

# WRITING FOR THE ELECTRONIC MEDIA

School of Journalism and Mass Communication

JOMC-121.1, Spring 2008

Monday, Wednesday 11 a.m. - 12:15 p.m., Carroll Hall 132

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Teaching Assistant: Sheila Read Electronic Communication suite email: sspread at email dot unc dot edu	Office Hours:

JOMC-121 cannot be taken concurrently with any course in which the lab or group meeting conflicts with JOMC-121 time periods.

Be sure your registration is up to date. If you are not officially registered for JOMC-121 by Wed., Jan. 16, 2008, you will not be permitted to continue to attend class.

## **National Standards:**

The standard expected of every student enrolled in the School's JOMC-121 sections is at the level of national excellence. By the time you complete JOMC-121 you will be a competent broadcast news writer.

## **The Discipline and The Course:**

The study of broadcast journalism combines the skills of news writing, reporting and radio production. To succeed in the course, you'll need to achieve competence in all three areas. JOMC-121 is the first course in the broadcast journalism sequence which consists of JOMC-120, JOMC-121, JOMC-421 and JOMC-422. All four courses are required to complete the Electronic Communication Sequence in the School. If you're an electronic communication major, you should take JOMC-121 concurrently with JOMC-120.

## **Oral Communication Component:**

No prerequisite exists for oral communication skills. Unlike many courses in the School of Journalism and Mass Communication, this course includes an oral communication component. You cannot receive a passing grade in

this course if your oral communication skills are deficient. If you have any doubts about your ability to achieve competency in this area before completing the course, check now with the instructor. Students with an interest in a broadcast career are encouraged to take Prof. David Cupp's voice and diction class (JOMC-425). Please see Prof. Cupp for details.

### **Basic Objectives:**

Basic objectives of JOMC-121 include the following:

- To improve your broadcast news writing and reporting skills.
- To integrate your broadcast news writing skills with basic reporting practices into the production of professional, broadcast-quality audio news packages.

### **Equipment:**

#### Digital Recorder:

You will need to purchase a digital voice recorder. A list of recommended recorders will be posted on Blackboard. Please consult the list *before* purchasing your recorder. We will supply you with a broadcast-quality microphone and cable to connect to your digital recorder. It's your responsibility to keep the microphone and cable in good working order. If you believe that you are not getting good quality audio from your recorder/microphone unit, please let Dr. Linden know right away so we can troubleshoot the problem. You cannot receive a grade in this course until you return the microphone and cable at the end of the semester.

#### Rewritable CDs:

You will need a supply of rewritable CDs for submission of your audio stories.

### **Attendance/Punctuality:**

As in the broadcast industry, punctuality and meeting deadlines are not just important, they are essential. For our purposes, being late is the same as being absent. If you are late for class, please do not come. You can count that as one of your two absences. **Three** unexcused absences will result in your not receiving a passing grade in the course. If you accumulate three unexcused absences, you can be dropped from the course at the instructor's discretion. I do understand there are real emergencies (like the death of a family member or hospitalization). However, if you won't be in class, please need to notify me in **advance** of class by telephone or e-mail. I also expect that you'll stay for the entire class period. If you need to leave early, please let me know in advance. (Just a reminder: this class is designed to give you the fundamental skills that you'll need for a job in broadcasting. One of

those skills is the ability to hit a deadline. Consider the start of this class as your first deadline.)

**Inclement Weather:**

In the event of inclement weather, please check your e-mail and/or the [UNC Web site](#) to see if class has been canceled.

**Stories and Assignments:**

Stories and assignments are due at the start of class.

**Submitted Assignments:**

All assignments must be word-processed. No assignment will be accepted in longhand, and no longhand marks are to appear on the front of any submission. Please be sure to double space your script which should be written in a sans serif font, either Arial or Geneva. On the back of each assignment, please write (longhand permissible) the name and phone number of each source whom you interview for your story. Failure to list your sources and their phone numbers on the back of your assignment will result in a 20-point deduction. You can expect at least one written and/or audio assignment every other week.

