

## **Syllabus**

### **COM 207-Broadcast News Writing**

Instructor: To be announced

Office Hours: To be announced

Office Telephone: To be announced

E-mail: To be announced

### **PREREQUISITES: ENG 103, COM 200, COM 201**

### **COURSE DESCRIPTION:**

This course is designed to teach students how to write news for radio or TV. It will also introduce students to online journalism and blogs. Students will learn how to write for the radio and how to use sound from interviews for radio and TV. The class will cover a range of topics from terminology to legal issues in broadcasting. It will focus on theories and practice of broadcast news gathering, writing and delivery.

### **COURSE OBJECTIVES:**

Upon completion of this course the learner will:

- identify the principles of clear broadcast news writing and proper broadcast style;
- practice proper broadcast writing skills;
- demonstrate the procedures a good reporter must follow during interviews and when researching and evaluating information;
- identify the legal rights reporters have as well as legal restraints on and ethical responsibilities of broadcast journalists;
- demonstrate an understanding of the resources available to broadcast journalist for gathering and disseminating information by effectively using them.
- employ computer skills in word processing, scripting, database use and web searches.

### **REQUIRED TEXT**

Tuggle, C.A., Carr, Forrest and Huffman, Suzanne. (2007). *Broadcast News Handbook: Writing, Reporting, and Producing in a Converging Media World* ( 3rd ed.). Boston: McGraw.

MacDonald, Ron. (1994). *A Broadcast News Manual of Style* (1994). White Plains, NY: Longman.

**Required Materials:** none

### **COURSE REQUIREMENTS:**

- Quizzes
- In-class writing assignments
- Lab participation

- Outside story assignments
- Mid-term and final exams

### •QUIZZES

There will be six quizzes in this course. The quizzes will be scheduled approximately every two weeks and will cover material presented in lectures, assigned readings, and current events. Quiz format is short answer and writing or editing. You will be asked to write short answers that show you thoroughly understand writing rules, broadcast terminology and CURRENT EVENTS. If you must miss a quiz let the professor know in advance, by phone, FAX or email. You will be given an opportunity to make up the quiz at the professor's convenience.

The final examination will be COMPREHENSIVE. Your quizzes will be an important review resource.

### •IN-CLASS WRITING ASSIGNMENTS

To help you learn broadcast writing rules and improve your writing, you will write news stories in class each week. The length of the stories will vary, depending on the assignment. You will be asked to do some writing based on analysis of facts presented in class as well as some editing and rewrites of stories, including information and video sound bites from interviews.

### •LAB PARTICIPATION

For the first seven weeks of the semester, you can earn points by coming to and participating in lab. Each week you can earn 25 points. An unexcused absence for any reason on either day of those weeks means you receive no points for lab.

### •OUTSIDE STORY ASSIGNMENTS

To help you learn practical application of the writing rules and theory presented in class and the video shooting and editing basics presented in the lab, in a deadline situation, you will shoot, edit, and write at least two "VO-SOTS" (also known as "VOB'S") during the semester.

You will also produce two "packages" (complete video stories, including your taped voice over, at least two sound bites, and video cover) near the end of the semester.

Your stories should be about events happening in Lincoln or of statewide interest. Your stories will be evaluated for proper structure, broadcast writing style, grammar, production and presentation, accuracy, and completeness (see evaluation section of syllabus). You are responsible for coming up with the ideas for your stories, although will be willing to discuss story ideas with you. Story ideas must be cleared with the individual instructors. The stories and lab participation are a major portion of your grade.

### PERCENTAGES

Lab participation

### FINAL

First seven weeks, 7 x 25

### MID-TERM

17.5%

<b><u>Outside Story Assign.</u></b>	2 VOB Stories x 50	10%
	2 TV NEWS Packages x 100	20%
<b><u>In-class Writing Assign.</u></b>	4 x 20 points	8%
<b><u>QUIZZES</u></b>	6 x 30 points	18%
<b><u>Midterm Exam</u></b>		11.5%
<b><u>Final Exam</u></b>		15%
<b><u>TOTAL</u></b>		100%

## **GRADING SCALE:**

Assignments and test scores will count toward a final score for the course in this way:  
A (100-97), A- (96-93), B+ (92-89), B (88-85), B- (84-81), C+ (80-77), C (76-73), C- (72-69),  
D+ (68-65), D (64-61), F (60 and under).

