct. 16

Midterm**Sixth AP Style Lesson****Week 9**

Oct. 23

Covering speeches, news conferences and meetings: We'll talk about what city governments do, forms of local government and the public interest as well as strategies for covering speeches.**Reading:** Pages 106–114 in Chapter 5 and pages 248–249 (Harrower)**Lab 6:** We'll cover a mock school board meeting.**Homework 1 Due:** Interview at least two students who are demographically different than you. Ask them about their concerns and the kinds of stories they think the news media isn't overlooking.

Nudge them to talk about specific ideas for stories, not vague terms like "happy stories" or "sports stories." Bring two ideas to class. Each story idea should be described in two to four sentences.

Week 9

Oct. 30

News Deck Presentation Pair 7**Seventh AP Style Lesson****In-class brainstorming:** story ideas for the next homework assignment**Tragedies:** We'll talk about covering accidents, disasters, fires and crimes accurately and tastefully.**Reading:** Pages 98–105 and any two stories on pages 230–247 (Harrower)**Week 10**

Nov. 6

News Deck Presentation Pair 8**Lab 7:** Writing about an accident, disaster, fire or crime.**Homework 2A Due:** Bring one-paragraph proposal of a story you'd like to write.**Reading:** Pages 102 through 107 of Chapter 5 and pages 236, 242 and 243 (Harrower)**Eighth AP Style Lesson****Obituaries and profiles****Reading:** Pages 96–97 in Chapter 5, pages 124 and 125 in Chapter 6, and pages 224 and 225 (Harrower). Listen to or read "[Obit Writing: Getting to the Heart of Things](#)" from NPR.**Week 11**

Nov. 13

News Deck Presentation Pair 9**Lab 8:** Writing obituaries (Don't be sad. It's no one you know.)**Feature stories****Reading:** Chapter 6 (Harrower)**Week 12**

Nov. 20

News Deck Presentation Pair 10**Ninth AP Style Lesson****Lab 9:** Descriptive writing**Reading:** Read any two stories that appear on pages 250 through 271 (Harrower)

Week 13

No class. Thanksgiving break.

Week 14

Dec. 4

Online: Trends and tips

Reading: Chapter 8 (Harrower)

Homework 2B Due: Turn in your completed story.

Tenth AP Style Lesson

Lab 10: Social me and media

Hint: Be sure to look at the weekend's top stories before coming to class.

Week 15

Dec. 11

Final exam 10:15 a. to 12:15 p.m.