**Your E-mail Address:**

Every enrolled student in the School of Journalism and Mass Communication is required to have a *UNC* e-mail address. Check your e-mail often, and always within 24 hours before class.

**Syllabus:**

Please check your syllabus before each class. The schedule and/or assignments may change without your being notified by e-mail. All changes will be reflected in the online syllabus which will be accessible via Blackboard at:

<http://blackboard.unc.edu/> and also at:

<http://www.unc.edu/~trl/syllabi/121.html>

**In-class Computer Use:**

In class, computers are to remain off at all times unless you are asked by the instructor to turn them on.

**Readings:**

Students are responsible for being informed at all times about national and international news events. Be prepared for a current events quiz at any time.

You can succeed in the news profession only if you have an insatiable appetite for information and are intelligently informed about major current events at all times.

Many classroom sessions will start with a current events discussion gleaned from your reading of that day's or the previous day's *New York Times*. Do get in the habit of reading the *New York Times* each morning before class.

### **Daily Newspaper Subscription:**

*The New York Times* (Monday through Friday) is required reading. You can either subscribe to the print edition of the *New York Times* or read the newspaper online at [www.nytimes.com](http://www.nytimes.com). However, be advised that questions on quizzes will be taken from stories listed in the national and international news summaries on page 2 of the print edition. To subscribe at a reduced rate, please go to:

<http://www.nytimes.com/student>

You can request either home or lock box delivery of the paper at one of several locations on campus. If you want to get the paper delivered M-F in a lock box, enter the zip code of 27599 and be sure to choose the University of North Carolina as your university. If the site asks for course number, just put in the numbers 121. The site will request a credit card number that you will need to supply if you want delivery either off-campus or on-campus at a lock box. If you have problems with ordering the *NYT*, you can call 1-888-NYTCOLL (1-888-698-2655).

Please keep your daily issue of the *NYT* for one week as questions for pop quizzes will come from recent issues as far back as a week.

### **Texts:**

Kalbfeld, Brad, *AP Broadcast News Handbook*, The Associated Press, ©2001, ISBN #0-071-363882.

Bliss Jr., Edward and James L. Hoyt, [Writing News for Broadcast](#), Third Edition, Columbia University Press, New York, ©1994, ISBN #0-231-07973.

### **Supplementary Text:**

Tuggle, C.A., Forrest Carr and Suzanne Huffman, *Broadcast news*

*Handbook*, Second Edition, McGraw-Hill Higher Education, ©2003, ISBN #0-07-285351-4.

### **Supplementary Readings:**

In addition to the assigned readings, supplementary reading materials may be distributed in class.

### **Radio Newscasts:**

Award-winning local and national radio newscasts are heard on [WUNC](#) (91.5 FM). The quality of your work in JOMC-121 is expected to be at the level of National Public Radio. You're also encouraged to listen to [This American Life](#), an award-winning radio documentary series that airs Friday at 7:00 p.m. on WUNC-FM and is repeated Saturday afternoon at 1:00 p.m.

Also, you should listen to the School's student radio newscast, [Carolina Connection](#), broadcast Saturday mornings at 8:30 a.m. on [WCHL 1360 AM](#). Several JOMC-121 students have worked for WCHL after successfully completing this course.

### **Missed Quizzes & Exams:**

If you miss a quiz, the quiz portion of your final grade will be the average of all the quizzes that you took. There are no makeup quizzes given. Also, there will be no makeup given if you miss the textbook exam. In the event that you do miss the textbook exam, then the average of your current events quizzes will count for 35% (rather than 15%) of your final grade.

### **Grading Breakdown:**

To receive a passing grade in the course, you must receive a passing grade in all of the following graded components:

1. Textbook exam.
2. Writing/reporting assignments.
3. Pop quizzes/current events discussions.
4. Oral communication competency (P/F).

You cannot receive a passing grade in the course unless all assignments in the course are completed.

