

MCM 374 Broadcast Journalism Writing
Jocelyn Lane (713) 569-4117
Jal029@shsu.edu

Fall 2009 Credit: 3 hours
10-10:50 a.m. M, W & F
Communications Build. 125

Office Hrs: M & W 11- Noon
Communications Build. 128

Course Description

This class emphasizes the theory, techniques and practice of television journalism. Emphasis is on writing and editing news copy and honing style and content skills appropriate for effective broadcast news writing. MCM 374 also encourages production of broadcast news content and discussion of current issues facing broadcast journalists.

Required Materials

“The Broadcast News Process,” 7th edition, by James Redmons
The Associated Press Broadcast News Handbook, any edition
Stopwatch (a wristwatch with a stopwatch is acceptable)

Course Objectives

The focus of this course is establishing an understanding of producing stories for TV news. Students will learn or improve their skills in writing, shooting, editing and reporting news for television. Our goal is to produce solid, well-crafted stories on deadline.

Methods

You will produce materials for use within news or other programs presented on cable Channel 7. Much of your time will be spent researching, shooting, writing and editing. Most of these stories will be packages, but there will also be voice-overs, vo/sot's and “look lives.”

This class requires significant amounts of hands-on lab work. Each student is responsible for knowing how to use the equipment based on skills from prerequisite classes: MCM 132 (Writing for Mass Media) and MCM 372 (Single Camera and Non-linear Editing 1). Students who have not taken these classes and received a grade of C or better will be dropped.

Students will hone the skills essential for every good reporter: time management, organization, persistence, thoroughness and the ability to analyze and interpret. Emphasis will be placed on a journalist's responsibility to handle subjects and sources with respect and care, while always maintaining ethical standards beyond reproach.

Our classroom is a newsroom. Together, we will cover all types of stories -- campus and community news and events, speeches, sports, meetings, features and in-depth issues. It is likely you will be required to cover events and conduct interviews off campus. You must provide your own transportation.

To do well, you must do three things. All three require clear thinking and organization. You must: 1) know WHAT your story is, 2) be able to GET that story and (3) SHOOT, WRITE and EDIT that story in a simple, strong, compelling way.

Attendance & Late Work

Late news is an oxymoron. Projects must be turned in ON TIME. In broadcast news, if you don't make your "slot" (deadline), your story is dead. Same here. Any and all assignments are due at the beginning of class on the due date. After class is LATE. Late work is not accepted. Please do not ask me for ways to resolve your deadline problems; it is your responsibility to meet the deadline regardless of technical or other problems.

News is all about meeting deadlines, and that also means being on time. If you arrive after roll is taken, you will be counted absent. More than three absences can impact your grade. There are no excused absences.

Students are required to come to class to get assignments information and to turn in work. Do not rely solely on Blackboard for material, assignments or notes.

Quizzes & Tests

Quizzes: Pop quizzes may be given on current events. Quiz questions will be based on stories in the Houston Chronicle, the Houstonian, [Today@Sam](#) and the Huntsville Item. You are REQUIRED to read these. There will also be scheduled quizzes on style, writing and material in the textbook.

Story Ideas

Every Monday, you are required to submit three story ideas in writing. You must include the angle the story would take, a description of possible visuals (B-roll) and suggestions who to interview. By doing this, you will develop a "nose for news." Good reporters are always on the lookout for untold, interesting stories. They also know how to localize national news stories. If you consistently provide solid, original story ideas, it will help your grade. If your ideas lack originality and thought, your grade will suffer.

Format

All scripts must be neatly typed using a standard script form (I will supply a template). Handwritten material will not be accepted. Quiz and test answers must be neatly printed. I will count it wrong if I can't read it. All video editing will be done in the editing suites.

Grading

Stories (and story ideas): 70%

Tests & Quizzes: 20%

Participation: 10%

Extra Credit: Is not likely, unless there is a class field trip.

Assignments

You are encouraged to “pitch” story ideas. But the final decision on what you cover is made by the professor. Sometimes you’ll like these stories, sometimes you won’t. You must cover them anyway. Everyone will cover a variety of stories: meetings, sports, features, news and events.

The class will be divided into teams of two. For each story, one of you will be the reporter/photographer and the other will be the photographer/editor. For the next story, you will trade positions. Your grade for that assignment will be based on your role: if you are the photographer, your grade will be based on the shooting, lighting, audio quality and editing. If you are the reporter, your story will be graded on the research, story set-up, editorial content, structure, writing, and delivery. You are required to trade positions with each story, so by the end of the semester, you’ve done each job 50% of the time.

