



## **JOUR 207: Reporting and Writing I** **3 Units**

**Fall 2020 – Tuesdays – 12-2:30 p.m. PST**

**Section:** 21096D

**Location:** Online

**Instructor:** Yazmin Cruz

**Office:** Online via Zoom

**Student Hours:** Tuesdays, 2:30-4 p.m., and by appointment

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### **I. Course Description**

Welcome to JOUR 207. The goals of this course are to sharpen your writing, reporting, and critical thinking skills, as well as teach you about news values, ethics, copy editing, interviewing, fact-checking, AP style and how to accurately report and write about a diverse world *on deadline*.

This course will introduce you to the step-by-step process of producing news content, from understanding the concept of news judgment — when an event is newsworthy and why — to the research, reporting, writing and dissemination of news in a 21<sup>st</sup> century news ecosystem.

We believe students should begin by learning what makes a story newsworthy — and how that might change depending on the news outlet — and what elements should be included in basic news stories. From there we'll move to the acquisition of basic news skills, including the writing of leads, briefs, short stories, tweets and the basics of interviewing, reporting/researching and fact-checking through a variety of assignments.

All students will complete online self-directed learning modules on Associated Press style and grammar, spelling and punctuation. You will learn how to copy edit the work of others and how to self-edit your own work. Finally, part of your training in this introductory news writing and reporting course includes professionalism through a thorough review and discussion of codes of ethics and ethics case studies.

This course will be conducted online through Zoom and Blackboard. Each week, you will be expected to complete a set of readings and exercises independently (asynchronously) before we meet for class. While in class, we will work together (synchronously) to answer questions, review your work, and continue to hone your skills.

You are expected to login to class on Time, prepared (i.e., having done your readings and homework assignments), and be ready to discuss various news-related topics. You are also expected to participate in class and have your camera on during our class time. If you're not already a newshound, it is strongly suggested that you become one. A good journalist knows what's happening all around the world.

Every student also is required to schedule a one-on-one meeting with me sometime during the semester, ideally around Week 5 or 6. You're all welcome to meet with me more often, of course. And each student is encouraged to meet at least once with the writing coach this semester but please note: You should only show the writing coach work that has already been graded. In other words, the coach cannot help you polish stories that have not yet been edited by your instructor.

By the end of this course, you will understand what makes an event newsworthy, and have the capability to produce accurate, well-written, well-sourced tweets and short news stories on deadline.

You will report and write news stories while also learning about some of the basic types of coverage media outlets focus on — crime, courts, government meetings, speeches, press conferences and polls.

If you miss class, you cannot make up an in-class assignment. In addition, homework assignments will be weighted more heavily in the second half of the semester, meaning they will count for a higher portion of your grade at the end of the semester as stories get more complex. You will be given the opportunity to rewrite one homework assignment (the two grades will be averaged).

**Please note:** You are *not* allowed to interview friends and family members for stories. And you are *not* allowed to misrepresent yourselves when seeking an interview (i.e., telling a source you are writing for The Daily Trojan or the Annenberg Media Center if you are not actually doing so). You are *not* allowed to submit single source stories unless given the okay by your instructor.

The course that follows, JOUR 307, will build on the skills learned in JOUR 207 and focus on longer enterprise (i.e., feature) stories.

## II. Student Learning Outcomes

### Learning Objectives:

By the end of this course, students will be able to:

- Write a hard news story on deadline with multiple sources, effective quotes, and a compelling lead, using clear and concise language and correct grammar, punctuation, spelling and AP style.
- Conduct research and verify information using diverse primary and secondary sources

**Concurrent Enrollment:** JOUR 321

## III. Course Notes

Assignments will be graded on accuracy, grammar, spelling, AP style, clarity, deadlines, conciseness, structure, proper punctuation, quality of interviews/reporting and use of quotes, if applicable, use of numbers, quality of sources, attribution, research, objectivity, etc.

Rubrics will be provided for each assignment on Blackboard.

You must abide by the Society of Professional Journalists Code of Ethics (<http://www.spj.org/ethicscode.asp>), NPPA (<https://nppa.org/ethics>), SND (<http://www.snd.org>) and the RTNDA Code of Ethics ([http://www.rtdna.org/content/rtdna\\_code\\_of\\_ethics#.VTNMjItAwUU](http://www.rtdna.org/content/rtdna_code_of_ethics#.VTNMjItAwUU)).

