

Writing Across the Media

Journalism 120

Fall Semester 2015

Tuesdays and Thursdays

4:00 P – 5:50 P

Room LA-4-102

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From the Course Catalog

Course provides introductory overview on writing techniques used in the print media, in broadcast media, in online media and in preparation of materials for media professionals by public relations practitioners. Focus is on writing news stories and meeting deadlines. Letter grade only (A-F). (Lecture 2 hours, Laboratory 2 hours)

Course Objective

J-120 is the Journalism Department's introductory course. It's a prerequisite for J-311.

In this course, you'll learn the basics of news writing, in formats and styles appropriate to the media platforms in wide use during this era of accelerated media evolution. You'll practice and master the basics of writing news and feature stories for text-based outlets, in print and online; learn the differences between print and broadcast news writing styles; be able to tailor your copy to the demands of online media; and learn to use social media to report and advance your story and develop sources, in addition to its common use as a promotional tool.

By the end of this course, you'll be skilled in the mechanics of writing for broadcast, online and print media and for the news, entertainment and public relations sectors of the industry. The course will cover—:

- Leads: how to compose an effective lead; why one story requires leads in differing styles when distributed on a variety of media platforms; the five Ws (who, what, when, where, why) and their cousin, the H (how); hard and soft leads
- The Essential Question: Regardless of the platform or the purpose, every story you write must answer one essential question that the reader/user/viewer/listener will ask while consuming your work: Why should I care?
- Your copy: You'll learn how to trim the fat from your copy so that only muscle remains; know to eliminate Styrofoam peanut words that render your copy filling but not nutritious; become skilled at preventing "journalese" and other types of jargon (like "cop talk") from weakening your story; use quotes effectively and accurately; when to throw the rules out the window
- The Medium and the Message: you'll be able to write compelling broadcast copy, crackling text and lean online posts
- How to get help: You'll explore the Associated Press Stylebook and other sources that can help you keep your writing free of errors in spelling, grammar, punctuation, usage and style; you'll also know the basics of the legal protections and parameters of journalism: privacy, libel and slander, sourcing and attribution, what the First Amendment guarantees and what it does not; and how, when and where to correct errors that are inevitable because we are, after all, human
- Transparency: why journalists must practice it, not just demand it of others; how to be transparent in your reporting and writing
- Deadlines: why they matter; how to succeed despite them
- Ethics and personal responsibility: even as Americans consume large amounts of news—and "news"—their opinion of and trust in the professionals who report, write, produce and deliver the news is at historically low levels. You'll learn how that can affect your practice of journalism, and how you can—through your work—show that journalism can be, and is, practiced with skill, integrity and compassion
- Journalism Outside Journalism: you'll explore how the values of journalism can inform your work even if you choose to pursue a career outside the news business, and why that can benefit you and your future employers

Required Texts

Inside Reporting: A Practical Guide to the Craft of Journalism, 2nd edition

Tim Harrower

2010

McGraw-Hill

ISBN: 978-0-07-337891-6

The Associated Press Stylebook 2015 And Briefing on Media Law

Online subscription, Paperback edition or Spiral-bound edition

2015

The Associated Press (online)

Perseus Publishing (paperback).

Recommended Reading

A selection of sources of daily news and feature content, online, broadcast and in print. These sources should be diverse enough to provide you with a variety of examples of differing points of view, alternative approaches to story selection and presentation, and at least some examples of content outside your personal comfort zone. These sources will reinforce the discussions in class concerning tailoring your writing to medium, audience and environment

Student Media

CSULB provides on-campus opportunities for you to gain hands-on experience in many forms of media. Volunteering for any of these outlets will provide added-value to your experience in this and other Journalism and Mass Communication Department courses. You will be able to put into practice concepts you learn in this class, in an environment that is professional and deadline-driven, but also still an academically-supervised learning laboratory. Opportunities include news, features, interviews, sports, photography, videography, audio and video production, graphic design, web design, and on-air talent

CSULB STUDENT MEDIA

<i>Daily 49er</i>	daily49er.com	Daily newspaper and associated social media outlets; produced by students with a faculty advisor provided by the Journalism and Mass Communication Department
<i>Morning 49er News</i>		The paper's daily audio podcast
<i>Daily 49er TV</i>		The paper's video effort

ASSOCIATED STUDENTS, INC MEDIA

KBEACH Radio	kbeach.org KKJZ-FM 88.1 HD-3	Radio station and associated social media outlets; managed by students, staffed by students, individual faculty members and members of the community with a staff adviser provided by ASI
College Beat TV	youtube.com/CollegeBeatPro	Student-managed and staffed production organization that produces videos about on- and off-campus happenings, plus music, interview and scripted comedy and drama presentations; with a staff adviser provided by ASI
<i>Union Weekly</i>	lbunion.com	Weekly, feature-oriented magazine-style newspaper produced by students with a staff adviser provided by ASI

Your Grade

Factual errors, spelling errors and missed assignments will have a negative impact on your grade. As in the real world, the impact of many transgressions can be lessened via prior disclosure. Ask for help when you need it; stay in touch with the instructor.

