



**JOUR 206: Reporting and
Writing Practicum (Community Reporting)
1 Unit**

Spring 2021 – Mondays

8-11:50 a.m./11 a.m.-2:50 p.m./2-5:50 p.m.

Section: 21001R/21003R/211056R

Location: Online

Instructor: Esmeralda Fabian Romero

Office: Online

Office Hours: By appointment on Fridays, 12-1 p.m.

Course Description

Welcome to JOUR 206, Reporting and Writing Practicum (Community Reporting.) This course gives journalism majors hands-on experience in writing digital news for publication on uscannenbergmedia.com. During this weekly lab, students work four consecutive hours for the USC and/or South Los Angeles desks of Annenberg Media, reporting, writing, and distributing stories assigned by student editors with guidance from experienced faculty and coaches. This course runs concurrently with JOUR207, Reporting and Writing I, and JOUR307, Reporting and Writing II. The practicum is credit/no-credit.

Student Learning Outcomes

- Identify elements that make a story newsworthy for different audiences
- Identify and use diverse sources in news stories
- Research and verify information for use in news stories on digital platforms and social media
- Write news briefs and stories on deadline and in accordance with professional industry standards under the guidance of student editors and faculty and in collaboration with other student reporters and editors
- Create content for digital and social platforms on deadline and in accordance with professional industry standards and in collaboration with other student reporters and editors
- Apply principles of ethics in real-life news situations

Concurrent Enrollment: JOUR 207 Reporting and Writing I or JOUR 307 Reporting and Writing II

Description and Assessment of Assignments

This class is about hands-on learning. It is designed to give you practical experience in a newsroom. The work you do in your lab shifts will be published on uscannenbergmedia.com and Annenberg Media social media platforms. Class work will consist of on-the-job training and experience that mirrors the real world.

At the start of the semester, students will participate in mandatory newsroom training. Beginning in week three or four, students will act as general assignment reporters in an active newsroom.

Student duties include:

- Generating story ideas
- Finding and maintaining source lists
- Conducting research and interviews
- Writing news briefs, social media posts and longer stories
- Writing handoff notes for other reporters and editors summarizing their progress on stories

Students will work under the guidance of student editors and with the support of faculty and coaches. Every week, you should arrive with your own story ideas. Instructors will discuss current stories and review the previous week's work.

In order to receive credit for your lab shift, you will need to attend all of your shifts, spend the full four hours focusing your energy and attention on your assigned newsroom tasks and complete a shift handoff note before you leave. Please check in with your instructor and student editors before you leave your shift.

Course Notes and Policies

The practicum is credit/no-credit.

This semester, we will work from a virtual newsroom via Zoom meetings and extensive communication through Slack. Please stay engaged while on the Zoom calls. You don't need to have your camera on all the time, but please be respectful and attentive during the virtual newsroom meetings, in your comments and in chat. You'll need to check your USC email and the Annenberg Media Slack account regularly to keep up with newsroom communication.

We expect you to do much of your reporting using your phone and computer to prioritize safety and safeguard the common good. All of it should follow the public health guidelines in your area.

Please arrive on time, aware of the day's news and prepared to give your full attention to your newsroom duties. Please don't schedule or conduct interviews or work on assignments for other classes during your lab shift.

The student-led news outlets that make up Annenberg Media are counting on you. If you must miss a shift because of documented illness or emergency, please let your instructor and student editors know via the newsroom Slack channel. You'll need to make up the session within two weeks (religious holidays are exempt, as are some other limited circumstances.) If you miss any sessions at the beginning of the semester, please reach out to your instructor to make them up as soon as possible, so you are up to speed on everything you will need to operate successfully in the newsroom. If you're having difficulty fulfilling your shifts at any time or for any reason, please reach out to your instructor for support.

Learning how to become a good journalist means understanding and questioning your own biases and assumptions and considering the "fault lines" present in most stories. As a reporter, you will strive for a diverse range of sources and voices in your stories, and your instructors will help support those values.

This lab shift involves robust discussion about story ideas and peer review and editing. We are committed to a culture of respect at Annenberg Media. If you have concerns about interactions with student editors, reporters, or faculty, or want to express other concerns about the Media Center, you can use [this form](#) to provide anonymous feedback. It will be reviewed by the Director of the Media Center. If you prefer to raise issues to others at Annenberg who are NOT affiliated with the Media Center, you can fill out [this form](#).

