

Journalistic Inquiry

V54.0101.02

Monday/Wednesday 4:30-6:20 p.m.

Room 655

Prof. Fran Stern

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“I know of no human being who has a better time than an eager and energetic young reporter.”
H. L. Mencken

Purpose

The objective of JI is to train students in the principles and practices of professional journalism. Regardless of the medium, journalists share professional ethics and standards. To inform the public – whether a readership or broadcast audience – you need to communicate clearly and concisely.

Good writing is grounded in logical thinking, solid research and comprehensive reporting. Before putting fingers to keyboard, or voice to recorder, or face to video, you need to fully understand all aspects of a story and their impact. JI will teach you to research the elements of a story, gather facts, and analyze data and information from various angles and perspectives. You will learn how to prepare for and conduct interviews and how to use quotes to inform and illustrate your stories. You will learn how to write well organized stories under deadline pressure.

Essential to the role of the reporter is the skill known as news judgment. What is news? What is the lead of the story? What are the essential elements of a story? Throughout the course, you will gain insight into how these decisions are made and how to apply professional judgment to your work.

Through classroom discussion and in-class and out-of-class assignments, you will apply these skills across platforms: print, broadcast and online. You will learn of the similar substance but different writing and production styles of the news media.

Every Class

Bring to every class the reporting textbook, The New York Times, and a notebook for lectures. You are expected to read The New York Times every day; it is as essential as the textbook. I don't expect cover to cover, but at least the News Summary and its complete stories and the front of every section. You are expected to listen to all news radio: WCBS 880 AM (www.wcbs880.com) and/or WINS 1010 AM (www.1010wins.com) and watch local, network and cable television news broadcasts. Each Wednesday, class will begin with a weekly news quiz.

Three online sites are particular useful to check every day; you can sign up and get daily e-mail delivery: “Al’s Morning Meeting” at <http://www.poynter.org/column.asp?id=2>; “Today’s News” at www.slate.com and www.GothamGazette.com for the daily “Eye Opener.”

Assignments

Generally, you will pitch your weekly story ideas in class on Monday and the stories will be due via e-mail as attachments the following Monday at 9 a.m.

If your assignment is late, even by an hour, it will be downgraded. No assignment will be accepted more than 24 hours late; it will be considered a missed assignment for which an “F” will be recorded. You will be graded for research, reporting and writing, as well as spelling and grammar. On the last page of every reporting assignment please list the names/titles/contact info of your sources.

When you e-mail your work please name the attachment (the document) with your last name followed by the name of the assignment. e.g.: Jones--student issue.

Please type and double space each assignment. On the first page, in the upper left corner, include your last name, the story slug, the date and the page number. This can all be done in the “header” on Word. Please learn how to use the header and attachment features in Word.

Example: Jones—student issue—1/24/07---1

Put --more--at the end of each page and --30--at the end.

You are expected to use AP style for all your assignments.

For your broadcast assignments you will need a tape recorder with a counter or digital marker and a stopwatch or digital watch with a second timer. Or, you can use an online stopwatch. Here’s one: <http://tools.arantius.com/stopwatch>

Attendance

You are expected to attend every class, to arrive on time, and to offer insights during class discussions. Your careful reading of the assignments and knowledge of news events are essential for meaningful discussion. (NB: There is no class Monday, October 8.)

If you miss a class, for any reason, you are responsible for getting the notes and assignments from a classmate and submitting the assignments on time. An “F” will be recorded for any missed assignments.

Grades

Your final grade will reflect your grades on class and field assignments and class participation. Effort and progress will count. I strongly urge you not to miss any classes during the semester. If you miss more than four classes your final grade will drop one full letter.

Your grade in the class will be calculated using this formula:

Writing assignments	40 percent
Final project	40 percent
News Quizzes	10 percent
Class participation	10 percent

Cheating, fabrication and fiction will not be tolerated. You will fail this course immediately if you're caught plagiarizing, inventing sources, or doctoring quotes.

Journalism majors: A grade of "C" or better is needed for the course to count toward your major.

Grading will conform to the Journalism Department's policy:

- A= publishable as is
- B= publishable with light editing
- C=publishable with a rewrite
- D=major problems with facts, reporting, writing
- F=missing key facts, containing gross misspellings, plagiarism or libel

Final Project and Blog

In the course of your reporting you will encounter many new people and places. I hope that one of these encounters will inspire you to dig deeper, deep enough to write a 1,000 final piece on the subject. (NB: While you research and write - and rewrite - your piece, you will also be required to keep blog notes, as many professional journalists do now. Your blog notes will be posted on a class blog.

