**JOUR 446: Entertainment Reporting**

**2 Units**

**Spring 2021 – Wednesdays – 12-1:40 p.m.**

**Section:** 21208R

**Location:** Online

**Instructor: Mary Murphy**

**Office:** ASC 301 G

**Office Hours:** By apt. on Zoom or Facetime

**Contact Info:** mmurphystar@yahoo.com

**I. Course Description:**

The entertainment industry is an unstoppable global force—an epicenter for art, music, film, television, pop culture, social justice and more. It is no wonder more and more political candidates and leaders emerge from celebrity backgrounds—from Ronald Reagan to Donald J. Trump, a reality TV star for 14 years, to the newly elected president of the Ukraine, Petro Poroshenko, who had previously played a president on a TV comedy.

At the heart of both industries is mass seduction: Bill Clinton blew his saxophone on the *Arsenio Hall Show* while running for President and Arnold Schwarzenegger, one of the biggest superstars in the world, announced his candidacy for California governor on *The Tonight Show.* The marriage of entertainment and politics isn’t new; but technologies like social media have exploded the power celebrities have on our society. The entertainment industry provides a media platform for celebrities to exercise their influence over others, and the technology industry has empowered those celebrities to turn themselves into powerful brands with a daily presence in the lives of their fans.

The purpose of this class is to teach students to navigate and report on the mass celebritization of our culture and politics, and to familiarize them with specific techniques for covering the intersection of entertainment and politics, and the endless coil of people and industries who exploit them. Techniques for story development, interviewing and covering breaking news will be paramount to this process. Students will learn to profile performers, politicians, influencers and various members of the entertainment and political universe while developing skills to report quickly, precisely and accurately, both in class and in the field or though social media, on various aspects of the industries. Topics will include official White House channels to the power of film, television and late-night comedians like Trevor Noah and Jimmy Kimmel, or social media savants like John Krasinski and Sarah Cooper, who stepped in to fill the void when COVID-19 shut down production in Hollywood. The role of the journalist has never been more important to help audiences distinguish between fact and fantasy.

**II. Overall Learning Objectives and Assessment:**

The course will teach students to research, report and write stories covering various disciplines within the entertainment/political world – business stories, feature stories, trend stories, breaking news stories and character studies in all media. You will write articles, cover live events (or quasi-live events), and develop skills to analyze and report on the ever-growing influence of media on the workings of our democracy. Social media in particular will be a focus, as celebrities, candidates and the president have taken to Twitter, Instagram, Facebook and TikTok to influence their fans and constituents.

**III. Course Notes**

This course will be taught in class or on Zoom, depending on the availability of a guest speaker or breaking news. If the class is taught on Zoom, a recording will be available. If the class is taught in person, professors expect students to be present unless there is a medical excuse or the student reaches out to the professor in advance.

**IV. Description and Assessment of Assignments**

This class is for you. You will be treated professionally and we will be here to help. Excellence and effort will be rewarded, as will enthusiasm, energy and attention to detail. Class participation is important. You will be writing short reported features. Your final will be a 1500-word article or a podcast, based on your original reporting. The goal of this class is to have a paper that can be publishable by the end of the semester.

**Homework assignments will be given in class.** Most homework assignments given during the Wednesday class are **due Tuesday at 7 p.m. by email.**

**V. Grading**

**a. Breakdown of Grade**

Grades will be computed along these lines

| Assignment | % of Grade |
| --- | --- |
| Written Assignments | 15% |
| Midterm Exam | 40% |
| Final Paper | 35% |
| In Class Participation | 10% |
| **TOTAL** | **100%** |

**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 |

Students will attend all class sessions and complete all class assignments, on time, except by previous agreement with the instructor. Students will complete outside reading, reporting and writing assignments prior to class sessions and by stated deadlines. Tardiness and missed deadlines will not be tolerated. Late papers will not be accepted. In-class quizzes cannot be made up.