A test on the two text books and other assigned reading will count for 20% of your final grade. A major feature assignment will count for 30% of your final grade. Current events quizzes from the *New York Times* will count for 15% of your final grade. Reporting assignments will count for 25% of your final grade. Classroom participation will count for 10% of

your final grade.

A numerical grade scale will be used on all papers and tests. Here are the letter equivalents:

#### FINAL GRADES

98 - 100	A+
94 - 97	A
91 - 93	A-
88 - 90	B+
84 - 87	B
81 - 83	B-
78 - 80	C+
74 - 77	C
71 - 73	C-
68 - 70	D+
64 - 67	D
61 - 63	D-
60 and below	F

#### **Late Assignments:**

Late assignments (defined as assignments not turned in at the beginning of class on the date due) will be assessed a penalty of 10 points per day until the assignment is turned in. An assignment that's not turned in within a week will result in a zero grade for that assignment.

#### **Notifying Sources:**

Every source you contact must be told at the very outset of your conversation that she/he is being interviewed for a story that may be used on the air. A source must be notified, and you must have the source's permission to be quoted and to record that person's voice. It's the law, along with being an Honor Code violation, if you do not follow this procedure. Also, as noted above, on the back page of each assignment, please write the name and phone number of each source whom you interview for any assignment. Failure to include source names and phone numbers will result in a 20-point deduction for that particular assignment.

#### **Additional Considerations:**

Stories receiving the highest grades are ones displaying considerable intellectual depth, originality, creativity, news value, and flawless writing and production.

All work must be original and solely for this class. No assignment may be submitted for credit which was prepared as part of any other class assignment.

Broadcasting is different from print. A misspelled word among millions of words in a daily newspaper may not be too serious. But in television broadcasting, a misspelled, character-generated, on-screen word identifying a newsmaker or location, or a misspelled word on a teleprompter script is far more significant. Remember, when you start working in television news, you are often writing for three people -- yourself, the anchor, and an individual in the listening or viewing audience. Therefore, a misspelling of any word will result in a two-point deduction. Misspelling of a proper name or a factual error will result in a 10-point deduction. Each style error (defined by both the *AP Broadcast News Handbook* and the Bliss & Hoyt text) will result in a two-point deduction.

Under no circumstances can a journalist fabricate a source, quote or sound bite. Also, do not ask a source to stage a sound bite or have that source read a bite from a prepared text. A trained broadcast journalist will be able to spot a canned sound bite. Don't go there as staging is a form of fabrication. The other major journalistic ethical violation is plagiarism, the act of passing off another's words or ideas as your own. If you fabricate a quote, stage a sound bite or plagiarize another writer or source, you will fail the course and will be referred for an Honor Code violation. For most journalists, engaging in plagiarism or fabrication is a career-ending move.

### **Story Assignments:**

(Assignments and CDs not retrieved by the last day of class become the property of the School and may be discarded.)

The instructor in the course serves as a news director/executive producer with final determination over the acceptability and quality of any story.

### **Weekly Schedule:**

The following schedule will change during the semester, depending on the time necessary to critique individual writing assignments, production schedules, studio availability, the coverage of current events, schedules of guest speakers and other factors. Please check the online syllabus **before** each class as the schedule may change without e-mail notice.

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### **Week #1 - Course Expectations**

**Jan. 9:** Introduction to the course

[Listen](#) to "Which One of These is not Like the Others," This American Life, [www.thislife.org](http://www.thislife.org).

Assignment for next class:

Listen to NPR WUNC 91.5.

Subscribe to the *New York Times*.

Read the syllabus.

Read the Society of Professional Journalists' Code of Ethics:

<[http://www.spj.org/ethics\\_code.asp](http://www.spj.org/ethics_code.asp)>.

