Journalism 311

**I n f o r m a t i o n G a t h e r i n g**

Syllabus for Fall 2015

**Tuesdays and Thursdays** Noon to 1:50 p.m.

**Section:** 03 (3598) and 04 (3599)

**Classroom:** LA4 102

Professor Gary Metzker

**E-mail:** [gary.metzker@csulb.edu](mailto:gmetzker@csulb.edu)

**Office hours:**  Noon to 2 p.m. Mondays and Wednesday or you can e-mail me or set up an appointment

**Office location:** LA4 201B

**COURSE DESCRIPTION**: This course is an introduction to newsgathering and writing for newspapers, magazines and websites. We will learn the basics of conducting interviews, writing a straight news story, covering a meeting, crafting a news feature and writing a profile. We will focus equally on information gathering and writing skills. The course will also teach you about honing your “news judgment” so that you may develop an aptitude for identifying and developing story ideas. We will also consider the ethical and legal issues involved in newsgathering. A good deal of class time will be devoted to writing, in order to work on style and organization. Some class time will also be spent critiquing and editing one another’s articles.

The format of this course relies on your participation and initiative. The coursework entails a significant amount of outside research and interviewing—which can only happen when you make the effort. I gladly provide guidance and support, but you must take responsibility for your own success. Additionally, I strongly encourage you to actively participate during class. I don’t intend to speak for the duration of every class. So, please bring your ideas and your voice to class.

**LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

This course is designed to help students:

• Conceptualize what makes an interesting news story and why.

• Determine questions to ask and reactions to report in a news story.

• Identify key sources for news stories.

• Write leads that convey critical information and “hook” the reader.

• Organize facts into accurate, complete and structured stories that follow journalistic style and AP rules.

• Ask questions and conduct interviews, as well as understand how to quote/attribute information obtained.

• Learn how to cover various types of news stories, including straight news; meetings, speeches and press conferences; profiles; and news features.

• Learn to meet hard deadlines.

• Grasp the ethical issues in news reporting, such as accuracy, fairness and multicultural sensitivity.

• Think critically, creatively and independently.

• 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.

**Required Texts** (both of which students are expected to bring to each class meeting)

—Writing and Reporting News: A Coaching Method, 7th edition, by Carole Rich

—The 2015 Associated Press stylebook.

**SOURCE LIST POLICY:**

1. A source list must be submitted for each reporting assignment. Example: first and last name, identifying information (examples: history teacher at Roberto Clemente High School; the first officer on the scene), cell or other phone number; email address.

2. Students may NOT use family or friends as sources in their reporting assignments. It is inappropriate to use students and faculty members from the Department of Journalism and Mass Communication as sources. When in doubt, consult with me.

**ATTENDANCE AND PARTICIPATION**: Your attendance in class is critical to your understanding of the readings and assignments. More than six absences will result in automatic failure for the semester. It should also go without saying that cell phones must be in silent mode or turned off during class. It is OK to bring in your laptop to take class notes, but any other usage in class time (to check e-mail, chat or check your Facebook pages) is impermissible. To reiterate, the only reason for an open laptop is note taking.

**PLAGIARISM**: This includes the fabrication or falsification of data, or co-opting work produced by someone else. If you are caught engaging in any form of academic misconduct, you will receive an “F” for the course, and I may pursue the academic misconduct grievance procedure. I’m serious about this stuff. It’s deeply painful for all involved to sort out an academic misconduct case. If you have any questions about citing sources or how to use references, please ask me, and please read the attached CSULB plagiarism policy.

**GENERAL GUIDELINES FOR WRITTEN WORK**:

**Accuracy**. Because we are in a journalism department, it is important for you to use correct spelling, grammar, and punctuation in your written work. Accordingly, you will receive a grade of zero if you have fact errors, spelling or grammar errors on your assignments.

**Late work**. We are in an industry (in fact, a world!) controlled by deadlines. I deduct five points per day from late major assignments, including weekends. I will not accept assignments more than five days late. You may make up the media law/ethics quiz only via special arrangements.

**Format**. All work turned in must be typed, 12 point, Times New Roman, double spaced. All work must be in a Word format, like .doc or .docx. NO EXCEPTIONS. Incorrectly formatted stories will be returned and you will lose points.