**c. Grading Standards**

***Journalism***

All assignments will be edited on a professional basis and you will be judged first on the accuracy, fairness and completeness 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**

Homework will be graded every week

**VI. Assignment Rubrics**

**VII. Assignment Submission Policy**

All assignments are due on the dates specified. Lacking prior discussion and agreement with the instructor, late assignments will automatically be given a grade of F. Students will submit assignments to both professors through email.

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 that 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.

**VIII. Required Readings and Supplementary Materials**

James Poniwozek: “Audience of One”

Ronan Farrow: “Catch and Kill”

Twitter: Follow 50 Entertainment and Political Journalists

Instructors will provide reading assignments each week

Watch: Amazon Prime series:”1968: The Year That Changed America”; CNN documentary “Scandalous” with New Yorker writer, Ken Auletta.

**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**](http://www.annenbergdl.org/) for more information. To connect to USC’s Secure Wireless network, please visit USC’s [Information Technology Services](http://itservices.usc.edu/wireless/support/) website.

**X. Add/Drop Dates for Session 001 (13 weeks: 1/15/21 – 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

**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.*

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Topics/Daily Activities | Readings and Homework | Deliverable/Due Dates |
| Week 1  Date: 1/20 | Discus the Entertainment and Political Media Landscape/print/digital/ legacy vs upstarts/media reporting  INAUGURATION DAY  Looking back historically: Show Video of famous Inaugural Speeches: FDR, JFK, and Ronald Reagan.  Watch Video of Women’s Marches. | Follow 50 entertainment and political journalists on Twitter.  Watch how the President decorum and how he acts, or reacts on Inauguration day in comparison to past presidents. How has Covid affected the event. Watch Inaugural Balls in terms what celebrities attend, who performs, what groups. Who did Trump have vs Biden/Harris. | Send 300 -word analysis of your reporting on Inauguration by Friday 1/22 And be prepared to discuss during class  Send list of journalists you are following on Twitter to professor by Tuesday at 7 p.m. 1/26  READ 100 PAGES OF “SHE SAID”  Watch “On The Record” on HBO Max. |
| Week 2  Date: 1/27 | Discuss HOW ENTERTAINMENT PLAYS A ROLE IN coverage of #MeToo and Black Lives Matter. Discuss “On The Record” on HBO Max and the initial New York Times and New Yorker stories on #MeToo.L  listen to “The 1619 Project” podcast  “SHE SAID” MEGAN TWOHEY  Speaker:  MEGAN TWOHEY  NY TIMES REPORTER | Read “Audience of One” pp 1-75 | How Have Journalist changed the culture of Hollywood in terms of women and racial justice? 400 words  Due Tuesday at 7 pm. |
| Week 3  Date: 2/3 | Trump and the Media. A lesson on reporting in the Entertainment and Political world and how they are similar and different.  Discuss Audience of One. Read stories of “Oscar Envelope-gate” and news reports on Hollywood during Covid | Read the history of the Hollywood Black List | Based on reading in “Audience of One” and the class Lecture write a 300-word analysis of the reporting.  Due Tuesday at 7 p.m. |
| Week 4  Date: 2/10 | THE HISTORY OF HOLLYWOOD AND POLITICS: THE BLACK LIST.  JOURNALIST TED BEITCHMAN SPEAKER | Read coverage of Entertainment Phenomenon like “The Bachelor”/ BLM / and Tiger King” and “Bachelor Nation” |  |
| Week 5  Date: 2/17 | How to develop a story stemming from a media phenomenon like “Tiger King” or ”The Bachelor ”or a major Entertainment Event like the Emmys: Guest Speaker Amy Kaufman, LA Times reporter | For research on the art of the Interview  Watch “Frost-Nixon” or “Spotlight” | Pick one of the films and be prepared to discuss Top 5 Interviewing Techniques that worked/ and 5 that did not. |
| Week 6  Date: 2/24 | Interviewing: How to do it based on instructor lecture; “Frost-Nixon” and “Spotlight”. Discuss Interview vs research/reporting  DISCUSS INTERVIEWING TECHNIQUES AND LECTURE ON THE ART OF THE INTERVIEW | WATCH GOLDEN GLOBE AWARDS FEB 28 | WRITE A 300-WORD REVIEW OF THE GOLDEN GLOBES  **Due Monday 2/29 by 10 am**. |
| Week 7  Date: 3/3 | Award Shows coverage/ good and bad/ *La La Land* mixup/ Awards shows during Covid.  Speaker: Lawrence Yee | Read articles on the role of the journalist vs the publicist in Hollywood and the journalist vs the spin doctor in Politics | Compare and Contrast. pick one story and write about “both sides” of the problem, from point of view of publicist or spin doc and from POV of Journalist. |
| Week 8  Date: 3/10 | The role of the journalist vs the role of the publicist: students present three ideas for final piece. Guest: Simon Halls/ Lewis Kaye/Terri Corrigliano | Instructors will listen to pre-prep ideas of final papers | Write one paragraph about your decision on the topic of a final paper. Send by class on Wednesday  **Study for Midterm: Midterm will cover lectures, videos, readings and speakers for first half of the semester**. |
| Week 9  Date: 3/17 | Midterm | Late Night Viewing: Watch Lilly Singh/ Trevor Noah/ Jimmy Kimmel/Melissa McCarthy on SNL, Alex Baldwin on SNL | To be discussed in Class |
| Week 10  Date: 3/24 | Power of Late Night: Impact of Late Night/Political Satire. Guest Speaker: Journalist Matt Roush | Watch ”The Ides of March,” “Bombshell” movies or Showtime TV series: “The Loudest Voice” or “Comey Rules.” |  |
| Week 11  Date: 3/31 | Impact of Hollywood movies and TV series: ”The Ides of March,” “Bombshell,” “The Loudest Voice,” “James Comey mini-series” | How does Hollywood define or impact politics or #MeTOO through its films and TV series. |  |
| Week 12  Date: 4/7 | Wellness Day: no class |  |  |
| Week 13  Date: 4/14 | Instructor lectures on Covering scandal and death/ how to write an obit  Oscars Poll | Work on final paper  Watch CNN documentary: “Scandalous” |  |
| Week 14  4/21 | Discuss Oscars  WATCH OSCARS 4/25 |  |  |
| Week 15  4/28 | Discuss Oscars in terms of diversity |  |  |
| FINAL EXAM PERIOD  5/7, 11 a.m.-1 p.m. | Summative Experience  Final paper due by 11 a.m. on May 7 |  |  |