## **LATE WORK/MISSED QUIZZES AND EXAMS:**

Without a valid written excuse (see attendance policy), missed tests, quizzes, exams and in-class assignments may or may not be rescheduled depending on the particular situation. With a valid excuse, the quiz, exam, or assignment, or an equivalent assignment, will be given. Late papers, assignments, and take-home tests will be docked.

## **ETHICS**

We all have ethics, of one sort or another, and we will examine how your standards match accepted ethical standards for journalists, and develop your ethical thought processes regarding news media using reviews of other journalists work throughout the semester. We will also present case studies in the final segment of this course.

## **STANDARDS FOR REPORTING AND WRITING**

**Reporting:** You must adequately research your topic for each story using databases and interviews as the sources. You will gather far more information than you will include in your story in order to make sure you thoroughly understand the subject you are presenting to the audience. You must record the information you gather accurately to eliminate the possibility of factual errors in your story.

**Factual errors in a story (even one) mean a score of ZERO for that story** unless corrected on evaluation.

Interviewing effectively and researching the topic carefully should mean you get enough high quality information to present a balanced, accurate story to your audience.

You will attach sources of background information to each story proposal (required).

**Organization:** You must choose which pieces of information to present to your audience. The way you structure that presentation should help the audience understand the story. What will you tell the audience first? How will you lead the story? Your writing must follow a logical sequence as you develop the story. You will follow the prescribed format and broadcast rules when writing your stories.

**Writing:** You need to follow all of the conventional rules for sentence structure, grammar, punctuation and spelling as well as special rules for broadcast news writing. You will be learning the elements of broadcast style early in the semester and will be held responsible for using them in your stories.

**Production and Presentation:** Your use of actualities from interviews, natural sound and the general audio and video quality of your reports are important. Poor quality and improper editing can distract the audience from the message you are trying to present and it may hurt the accuracy of your reports. Your presentation of the story, when you videotape your reports, is important as well.

**Research:** Good reporters research their stories. You will, too. Use the databases available through the UCO library (we'll show you how), and printed sources. EbscoHost and NewsBank are two databases that contain newspaper and magazine articles as well as broadcast scripts. Find out what's been written on your topic by others as background and a source for questions. Do not use a Yahoo or Google search for your research. Search engines don't make a distinction between good information and bad, and there's a lot of junk on the Internet. You can look at them for their entertainment value.

**Evaluation:** Your stories will be evaluated according to how well you meet the criteria outlined under the headings of Reporting, Organization, Writing, Production, and Presentation. There are three levels of performance with a point range for each - excellent, good and poor.

EXCELLENT - Your story meets all the criteria

GOOD - Your story meets most of the criteria but is weak in one or two areas.

POOR. - Your story is weak in several areas.

### **Attendance Policy**

Lincoln University uses the class method of teaching, which assumes that each student has something to contribute and something to gain by attending class. It further assumes that there is much more instruction absorbed in the classroom than can be tested on examinations. Therefore, students are expected to attend all regularly scheduled class meetings and should exhibit good faith in this regard.

For control of absences, the faculty adopted the following regulations:

- Four absences may result in automatic failure in the course.
- Three tardy arrivals may be counted as one absence. The student is considered late if they arrive 5 minutes after the posted class time.
- Absences will be counted starting with the first day of class or the first day the student is registered for the class, but not later than the deadline for adding or dropping a class.
- In case of illness, death in the family, or other extenuating circumstances, the student must present documented evidence of inability to attend classes to the Vice President for Student Affairs and Enrollment Management. However, in

such cases the student is responsible for all the work missed during those absences.

- Departments offering courses with less than full-course credit will develop and submit to the Vice President for Student Affairs and Enrollment Management a class attendance policy in keeping with the above.
- Students representing the University in athletic events or other University sanctioned activities will be excused from class (es) with the responsibility of making up all work and examinations. The Registrar will issue the excused format to the faculty member in charge of the off-or on-campus activity for delivery by the student (s) to their instructors.