**Making the grade**

90% - 100% = A

80% - 89% = B

70% - 79% = C

60% - 69% = D

Below 60% = F

**Earning the points**

Hard news story 10 points

News writing exercises 10 points (each assignment worth a minimum of 1 point)

Meeting/speech story 15 points

Profile story 20 points

Trend story 25 points

Data gathering 5 points

Class participation 5 points

Quizzes (AP, current events

and ethics) 10 points (each quiz worth 1 point)

TOTAL 100 points

**Major Assignments**

**STRAIGHT NEWS STORY**: Write a hard news story with quotes from at least three sources. Pay special attention to your lead—which can be summary, anecdotal or descriptive—and nut graph. Be sure to immediately alert readers to the focus of your story. How you organize the body is up to you, but remember the common structures we’ve learned about, such as inverted pyramid, hourglass and the Wall Street Journal formula. You must interview a minimum of three sources for this article. Deadline: Sept 24. Length: 450-500 words

2. **Meeting/speech/press conference story**: Attend a meeting or speech and write a news story about it. This can be on or off campus . . . a Zoning Board hearing, a lecture by a renowned archeologist, an anti-war rally, a school board meeting . . . Just remember to speak to audience members and get opposing points of view. Reporting outside the event itself may be required. You must interview a minimum of three sources for this article. Deadline: Oct. 22. Length: 500-600 words.

3. **Profile story**: Take readers to a unique place or introduce them to an unsung hero by writing a human-interest story. Here’s the catch: You must profile someone whose race, ethnicity, language, national origin, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, religion, ability, or socio-economic circumstances are markedly different from your cultural identity and experiences. This assignment requires in-person reporting and research. The profile must include comments from persons other than the subject. A strong profile depends on your powers of observation, as well as your ability to ask questions that lead to anecdotes and revealing answers. If you look closely enough, a remarkable story lurks behind even the seemingly mundane. This is your chance to showcase literary writing, and don’t be afraid to incorporate details that most editors would cut from a breaking news story. Go beyond the obvious to craft a story about a blind sculptor; the last family to move out of a public housing high-rise before it is imploded; or best friends who started out as adversaries. You must interview a minimum of four sources for this article. Deadline: Nov. 12. Length: 600-750 words.

4. **Trend or conflict story**: Report on a trend, identify a social or economic phenomenon. Interview sources who explain what is happening, why and the impact. **You must include data collection to enhance your story**. Include colorful anecdotes to illustrate the trend. If you report on a conflict or controversy, you must identify the origin of the disagreement, and use visual language to present multiple sides of the issue. Tell readers how the debate impacts them. Be sure to highlight the “universal” aspect of the trend or conflict. Both trend and conflict stories require investigative reporting. You must interview a minimum of five sources for this article. Deadline: Dec. 10 between 10:15 a.m. and 12:15 p.m. Length 750-900 words.

**Budget information and formatting**

Daily newspapers and broadcasters control the flow of copy and keep track of stories that are assigned through the use of “budgets.” Usually each department of a newspaper or broadcast station produces its own budget. These story line-ups are discussed at news meetings, typically once in the morning and again in the afternoon.

Each Tuesday, you will need to turn in two budget items—preferably original ideas for news stories. Each newsroom has its own strategy for the contents of a budget. For this class, we will use the following three simple elements. Here’s an example of what your budgets should look like:

METZKER’SAJERK25 or

LMFAO25

1. SLUG. Write a word unique to the story using no more than 12 letters, followed by a two number date signifying when the story is expected to run (the day of class, in our case). For example, COUNCIL12 would be a story about the City Council meeting, running on the 12th of the month.

2. SUMMARY SENTENCE. This description of the story is no more than 20 words long. It must convey key facts and the significance of the story. Focus on impact and information in-hand rather than story assignment. For example, a City Council story may read, “Long Beach council votes to ban college students from local bars; student protests planned,” rather than “Council met Tuesday and decided . . .” Your editor already knows that the council met Tuesday.

3. ART. This should be a note about potential opportunities for photos, illustrations, charts or other graphics that should be assigned to accompany your story.

**Anticipated Course Outline**

\*\*\*\*Students are expected to complete reading assignments before class\*\*\*\*\*

**Week 1 (Aug. 25-27)**

Introduction to class.

Changing concepts of news and writing a basic news story.

Reading: Chapters 1 and 2.

**Week 2 (Sept. 1-3)**

Go over budgets. Finding your focus. AP quiz.

