

Broadcast News Writing & Reporting

COMM 4450 (W)

Spring 2005

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Office Hours: Mondays 10:00am – Noon & 1:00 – 4:00pm
Tuesdays & Thursdays 3:30pm – 4:30pm
By Appointment

Overview

COMM 4450 is instruction and practice in the basics of TV news writing and reporting. As closely as possible, the classroom experience will parallel the rigor of a newsroom in which I will serve as a producer and you will serve as a reporter. As your producer, I will coach you through the writing and reporting process from conceptualizing enterprising news story ideas to developing and rewriting final scripts with video for broadcast. As a reporter, you will be expected to keep abreast of local, state, national, and international news, and in turn, conceptualize, research, write, edit, and videotape enterprising news stories.

You should complete assigned readings prior to class and be prepared to participate in class discussions. Lectures will focus on central concepts in assigned text, and will occasionally draw on information from additional sources. You are responsible for learning all material presented in lectures and assigned readings. You are also encouraged to make use of office hours and WebCT to discuss lecture and reading material that is unclear to you.

Learning Objectives

- To demonstrate ability to exercise news judgment
- To demonstrate ability to research and write accurate, fair, comprehensive news stories under deadline pressure
- To demonstrate ability to research and write news stories in accordance to timing, format, lead, style, and development guidelines

Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC)

COMM 4450 is a WAC or writing intensive course. The goals of WAC are to encourage students to use writing as a way to learn, to show students how to write effectively in their disciplines, and to improve students' writing skills. Accordingly, COMM 4450 involves *Writing to Learn* (WTL) and *Writing to Communicate* (WTC) assignments. WTL assignments help students to generate and focus ideas through informal writing. WTC assignments help students to communicate ideas through formal writing.

Text

C.A. Tuggle, Forrest Carr, & Suzanne Huffman. (2004). *Broadcast News Handbook: Writing, Reporting & Producing in a Converging Media World*. Second Edition. Boston: McGraw-Hill.

Materials

You are responsible for bringing a 3 1/2" diskette to each class session. You should consider bringing an extra diskette to make backup files. You will also need a reporter notebook (small vertical spiral), dictionary, thesaurus, stopwatch, at least two videocassettes, and access to a computer to complete assignments outside of class. University Television will provide other necessary equipment, i.e. camcorders, editing suites, microphones.

Attendance

Reporters routinely work under deadline pressure. Failing to report to work or to notify the news producer of absences, late arrivals, and early leaves may jeopardize the newscast, and thus may compromise the credibility of the news team and/or result in loss of advertising revenue. Consequently, you are expected to arrive on time and remain for the duration of all regularly scheduled class sessions. EACH unexcused absence, late arrival, or early leave lowers your final grade by .5 of a point. Absences, late arrivals, and early leaves are excused in cases of unavoidable situations substantiated with documentation. Requests to excuse absences, late arrivals, and early leaves must be made at least two hours before or after the class for which you will be absent, arrive late, or leave early. To make requests, contact me or leave a message with a contact number at 678.839.4933. However, be mindful that an excused absence does NOT justify a deadline extension. Rather, it protects your final grade from being lowered by .5 of a point.

Assignments

Practice Exercises

You are expected to complete practice exercises (in and out of class) to develop your news judgment and news writing skills.

News Briefs

You are expected to post weekly news briefs on the WebCT Discussion Board. News briefs are your summaries of major local, state, national/international news stories.

Practice exercises and news briefs will be graded on a check system to encourage you to focus on developing your news judgment and writing style rather than earning a desired grade.

- ✓+ Mastered objectives/skills (1 point)
- ✓ Evidenced potential to master objectives/skills (.75 point)
- ✓- Did not master objectives/skills (.5 point)
- Did not complete exercise (0 point)

News Stories

You are expected to write four news stories—Reader, VO, VO/SOT, and Package.

Guidelines for practice exercises, news briefs, and news stories will be provided during class and/or in separate course handouts. Assignment deadlines will be extended ONLY in cases of unavoidable situations substantiated with documentation. To make requests for extensions, contact me or leave a message with a contact number at 678.839.4933.

Academic Dishonesty

Academic dishonesty will NOT tolerated. It will result in failure on assignment(s) as well as possible disciplinary sanction(s) as stipulated by university rules. The State University of West Georgia Student Conduct Code defines academic dishonesty as cheating, fabrication, plagiarism, and facilitating or allowing academic dishonesty in any academic exercise. The Code defines cheating as using or attempting to use unauthorized materials, information or study aids; fabrication as falsification or unauthorized invention of any information or citation; and plagiarism as representing the words or ideas of another as one's own. Direct quotations must be indicated and ideas of another must be appropriately acknowledged.

Evaluation

Assignments will be weighted as follows.

Practice Exercises	15%	WTL
News Briefs	10%	WTL
Reader	15%	WTL/WTC
VO	15%	WTL/WTC
VO/SOT	20%	WTL/WTC
Package	25%	WTL/WTC

Assignments and final grades will be based on the following scale.

A	90 - higher
B	80 - 89
C	70 - 79
D	60 - 69
F	59 – lower

Remember, EACH unexcused absence, late arrival, and early leave lowers your final grade by .5 of a point.

Schedule

		Lecture	Reading*
Week	1 1/11 1/13	Syllabus Review Defining Broadcast News	ch 1
Week 2	1/18 1/20	Exercising News Judgment Enterprise Reporting	ch 2
Week 3	1/25 1/27	Gathering Data Proofing Stories for Libel & Ethical Issues	ch 5 ch 12
Week 4	2/1 2/3	Broadcast News Style Writing Leads	ch 4 ch 3
Week 5	2/8 2/10	Developing the Reader Reader Editorial Meetings Reader Due**	
Week 6	2/15 2/17	Rewrite Reader Developing the VO	ch 7
Week 7	2/22 2/24	VO Editorial Meetings TV Production Workshop	
Week 8	3/1 3/3	VO Field Work VO Due** Last day to withdraw with a grade of W	
Week 9	3/8 3/10	Rewrite VO View Edited VOs Developing the VO/SOT VO/SOT Editorial Meetings	ch 8
Week 10	3/15 3/17	VO/SOT Field Work VO/SOT Due**	
Week 11	3/22 3/24	No Class Spring Break Week!!!	
Week 12	3/29 3/31	Rewrite VO/SOT View Edited VO/SOTs Developing the Package Package Editorial Meetings	ch 9
Week 13	4/5 4/7	Package Editorial Meetings No Class – Media Day	
Week 14	4/12 4/14	Package Field Work Package Due**	
Week 15	4/19 4/21	Rewrite Package Group A Rewrite Package Group B	

Week 16 4/26 View Edited Packages
 4/28 Putting Together the Resume Tape
 & Writing Portfolio
 Last Day of Class

* Lecture notes may be provided in addition to text readings.

** A guest speaker may be in class on this date. You will be notified in advance if the class will be required to meet on this date.

The professor reserves the right to make modifications to this schedule.