## IV. Description and Assessment of Assignments

- **News leads:** You will learn how to write an info-packed, yet readable news lead in a sentence of 35 words or less from a factsheet. You also will learn to support this lead.
- **News briefs:** You will write short yet complete news stories, or briefs, of one to three paragraphs from a factsheet.

- **News stories:** You will research, report on and write 500-word news stories on deadline. We will start with factsheets, but then you will report stories. The stories will be assigned by your instructor.
- **AP/GSP modules on Blackboard:** These self-paced modules must be completed before the midterm.
- **Tweets:** You will learn how to use social media for reporting, especially during live events, and developing sources. You also will learn how to write tweets, engage with your audience and verify information.
- **Ethics/Media tear-ups:** Students will be paired up and assigned a specific journalistic ethical question to research. In class, students will be responsible for leading a class discussion. These should reference specific stories from mainstream outlets such as CNN, the Los Angeles Times, USA Today, etc. to share with the class and discuss key questions about its production and merit. (How to lead a tear-up and what is expected will be discussed in class, and an outline uploaded to Bb).
- **Midterm:** At the midpoint of the semester, you will be tested on grammar, spelling, punctuation, AP style, ethics and writing.
- **Final:** You will report and write a 500- to 750-word story and write at least three tweets for this story.

## V. Grading

### a. Breakdown of Grade

Assignments	% of grade
AP style, GSP Modules	5%
In-class assignments (credit/no credit)	10%
Ethics presentation/ media tear-ups	5%
Homework assignments (up to midterm)	10%
Homework assignments (after midterm)	30%
Midterm	15%
Final	25%
<b><u>Total</u></b>	<b><u>100 %</u></b>

### b. Grading Scale

95% to 100%: A	80% to 83%: B-	67% to 69%: D+
90% to 94%: A-	77% to 79%: C+	64% to 66%: D
87% to 89%: B+	74% to 76%: C	60% to 63%: D-
84% to 86%: B	70% to 73%: C-	0% to 59%: F

### c. Grading Standards

#### *Journalism*

All assignments will be edited on a professional basis and you will be judged first on the accuracy and fairness and of your stories. You will then be evaluated for broadcast style, editing, production value, originality and the ability to meet deadlines.

**“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.
- Missing a deadline.

#### **d. Grading Timeline**

All homework assignments should be uploaded to Blackboard in a Word document no later than one week after they are assigned (i.e., they are due before the next class session). Sometimes, deadlines will be even tighter. I will return your edited homework and in-class assignments within a week, and option sooner.

### **VI. Assignment Rubrics**

Rubrics for each assignment will be uploaded to Blackboard.

### **VII. Assignment Submission Policy**

Short assignments will be due in class and homework assignments will be due before the next class session. Please upload your assignments to Blackboard in a Word document and give your file a two-word slug followed by an underscore and your last name. Example: CarFire\_Cruz or CouncilMeeting\_Cruz.

Students are encouraged to submit their work for consideration to Annenberg Media or the Daily Trojan, or pitch it to mainstream media outlets. Visit <http://bit.ly/SubmitAnnenbergMedia> for more information about the submission and review process and email Daily Trojan news editors at [dt.city@gmail.com](mailto:dt.city@gmail.com) for more on how to pitch your work to the campus newspaper.

