

COMM 256 BROADCAST NEWS

Fall 2020

Synchronous course, T/Th, 11:30-12:45

Zoom Meeting ID: 910 6006 7060

Professor Sarah Dallof

Office Hours: Tuesdays 12:45-1:30, Thursdays 11:00-11:30
or by appointment

Email: sdallof@luc.edu

• COURSE GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

“Writing well means never having to say, ‘I guess you had to be there.’ ”

Hans Hofmann

In an age where viewers are inundated with information, it's critical to deliver quality, concise and accurate broadcast news. We do so under tight deadlines, mixing carefully chosen words with strong images for maximum storytelling impact. During this course, you'll learn the foundation of broadcast news media, the techniques and nuances of broadcast news writing and how the industry has pivoted to safely cover a global health emergency.

We'll focus the first part of the semester on broadcast writing and fundamentals and writing for radio. The second part will introduce adding visual aspects for writing for television. We will also include some exposure to on-line presentations. You will learn script formatting for radio and TV, standard terms used in news production, how to produce a newscast, and a very basic introduction to the studio. You will be encouraged to develop a critical eye and ear as you watch

and listen to newscasts: What was done well? What could be done better? Just because you hear a professional do it does not mean that's the best way! Becoming a critical listener/viewer will help you improve your own writing.

This course will also lay the foundation for more advanced courses in the broadcast curriculum, including COMM 358 Newscasting and Producing (the course where you'll produce and deliver newscasts).

• **WHAT YOU'LL NEED**

Suggested Text: Broadcast News Handbook: Writing, Reporting & Producing in the Age of Social Media (5th edition), by C.A. Tuggle, Forrest Carr and Suzanne Huffman (McGraw-Hill, 2014).

Computer/smartphone capable of connecting to Zoom: This semester, class will be virtual. Please contact the Dean of Students or me if at any point in the semester you need assistance accessing a device or Internet connection.

Audio equipment: To record your writing and for some radio lessons, you will need access to an audio recording device. The university has some of these devices available for checkout, or you may use your own. A smartphone or laptop is perfectly acceptable.

Supplemental Materials: Expect a number of emailed handouts to supplement the reading material. You may wish to use a folder or notebook to keep the handouts together. Some, such as the broadcast style handout, you will need as an ongoing reference.

Newscasts: You will be expected to listen to radio newscasts or podcasts and watch TV newscasts to see how the techniques covered in class are manifest in the “real

world” of broadcast news. Also, read credible online news sources. All of these will help you keep up on current events and follow ongoing stories. Knowledge of current events will greatly enhance your success in class, as well as help you develop habits and interests you will need for professional success in a journalism career.

• **GRADING**

Grades will be weighted as follows:

Writing Assignments 40%

In-class and Other Assignments 25%

Mid-Term 15%

Final Project 20%

Writing Assignments (40%)

A substantial portion of your grade will be based on writing assignments that you will work on outside of class. You will do well if you learn the ABC’s of broadcast writing:

A – Accuracy B – Brevity C – Clarity (also compelling and creative)

It will be crucial to check your work for facts, and to use broadcast writing conventions. Automatic deductions will be taken for fact errors and broadcast style errors.

In-class grades and other assignments (25%)

- Expect regular short in-class writing assignments to help you practice key concepts and writing on deadline while having the opportunity for immediate help and feedback. These assignments will be graded and cannot be made up, so being in class is especially important. (Note: At the end of the semester, we will drop the lowest in-class writing grade. If you miss a

class day with in-class writing that will be the one dropped.)

