

# COMM 256-20W BROADCAST NEWS

Spring 2019

Tuesdays and Thursdays, 11:30-12:45 PM

School of Communication, Room 100

Professor Sarah Dallof

Office: Lewis Towers, Ste 900

Office Hours: Tuesdays 1-2:00 PM Thursdays 10:45-11:15 AM

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## ➤ 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 and the techniques and nuances of broadcast news writing. 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 we produce and deliver newscasts).

## ➤ **WHAT YOU'LL NEED**

**Required 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).

**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. (Note: The device you use needs to have output capability, so you can download files for editing.)

## **Supplemental Materials**

Expect a number of 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. In case 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 attendance and punctuality (see separate section below). **Reading reflections** Reading assignments have been carefully chosen to coincide with the topic covered in class on a particular day. To get the most out of the synergy between the readings and class, you should complete the assigned reading before class time. To help you synthesize the

material, you will be asked to write short reflections on each reading. For each chapter or part of a chapter assigned, write a short reflection (4-5 sentences) on what you got out of the reading and any questions or comments you have about the material. These may be submitted via Sakai or in hard copy (typed). Though each reflection is worth only 5 points, cumulatively they are worth 75 points. (Note: On days with double reflections be sure to write a separate reflection for each chapter or section assigned.)

While you should complete the readings before class, reflections for that week will be due by 5 p.m. Friday. They will not be accepted later than that.

### **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, March 12**.

### **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 April 30 by 11:59 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 in-class grade will be based on attendance, punctuality and class participation. Being in class and being on time are vital. 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**

Loyola University and the School of Communication expect academic integrity and have policies regarding academic dishonesty. Specifically for the SOC: **1.** Academic dishonesty of any kind will not be tolerated. Plagiarism in your work will result in a minimum of a failing grade for that assignment. The case may carry further sanctions from the School of Communication or the University, the most serious being permanent expulsion. Avoid turning in work that could be interpreted as plagiarism or academically dishonest (e.g., failing to properly credit a source or using someone else's ideas without clarifying that they are not yours). This is an academic community; being uninformed or naïve is not an acceptable excuse for not properly

referencing sources.

## **2. It is dishonest to:**

➤ Turn in the same work for two classes; ➤ Turn in a paper you have not written yourself; or ➤ Copy from another student or use a “cheat sheet” during an exam.

### ***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\\_academic\\_integrity.shtml](http://www.luc.edu/academics/catalog/undergrad/reg_academic_integrity.shtml).

## **Special Needs**

If you have a special circumstance that may impact your course work and for which you may require accommodations, please contact me early in the semester so arrangements can be made with the Student Accessibility Center (formerly SSWD). We will accommodate your needs in the best way possible, given the constraints of course content and processes. Loyola’s policy is that 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 SACD website: <https://luc.edu/sac/>.

## **Classroom Conduct**

Electronic devices are increasingly ubiquitous, and are often

quite distracting. Please turn off cell phones and other electronic devices before class begins. If you use a laptop computer to take notes in class, you will be required to send Professor Dallof copy of the notes at the end of class. Do not use your computer for any activity not directly related to the class.

## ➤ **Electronic Communication & Information**

### **Sakai**

Course information and assignments will be available on Sakai, and some assignments (though not writing assignments) can 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 second semester at Loyola, after moving to Chicago from Atlanta, GA. I have 15 years experience in television news, the most recent five 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: Reading assignments are to be completed before the start of class on the assigned day. Also note: Some additional assignment due dates may be added throughout the semester.*

**Tues, Jan 15:** Introduction – Broadcast news versus other journalistic writing

**Thurs, Jan 17:** Broadcast writing and style. The art of the lead  
*Reading:* Tuggle Foreword, Preface & Ch. 1

**Tues, Jan 22:** Guest speaker, Prof John Goheen

**Thurs, Jan. 25:** First writing assignment work day  
*Reading:* Tuggle Ch. 3 (to p. 38; save Beyond the Lead section for later)

***Due by end of day: First writing assignment and recording of assignment***

**Tues, Jan 29:** Different sources of news & selecting stories; writing tight  
*Reading:* Tuggle Ch. 2

**Thurs, Jan 31:** Radio story types and formats  
*Reading:* Tuggle Ch. 6

**Tues, Feb 5:** Other writing styles; writing issues and word precision  
*Reading:* Tuggle Ch. 3 pp. 38-50, Ch. 4; skim Appendix A (*reflections on both chapters*)

***Due: Second writing assignment, Writing Tight (with recording)***

**Thurs, Feb 7:** Broadcast Interviewing  
*Reading:* Tuggle Ch. 5  
***Due: Radio listening log***

**Tues, Feb 12:** Choosing and incorporating sound; writing into & out of bites

***Due: Narrative writing assignment (with recording)***

**Thurs, Feb 14:** Digital audio editing

**Tues Feb 19:** Digital editing II: putting radio stories together

**Thurs, Feb 21:** Radio newsgathering on deadline – field practice in class

***Assignment due end of class***

**Tues, Feb 26:** Producing Radio News

***Due: Interview assignment & actuality stories***

**Thurs, Feb 28:** Producing Radio News II; Mid-Term Review & Prep (*Recommended reading: Appendix C; no reflection due*)

**Tues March 4:** Spring break

**Thurs, March 7:** Spring break \_\_

**Tues, March 12:** Mid-Term in Class (*Take-home section due beginning of class*)

**Thurs, March 14:** Broadcast Law & Ethics

*Reading: Tuggle Ch. 13 & Appendix B (note: reflections on both)*

**Tues, March 19:** TV story forms and incorporating the visual element

*Reading: Tuggle Ch. 7 (save pp. 116-top of 122 on graphics for later)*

**Thurs, March 21:** Incorporating sound for TV; writing & scripting VO/SOTs

*Reading:* Tuggle Ch. 8

**Tues, March 26** Work day, VO, VO/SOT Writing Assignment

**Thurs, March 28:** Writing to graphics

*Reading:* Tuggle Ch. 7 pp. 116-122

***Due: VO writing assignment***

**Tues, April 2:** Media convergence and social media in news

*Reading:* Tuggle Ch. 14, skim Ch. 15 (*double reflection*)

**Due: VO/SOT writing assignment**

**Thurs, April 4:** TV newsgathering on deadline – field practice during class

**Tues, April 9:** Packaging for TV *Reading:* Tuggle Ch. 9

**Thurs, April 11:** Packaging II, Writing leads and tags; standups and other elements

**Tues, April 16:** The TV industry – organization, audiences, issues

***Due: Package writing assignment***

**Thurs, April 18:** Writing help as needed

**Tues, April 23:** On-air performance for radio and TV *Reading:* Skim Tuggle Ch. 12 (reflection optional)

**Thurs, April 25:** Broadcast & other media jobs; review of final project requirements *Reading:* Skim Tuggle Ch. 16 (reflection optional)

**TUESDAY, APRIL 30: 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.