

The Department of Media and Communications

Media Production Introduction Journalism

Updated September 2011

This course is taken by Media and Communications students, Media and Modern Literature students and Joint Honours students and may take place in your first, second or third year. For some students, going on to specialise further in journalism, this will be the first part of a two or three part course.

MC52008A

MC53029A

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Introduction to area of study

The course is designed to serve as an introduction to the practice of contemporary journalism.

Learning Outcomes

By the end of the course you should have:

1. Acquired skills in information gathering, analysis and communication, appropriate to a wide range of professional areas in addition to print journalism and to a variety of audiences
2. Developed your creative and critical expression within the conventions of journalism
3. Acquired the knowledge and skills to be critical of journalistic practice including your own
4. The confidence, knowledge and skills to work independently, flexibly and to deadline, in the research, organisation and writing of a news report, an interview and a feature article

Teaching Methods And Course Content

You will learn by practising, basic news-gathering, interviewing and feature writing. The course days will normally include talks on aspects of journalism and group seminars. Most assignments will be carried out between practice days. In the second half of term, there will be tutorials, individually, or in groups of two or three, depending on the time available. There are no lectures. Students will learn by doing, and every exercise and assignment will be discussed and analysed in the group or individually.

Please note that this course comprises a whole course unit and you are expected to produce work outside your production days.

Assessment:

Learning outcomes 1-4 will be assessed via a portfolio comprising three pieces of work:

- 1 A news story (300-500 words)
- 2 An interview piece (profile) (800-1000 words)
- 3 A feature (800-1000 words)

On the last workshop day of term, you must also hand in two copies of all class work and weekly assignments in addition to two copies of your final portfolio. We expect to see a minimum of five separate pieces derived from your class work; it cannot include your team research report.

Assessment criteria, equally weighted:

1. The ambition of the work
2. The variety and appropriateness of sources used across the portfolio
3. The quality of analysis
4. The structure and style of the work

Marking: 80% of your final mark will come from the portfolio and 20% will be from your class work and contribution in class.

Please ensure you refer to the handbook 'Pocket guide to media law and ethics' available on learn.gold when writing all articles.

Please hand in 2 copies of all your work in 2 separate folders.

Timetable

Week One:

AM:

Course introduction and aims

Walk through of syllabus.

Contacts

Initial briefing on ELL

What is news?

What makes news?

New values

How do we define a news story

Different types of news stories:

Working in pairs analyse the top news story of the day on the Guardian and Telegraph sites; compare with red top tabloids.

Does objectivity really exist?

How stories differ between different publications and between online and print/broadcast.

PM:

What are Features?

The different types of feature writing: comment, diary, arts, interviews, case studies, personal observation etc.

When is a feature newsy and when it is not. The use of evidence and style. Look at the features on the East London Lines website.

Assignment:

In groups, research an assigned local area. Prepare a two or three page research report about the area by next week, which will include two ideas for news stories and two ideas for features which will be discussed in class.

Week Two

AM:

Discussion of ideas for news stories:

- How to source and develop news stories
- What sources to go to, who to contact

Where do we get information from: courts, councils, public bodies etc.

Using online sources and social media Interviewing for information and opinion:

- The importance of the interview to all journalism.
- The difference between gathering facts and offering opinions. Different types of news interviews: research, vox pop, case study, doorstep, telephone,

Briefing on vox pop exercise

PM

Discussion of ideas for features and how they differ from news

Analysis of features style and content.

Researching features in your area: what is on ELL?

Interviewing for features: celebrity, profile etc.

Assignments:

- 1 Write up your vox pop, with a short intro, followed by quotes. 500-600 words.
- 2 Submit a short research report of about 200 words for a news story or feature from your area

Week Three

AM:

Feedback on vox pop exercise and discussion of news story research reports

News writing:

How to write a news story.

Remembering the Five W's and the H

Structuring a news story

Using quotes effectively.

The importance of consistent style

Exercise: using worksheets provided write a simple, balanced news story

PM:

Discussion of features ideas

Features styles continued:

How writing styles differ between different formats

First person, consumer, confessional, reportage

Feature writing exercise – As a class choose a news story to use as inspiration for features and together brainstorm all the possible feature ideas that come out of this. Then in small groups do the same with a different news story. In consultation with your tutor choose one of your ideas to expand into a feature and research it and draw up a plan for what such a feature would look like.

Briefing on court reporting

Assignments:

- 1 Begin to investigate possible feature and interview subjects.
- 2 Read up on court reporting for next week and make sure you know where you are going.

Week Four:

Court reporting

AM:

You will be meeting at the court.

PM:

Return to office and write up court report under supervision.

Assignment:

1. Complete your court report in no more than 400 words.
2. Contact your portfolio interview and feature subjects to arrange interviews.

Week Five:

AM:

Debrief on court reports.

Newspaper and web production.

Basic sub-editing including intros, headlines, sub-heads and length.

You will work in groups on subbing and editing exercises

PM:

Feature/interview research – how to do it.

Structuring longer pieces of writing/intros and outros

Agree profile features and interview subjects with tutor.

Divide into peer review groups. You will be reviewing each piece of work by everyone in your review group – using the peer review questions. This is an important part of your learning as you will be practising editing skills as well as learning from each other.

Assignment: Research your feature and interview and prepare draft versions of both for week seven. Drafts must be circulated to your peer group well before the week seven class.

Week Six (Reading week):

NO CLASSES.

Week Seven

AM:

Press conference exercise

You will attend a mock press conference and write a report to deadline

PM:

Tutorials or peer group discussions on drafts

Assignment:

1. Re-write feature and interviews.
2. Source a news story from your area.

Week Eight

AM:

Creating a news list.

In groups, agree a daily news list for your area.

Decide what are features and what are news stories.

Write up one news story.
Edit each other's work and provide headlines.

PM:
Tutorials

Assignment:

Work on your feature and interview

Week Nine

AM:
News writing exercise: TBC
Briefing on news story for portfolio
Discussion of ideas

PM:
Tutorials

Week Ten

AM:
Confirm news stories for portfolios.
In peer groups, provide critical feedback on each other's final features/interviews.

PM:
Tutorials
Final briefing on portfolio requirements

Week Eleven:
Hand in two copies of your portfolio.