- Other assignments will cover key concepts. Also expect occasional unannounced quizzes on current events and/or other class topics.
- Your in-class grade also includes virtual attendance and punctuality (see separate section below).
- News reflections: To help you relate the material in class to real life broadcasts, you'll listen or watch different news sources of your choice. Afterwards, write a short reflection (4-5 sentences) on what you got out of the report/s and any questions or comments you may have about the material's content or format, paying special attention to whatever aspects of news writing we covered in class that week. Options include: local or national newscasts and radiocasts, podcasts produced by or done in partnership with reputable news organizations, social media stories (including Instastories and Snapchats) by reputable news organizations. You cannot repeat the same news organization and format (for example, if you write a reflection on NBC Nightly News one week, you couldn't select it for the next reflection. You could select the network's morning broadcast, the TODAY Show, or other network evening broadcasts including ABC World News Tonight and CBS Evening News). While each reflection is worth only 5 points, cumulatively they will impact your grade. Total listening/watching time must be at least 15 minutes. Submit via Sakai.

Midterm Exam (15%)

Your mid-term exam will consist of a take-home portion and an in-class assignment, to allow you to demonstrate the

skills you acquire in the first half of the semester, focused on basic broadcast concepts and radio writing. The in-class mid-term is scheduled for **Tuesday Oct 6**.

Final (20%)

In lieu of a final exam, you will turn in a final project that will consist of TV and multi-media elements. It will be due **Tuesday, Dec 8 by 11:55 PM**. You may turn it in early if you wish. Class will not meet during the final exam time.

Deadlines

Deadlines are of the utmost importance in broadcasting. Newscasts and radiocasts begin on schedule, not when you're ready. Late assignments will receive a grade reduction of 10% per class day late.

Attendance and the Importance of Being Here

Part of your virtual in-class grade will be based on attendance, punctuality and class participation. Some graded assignments will be in-class only and cannot be made up. Absences will be excused in the event of a genuine emergency or illness, but please notify me *prior* to class if at all possible.

At Loyola, we respect that you may miss class due to religious observances. In these circumstances, please notify me ahead of time that you will be gone.

Grading scale

Assignments will be graded on a point system. At the end of the semester, the cumulative points will be converted into a letter grade based on the following scale:

A 94-100%; A- 90-93%; B+ 87-89%; B 84-86%; B- 80-83%; C+ 77-79%; C 74-76%; C- 70-73%; D+ 67-69%; D 64-66%

Loyola does not recognize a grade of D-, so a grade below 64% is failing.

• **Rules and Responsibilities**

Academic Dishonesty

A basic mission of a university is to search for and to communicate truth as it is honestly perceived. A genuine learning community cannot exist unless this demanding standard is a fundamental tenet of the intellectual life of the community. Students of Loyola University Chicago are expected to know, to respect, and to practice this standard of personal honesty.

Academic dishonesty can take several forms, including, but not limited to cheating, plagiarism, copying another student's work, and submitting false documents. These examples of academic dishonesty apply to both individual and group assignments.

Academic cheating is a serious act that violates academic integrity. Cheating includes, but is not limited to, such acts as:

- Obtaining, distributing, or communicating examination materials prior to the scheduled examination without the consent of the teacher;
- Providing information to another student during an examination;
- Obtaining information from another student or any other person during an examination;
- Using any material or equipment during an examination without consent of the instructor, or in a manner which is not authorized by the instructor;

- Attempting to change answers after the examination has been submitted;
- Taking an examination by proxy. Taking or attempting to take an exam for someone else is a violation by both the student enrolled in the course and the proxy.
- Unauthorized collaboration, or the use in whole or part of another student's work, on homework, lab reports, programming assignments, and any other course work which is completed outside of the classroom;
- Falsifying medical or other documents to petition for excused absences or extensions of deadlines; or
- Any other action that, by omission or commission, compromises the integrity of the academic evaluation process.