Required Texts

Primary text:

Writing and Reporting News: A Coaching Method by Carole Rich, 5th edition

Required books: The Associated Press Stylebook and Briefing on Media Law
On Writing Well, 30th Anniversary Edition, William Zinsser
America's Best Newspaper Writing, 2nd edition, Clark and Scanlan
Freakonomics, Levitt and Dubner, paperback coming in October
The New York Times, daily

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<u>Date</u>	<u>Topic</u>	<u>Assignment</u> Due 9 a.m. Mondays unless noted otherwise	<u>Grammar/other</u> <u>assignments</u>	<u>Readings/</u> <u>Media menus</u>
Wednesday, Sept. 5	The changing landscape of journalism News judgment, ledes, the news story	Mini-profiles due Mon. 9/10 9 a.m.		Rich: 1, 2, 3, 7 and 22 (pp. 463-476 only)
Monday, Sept. 10	Interviewing sourcing, attribution		Pitch student issues <i>nouns</i>	Clark chap. 1 Rich 5
Wednesday, Sept. 12	Basic research techniques	Student issue NQD due Mon. 9/17 9 a.m.	<i>verbs</i>	Rich 4
Monday, Sept. 17	More research		Pitch tourist <i>adverbs</i>	Rich 8
Wednesday, Sept. 19	Writing for the web	Tourist NQD due Mon.9/24 9 a.m.	<i>adjectives</i>	Rich 11 Clark: 287-294
Monday, Sept. 24	News story structure		Pitch controversial issue <i>commas</i>	Rich 12 Clark: chap 2
Wednesday, Sept. 26	More writing for the web	Controversial issue NQD due Mon.10/1 9 a.m.		Rich 9
Monday, Oct. 1	Story structure		Pitch Halloween business story; <i>prepositions</i>	Clark: 294-303
Wednesday, Oct. 3	Alternative leads	Halloween business due Mon.10/8 9 a.m.	<i>participles,</i> <i>gerunds</i>	Zinsser
Monday, Oct. 8	Columbus Day	No Class		

Wednesday, Oct. 10	Writing for radio, podcasts	Radio briefs due Mon.10/15 9 a.m.		Rich 11
Monday, Oct. 15	More radio		Pitch Halloween biz broadcast version <i>Metaphors, similes</i>	Listen to the radio
Wednesday, Oct. 17	More radio	Halloween biz b'cast script due Mon. 10/22 9 a.m.		Pick a podcast
Monday, Oct. 22	Intro to feature: the profile		Pitch profile piece	Clark: chap. 7
Wednesday, Oct. 24	Interviewing part 2	Profile piece due Mon.10/29 9 a.m.		Review Rich 22, pp. 463- 476
Monday, Oct. 29	Story structure		Pitch Halloween parade piece	Clark: 288-304
Wednesday, Oct. 31	Writing style	Parade: print or b'cast story due Mon.11/5 9 a.m.		Rich 9
Monday, Nov. 5	Libel, ethics			Rich 13, 14, 15 Clark: chap11
Wednesday, Nov. 7	Covering law and order		Discuss police ridealong.	Rich 19, 20, 21
Monday, Nov. 12	More law and order	Police ridealong essay due Fri. 11/16 9 a.m.	Police ridealong tonight.	Clark, chap. 4
Wednesday Nov. 14	Obituaries	Obituary due Mon. 11/19 9 a.m.		Rich 22 pp. 476-481 Clark: chap. 3
Monday, Nov. 19	Meetings and speeches		Pitch meeting or speech	Rich 17, 18, 19
Wednesday, Nov. 21	Opinion writing	Meeting or speech due Mon. 11/26 9 a.m.		Clark: chap. 6

Monday, Nov. 26	News features		Pitch seasonal piece	
Wednesday, Nov. 28	More feature	Seasonal piece with b'cast version due Fri. 11/30 9 a.m.		Clark: chap. 9
Monday, Dec. 3	Query letters More feature		Pitch final piece	
Wednesday, Dec. 5	Writing for video	Final piece draft one due Fri. 12/7 9 a.m.	Submit blog entry and photo	
Monday, Dec. 10	Rewriting techniques	Final piece draft two due Wed. 12/12 9 a.m.	Submit blog entry and photo	
Wednesday, Dec. 12	Work shopping and wrap up	Final piece due Mon. 12/17 9 a.m.	Submit final blog and photo	