<u>COURSE COMPONENT</u>	<u>POINTS</u>
In Class Exercises & Assignments:	300
Participation in In-Class Discussions	100
Online copy project	100
Print copy project	100
Radio copy project	100
Television copy project	100
Midterm Exam	100
Final Exam	100
TOTAL	1,000

GRADE COMPUTATION

A	90 – 99 points	Superior work: accurate, clear, well written, well delivered; you have adopted the fundamentals and principles instructed in class
B	80 – 89 points	Good to very good work: may be missing one or two previous thresholds
C	70 – 79 points	Satisfactory: needs improvement in writing, editing; may have more than a few errors in the principles and fundamentals
D	60 – 69 points)	Unsatisfactory: needs improvement in every area
F	Below 60 points	Failure to meet minimum course requirements; did not turn in major assignment on time

Course Schedule

(Subject to change)

August 25 / 27	Introduction; different writing styles for different media; Leads; History; Breaking news
September 1 / 3	Writing a profile
September 8 / 10	Language and Grammar basics; Writing for someone else
September 15 / 17	Basics of print
September 22 / 24	Print copy assignments
September 29 / October 1	Basics of online
October 6 / 8	Online copy assignments
October 13	Review; Guest speaker
October 15	MIDTERM EXAM
October 20 / 22	Basics of broadcast
October 27 / 29	Radio copy assignments
November 3 / 5	Television copy assignments
November 10 / 12	Incorporating audio actualities and video soundbites
November 17 / 19	Journalism, Law and Ethics
November 24 / 26	THANKSGIVING HOLIDAY: NO CLASS
December 1 / 3	The package
December 8	Review
December 10 – 16 [TBA]	FINAL EXAM

Addendum

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 importance 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 serious or compelling reasons beyond the student’s control for purposes of withdrawing.

During the final three weeks of instruction, you may NOT withdraw from classes except in cases of accidents or serious illness. During the final three weeks withdrawal forms have to be signed by the instructor and authorized by both the department chair and college dean.

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.*

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. Making something up constitutes fabrication. 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. Instances of cheating, plagiarism and/or fabrication may result in your immediate removal from class with a failing grade, removal from the College of Liberal Arts and expulsion from the university.

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 can result in a student’s immediate expulsion from the class with a grade of “F” and may lead to the students being dropped from the Department of Journalism and/or other sanctions as the instructor deems appropriate.

Addendum to Course Syllabus: Department of Journalism Policies on Grading, Conduct of Classes, Drops, Absences and Cheating

Grading: The grading policies and practices in this class are explained elsewhere in the syllabus. It is the student's responsibility to read them and to seek clarification if necessary. The student should be fully aware of what is required for success in the course, such as group participation, writing, speaking, completing assigned readings, etc.

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.

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Academic Honesty: You should be familiar with University regulations regarding academic honesty. Violations of academic honesty will not be tolerated. A student guilty of violations will receive an automatic grade of "F" for the class and will be subject to other penalties, including suspension from the University.

The Department of Journalism and Mass Communication at California State University, Long Beach is accredited by the Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communications (ACEJMC).

ACEJMC has established educational requirements and standards and provides a process of voluntary program review by professionals and educators, awarding accredited status to programs that meet its standards. Through this process, the Council assures students, parents, journalism and mass communications professionals, and the public that accredited programs meet rigorous standards for professional education.

Accreditation by ACEJMC is an assurance of quality in professional education in journalism and mass communications. Students in an accredited program can expect to find a challenging curriculum, appropriate resources and facilities, and a competent faculty.

ACEJMC lists 12 professional values and competencies that must be part of the education of all journalism, public relations, and mass communication students. Therefore, our graduates who major in journalism and public relations should be able to do the following:

- understand and apply the principles and laws of freedom of speech and press, for the country in which the institution that invites ACEJMC is located, as well as receive instruction in and understand the range of systems of freedom of expression around the world, including the right to dissent, to monitor and criticize power, and to assemble and petition for redress of grievances;
- demonstrate an understanding of the history and role of professionals and institutions in shaping communications;
- demonstrate an understanding of gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation and, as appropriate, other forms of diversity in domestic society in relation to mass communications;
- demonstrate an understanding of the diversity of peoples and cultures and of the significance and impact of mass communications in a global society;
- understand concepts and apply theories in the use and presentation of images and information;
- demonstrate an understanding of professional ethical principles and work ethically in pursuit of truth, accuracy, fairness and diversity;
- think critically, creatively and independently;
- conduct research and evaluate information by methods appropriate to the communications professions in which they work;
- write correctly and clearly in forms and styles appropriate for the communications professions, audiences and purposes they serve;
- critically evaluate their own work and that of others for accuracy and fairness, clarity, appropriate style and grammatical correctness;
- apply basic numerical and statistical concepts;
- apply tools and technologies appropriate for the communications professions in which they work.