## Additional Policies

1. All readings assigned for that day should be completed before each class. Late assignments will not be accepted.
2. Homework needs to be posted on Blackboard in a Word document by deadline.
3. Always save all assignments and handouts. Keep them organized and have them handy during classTime.
4. Read and RE-READ all handouts. You will write better.
5. Students may rewrite one homework or in class assignment that received a low grade. The recorded grade on the rewritten assignment will be the average between the new and old grades. (An “F” on the original and an “A” on the rewrite would be a “C”.) I will return your graded assignments on a Timely basis with comments and suggested corrections. If you don’t understand a comment or correction, or you disagree, reach out to your instructor.
6. There will be timed assignments that can only be completed in class. Make-up assignments for the in-class work will not be possible. You cannot be late on a story and you should not be late to class. Please alert your instructor if you’re going to be late or miss a class for personal emergencies or illness.
7. Accuracy is the number one priority. Your reputation as a journalist and the reputation of the news organization you work for hangs in the balance. Is the information accurate, is the grammar correct, are the names spelled correctly? Have you identified the sources of your report? Is the writing style conversational? Have you written a lead that will grab the viewers’ attention? Is the style and tone appropriate for the report?
8. In addition to being ethical in developing and writing your stories, it is important that you also consider diversity. When looking at your work, you should consider who is involved and how it will impact others. Is your work fair and does it represent all stakeholders in a balanced manner? This class will help you learn how to write in a manner that includes diverse viewpoints. The class will discuss socioeconomic/class, race/ethnicity, religion, gender/sexual orientation, geography and generations in the context of current events and journalism.

## VIII. Required Readings and Supplementary Materials

- *Inside ReporOng: A Practical Guide to the Craft of Journalism* (2012) Author: Tim Harrower.  
McGraw-Hill, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, 2012
  - ISBN: 978-0073526171
- *The Associated Press Stylebook and Briefing on Media Law*, 55<sup>th</sup> Edition
  - ISBN-10: 1541647572
  - ISBN-13: 978-1541647572

The following Diversity Stylebooks are on Bb:

Diversity Styleguide: <https://www.diversitystyleguide.com/>

National Center of Disability and Journalism: <http://ncdj.org/style-guide/>

LGBT Terminology: <https://www.nlgja.org/stylebook/>

NAJA Styleguide: <https://www.naja.com/resources/naja-ap-style-guide/>

NABJ Styleguide: <https://www.nabj.org/page/styleguide>

AAJA Styleguide: <http://sjsujmc.com/MCOM285/alaban/2018/03/29/aajas-guide-to-covering-asian-america/>

Immigration Styleguide: [https://www.raceforward.org/sites/default/files/DTIW\\_update\\_JournalistStyleGuide4.pdf](https://www.raceforward.org/sites/default/files/DTIW_update_JournalistStyleGuide4.pdf)

Race Reporting Guide: <https://www.raceforward.org/sites/default/files/>

[Race%20Reporting%20Guide%20by%20Race%20Forward\\_V1.1.1.pdf](https://www.raceforward.org/sites/default/files/Race%20Reporting%20Guide%20by%20Race%20Forward_V1.1.1.pdf)

SAJA Styleguide: [http://www1.lasalle.edu/~bea`y/310/ACES\\_CD/reference/reference\\_and\\_resources/](http://www1.lasalle.edu/~bea`y/310/ACES_CD/reference/reference_and_resources/)

[SAJastyle.pdf](#)

## Suggested Readings:

Follow at least three news organizations on Twitter and sign up for three push alerts. Here are a few I suggest but feel free to choose based on likes and future interests. @AP, @washingtonpost @THR (The Hollywood Reporter), @laTimes, @ABC, @CBSNews, @NBCNews, @nyTimes, @BBCWorld, @reuters, @CNN, @HuffPost, @theskimm, @LAist, @LAMag, @FoxNews, @NPR and @KPCC

Watch at least one national and local newscast every day:

NBC Nightly News, CBS Evening News, ABC World News, KABC, KCBS/KCAL, KNBC, KTLA, KTTV, Spectrum News 1

Listen to NPR

KPCC/Southern California Public Radio

Add these news organizations on Instagram and watch their Stories: The Guardian, CNN, New York Times, LA Times

## Helpful websites:

BBC Social Media Academy: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/academy/journalism/skills/social-media>

Media Shi\_: [http://www.pbs.org/mediashi\\_/](http://www.pbs.org/mediashi_/)

Journalist's Toolbox: <http://www.journaliststoolbox.org/archive/mobile-journalism/>

NPPA: <https://nppa.org>

SPJ: <http://www.spj.org>

NPR training: <http://training.npr.org/category/social-media/>

NPR Social Media Code of Ethics: <http://ethics.npr.org/tag/social-media/>

[Annenberg Media Guide to Thoughtful Language](#)

SPJ Code of Ethics at <http://www.spj.org/ethicscode.asp>

ONA Code of Ethics at <http://journalists.org/?page=onamission>

<https://www.poynter.org/news/what-every-young-journalist-should-know-about-using-twi`er>

<https://www.nyguild.org/front-page-details/basic-best-practices-for-journalists-on-twi`er>

<https://www.poynter.org/news/twi`er-dustups-are-reminder-journalists-you-are-what-you-tweet>

## IX. 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.

## X. 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

## XI. Course Schedule: A Weekly Breakdown

**Important note to students:** Be advised that this syllabus is subject to change — and probably will change — based on the progress of the class, news events, and/or guest speaker availability.