**XII. Policies and Procedures**

**Additional Policies**

Students are expected to attend all classes on Zoom should, unless students send an email to both professors before class begins. If students miss a class they are expected to watch the recording of class and do the required homework.

**Communication**

Instructor will be available after class and by appointment on Zoom, or by telephone or email.

**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 by 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](https://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](https://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](http://www.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](https://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](https://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.symplicity.com/care\_report](https://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.

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

[studenthealth.usc.edu/counseling](https://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*

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

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[studenthealth.usc.edu/sexual-assault](https://studenthealth.usc.edu/sexual-assault/)

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

*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](https://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](https://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 Instructors**

**Mary Murphy** is a veteran multi-media journalist who has been on the staffs of the Los Angeles Times, New York Magazine, Esquire Magazine, Entertainment Tonight and TV Guide. She writes an award-winning a blog for thewrap.com. She also reviews movies weekly for GoodTalk. She has also written for the New York Post, the Los Angeles Times Magazine and USA Today. She was an online producer for mytime.com. Murphy appeared nightly on the CBS syndicated shows, Entertainment Tonight and The Insider, from 2011-2013 giving a historical perspective on Entertainment and Entertainers. She has also been a frequent guest on such TV shows as CNN Showbiz Tonight, NBC's Today, ABC's Good Morning America, and the syndicated show Inside Edition. Her book for Taylor & Francis called “The New News: The Digital revolution in newsrooms across America,” was published in August. Her book “Blood Cold, Fame, Sex and Murder in Hollywood “ is currently being made into a Hollywood movie. Murphy is currently working on another book about the history of entertainment journalism.