Read the following NYT stories:

"Novel Strategy Pits Journalists Against Source" By KATHARINE Q. SEELYE AND ADAM LIPTAK, published October 29, 2005

<<http://select.nytimes.com/search/restricted/article?res=F30814FE39550C718>>

"Senate Summons Pentagon To Explain Effort to Plant Reports in Iraqi News Media" By ERIC SCHMITT AND DAVID S. CLOUD; JEFF GERTH CONTRIBUTED REPORTING FOR THIS ARTICLE, published December 2, 2005

<<http://select.nytimes.com/search/restricted/article?res=FB0916F7355B0C7A8>>

"When Democracy Died in Wilmington, N.C." By BRENT STAPLES, published January 8, 2006 <<http://www.nytimes.com/2006/01/08/opinion/08sun3.html>>.

Final report on the [1898 Wilmington Race Riot](#) (not required reading).

Read "Audio Recorders" in Documents folder of [Blackboard](#). Bring the document to class on Monday.

## **Week #2 - Ethics of Broadcast Journalism**

**Jan. 14:** Tips on Buying Your Voice Recorder (Guest speaker: Dylan Field, UNC School of JOMC A-V Specialist) & Ethics of Broadcast Journalism  
v Review ethics readings and critique radio case studies from RTNDF, time permitting.

Assignment for next class:

Read "FCC, on 3-2 Vote, OK's Media Ownership Rule,"

<[http://www.hollywoodreporter.com/hr/content\\_display/news/e3i5d843c633b3a4](http://www.hollywoodreporter.com/hr/content_display/news/e3i5d843c633b3a4)>

Hollywood Reporter, 12/19/07.

Watch video or read transcript, "Massing of the Media," *Bill Moyers Journal*, <<http://www.pbs.org/moyers/journal/12142007/profile2.html>>, 12/14/07.

Read transcript of "[The Misinformation Superhighway?](#)" interview with Anne Mintz, director of knowledge management at Forbes Inc. and adjunct professor at the City University of New York (CUNY) Graduate School of Journalism, from "Now" on PBS.

**Jan. 16:** Ethics of Broadcast Journalism

v Review assigned articles.

v Listen to Edward R. Murrow's CBS News radio report, "Visit to West Somerset" in "A Reporter Remembers the War Years" (AV 90015).

Assignment for next class:

Read *AP Broadcast News Handbook*, Chapters 1, 2, 3, 4.

At the [First Amendment Center web site](#), read the following articles:

"Libel & Defamation"

<[http://www.firstamendmentcenter.org/Press/topic.aspx?topic=libel\\_defamati](http://www.firstamendmentcenter.org/Press/topic.aspx?topic=libel_defamati)  
and "Broadcasting"

<[http://www.firstamendmentcenter.org/Press/topic.aspx?topic=press\\_broadcas](http://www.firstamendmentcenter.org/Press/topic.aspx?topic=press_broadcas)

### **Week #3 – Writing for Broadcast News**

**Jan. 21:** Martin Luther King Jr. Holiday (No Class)

Assignment for next class:

See Jan. 16 assignment.

**Jan. 23:** Writing for Broadcast News (cont.)

v Review *AP Broadcast News Handbook* and First Amendment articles.

Assignment for next class:

Read *AP Broadcast News Handbook*, Chapters 5, 6, 7.

Read Bliss & Hoyt, pp. 1 - 97.

Read "[Loosening Lips](#)" by Eric Nalder.

### **Week #4 – Recording & Editing Sound**

**Jan. 28:** How to Get Great Sound (Guest speaker: Dylan Field, UNC School of JOMC A-V Specialist)

v Learn how to operate your digital recorder and microphone.

Assignment for next class:

Review Audition 2.0 tip sheet by Dylan Field in Blackboard "Documents" folder.

Read Bliss & Hoyt, pp. 98 - 153.

**Jan. 30:** Tour of Audition & Audacity (Guest speaker: Dylan Field, UNC School of JOMC A-V Specialist)

Assignment for next class:

Read "[Liberation of Buchenwald](#)" by Harry J. Herder Jr.