**Readings should be completed before the day's class session.**

## **Week 1 — Tues., Aug. 18 — Course intro, Newsworthiness, Ethics, Diversity and Hard News Leads (The following should be completed before we meet for class).**

### **Discussion topics:**

- What makes something newsworthy?
- How does it change depending on the news outlet?
- Basic Journalistic Ethics. What are they today?
- Diversity and ethics

### **Watch Bb videos on:**

- Course intro and Blackboard
- Newsworthiness
- How to write a hard news lead

### **Readings:**

- Harrower: Ch. 7, 8
- AP Stylebook: Review The Associated Press Statement on News Values and Principles
- On Bb:

[The Elements of Journalism](#)

[SPJ Video: Media Ethics](#)

[Diversity is Accuracy](#)

### **Homework:**

Intros – Due on Disc board Sunday, Aug. 16.

Five hard news leads from factsheets due today Aug. 18 at 12 p.m. in a Word doc, uploaded to Bb.

### **In Class:**

Review leads

Write leads. The class will peer review leads together.

Sign up for ethics discussions (instructor will put you into teams of two) and news tear-ups (individual).

## **Week 2 — Tues., Aug. 25 — Supporting your lead, objectivity, Fault Lines (The following should be completed before we meet for class)**

### **Discussion topics:**

- After you have written an info-packed hard news lead, the second paragraph of a story must support the lead. How do you do that?
- As reporters, you also must be mindful to be inclusive when it comes to coverage of your community and include a wide range of voices in your stories. We will use the Maynard Institute's Fault Lines approach to think about issues of generation, gender, class, race/ethnicity, geography and access to technology.
- We also will discuss objectivity and how that idea has evolved over the years.

### **Watch Bb videos about:**

- Supporting paragraphs

- Fault Lines
- Objectivity

**Readings:**

- Harrower, Chapter 3, Pgs. 36-47.
- AP Stylebook: A,B,C,D,E
- On Bb:
  - [“A Reckoning Over Objectivity, Led by Black Journalists.”](#)
  - [Twitter thread response to Lowery](#)
  - [How to Cross Your Fault Lines](#)

**Homework:**

Write five hard news leads *plus* Supporting graphs for each from factsheets that will be uploaded to Bb today by 12 p.m. in a Word doc.

**In class:**

Review leads and Supporting graphs  
 Small group discussion  
 Team Ethics discussion/media tear-ups

**Week 3 — Tues., Sept. 1 — How to write news briefs, basic story structure, fighting bias (The following should be completed before we meet for class)**

**Discussion topics:**

- This week we’ll learn how to write news briefs, tell a complete story. They can be one paragraph to three paragraphs long. Each paragraph can be one to three sentences long. There’s no exact formula. You must use your critical thinking skills to determine what your audience needs to know.
- Story structure is based on the inverted pyramid, where the most pressing information goes at the top.
- We’ll discuss implicit bias and how that may impact journalism and newsrooms.

**Watch Bb videos on:**

- News briefs and story structure/inverted pyramid
- [How Journalists Minimize Bias](#)

**Readings:**

- Harrower: Chapter 3, Pg. 41-53.; 82-85.
- AP Stylebook: F,G,H,I, J
- On Bb:
  - [“How Implicit Bias Works in Journalism.”](#)

**Homework:**

Three news briefs from factsheets should be uploaded to Bb today by 9 a.m. in a Word doc.

**In-class:**

Review news briefs  
 Class activity  
 Team Ethics discussion/media tear-ups

## **Week 4 — Tues., Sept. 8 — Writing longer stories, using quotes, sidebars, protest coverage and editing (The following should be completed before we meet for class)**

This week we'll start writing full news stories. Moving from a three-paragraph news brief to a 300- to 500-word story is not that much of a leap. The key is organization. It involves expanding on and Supporting the 5 w's and h with data, description and quotes.