Required Readings, Equipment and Supplementary Materials

There are no required textbooks in this class, but please bookmark the following Media Center guides:

- [USC Annenberg Media Resources](#) — links to schedules, tools, guidelines, etc.
- [Legal Guide](#) — writing about crime, minors, courts. Using anonymous sources.
- [Guide to Thoughtful Language](#) — writing about age, disability, ethnicity, race, gender, sexuality. Cautions on using obscenities, profanities, vulgarities.
- [11 Style Rules to Know Now](#): Review of AP style. Using Amy the Stylebot in Slack.
- [Media Center Ethics Guidelines](#) — a guide to practices and the workplace environment.
- [Resources and Links: Pitching and Researching Stories](#) — writing a solid pitch, working with polls, tips for fact checking and verification, USC contact and expert lists.

All USC students have access to the AP stylebook via the USC library.

(https://libproxy.usc.edu/login?url=http://www.apstylebook.com/usc_edu/), and you can also use Amy the Stylebot in the Annenberg Media Slack account for AP style questions.

Annenberg Media uses AP style in assignments, including when writing about race and ethnicity. The new [AP style guidelines](#) include capitalizing Black and deleting the hyphen in terms such as Asian American. Please consult the [Annenberg Media Guide to Thoughtful Language](#) for more discussion on accurate and respectful language.

All undergraduate and graduate Annenberg majors and minors are required to have a PC or Apple laptop that can be used in Annenberg classes. Please refer to the [Annenberg Digital Lounge](#) for more information. To connect to USC's Secure Wireless network, please visit USC's [Information Technology Services](#) website.

Annenberg is committed to every student's success. There are multiple resources available to assist students who are having issues with equipment or technology that limit their ability to participate fully in class. Please reach out to your instructor and/or advisor if this is the case. We can help connect you with resources.

Grading Breakdown of Grade

Assignment	% of Grade
Weekly handoff notes (15)	90%
Participation	10%
TOTAL	100%

Grading Standards

This is a credit/no credit course. You will not receive a letter grade for this class, but will be assessed on your effort and output. The aim is to produce publishable work, which could help you if you are seeking a job in a newsroom or as a student manager with Annenberg Media in subsequent semesters. You cannot pass this class without doing the hands-on work.

School of Journalism Grading Standards

Our curriculum is structured to prepare students to be successful in a professional news organization with the highest standards. Students will be evaluated first on the accuracy, fairness and completeness of their stories. They will also be evaluated for a story's writing style, editing or structure, layout or visual elements (when appropriate), newsworthiness and ability to meet deadlines. All stories should be written in AP style.

"A" stories are accurate, clear, comprehensive stories that are well written and require only minor copyediting (i.e., they would be aired or published). Video work must also be shot and edited creatively, be well paced and include good sound bites and natural sound that add flavor, color or emotion to the story.

"B" stories require more than minor editing and have a few style or spelling errors or one significant error of omission. For video, there may be minor flaws in the composition of some shots or in the editing. Good use of available sound bites is required.

"C" stories need considerable editing or rewriting and/or have many spelling, style or omission errors. Camera work and editing techniques in video stories are mediocre or unimaginative, but passable. Sound bites add little or no color - only information that could be better told in the reporter's narration.

"D" stories require excessive rewriting, have numerous errors and should not have been submitted. Camera work is unsatisfactory or fails to show important elements.

"F" stories have failed to meet the major criteria of the assignment, are late, have numerous errors or both. Your copy should not contain any errors in spelling, style, grammar and facts. Any misspelled or mispronounced proper noun will result in an automatic "F" on that assignment. Any factual error will also result in an automatic "F" on the assignment. Accuracy is the first law of journalism. The following are some other circumstances that would warrant a grade of "F" and potential USC/Annenberg disciplinary action:

- Fabricating a story or making up quotes or information.
- Plagiarizing a script/article, part of a script/article or information from any source.
- Staging video or telling interview subjects what to say.
- Using video shot by someone else and presenting it as original work.
- Shooting video in one location and presenting it as another location.
- Using the camcorder to intentionally intimidate, provoke or incite a person or a group of people to elicit more "dramatic" video.
- Promising, paying or giving someone something in exchange for doing an interview either on or off camera.

