

# **News Writing, Editing and Performance for the Web**

## **Course Description**

This course introduces students to the fundamentals of writing, editing and anchoring online newscasts. Students will learn to write factually correct, objective, concise news stories that offer both timely information and context. They will develop sound news judgment and strong newsgathering skills. They will learn to gather video elements for their newscasts and edit the newscasts appropriately to post online. And they will learn appropriate anchoring skills and understand the importance of professional and credible on-air performance. The course is comprised of class lecture/exercises and newsroom lab work that will include writing, editing and anchoring of webcasts.

**Prerequisite:** JOU 3101- Reporting

## **Course Objective**

To give students the skills to originate, research and write clear, compelling, and timely news stories in a deadline environment. To give students the skills to edit all video elements for their newscast and prepare the newscast for posting online. And to give students the skills to deliver these stories in a professional, credible manner to an online audience.

## **Learning Objectives**

- To investigate journalistic principles such as integrity, fairness, and balance
- To investigate ethical challenges and develop ethical standards
- To develop strong news judgment skills
- To learn to gather information and conduct research for news stories
- To learn to evaluate credibility of sources and potential conflicts of interest
- To write strong news leads and concise, accurate stories on deadline
- To develop strong on-set performance skills
- To develop video editing skills for online newscasts

**Required text**

None required – students will be assigned readings relevant to course objectives

**Week 1: Editing Video**

You'll learn the basics of editing your online newscast.

**Week 2: More Video Editing Fundamentals**

You'll learn more editing basics and how to gather video elements for your newscast.

**Week 3: Writing on Deadline – How to Successfully Produce Daily Turn News**

You will learn how to write more quickly and accurately in order to survive daily deadlines.

**Week 4: Appearance**

How to look good and perform well on air

**Week 5: Writing Strong Leads**

You'll learn to keep it clear, concise and compelling without the hype or bad writing. We're going to remove your cheese.

**Week 6: Developing Editorial Skills and Good News Judgment**

How do you determine what is newsworthy? And how does your perception of your audience affect your editorial decisions?

**Week 7: Objectivity and Fairness – Overcoming the Challenges**

We'll examine the concepts of objectivity and equal weight. They're not the same thing. And we'll consider what that means for today's journalists. We'll also examine the effect of the journalist's history/experiences on his/her ability to be objective.

### **Week 8: Attribution, Allegedly, and Staying Out of Legal Trouble**

You'll learn when attribution is needed, why allegedly is always wrong and how to protect yourself from libel lawsuits. We'll also look at the use of quotes vs. paraphrasing in online/broadcast news.

### **Week 9: Garbage In, Garbage Out. Be Better than the News Feeds.**

Just because it came from another news organization doesn't mean it's accurate, fair, or clear. And even the best in the business get it wrong or write it poorly. You'll learn to be better than the rest of the crowd.

And **lose the copspeak** – tell the story to your mom. We'll examine the jargon and official-ese that can kill your copy. You'll learn how to write conversationally.

### **Week 10: Kill Your Bad Copy – What to Never Say in Your Script**

You'll learn to develop great writing habits that will make your copy clear, concise, compelling and cliché-free.

### **Week 11: Being First vs. Being Right – You Can't Always Be Both – And Who Cares Anyway?**

We'll take a look at the race for first and how it affects editorial decisions, content and context. We'll also consider the importance of being first. And we'll examine how the drive to be first affects reporting pools all the way up the White House, plus the Affordable Care Act debacle, the ABC News Holmes/Tea Party mistake and Edward Champion's Tea Party tweets and the role of process journalism.

White House Press Pool Losing Scoops to Twitter:

<http://dyn.politico.com/printstory.cfm?uuid=CAD15E96-1BE7-407D-886B-31C0B77DF342>

Poynter: Details about Colorado shooter too important to tweet incrementally

<http://www.poynter.org/latest-news/top-stories/181977/details-about-colorado-shooter-too-important-to-tweet-incrementally/>

The Wall Street Journal: Rush to report US health ruling trips up CNN, FOX.

<http://online.wsj.com/article/AP7fb98cdd01154a4d844b1bfc5d3270cd.html>

Baltimore Sun: ABC's Brian Ross and a press that disregards reputations of those it covers

[http://articles.baltimoresun.com/2012-07-21/entertainment/bal-brian-ross-james-holmes-abc-news-20120721\\_1\\_abc-news-ross-and-abc-tea-party](http://articles.baltimoresun.com/2012-07-21/entertainment/bal-brian-ross-james-holmes-abc-news-20120721_1_abc-news-ross-and-abc-tea-party)

**Week 12: Let's look at how you're doing:**

We'll take a look at your on-camera work, your editorial decisions and see how this compares to the beginning of the semester. Is there still room to improve?

**Week 13:**