### **Discussion topics:**

- What qualifies as a good quote?
- The ethics of protest coverage.
- How to think about "sidebars" or other stories related to the main story.
- How to copy-edit and self-edit.

### **Watch Bb videos on:**

- Writing longer stories, quotes, sidebars
- [SPJ Video — Editing](#)
- [Journalist's Toolbox – Copy Editing Tools](#)

### **Readings:**

- Harrower: Pgs. 50-64.
- AP Stylebook: K,L,M,N,O
- On Bb:  
["It's Time to Change the Way the Media Reports on Protests. Here are some Ideas."](#)  
[By dismantling its copy desk, The New York Times is making a mistake that's been made before](#)

### **Homework:**

Write one 300-word story and one 500-word story from fact sheets and upload both to Bb by 12 p.m. today in a Word doc

### **In-class:**

Review longer stories  
Small group discussion  
Editing activity  
Team Ethics discussion/media tear-ups

## **Week 5 — Tues., Sept. 15 — Review for Midterm (The following should be completed before we meet for class)**

### **Discussion topics:**

- We will review the basics of writing a lead, a hard news story, writing conventions, AP style and editing tips.
- We'll also review the Maynard Institute's Fault Lines.

### **Readings:**

Review all your graded work.

### **Homework:**

Come to class with any questions about what we've covered so far this semester.

Watch this video on verification: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o9rBZ5FwFjw>

**In-class:**

Poll  
Peer reviewed writing assignment  
Group editing assignment  
Team Ethics discussion/media tear-ups

**Week 6 — Tues., Sept. 22 — Midterm**

The midterm will include an editing assignment and writing assignments (leads, a brief and a story from factsheets) that are due **today** by the end of class. You may use the AP Stylebook and the dictionary for both.

**Week 7 — Tues., Sept. 29 — Reporting and Interviewing (The following should be completed before we meet for class)****Discussion topics:**

- Reporting can involve stories that are “breaking” or that you pitch to an editor. In both cases, you must spend whatever Time you have to find sources, primary and secondary, to help with your reporting and writing.
- You must learn to use the web, improve your observation skills, take notes as well as use recording devices for notes, photos and video, and most important, learn about interviewing, from the initial “ask” to the “follow-up.”
- Tips about Journalists and the Law also will be reviewed.

**Watch Bb videos on:**

- Interviewing
- [5 Simple Journalist Techniques for Effective Interviews](#) (for broadcast, but good tipsoverall)
- [Katie Couric on how to conduct a good interview](#) (also from a broadcaster, but good pointers)
- [SPJ Student Law Video](#)

**Readings:**

- Harrower, Pgs. 68-85.
- AP Stylebook: “Briefing on Media Law.”  
[https://archives.cjr.org/realtalk/the\\_art\\_of\\_the\\_interview.php](https://archives.cjr.org/realtalk/the_art_of_the_interview.php) Good Tips on interviewing.

**Homework:**

Identify, get the contact info for, and send an email to, a local news reporter, requesting a short interview for this class. A copy of your email request to the reporter should be uploaded to Bb today by 12 p.m. on Bb. The story should include the basic info about the reporter but also answer the following questions: What do young journalists need to master to succeed in the world of journalism today? Is the lack of diversity in newsrooms a problem? If so, what can be done about it? Write no more than 500 words. Upload it to Bb in a Word doc by next Tuesday, Oct. 6.

**In-Class:**

Poll  
Review homework  
Group role play  
Team Ethics discussion/media tear-ups

**Week 8 — Tues., Oct. 6 — Covering polls, surveys and other numbers (The following should be completed before we meet for class)**

**Discussion topics:**

- Regardless of beat, journalists often write about public opinion polls and surveys, which are designed to measure the public's attitudes about an issue or idea.
- Researchers frequently conduct national polls and surveys to better understand how Americans feel about public policy topics such as candidates, gun control, immigration reform and decriminalizing drug use.
- When covering polls, it's important for journalists to try to gauge the quality of a poll and make sure claims made about the results actually match the data collected.
- Sometimes, pollsters overgeneralize or exaggerate their findings. Sometimes, flaws in the way they choose participants or collect data make it tough to tell what the results really mean.

