

CLL 495/EST695 Environmental Journalism

T/Th 12:30-1:50

Moon 19

Instructor: Khris Dodson

Office Hours: 105 Moon

Tues & Thurs 2-3:30

COURSE OBJECTIVES: This course is a comprehensive approach to learning the fundamentals of news writing with a special focus on Environmental Journalism. It will get you writing quickly, confidently and with precision. The course emphasizes reporting, writing, gathering of information and interview techniques while also examining journalism through a theoretical lens.

This course will help you to become a better thinker, and a wiser, more critical consumer of the media. The class is fast-paced and topical with hands-on learning.

One of the wonderful things about this class (and journalism in general) is that you will meet people, hear stories, and have experiences you otherwise wouldn't. Whether you are shy or outgoing, journalism will give you the excuse for new adventures. Make the most of it! This is an important time to learn about journalism.

- Journalistic writing is different from most of the writing you may have done thus far at ESF. There are similarities but also differences which we will talk about in class. Journalism is creative, cutting edge and fun. It is storytelling and is important to democracy and to our culture.
- **Even the best writers need editors.** Though my tone can be perceived as critical and impatient, my advice and comments are meant to help you. However, learning how to handle constructive criticism from me and your peers is an important step in becoming a good writer. We will do some peer editing where you will trade papers with classmates.
- Part of being a good journalist is learning how to solve problems on your own. If you are having trouble getting interviews with people you think are important to a story, cast a wider net, try different forms of communication, etc. Think on your feet.

COURSE OBJECTIVES: The goal of the course is to teach the following skills:

1. How to effectively evaluate the media and be a better consumer of the media
2. How to write well under pressure
3. How to gather information independently and organize it effectively
6. How to interview effectively
7. How to work effectively with your peers

8. How to write the following newspaper/magazine formats:
- a. features: top stories, people, ideas, trends
 - b. profiles
 - c. editorials and viewpoints
 - d. survey stories (man on the street)
 - e. event-based stories

YOUR RESPONSIBILITY: Please be prepared to report, write and interview in and out of class. The job of a journalist is to be prepared for a story at anytime. This also means reading and preparing assignments before class. You will often submit in-class writing assignments.

Deadlines are important, just as they are in any newsroom. Late work is not accepted except on rare occasions. Develop a good attitude about the deadline early on.

A good journalist stays informed. For this class you will be required to read the **New York Times Environment Blog**: <http://green.blogs.nytimes.com/>, **Grist.org**, **GreenCNY** and its blog: Syracuse.com/green. **You will be quizzed weekly on the top news found in these publications.** Whether you subscribe to them or just browse them daily is up to you. If you find an error (stylistic, fact, typo or otherwise) you will receive extra points on your quiz if you bring the error in to me.

Keep a portfolio of your work, drafts, notes and final articles; you may need them for the publication in the Knothole or elsewhere.

ATTENDANCE: It's important that you attend class because of the pace of the course. But it is your choice to attend. Work missed because of unexcused absences cannot be made up for credit. An excused absence is one that is cleared by me beforehand. If you are sick and can't make class please check in with me after you get back.

WRITING ASSIGNMENTS: Heavy emphasis will be placed on writing assignments. You will be responsible for following stylebook guidelines as they are introduced in class.

- Deadlines are of paramount importance, just as they are in any newsroom.
- Late work will not be accepted except on rare occasions.
- Assignments must be typed, double spaced, with generous margins.

BOOKS:

- **Highly Recommended:** The Associated Press Stylebook 2008-10 versions

- **Required:** Covering the Environment: How Journalists Work the Green Beat. This book is available at Follett's Orange Bookstore and on-line at Amazon, etc.

GRADING:

You can always make your work better. If you do the work you cannot fail. I urge you to read and refer to course readings.

Here is the grading standard I use for writing.

Grading key:

A=publishable quality

B=publishable with some editing

C=substantial editing needed

D=marginal quality

F=unacceptable

Another standard I use is this: is your work interesting? Are you telling the story? If I found this in the newspaper, would I want to read it? Would you?

Please feel free to meet with me at any time to discuss your progress in the class.

I will not accept late papers, except on extremely rare occasions. Being late in journalism usually means the story won't be published. The whole newspaper can't wait for a late story.

Grade Breakdown:

News quizzes: 5%

Participation: 5%

Enterprise Story: 20%

Other stories/ writing assignments: 40%

Research Methods Paper: 15%

COURSE SCHEDULE: This is subject to change as we progress and more details on assignments, readings and course projects are finalized.

Week 1

1/18

What is this course about? What is journalism?

Why is it important? Changing ideas of news

Readings: Watchdogs of Democracy, Text Chapter 1

Assignment: classmate profile

Week 2

1/25

Basic principles of journalism; Writing in a journalistic style

The basic news story, structure,

Leads, Nut graphs, pull-quotes, heds, deks, call-outs, captions

Reading: Patterson, Chapters 10, 11; handout; Chap 7, 8; Reader

Assignment: create heads, decks and callouts for article reviewed in class

Man-on-the-street

Week 3

2/1

Grammar and usage, Good writing techniques, sources and research;

Pitching ideas, story ideas, where to find information

Reading: 3, 4, 6

Assignment: Write query letter for Enterprise #1

Week 4

2/8

Doing deep research! Why!?

Reading: Historical Methods Book, Text Chapter 2

Assignment: First enterprise story

Research Methods paper

Week 5

2/15

Interviewing and storytelling, meetings, press conferences, speeches

Reading: Chapters 5, 9;

Assignments: meeting/speech story

Week 6

2/22

Enterprise story #1 due

Ethics: accuracy and libel; fact checking, attributions, InfoTrac

Reading: Chapters 13, 14, 15;

Week 7

3/1

Freelancing, editing and assigning
Assignments: write a query letter for Enterprise story #2, respond with an assignment letter

Week 8

3/8

Internet and the media, writing for the internet

Assignment: Write an editorial about the changing media environment.

SPRING BREAK

Week 9

3/21

Media and Society

Reading: Crouteau and Hoynes handouts

Week 10

3/28

Brainstorming publication names, Assigning roles and tasks

Week 11

4/5

Group editing, working with your editor.

Week 12

4/12

Week 13

4/19

Week 14

4/26

Week 15

5/3

Ideas:

- Create a blog and make them use it

- Take over knothole (teach design in beginning)
- Invite in editor of Clearwaters, Ellen Leahy, Clare Dunn, Karen Moore, Carissa Matthews, Molly English-Bowers
- Environmental news and policy quizzes (take from specific online sources)
- Get DO to work with us on ESF page
- Hed/dek writing based on an article
- Watch 'Thanks you for Smoking'
- Long form vs short form journalism

Read many envi articles and blogs: grist, GreenCNY, treehugger, <http://www.green-blog.org/>,

he Media Education Foundation IS terrific videos on environmental topics in relation to media education. Here is the link (go to the left-hand side and click under "Commercialism" category, for some reason).. Also wanted to let you know about "Media that Matters." Featured films have a social/environmental justice theme. You can browse films by topic here: <http://www.mediathatmattersfest.org/>