**Week 3 (Sept. 8-10)**

Finding your focus (continued) and in-class exercise. Discuss portfolios.

Go over budgets. News story structure and developing story ideas.

Talk about Assignment 1—Straight news story.

AP stylebook: A-B and C-D.

Quiz

Reading: Chapters 5 and 7.

**Week 4 (Sept. 15-17)**

Go over budgets. Use class time to workshop Assignment 1 ideas.

Writing exercise on story structure.

Putting together the story and leads.

Story organization and forms.

Reading: Chapters 8 and 9.

AP stylebook: E-F and G-H

Quiz

**Week 5 (Sept. 22-24)**

**Hard news story due Sept. 24**

Go over budgets.

AP stylebook: I-J and K-L

Quiz

Interviewing techniques.

Reading: Chapter 6.

**Week 6 (Sept. 29-Oct. 1)**

Go over budgets.

Practice interviewing techniques and write brief article based on the interview.

Covering meetings, speeches and news conferences.

Reading: Chapter 18.

Talk about Assignment 2–Meeting, speech or press conference story.

AP stylebook: M-N and O-P

Quiz

**Week 7 (Oct. 6-8)**

Go over budgets.

Workshop ideas for Assignment 2.

In-class exercise (Obama commencement speech).

Convergent media writing.

Reading: Chapter 3.

Meet with Carol Perruso in library (Oct. 8)

Give update on meeting, speech or press conference article.

AP stylebook: Q-R and S-T

Quiz

**Week 8 (Oct. 13-15)**

Go over budgets.

The importance of accuracy/ libel law basics.

Reading: Chapter 14-15

Start in class/finish at home: Exercise on libel law and ethics.

AP stylebook: U-V and W-X-Y-Z

**Week 9 (Oct. 20-22)**

**Meeting/speech assignment due Oct. 22**

Go over budgets.

Turn in homework assignment.

Quiz on libel and media ethics.

Guest speaker

**Week 10 (Oct. 27-29)**

Go over budgets.

Writing obituaries and personal profiles.

Reading: Chapter 17.

Talk about Assignment 3—Profile story.

AP style: sports

In-class exercise on profile writing.

Quiz.

**Week 11 (Nov. 3-5)**

Go over budgets and update class on profile stories.

Working with statistics and other numerical data.

Reading: Chapters 5 and 19.

In-class exercise using stats.

AP style: food-fashion

Quiz

**Week 12 (Nov. 10-12)**

Go over budgets

Writing news features that involve trends and controversies.

Reading: Chapter 10.

**Profile story due Nov. 12**

Talk about assignment 4—News feature involving a trend or conflict.

Quiz

Guest speaker

**Week 13 (Nov. 17-19)**

Go over budgets and critique examples of news features.

In-class exercise practicing news feature writing.

Workshop news features in progress.

Quiz

**Week 14 (Nov. 24-26)**

Happy Thanksgiving.

**Week 15 (Dec. 1-3)**

Freelance reporting and selling articles.

Quiz.

In-class exercise practicing writing query letters.

Work on final project.

**Week 16 (Dec. 8)**.

Portfolios due

Work on final project.

**Finals (Dec. 10) 10:15 a.m. to 12:15 p.m.**

Turn in trend story.

**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.

**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.

**Cheating/Plagiarism/Fabrication Policy**: CSULB takes 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.

**Accommodation of Students With Disabilities in Journalism Courses**

Students with disabilities who need assistant or accommodation to participate in or benefit from university programs, services, and/or activities should inform the instructor and then contact Disabled Student Services. Students needing support services or accommodations should contact the instructor of the course within the first week of class. In addition, students should establish their eligibility for assistance by contacting the Disabled Student Services Office (Brotman Hall 270) at 562-985-5401.

Students are to provide to the instructor verification of their disability from Disabled Student Services. Typical accommodations available from Disabled Student Services, working with the journalism instructor, includes extended time for tests, test proctoring, private test rooms, note taking, Braille transcriptions, and referral for tutoring.

If the service offered is insufficient or inadequate, the student should confer with the instructor and the director of Disabled Student Services. If these efforts are unsuccessful, students have the option of directing their concerns to the Office of Equity and Diversity (University Student Union 301) at 562-985-8256. Responsibility for oversight and implementation of the Americans with Disabilities Act and the Rehabilitation Act has been delegated to the campus director for disability support and accommodation.