**Watch videos on Bb about:**

- How to write about polls and surveys
- Tips for using numbers in stories

**Readings:**

- AP Stylebook: sections on Polls and Surveys; AP Social Media Guidelines
- On Bb:

[11 Questions Journalists Should Ask about Public Opinion Polls](#)

["Polls rarely ask about concerns vital to minority voters."](#)

**Homework:**

You will write a 500-word story about a poll or survey (it will be your job to find one). Include a quote from someone who released the poll, and someone who may disagree with the poll, and someone who has an interest in the subject. Upload your story in a Word doc to Bb by next Tuesday, Oct. 13.

**In-class:**

Review journalists interview stories in class

Poll

Small group activity

Team Ethics discussion/media tear-ups

**Week 9 — Tues., Oct. 13 — Speeches, meetings and news conferences, tweeting (The following should be completed before we meet for class)****Discussion topics:**

- Covering speeches, meetings and news conferences are in many ways remarkably similar. The major differences are that meetings and news conferences often have *several* speakers while a speech has *one* speaker, which adds to the level of complexity. No matter what you are covering, it is your job as the reporter to use your critical thinking and news judgment skills to choose the most noteworthy element of what is discussed during a speech, meeting or news conference to feature in the lead and story.
- Option this includes getting a hold of the meeting agenda (for a meeting) beforehand and getting up to speed on items that are listed.
- To produce a fully reported story, journalists must find sources, primary and secondary; as well as real people who are affected by the news.
- Tweets — How to write them on deadline and how to use them to promote a story.

**Watch Bb videos on:**

- Covering speeches, meeting and news conferences
- Tweeting

- [SPJ Video: Fake News](#)

**Readings:**

- Harrower: Pgs. 106-110

**Homework:**

You will write about a 500-word story about a meeting, news conference or speech (likely via Zoom). Include two tweets. An event on campus is fine. Be sure to do research on the subject/speaker or get a copy of the meeting agenda. Upload a 500-word story to Bb in a Word doc by Tuesday, Oct. 20.

**In-class:**

Review poll/survey stories and Tweets

We'll review a budget from a local municipality and find: revenue, expenses.

Students will write a news brief and a Tweet from this budget.

Team Ethics discussion/media tear-ups

**Week 10 — Tues., Oct. 20 — Covering law enforcement, writing headlines (The following should be completed before we meet for class)**

**Discussion topics:**

Crime and public safety are top concerns. Covering these topics accurately and not sensationalizing stories is key, however. So is avoiding stereotypes, keeping victims safe, treating suspects and minors fairly, and learning how to interview victims and witnesses of trauma in a sensitive manner.

**Watch Bb videos on:**

- The police beat
- [SPJ Video on Writing Headlines](#)

**Readings:**

- Harrower: Pgs. 102-103

- On Bb:

["The Mug Shot, a Crime Story Staple, is Dropped by Some Newsrooms and Police"](#)  
[The Dart Center – Working with Victims and Survivors](#)

**Homework:**

See the in-class assignments below.

**In-class:**

Two guest speakers — a law enforcement officer and a cops reporter — will discuss their jobs and how they see their relationship to each other. You will write a 500-word story about what they say, which is due within 24 hours (Wednesday, Oct. 21, by 12 p.m.).

\*\*The topic for the final will be announced. You will be asked to conduct research and interviews by Nov. 10. You will add this material to a "live" interview with a source on the day of the final and put together a story on deadline on Tuesday, Nov. 19 from 11 a.m. - 1 p.m.

**Week 11 — Tues., Oct. 27 — Breaking news, self-care (The following should be completed before we meet for class)**

**Discussion topics:**

- Some of the most difficult stories reporters cover are breaking news stories such as elections, accidents, earthquakes and other disasters that involve injuries, the loss of property and life. Reporters and newsrooms have to have a plan in the event of such events.
- Reporters also have to know where to go to get information, how to take care of themselves, and how to deal with Victims.