Attend Dr. Cupp's voice and diction seminar Monday, Feb. 4 at 9 a.m. in CA 305 (dual meeting with Dr. Cupp's 121 section). Please note that we will still have our class section meeting at 11 a.m. that Monday.

### **Week #5 – Writing for Broadcast News (cont.)**

**Feb. 4:** Writing for Broadcast News (cont.)

v Review Bliss & Hoyt test and *AP Broadcast News Handbook*.

Assignment for next class:

Review Bliss and Hoyt text.

**Feb. 6:** Writing for Broadcast News (cont.)

v Review Bliss and Hoyt text.

v Edward R. Murrow reports from Buchenwald

<[http://www.otr.com/murrow\\_buchenwald.shtml](http://www.otr.com/murrow_buchenwald.shtml)>.

Assignment for next class:

Review Bliss and Hoyt text.

**Week #6 – How to Write a Radio Script****Feb. 11:** Guest talk by Draggan Mihailovich, producer for "60 Minutes"

v Watch "[A Visit to the Garden of Eden](#)," produced by Draggan Mihailovich and reported by Bob Simon, CBS News, "60 Minutes."

Assignment for next class:

Review Bliss & Hoyt text.

**Feb. 13:** How to write a radio script (use of natural sound & sound bites)

v [Listen](#) to "Growing Up Stories" from StoryCorps.

v [Life's a Bike: Tour de Bronx](#).

Assignment:

Radio field assignment #1 due Wednesday, Feb. 20.

**Week #7- Trauma in Journalism****Feb. 18:** View "Dying to Tell The Story," documentary film produced by

Kathy Eldon which focuses on the 1993 murder in Somalia of her son, [Dan Eldon](#).

Assignment for next class:

Read online "[Tragedies & Journalists: A Guide for More Effective Coverage](#)" (Introduction + all eight chapters). You can also download a [pdf file](#) of "Tragedies & Journalists."

**Feb. 20:** Conclude viewing of "Dying to Tell The Story."

v **Radio field assignment #1 due today.**

v Discuss "[Tragedies & Journalists](#)" and dealing with covering traumatic events.

Assignment for next class:

Study for exam.

**Week #8 - Reporting**

**Feb. 25:** Final review Bliss & Hoyt and AP texts

Assignment for next class:

Radio field assignment #2 due Wed., March 5.

Study for exam.

**Feb. 27:** Test over Bliss & Hoyt text, *AP Broadcast News Handbook* (Chapters 1 through 7), Web readings and current events from the *New York Times*.

**Week #9 - Reporting (cont.)**

**March 3:** Guest lecture, Joel Bourne, National Geographic staff writer  
v Return text test and review answers.

v Listen to NPR report about [Hurricane Floyd survivor, Anne Howell](#).

v "[On the School Bus with Miss Fannion](#)" by Noah Adams, NPR.

Assignment for next class:

Finish field assignment #2 due on Wednesday.

**March 5:** Elements of good reporting (cont.)

v **Radio field assignment #2 due today.**

v Watch [Holy Hostel](#).

Watch "On The Road with Charles Kuralt" reports (only available on School of JOMC computers): [Gandy Dancers](#) (1973)

Assignment for next class:

Radio field assignment #3 due Wednesday, March 19.

**SPRING BREAK (March 7 - 16)****Week #10 - Reporting (cont.)**

**March 17:** Class critique of assignment #2

Assignment for next class:

Radio field assignment #3 due Monday, March 24 in class.

**March 19:** Guest lecture, Richard Griffiths, CNN Editorial Director

Assignment for next class: Field assignment #4 due Wed. March 26. Also, proposal for final class project due Monday, March 24. (Each student should submit three proposals, two to three sentences per proposal. Also,

please list three sources per story, including title and contact information.)