See “Class Attendance” under “General Academic Regulations” in the *Lincoln University (PA) Bulletin 2003-2006*, pp. 60-61. Also located on Lincoln’s website as an Adobe© PDF file.  
<http://www.lincoln.edu/registrar/catalog>

### **Statement on Academic Integrity: (Lincoln University Policy)**

Students are responsible for proper conduct and integrity in all of their scholastic (*and creative*) work. They must follow a professor’s instructions when completing tests, homework, (*projects*), and laboratory reports, and must ask for clarification if the instructions are not clear. In general, students should not give or receive aid when taking exams, or exceed the time limitations specified by the professor. In seeking the truth, in learning to think critically, and in preparing for a life of constructive service, honesty is imperative. Honesty in the classroom and in the preparation of papers is therefore expected of all students. Each student has the responsibility to submit work that is uniquely her or his own. All of this work must be done in accordance with established principles of academic integrity

Acts of Academic Dishonesty (cheating)

Specific violations of this responsibility include, but are not limited to, the following:

- a. Copying, offering and/or receiving unauthorized assistance or information in examinations, tests, quizzes; in the writing of reports, assigned papers, or special assignments, as in computer programming; and in the preparation of creative works (i.e., music, studio work, art).
- b. The fabrication or falsification of data, results, or sources for papers or reports.
- c. The use of unauthorized materials and/or persons during testing.
- d. The unauthorized possession of tests or examination.
- e. The physical theft, duplication, unauthorized distribution, use or sale of tests, examinations, papers, or computer programs.
- f. Any action which destroys or alters the work of another student.
- g. Tampering with grades, grade books or otherwise attempting to alter grades assigned by the instructor.

h. The multiple submission of the same paper or report for assignments in more than one course without the prior written permission of each instructor.

## 2. Plagiarism

If a student represents "another person's ideas or scholarship as his/her own," that student is committing an act of plagiarism. The most common form of plagiarism among college students is the unintentional use of others' published ideas in their own work, and representing these ideas as their own by neglecting to acknowledge the sources of such materials. Students are expected to cite all sources used in the preparation of written work, including examinations.

It is each student's responsibility to find out exactly what each of his/her professor's expects in terms of acknowledging sources of information on papers, exams, and assignments. It is the responsibility of each faculty person to state clearly in the syllabus for the course all expectations pertaining to academic integrity and plagiarism. Sanctions peculiar to the course should also be explained in the syllabus.

## 3. Sanctions

A. Warning: A written notice that repetitions of misconduct will result in more severe disciplinary action. The warning becomes part of the student's file in the Office of the Registrar, and, there is no other example of misconduct, is removed at the time of graduation.

B. Failure for project (exam, paper, examination).

C. Failure of course. For serious and repeat offenses, the University reserves the right to suspend or expel.

Imposition of Sanctions: First Offense -- A and/or B

Second and Subsequent Offenses -- B or C

Expectations and sanctions will be explained in every syllabus. Students failing a course because of an instance of academic dishonesty may not drop the course. The student may appeal a charge of academic dishonesty within ten days of receiving notice of same. An Academic Hearing Board (AHB) consisting of the chairs of each division of study (or their designees) will hear the appeal. Files on violations of this academic integrity code will be kept in the Office of the Registrar.

See "Academic Organization, Curriculum, and Regulations"/ "Academic Integrity" in the *Lincoln University (PA) Bulletin 2003-2006*, pp. 55-56. Also located on Lincoln's website as an Adobe© PDF file. <http://www.lincoln.edu/registrar/catalog/>

### **COURSE Schedule:**

Week 1 – Course Introduction – Writing (Introduction, Chap. 1)

Week 2 – Broadcast News Writing Style – "The Rules" and Story Selection (Ch 2.)

Week 3 – Broadcast News Writing Style- Leads & Tips (Ch. 3)  
Appendix A – Word Usage & Grammar (A – H)

Week 4 – Broadcast News Writing Style – Copy Sins (Ch.. 4)  
Appendix A – Word Usage & Grammar (I – Z)

Week 5 – Interviewing (Ch. 5)

Week 6 – Wire Services and Weather Coverage (Ch. 6)

Week 7 – Court Coverage/Microphones and Cameras in Court (Ch. 7)

Week 8 – Microphones and Cameras in Court (cont'd) **Midterm Exam**

Week 9 – Legal Issues, Privacy (Appendix B) (Ch. 8)

Week 10 – Legal Issues, Privacy (cont'd) and Libel (Appendix B) (Ch. 9)

Week 11 – Legal Issues, Libel (Appendix B) (Ch. 10)

Week 12 – Legal Issues, Freedom of Information (Ch. 11)

Week 13 – Open Meetings and Open Records (Ch. 12)

Week 14 – Open Meetings and Open Records (cont'd)

Week 15 – Privacy Laws and Campus Reporting (Ch. 13)

Week 16-**Final Exam**