**Watch Bb videos on:**

- Covering breaking news/elections
- [SPJ Video on Reporting during the COVID pandemic.](#)

**Readings:**

- On Bb:  
[PBS NewsHour: How to Cover the Presidential Race](#)  
[Covering Elections: Journalist Safety Kit](#)

**Homework:**

A 500-word story, plus three tweets, about the presidential election, will be due next Tuesday, Nov. 3, four hours after the election is called. If it has not yet been called late into the night, file what you can by midnight. The tweets should focus on something at the beginning of your coverage, the middle and the end of your coverage. Your story should include quotes from at least three people.

**In-class:**

Review news conference/speech and cops assignments  
Team Ethics discussion/media tear-ups  
Small group discussions

**Week 12 — Tues., Nov. 3 — Covering court trials (The following should be completed before we meet for class)****Discussion topics:**

- After a suspect is charged, the court reporter takes over from the cop reporter. Learning about how civil and criminal courts work is imperative no matter what beat you cover, be it sports or celebrities or business.
- You also find stories about social justice gone wrong or inspiring stories of redemption. There are heartbreaking murder trials, important legal rulings and incredible human-interest stories.

**Watch Bb videos on:**

- How trials work

**Readings:**

- Harrower: Pgs. 104-105.
- On Bb:  
[About California Courts](#)  
[Reporting on Courts](#)  
[Should we be afraid of AI in the Criminal Justice System?](#)

**Homework:**

Write the body of a trial story — or the “B” matter — from a factsheet on Bb based on a Law & Order episode. Make it around 200 words. Upload to Bb by 12 p.m. today in a Word doc.

**In-class:**

Review today’s breaking news assignment

We will watch the trial portion of the L&O episode and top the material you’ve already written with the lead and Supporting paragraph.

**Week 13 — Tues., Nov. 10 — Final exam review (The following should be completed before we meet for class)**

**Discussion topics:**

The final exam will be a 500- to 750-word story written on deadline during the exam period. It will involve research into the topic ahead of Time. You will then listen to a live presentation by a speaker during the final exam period and write the story.

Your final story must include research and sources you contacted and quoted ahead of Time as well as a lead and quotes from the speaker you just heard from.

This week, we will learn how to compile “B” matter for your story and how to top it with “A” matter.

**Watch Bb videos on:**

- Writing “A” and “B” matter
- [Diversifying your Sources](#)

**Homework:**

Write draft of “B” matter for final story

**In-class:**

Review election and trial stories

Review “B” matter for final stories

Course and instructor evaluations

Small group discussions

**FINAL EXAM — Thurs., Nov. 19, 11 a.m.-1 p.m.**

Incorporate guest speaker’s comments into your previous research/writing (“B” matter). Due today.

**XII. Policies and Procedures**

**Additional Policies**

Since this class will be conducted online, it is important that you regularly check your USC email for communication about this and other classes.

**Communication**

Student hours are listed at the top of the syllabus, but to reiterate, you are more than welcome to schedule a time to talk or confer via Zoom at any Time during the semester. I also will respond to emails within 24 hours, if not sooner. If for some reason I don’t, please follow up.

## 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](http://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](http://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](http://studenthealth.usc.edu/counseling)

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

*NaDonal Suicide PrevenOon Lifeline - 1 (800) 273-8255 – 24/7 on call*

[suicideprevenNonlifeline.org](http://suicideprevenNonlifeline.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](http://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](http://equity.usc.edu), [titleix.usc.edu](http://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.symplcity.com/care\\_report](http://usc-advocate.symplcity.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](http://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](http://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](http://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](http://dps.usc.edu), [emergency.usc.edu](http://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](http://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.

### **XIII. About Your Instructor**

Yazmin Cruz is a Los Angeles-based multimedia journalist with a background in editing, video production, and audience engagement. She currently works as a digital producer at Spectrum News 1, where she edits TV reporter’s stories, writes breaking news and engages with the audience via social media. Before that, she mentored students at the Annenberg Media Center during her year as an Annenberg Leadership Initiative Fellow. She was a part of the Ventura County Star breaking news team that was recognized by the California News Publishers Association for its coverage of the devastating Thomas fire, Montecito mudslides, Borderline shooting and Woolsey fire. She has a passion for turning messy data into user-friendly interactive maps, graphics or visualizations to complement data-driven stories.