

JOUR 206: Reporting and Writing Practicum (Community Reporting)

1 Unit

Fall 2020 – Mondays

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

Section: 21002R/21004R/21006R

Location: Online

Instructor: Esmeralda Fabián Romero

Office: Virtual

Office Hours: By appointment, 6-7 p.m.

I. Course Description

This course gives journalism majors hands-on experience in writing digital news for publication on uscannenbergmedia.com. Students will work with the USC and South Los Angeles desks every two weeks, reporting, writing, and distributing in-depth stories for diverse audiences. Students work four hours a week for Annenberg Media to fulfill this lab shift, which runs concurrently with the core journalism courses JOUR 207 and 307, Reporting and Writing I and Reporting and Writing II.

II. Student Learning Outcomes

- Identify elements that make a story newsworthy for different audiences
- Identify and maintain diverse sources and develop story ideas in a specific community
- 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

III. Course Notes

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.

All reporting will be done remotely. Your instructor and Media Center staff will assist and support you to do this.

Netiquette norms: (Internet + Etiquette)

Students are encouraged to actively participate in online conversations during the pitching process and provide feedback to peers and instructors in a respectful manner in order that contributes to a positive classroom atmosphere.

I ask all students to make their best effort to follow these norms:

- Show respect to your peers and the instructor.
- Do not interrupt when someone else is speaking.
- Critique ideas and practices, not people. Support critique with evidence from course texts, or speak from personal experience.
- Allow everyone to participate (i.e., don't dominate or be engaged in unrelated activities.)
- Keep a positive tone when engaging in class discussions and group work.
- Equitably share group work across group members
- Accept feedback in the positive spirit with which it is given as a means of development
- If you are writing a chat, email or discussion post in anger, the content of your text will probably come off as disrespectful. Give yourself time to calm down and show respect.
 - Reflect kindness and concern for your peers. You never know when someone else is having the worst day of their life.
 - Let others know how you would like to be addressed and address others as they would like to be addressed.
 - Limit your use of the exclamation point.
 - Avoid using all caps. It is commonly interpreted as yelling.

IV. Description and Assessment of Assignments

Students in this course fulfill a weekly lab shift of four consecutive hours in the Media Center at Wallis Annenberg Hall. Students will report and write news stories as assigned by student editors and with the support of faculty and coaches for publication on *uscannenbergmedia.com* and Annenberg Media social media platforms. At the beginning of the semester, students will participate in mandatory newsroom training. Students will write a handoff note at the end of their shifts describing what they did during their time. Failure to submit a handoff note in Trello (the newsroom system) means a student will not get credit for that shift and must repeat it.

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 are required to keep up on the news by reading a variety of news outlets, listening to local and national radio or podcasts, and watching local and national news.

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 strive for a diverse range of sources and voices in your stories.

V. Grading

This class is about hands-on learning. It is designed to give you practical experience in a newsroom. In order to succeed in this class, you will need to attend your shift and complete the tasks assigned to you, including a shift handoff note to be done before you leave the (virtual) Media Center. 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, you must notify your instructor and student editors via the newsroom Slack channel and make up the session within two weeks (religious holidays are exempt, as are some other limited circumstances.) Please arrive on time. If you are late, you will not get credit for the shift and must make it up. Do not schedule interviews or assignments for other classes during this time period or you will not receive credit and must make up the shift.

c. Grading Standards

This class is a credit/no-credit class. You will not receive a letter grade for this class. You will be assessed on your effort and output, and the aim is to produce publishable work. That work 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.

VI. Assignment Submission Policy

Students will work under the guidance of student editors and with the support of faculty, instructors and coaches. Every week, you should arrive with your own story ideas. Instructors will discuss current stories and review the previous week’s work. All students must complete shift handoff notes in Trello before they leave the Media Center. You must check in with your instructor and student editors before you leave. If you do not complete a handoff note, you will not receive credit for your shift.

VII. Required Readings and Supplementary Materials

You will be expected to arrive for your shift with a knowledge of what is happening in local and national news. You will write in accordance with AP style. **You must check Slack and your USC email regularly.**

VIII. Laptop Policy

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.

