Communication 3353– Broadcast Journalism Fall 2015

INSTRUCTOR: JOHN BUTLER
TELEPHONE: 713-479-2940 (FOX) 281-224-4121 (CELL)
E-MAIL: butlerj@stthom.edu

COURSE OBJECTIVES
This course will teach the basics of broadcast news style writing. You will learn how to write in a journalistic style, mainly for TV and new media, but the skills will apply to radio news writing as well.

ATTENDANCE
You are expected to be in class and on time every week. You cannot be late on a story and you should not be late to class. There will be quizzes and viewings at the beginning of class and students who miss them will be unable to complete those assignments. Writing assignments are timed and can only be completed in class. Because many videos will be viewed and written in class, make-up assignments for the in-class work will not be possible. Bottom line: if you miss too many classes, you won’t pass this course.

TEXTBOOK:
There is no required text for this class

GRADING CRITERIA:
This is primarily a writing class, and as such, most of your grades will come from written assignments. There are 2 classes of writing assignments in class (1) Take home assignments designed to check your progress (these are the equivalent of quizzes), and (2) major in-class writing assignments (these are the equivalent of tests). All assignments will be judged first on their accuracy. Then they will be evaluated for grammar, style, production, and creativity. Grades will also be derived from homework assignments and quizzes.

• QUizzes
  We will begin each class with a quiz, usually 5 questions. If you are not on time for the start of class, you miss the quiz and there are no make-ups. The quiz will focus on current major local, national and international stories, and people making news (nothing obscure). If you have been watching, listening, reading, and keeping up on your assignments, you should do fine.

• Take Home Assignments
  Homework assignments are DUE on the class day listed. With approval, students may rewrite assignments that received a “D” or “F.” The recorded grade on the rewritten assignments will be the average between the new and old grades. (An “F” on the original and an “A” on the rewrite would be a “C”.) I will return your graded assignments on a timely basis with comments and suggested corrections. If you don’t understand a comment or correction, or you disagree, please come and talk to me.

• In-Class Assignments
  Deadlines are an everyday part of journalism. As such, all in-class writing assignments will be timed. You will also be expected to work in the correct broadcast format for the medium on all assignments. Correct formats will be discussed in class.
  If you are concerned about your grade at any point in the semester, please contact me to arrange a time to discuss it, usually before or after class since I don’t have regular office hours on campus. Please do not be discouraged if your writing receives low grades at the beginning of the semester, your grades will likely improve as the class progresses. News writing is an acquired skill and the only way to get better is to keep writing.
Grades and grade point averages are assigned as follows:

“A” stories are accurate, clear, comprehensive stories that are well-written and require only minor editing (i.e., “ready for air.”)

“B” stories require more than minor editing, and have a few style or minor spelling errors or an error of omission. “C” stories are stories that need considerable editing or rewriting and/or have many minor spelling and style errors. “D” stories require excessive rewriting; have numerous minor spelling and style errors, and should not have been submitted. “F” stories have at least one proper name misspelled, and/or one factual error. A misspelled name would be an example. A wrong intersection in a traffic story would be another.

The following are some circumstances that would warrant an F:

– Plagiarizing a script, portions of a script or information from any source

(i.e., wire copy, feed packages, another student’s story script).

– Making one or more serious factual errors in the script, including

(but not limited to) inaccurate names of significant people or locations, faulty descriptions of events that occurred, or misquoting people.

Here is a breakdown of your final grade:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In-Class writing assignments</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Current events quizzes</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Take home assignments/Homework</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**DISABILITY SERVICES FOR STUDENTS**

Students requiring special accommodations must follow the university procedures as outlined in the UST catalog excerpted below:

If a student has a documented disability, reasonable and appropriate academic accommodations for students who qualify under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 are available to ensure equal access to programs and opportunities at the University. Disabilities may be defined by the following:

• learning disabilities
• health impairments
• physical limitations
• psychiatric disabilities

Students should set an appointment with professional staff at C&DS to review the nature and history of the disability as well as present concerns related to the learning environment. The procedure for Disability Services is as follows:

1. If a student believes he/she may qualify for reasonable accommodations due to an impairment that creates a disability, the student will be asked to supply current diagnostic documentation of the disability and the students needs. Appropriate documentation identifies the disability and indicates how it substantially impairs current major life activities (e.g., learning, working, walking, seeing, hearing, etc.) as related to the academic environment. For students who have not had a previous professional evaluation or documentation, referrals may be provided.

2. To receive accommodations, the Committee for Academic Accommodation reviews the students request. The Committee will review the documentation and make recommendations appropriate to the students needs with in the learning environment.

3. When the student authorizes release of information regarding the disability, the Committees recommendations will be made available for students to distribute to their instructors and academic advisor. If testing accommodations
are granted, C&DS will notify the office of Career Services and Testing. The student must renew this authorization through C&DS early each semester to ensure continuation of academic accommodations.

The University abides by Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and other federal mandates that stipulate qualified students with disabilities receive appropriate accommodations in order to obtain equal access to programs and opportunities at the University.

**TENTATIVE CLASS SCHEDULE:**

**WEEK 1:** Introduction, review syllabus, basic differences between print and broadcast style, convergence.

**WEEK 2:** Basic Rules for Broadcast Writing, News Quiz – **be prepared this week**. Fundamentals of journalistic writing: Who, What, When, Where, Why, How), What makes a good story, How to approach a story, TV news script format and abbreviations.

**Homework Assignment:**
Watch a local TV news broadcast (Channels 2, 11, 13, or 26) Find a single story in the newspaper the next day or off the web (from a reputable news agency, e.g. AP, Reuters, etc.) Write a single page (in regular essay style) comparing the coverage of that story with how TV news covered the same story. The essay content should answer the following questions: Which do you think did a better job? Why? How were they different? Which gave you a better sense and understanding of the story? Which seemed more factual? Which kept your interest?

**WEEK 4:** **Homework Assignment Due,** Adding the Visual, Writing in the active voice, Writing to graphics and video, Writing a voice-over (VO) story

**WEEK 5:** Writing Leads, More VO, Writing to video

**Homework Assignment:**
Watch a regular national network newscast (CBS Evening News, NBC Nightly News, ABC World News Tonight). Then watch a local news broadcast (Channels 2, 11, 13, or 26). Do a one-page summary comparing the two. Don’t just list the stories each covered but tell me how the newscasts differed in style, substance, format, graphics, story count, and story length.

**WEEK 6:** **Homework Assignment Due,** More Writing to Video, Adding Sound, TV Story Form (VO/SOT)

**WEEK 7:** More Sound

**WEEK 8:** Fire and Disaster Stories

**WEEK 9:** Midterm writing Test
:30 VO from raw tape with tape log
:45 VO-SOT from raw tape with tape log

**WEEK 10:** - Speeches, Meeting, and News Conferences

**WEEK 11:** Writing Packages, View and critique packages (What works, what doesn’t), In-class assignment: View raw tape and write package

**WEEK 12:** Updates and Breaking News

**WEEK 13:** Crimes and Courts, Rules of coverage, Libel and Slander

**WEEK 14:** The Whole Newscast/Why newscasts at different times and on different channels are different.