Plagiarism is a serious violation of the standards of academic honesty. Plagiarism is the appropriation of ideas, language, work, or intellectual property of another, either by intent or by negligence, without sufficient public acknowledgement and appropriate citation that the material is not one's own. It is true that every thought probably has been influenced to some degree by the thoughts and actions of others. Such influences can be thought of as affecting the ways we see things and express all thoughts. Plagiarism, however, involves the taking and use of specific words and ideas of others without proper acknowledgement of the sources, and includes, but is not limited to, the following:

- Submitting as one's own material copied from a published source, such as Internet, print, CD-ROM, audio, video, etc.;

- Submitting as one's own another person's unpublished work or examination material;
- Allowing another or paying another to write or research a paper for one's own benefit; or
- Purchasing, acquiring, and using for course credit a pre-written paper.
- Submitting the same work for credit in two or more classes, even if the classes are taken in different semesters. If a student plans to submit work with similar or overlapping content for credit in two or more classes, the student should consult with all instructors prior to submission of the work to make certain that such submission will not violate this standard.

The above list is in no way intended to be exhaustive. Students should be guided by the principle that it is of utmost importance to give proper recognition to all sources. To do so is both an act of personal, professional courtesy and of intellectual honesty. Any failure to do so, whether by intent or by neglect, whether by omission or commission, is an act of plagiarism. A more detailed description of this issue can be found at

https://www.luc.edu/academics/catalog/undergrad/reg_academicintegrity.shtml

Plagiarism or any other act of academic dishonesty will result minimally in the instructor's assigning the grade of "F" for the assignment or examination. The instructor may impose a more severe sanction, including a grade of "F" in the course. All instances of academic dishonesty must be reported by the instructor to the Associate and Assistant Deans of the School of Communication. Instructors must provide the appropriate information and documentation when

they suspect an instance of academic misconduct has occurred. The instructor must also notify the student of their findings and sanction.

The Associate and Assistant Deans of the School of Communication may constitute a hearing board to consider the imposition of sanctions in addition to those imposed by the instructor, including a recommendation of expulsion, depending on the seriousness of the misconduct. In the case of multiple instances of academic dishonesty, the Dean's office may convene a separate hearing board to review these instances. The student has the right to appeal the decision of the hearing board to the Dean of SOC. If the student is not a member of the SOC, the dean of the college in which the student is enrolled shall be part of the process. Students have the right to appeal the decision of any hearing board and the deans of the two schools will review the appeal together. Their decision is final in all cases except expulsion. The sanction of expulsion for academic dishonesty may be imposed only by the Provost upon recommendation of the dean or deans.

Students have a right to appeal any finding of academic dishonesty against them. The procedure for such an appeal can be found at:

http://www.luc.edu/academics/catalog/undergrad/reg_academicgrievance.shtml .

The School of Communication maintains a permanent record of all instances of academic dishonesty. The information in that record is confidential. However, students may be asked to sign a waiver which releases that student's record of dishonesty as a part of the student's application to a graduate or professional school, to a potential employer, to a bar association, or to similar organizations.

Specifically for this class:

You will be rewriting stories from professional journalism sources. The source material will provide basic facts and information on stories, but it is **vital and expected** that you use your own words and do not copy the wording from the original source. (We will go over attribution and the use of quotes as part of the writing instruction.)

You can find Loyola's policies regarding academic integrity at:

http://www.luc.edu/academics/catalog/undergrad/reg_academicintegrity.shtml.

Students with Learning Disabilities

Any student with a learning disability that needs special accommodation during exams or class periods should provide documentation from the Student Accessibility Center confidentially to the instructor. The instructor will accommodate that student's needs in the best way possible, given the constraints of course content and processes. It is the student's responsibility to plan in advance in order to meet their own needs and assignment due dates.

Additional information about the services available at Loyola, including eligibility for services, is on the SAC website:www.luc.edu/sac/

Managing Life Crises and Finding Support

Should you encounter an unexpected crisis during the semester (e.g., securing food or housing, addressing mental health concerns, managing a financial crisis, and/or dealing with a family emergency, etc.), I strongly encourage you to contact the Office of the Dean of Students by submitting a CARE referral (LUC.edu/csaa) for yourself or a peer in need

of support. If you are uncomfortable doing so on your own, please know that I can submit a referral on your behalf – just email me or schedule a meeting with me during office hours. To learn more about the Office of the Dean of Students, please find their websites here: LUC.edu/dos or LUC.edu/csaa.