IX. Add/Drop Dates for Session 001 (13 weeks: 8/17/20 – 11/13/20)

Friday, September 4: Last day to register and add classes for Session 001

Friday, September 4: Last day to change enrollment option to Pass/No Pass or Audit for Session 001

Friday, September 4: Last day to drop a class and receive a refund to avoid a mark of "W" on student record and STARS report

Friday, September 4: Last day to purchase or waive tuition refund insurance for fall

Friday, October 2: Last day to drop a course without a mark of "W" on the transcript only. 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 for session 001 (or the 20 percent mark of the session in which the course is offered) to avoid tuition charges.]

Friday, October 2: Last day to change a Pass/No Pass course to letter grade

Friday, November 6: Last day to drop a class with a mark of "W" for Session 001

X. Course Schedule: A Weekly Breakdown

Important note to students: Be advised that this syllabus is subject to change.

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.

Week 1 — Aug. 17

- Onboarding and overview: Meet the Media Center director and executive editor. Review previous student work and Annenberg Media's greatest hits.
- Getting organized: Obtain a login for the Annenberg publishing system. Get on Slack and Trello. Follow Annenberg Media on Twitter, Instagram and Facebook.
- Lecture: "News Writing for the Media Center." Topics include ledes, the nut graf and basic story structure. We'll review examples from outside publications and analyze a sample breaking news story for a brief writing exercise.

Week 2 — Aug. 24

- More introductions: Meet your student editors for your weekly shift.
- Lecture: "Tips for Handoffs." We'll use the sample breaking news story from Week 1 to show how to summarize basic facts, use quotes and develop "story-fied" text for handoffs to Media Center reporters and editors working later in the news cycle.
- Lecture: "So You're a Reporter ... Now What?" Topics include identifying yourself as an Annenberg reporter; setting up and conducting interviews; reviewing Media Center ethics guidelines; covering sensitive topics; dealing with legal issues; mastering style and language basics.

- Bookmarks: Media Center guides (click the links):
- 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.

Week 3 — Aug. 31

- Getting started in the Arc Composer publishing system: File a sample story using dummy copy and photos. Write a headline, subheadline, caption, hyperlink.
- Lecture: “How to Pitch a Story.” What is an Annenberg Media story? Who is our audience? How does this translate into a pitch? Other topics: the typical shift schedule, filing pitches and reviewing story assignments in Trello, how to find stories.
- Lecture: “Annenberg Media Ethics and Guidelines.” Topics include anonymous sources, corrections, conflicts of interest, privacy rights, personal politics, verification.
- Bookmarks: Media Center resources from the day’s lectures (click the links):
- 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.

Week 4 — Sept. 7

The student-led Media Center newsroom is up and running fully (and remotely.) You will work on stories as assigned by the editors. You are also encouraged to file your own story pitches to Trello the night before or arrive for your weekly shift prepared to share your story ideas. You will need to write a handoff note at the end of your shift.

Week 5 — Sept. 14

Newsroom production continues.

Week 6 — Sept. 21

Newsroom production continues.

Week 7 — Sept. 28

Newsroom production continues.

Week 8 — Oct. 5

Newsroom production continues.

Week 9 – Oct. 12

Newsroom production continues.

Week 10 – Oct. 19

Newsroom production continues.

Week 11 – Oct. 26

Newsroom production continues.

Week 12 – Nov. 2

Newsroom production continues.

Week 13 – Nov. 9

Last week of newsroom production. There is no final for this class, but there will be a wrap party.

XI. Policies and Procedures**Additional Policies**

Please see the clearly stated policies above. You will need to check your USC email and Slack regularly as well as follow the preceding rules about lab shifts.

Communication

Please contact me by Slack when possible. Otherwise, you may contact me by email. I'll return your messages within 24 hours.

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 Support and Advocacy – (213) 821-4710

uscsa.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.

XII. About Your Instructor

Esmeralda Fabián Romero is a bilingual journalist, currently working as a senior reporter for LA School Report, an education news site reporting about the Los Angeles K-12 public education system. She also collaborates with Spanish-language news outlets 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.