Each story must have at least two separate interviews and a standup. Average length: 1:30.

You must fill out and turn in accurate information for everyone you interview, including properly-spelled first and last names, e-mail addresses and phone numbers.

Equipment use policy

It is the policy of our department that you pay for the repair or replacement of equipment checked out to you if it is broken or lost. Failure to comply will result in no grade for the course. You must use our equipment.

Appropriate Dress

Dress professionally. When you do interviews, you’re representing the university. Plus your goal is to get a professional-looking audition tape together. Watch TV newscasts and notice what reporters and anchors wear. Dress the part.

Reporters: men should wear a shirt with a collar, along with a blazer or sweater, if you like. Women should wear a nice blouse or dress (nothing sleeveless), a blazer or sweater. For both men and women: solid colors are best. Stay away from bold patterns.

No logos, tanktops, ballcaps, shorts (if your legs show in the video), hats or baggy pants. Hoods are not to be worn during class, nor are bulky coats or head coverings.

Writing Help

A big portion of your grade will be based on writing. If writing is difficult for you, you're encouraged to visit the Sam Houston Writing Center, located in Farrington 111. Writing tutors will work with you one-on-one. You can drop or call (936) 294-3680 to schedule an appointment.

Academic Dishonesty

If you fabricate content or violate ethical newsgathering practices, you will fail the course.

All students are expected to engage in all academic pursuits in a manner that is above reproach. Students are expected to maintain complete honesty and integrity in the academic experiences both in and out of the classroom. Any student found guilty of dishonesty in any phase of academic work will be subject to disciplinary action. The University and its official representatives may initiate disciplinary proceedings against a student accused of any form of academic dishonesty including, but not limited to, cheating on an examination or other academic work which is to be submitted, plagiarism, collusion and the abuse of resource materials.

DO NOT plagiarize. Do not copy anything from any source and pass it off as your own. If you reference someone else's work, give them full credit. Plagiarism will not only earn you disciplinary action or a failing grade, it could earn your expulsion from this institution. Plagiarism is defined as presenting someone else's work, including the work of other students, as your own. Any ideas or materials taken from another source must be full acknowledged unless the information is common knowledge. Any student who plagiarizes will receive a failing grade on the assignment for the first offense. A second offense will result in a more severe penalty, up to and including an F for the course and/or disciplinary referral to the dean.

Americans with Disabilities Act

It is the policy of Sam Houston State University that individuals otherwise qualified shall not be excluded, solely by reason of their disability, from participation in any academic program of the university. Further, they shall not be denied the benefits of these programs nor shall they be subjected to discrimination. Students with disabilities that might affect their academic performance are expected to visit with the Office of Services for Students with Disabilities located in the Counseling Center. They should then make arrangements with their individual instructors so that appropriate strategies can be considered and helpful procedures can

be developed to ensure that participation and achievement opportunities are not impaired. SHSU adheres to all applicable federal, state, and local laws, regulations, and guidelines with respect to providing reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities. If a student has a disability that may affect adversely his/her work in this class, then the student is encouraged to register with the SHSU Counseling Center and to talk with the instructor about how best to deal with the situation. All disclosures of disabilities will be kept strictly confidential. NOTE: no accommodation can be made until the student registers with the Counseling Center.

Religious Holidays

Section 51.911(b) of the Texas Education Code requires that an institution of higher education excuse a student from attending classes or other required activities, including examinations, for the observance of a religious holy day, including travel for that purpose. A student whose absence is excused under this subsection may not be penalized for that absence and shall be allowed to take an examination or complete an assignment from which the student is excused within a reasonable time after the absence. "Religious holy day" means a holy day observed by a religion whose places of worship are exempt from property taxation under Section 11.20, Tax Code.

Visitors in the Classroom

Unannounced visitors to class must present a current, official SHSU identification card to be permitted into the classroom. They must not present a disruption to the class by their attendance. If the visitor is not a registered student, it is at the instructor's discretion whether or not the visitor will be allowed to remain in the classroom.

Instructor Evaluations

Students will be asked to complete a course/instructor evaluation form toward the end of the semester.

Classroom Rules of Conduct

The Code of Student Conduct and Discipline is found at the following link: <https://www.shsu.edu/students/guide/dean/codeofconduct.html>. Section 5.2.22 defines classroom disturbances.

Common courtesy is required of everyone. Students creating any type of disturbance, such as excessive talking, will be asked to leave. Students may also be told to leave if

they are not paying attention. Students' cell phones must be turned off and out of sight during class.

If you have a computer at your desk, you may use it only for classwork (such as taking notes) during class. No checking your e-mail or Facebook page during lectures.