Add/Drop Dates for Session 001 (15 weeks: 1/15/2021 – 4/30/2021; Final Exam Period: 5/5-12/2021)

Friday, February 5: Last day to register and add classes for Session 001

Friday, February 5: Last day to drop a class without a mark of "W," except for Monday-only classes, and receive a refund for Session 001

Tuesday, February 9: Last day to drop a Monday-only class without a mark of "W" and receive a refund for Session 001

Friday, March 5: Last day to drop a course without a mark of “W” on the transcript for Session 001. Mark of “W” will still appear on student record and STARS report and tuition charges still apply. [Please drop any course by the end of week three (or the 20 percent mark of the session) to avoid tuition charges.]

Friday, March 5: Last day to change pass/no pass to letter grade for Session 001. [All major and minor courses must be taken for a letter grade.]

Friday, April 9: Last day to drop a class with a mark of “W” for Session 001

Course Schedule: A Weekly Breakdown

Important: Students are required to attend all shifts beginning the first week of classes. Many workshops will be presented during your shift; some will require you to view a recorded presentation BEFORE you arrive.

The following days in the Spring 2021 semester have been designated as Wellness Days for students: Friday, March 12, Tuesday, March 23, Wednesday, April 7, Thursday, April 22, and Friday, April 30. On Wellness Day, there will be no classes and no classwork expected of students.

Week 1 - January 18th (Martin Luther King's Birthday)

No class.

Week 2 - January 25th

Newsroom training as advised.

Week 3 - February 1st

Newsroom general assignment reporting as advised.

Week 4 - February 8th

Newsroom general assignment reporting as advised.

Week 5 - February 22th (President's Day)

No class.

Week 6 - February 22th

Newsroom general assignment reporting as advised.

Week 7 - March 1st

Newsroom general assignment reporting as advised.

Week 8 - March 8th

Newsroom general assignment reporting as advised.

Week 9 - March 15th

Newsroom general assignment reporting as advised.

Week 10 - March 22th

Newsroom general assignment reporting as advised.

Week 11 - March 29th

Newsroom general assignment reporting as advised.

Week 12 - April 5th

Newsroom general assignment reporting as advised.

Week 13 - April 12th

Newsroom general assignment reporting as advised.

Week 14 - April 19th

Newsroom general assignment reporting as advised.

Week 15 - April 26th

Newsroom general assignment reporting as advised.

Shifts end April 29th. Wrap party Monday, May 3rd.

Internships

The value of professional internships as part of the overall educational experience of our students has long been recognized by the School of Journalism. Accordingly, while internships are not required for successful completion of this course, any student enrolled in this course that undertakes and completes an approved, non-paid internship during this semester shall earn academic extra credit herein of an amount equal to 1 percent of the total available semester points for this course. To receive instructor approval, a student must request an internship letter from the Annenberg Career Development Office and bring it to the instructor to sign by the end of the third week of classes. The student must submit the signed letter to the media organization, along with the evaluation form provided by the Career Development Office. The form should be filled out by the intern supervisor and returned to the instructor at the end of the semester. No credit will be given if an evaluation form is not turned into the instructor by the last day of class. Note: The internship must be unpaid and can only be applied to one journalism or public relations class.

Statement on Academic Conduct and Support Systems

a. Academic Conduct

Plagiarism

Plagiarism – presenting someone else’s ideas as your own, either verbatim or recast in your own words – is a serious academic offense with serious consequences. Please familiarize yourself with the discussion of plagiarism in *SCampus* in Part B, Section 11, “Behavior Violating University Standards” policy.usc.edu/scampus-part-b. Other forms of academic dishonesty are equally unacceptable. See additional information in *SCampus* and university policies on scientific misconduct, policy.usc.edu/scientific-misconduct.

USC School of Journalism Policy on Academic Integrity

The following is the USC Annenberg School of Journalism’s policy on academic integrity and repeated in the syllabus for every course in the school:

“Since its founding, the USC School of Journalism has maintained a commitment to the highest standards of ethical conduct and academic excellence. Any student found plagiarizing, fabricating, cheating on examinations, and/or purchasing papers or other assignments faces sanctions ranging from an ‘F’ on the assignment to dismissal from

the School of Journalism. All academic integrity violations will be reported to the office of Student Judicial Affairs & Community Standards (SJACS), as per university policy, as well as journalism school administrators.”