### **Week #11 – Feature stories**

**March 24:** The basics of feature stories

v Listen to NPR report about [High cost of private universities](#), [Nudging killer asteroids off course](#), [A Father's Last Days](#), [Mastodons in Manhattan](#).

v Watch "On The Road with Charles Kuralt" reports (only available on School of JOMC computers): [Black Diamond Railcar](#) (1983), [Bicycle Man](#) (1983).

v **Proposal for class project due today.**

**March 26:** The basics of feature stories (cont.)

v **Radio field assignment #4 due today.**

v Listen to [My Lobotomy](#).

Assignment: First 60 seconds of final project script (no CD) due Wed., April 2.

### **Week #12 – Introduction to writing for the broadcast documentary**

**March 31:** Essentials of radio documentary

v Listen to NPR reports: [Witness to an Execution](#).

Assignment for next class: TBA.

**April 2:** New forms of radio storytelling

v **First 60 seconds of final project script (no CD) due today.**

Assignment for next class: Work on final project.

### **Week #13 – Intro to Television Script Writing**

**April 7:** How to put together a television script

Assignment for next class:

Read Tuggle et al. Chapters 7, 8, 9, 10.

**April 9:** How to put together a television script

v Writing for local television news

v Providing context – a case study from [NewsLab](#).

Assignment for next class: Final project due Monday, April 14.

**Week #14- Final project presentations**

**April 14:** Presentation of final class projects  
v **Final class project due at beginning of class.**

**April 16: No class**

**Week #15- Final project presentations (cont.)/Wrap-up**

**April 21:** Presentation of final class projects (cont.)

**April 23:** Presentation of final class projects (cont.) & class wrap-up

**Submitting Stories**

Remember the following points when preparing stories:

- \* The lead is critical.
- \* Make sure the announcer intro contains sufficient content and is flawlessly written.
- \* Writing: Correct spelling, grammar, structure, leads, etc.
- \* Writing flow: Mastering the art of a good sounding story. Does the story flow well? Does it read well? Always practice reading your story before you submit it to the instructor. You'll catch many mistakes and improve the flow of the story.
- \* Audio quality: Are the cuts clear and of professional quality?
- \* Production: Does the natural sound fit well into the story?
- \* Delivery: Is your voice quality the level of a professional-sounding announcer?
- \* News Value: Is the story significant?
- \* On-air quality: Is the story ready for airing?

All copy must be printed on a laser or high-contrast printer and double-spaced.

Longhand marks of any kind cannot appear on the copy of a story. (Your name and sources can be in longhand on the back of the story.)

The CD with your assignment should be labeled with the name of the

reporter/student and the title of the story written both on the CD and the CD box.

### **Helpful Hints**

Take advantage of every scholarship and award opportunity afforded to you in the School (and announced weekly in the School's online newsletter). It takes initiative, but without initiative you will not succeed. Winning any award/scholarship will enhance your credentials.

Regardless of your proficiency in oral communication skills, you are urged to take a course in voice and diction (please see Prof. Cupp). Good oral communication skills and good writing skills are the *sine qua non* of the industry. You can rarely get past an interview, no matter what job you are applying for, unless you possess strong oral and written communication skills. Unlike print journalism, where writing alone can sometimes support your credentials, broadcast journalism demands--in every job--extremely strong oral communication skills.

News is global and becoming more so every day. While not a requirement for this course, proficiency in a foreign language is an enhancement to your credentials when competing with other graduates for jobs in the industry (in many sections of the country, a knowledge of Spanish is very important). Outside course concentrations and proficiency in a foreign language are recommended for any student seriously interested in a long-term career in broadcast journalism.

### **The Honor Code**

The Honor Code is in effect in this class and all others at the University. I am committed to treating Honor Code violations seriously and urge all students to become familiar with its terms set out at <http://instrument.unc.edu>. If you have questions, it is your responsibility to ask me about the Code's application. All exams, written work, and other projects must be submitted with a statement that you have complied with the requirements of the Honor Code in all aspects of the submitted work.

(In this course, fabricating a source, fabricating purported statements of fact and/or plagiarism will result in a reportable Honor Code violation.)

**--syllabus revised March 20, 2008**