Classroom Conduct

Please turn on Zoom video during lessons and lectures.

- **Electronic Communication & Information**

Sakai

Course information and assignments will be available on Sakai, and assignments will be submitted electronically. Please notify me if you have any problems using the class Sakai site.

Email

I will answer email within 24 hours on weekdays, but will not always access email on weekends. You may not receive a response to a late Friday email until Monday.

- **ABOUT YOUR INSTRUCTOR**

This is my third year at Loyola. I have 17 years experience in television news, the most recent seven at the network level as a correspondent for NBC News. My resume features an extensive mix of breaking news including hurricanes, mass casualty events, election cycles and public health emergencies. I've reported throughout the U.S. as well as in Canada and Asia. My work has earned multiple honors from the Society of Professional Journalists. In addition, I have experience in radio, photography and editing.

Class Schedule*

Note: Some additional assignment due dates may be added throughout the semester.

Tues, Aug 25: Introduction – Broadcast news versus other journalistic writing

Thurs, Aug 27: Broadcast writing and style

News reflection #1 due Friday, Aug 28 by midnight

Tues, Sept 1: The art of the lead

Thurs, Sept 3: Different sources of news & selecting stories; writing tight ***Due: First writing assignment and recording of first writing assignment***

Tues, Sept 8: Radio story types and formats. Extra writing help as needed, solo sessions available.

Thurs, Sept 10: Other writing styles; writing issues and word precision ***Due: Second writing assignment, Writing Tight (with recording)***

Tues, Sept 15: Broadcast interviewing, gathering sound during a public health emergency ***Due: Radio listening log***

Thursday, Sept 17: Choosing and incorporating sound; writing into & out of bites ***Due: Third writing assignment, narrative writing***

News reflection due Friday, Sept 18 by midnight

Tuesday, Sept 22: Digital audio editing part I: putting radio stories together

Thursday, Sept 24: Digital audio editing pt II: using sound

Tuesday, Sept 29: Radio newsgathering on deadline – field practice in class ***Assignment due end of class***

Thursday, Oct 1: Mid-Term Review & Prep. Extra writing help as needed, solo sessions available. ***Due: Interview assignment & actuality stories***

Tuesday, Oct 6: Mid-Term in Class

Thursday, Oct 8: Broadcast laws and ethics ***Interview assignment & actuality stories***

Tuesday, Oct 13: TV story forms and incorporating the visual element

Thursday, Oct 15: Incorporating sound for TV; writing & scripting VO/SOTs

News reflection due Friday, Oct 16 by midnight

Tuesday, Oct 20: Mock newscast pt I: story selection, stacking and writing ***Due: VO writing assignment***

Thursday, Oct 22: Mock newscast pt II: presenting and feedback ***Due: VOSOT writing assignment***

Tuesday, Oct 27: TV newsgathering on deadline

Tuesday Oct 29: Writing to graphics

Tuesday, Nov 10: TV newsgathering on deadline

Thursday, Nov 5: Packaging for TV ***Due: Election night graphics reflection***

Tuesday, Nov 10: Packaging for TV II, writing leads and tags

Thursday, Nov 12: Packaging III, standups and live shots

Tuesday, Nov 17: Breaking news

Thursday, Nov 19: Perfecting your writing (writing help as needed) ***Due: Package writing assignment***

Tuesday:, Nov 24: Thanksgiving break, no class

Thursday, Nov 26: Thanksgiving break, no class

Tuesday, Dec 1: Broadcast & other media jobs; review of final project requirements

Thursday, Dec 3: Work day, writing help as needed

Tues, Dec 8: Final Projects due by 11:59 PM. (turn in only; class will not meet)

* We will try to stick to this schedule, but there may be changes if circumstances dictate or special opportunities arise.