***Department Information***

**Advising**: If you are a journalism major or minor, the department recommends that you see one of our advisers at least once a year. We have two experienced advisers – Professor Jennifer Fleming (Jennifer.Fleming@csulb.edu) and Professor Danny Paskin (Danny.Paskin@csulb.edu) – to assist you with your course selection, answer questions about requirements, help you stay focused on your chosen path to graduation, and offer other relevant advice. Their information and advising hours are posted around the department and available in the department office (LA4-106).

**Internships**: The department recommends that you pursue internships, service-learning experiences, and extra-curricular activities to enhance your career preparedness and marketability when you graduate. Employers will expect to see examples of your work; they prefer applicants with experience. Therefore, you will find all internships and job opportunities that come to the department posted on the department’s BeachBoard site. A binder with hard copies of all internships is also kept in the department office for your review. In addition, internship postings are available online through the CSULB Career Development Center. Students pursuing opportunities through our BeachBoard or CDC sites should be aware that the department and CDC do not screen these opportunities for JOUR 498 credit. If you are seeking JOUR 498 credit, you must attend one of the mandatory orientations conducted the semester prior to your enrollment in JOUR 498. Students enrolled in a section of JOUR 498 will also receive advance notice of the orientations from their instructor.

**Student Media**: The department is home to the *Daily 49er* and *Dig Magazine* and closely tied to *KBeach Radio* and *College Beat TV*. Getting involved in student media will help you hone your skills and give you real-life experiences. Stop by the *Daily 49er* and *Dig Magazine* offices in LA4-201 and talk to the staff. Introduce yourself to the faculty advisers – Professor Barbara Kingsley-Wilson (*Daily 49er*, Barbara.Kingsley-Wilson@csulb.edu), Professor Gary Metzker (*Daily 49er* and *Dig Magazine*, Gary.Metzker@csulb.edu), and Professor John Shrader (*KBeach Radio* and *College Beat TV*, John.Shrader@csulb.edu) – who can answer any questions you may have.

**Bateman Case Study Competition**: If you’re a public relations student, consider joining the *Bateman Case Study Competition Team*. The *Bateman Competition* (http://prssa.prsa.org/scholarships\_competitions/bateman/) is a prestigious inter-collegiate contest, often called the Super Bowl of collegiate public relations competitions. It is one of the most intense and rewarding experiences for our students. Participants on the *Bateman Team* receive JOUR 485 credit. See Professor Joni Ramirez (Joni.Ramirez@csulb.edu), our *Bateman* coach, for more information.

**Student Organizations**: The department is home to three active student organizations – the *National Association of Hispanic Journalists*, *Public Relations Student Society of America*, and *Society of Professional Journalists*. Each group has its own leaders and sponsors a variety of activities, including esteemed professionals as guest speakers. These three groups also work closely with the department to co-sponsor special events, such as Journalism and Public Relations Day. Get involved and have a blast with your classmates! Contact the respective faculty advisers for more information: Professor Danny Paskin ([Danny.Paskin@csulb.edu](mailto:Danny.Paskin@csulb.edu)) for **NAHJ**, Professor Holly Ferris ([holly@ferriscomm.com](mailto:holly@ferriscomm.com)) for **PRSSA**, and Professor Chris Karadjov ([Chris.Karadjov@csulb.edu](mailto:Chris.Karadjov@csulb.edu)) for **SPJ**.

**Social Media**: Be sure to get connected to the department’s Facebook page (https://www.facebook.com/CSULBJournalism?fref=ts) and website (http://www.cla.csulb.edu/departments/journalism/) for photos and information about department happenings.

**Office Hours**: Each faculty member holds office hours to help you perform well in your classes, answer any of your questions, and offer advice. Take advantage of office hours and get to know your faculty.

**Accreditation**: 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 Communication* (ACEJMC, https://www2.ku.edu/~acejmc/). Accreditation by ACEJMC is an assurance of quality in professional education in journalism and mass communication. Students in an accredited program can expect to find a challenging curriculum, good 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. Each one of your required courses in the journalism major addresses at least one of the 12 professional competencies. Therefore, graduates who majored 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 in the United States, 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 communication;
* demonstrate an understanding of the diversity of peoples and cultures and of the significance and impact of mass communication 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