In addition, it is assumed that the work you submit for this course is work you have produced entirely by yourself, and has not been previously produced by you for submission in another course or Learning Lab, without approval of the instructor.

b. Support Systems

Counseling and Mental Health - (213) 740-9355 – 24/7 on call

studenthealth.usc.edu/counseling

Free and confidential mental health treatment for students, including short-term psychotherapy, group counseling, stress fitness workshops, and crisis intervention.

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline - 1 (800) 273-8255 – 24/7 on call

suicidepreventionlifeline.org

Free and confidential emotional support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention and Services (RSVP) - (213) 740-9355(WELL), press “0” after hours – 24/7 on call

studenthealth.usc.edu/sexual-assault

Free and confidential therapy services, workshops, and training for situations related to gender-based harm.

Office of Equity and Diversity (OED)- (213) 740-5086 | Title IX – (213) 821-8298

equity.usc.edu, titleix.usc.edu

Information about how to get help or help someone affected by harassment or discrimination, rights of protected classes, reporting options, and additional resources for students, faculty, staff, visitors, and applicants. The university prohibits discrimination or harassment based on the following *protected characteristics*: race, color, national origin, ancestry, religion, sex, gender, gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation, age, physical disability, medical condition, mental disability, marital status, pregnancy, veteran status, genetic information, and any other characteristic which may be specified in applicable laws and governmental regulations. The university also prohibits sexual assault, non-consensual sexual contact, sexual misconduct, intimate partner violence, stalking, malicious dissuasion, retaliation, and violation of interim measures.

Reporting Incidents of Bias or Harassment - (213) 740-5086 or (213) 821-8298

usc-advocate.symplicity.com/care_report

Avenue to report incidents of bias, hate crimes, and microaggressions to the Office of Equity and Diversity | Title IX for appropriate investigation, supportive measures, and response.

The Office of Disability Services and Programs - (213) 740-0776

dsp.usc.edu

Support and accommodations for students with disabilities. Services include assistance in providing readers/notetakers/interpreters, special accommodations for test taking needs, assistance with architectural barriers, assistive technology, and support for individual needs.

USC Campus Support and Intervention - (213) 821-4710

campussupport.usc.edu

Assists students and families in resolving complex personal, financial, and academic issues adversely affecting their success as a student.

Diversity at USC - (213) 740-2101

diversity.usc.edu

Information on events, programs and training, the Provost's Diversity and Inclusion Council, Diversity Liaisons for each academic school, chronology, participation, and various resources for students.

USC Emergency - UPC: (213) 740-4321, HSC: (323) 442-1000 – 24/7 on call

dps.usc.edu, emergency.usc.edu

Emergency assistance and avenue to report a crime. Latest updates regarding safety, including ways in which instruction will be continued if an officially declared emergency makes travel to campus infeasible.

USC Department of Public Safety - UPC: (213) 740-6000, HSC: (323) 442-120 – 24/7 on call

dps.usc.edu

Non-emergency assistance or information.

Annenberg Student Success Fund

<https://annenberg.usc.edu/current-students/resources/additional-funding-resources>

The Annenberg Student Success Fund is a donor-funded financial aid account available to USC Annenberg undergraduate and graduate students for non-tuition expenses related to extra- and co-curricular programs and opportunities.

Breaking Bread Program [undergraduate students only]

<https://undergrad.usc.edu/faculty/bread/>

The Breaking Bread Program is designed to provide individual undergraduate students with an opportunity to meet and have scholarly discussions with faculty members outside of the normal classroom setting. Through this program, students and faculty enjoy good company and great conversation by literally "breaking bread" over a meal together and USC will pick up the tab! Your meal event can take place anywhere outside of the normal classroom setting. Your venue can be a restaurant or eatery on or off-campus.

About Your Instructor

Esmeralda Fabián Romero is a bilingual journalist, currently working as a contributor for LA School Report, an education news site reporting about the Los Angeles K-12 public education system. She also contributes to Spanish-language news outlets including La Opinión and Los Angeles Times en Español. Previously she has worked as a contributor for Fox News Latino and as MundoFOX network's newscast producer and assignment editor. Fabián Romero was selected as a fellow by the prestigious Loyola Law School as a Journalist Law School Fellow in 2014. She has been awarded by the California Teachers Association for Media Excellence in 2016 and has been selected multiple times as a fellow by New America Media. Her reporting in Spanish has been awarded by the National Association of Hispanic Publications. She is a member of the Education Writers Association and the National Association of Hispanic Journalists.