



**JOUR 532: Fall Digital Journalism
Immersion Practicum
1 Unit**

Fall 2022 – Tuesdays – 8 a.m.-6 p.m.

Section: 21543R

Location: Inside the Annenberg Media Center

Instructor: Alan Mittelstaedt

Office: Media Center

Office Hours: Make appt.

Contact Info: amittels@usc.edu, Cell: 626 372-2453

Pronouns: he, him

Course Description

This course gives students hands-on experience working with live television and radio, writing on deadline and creating video for digital and social platforms. Students work a full day each week for Annenberg Media, the multiplatform newsroom housed in the Media Center. Students will rotate through shifts with Annenberg TV News, Annenberg Radio News and annenbergmedia.com to fulfill this lab shift, which runs concurrently with JOUR 531-Fall Digital Journalism Immersion.

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 TV, radio and digital platforms including social media
- Write news briefs and stories for radio and TV 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
- Shoot photographs and video and record and edit audio and video for use in news stories on deadline and in accordance with professional industry standards
- Collaborate with other student reporters and editors to cover stories across platforms
- Apply principles of ethics in real-life news situations

Concurrent Enrollment: JOUR 531 Fall Digital Journalism Immersion

Description and Assessment of Assignments

M.S. students work a weekly shift of at least eight consecutive hours inside the newsroom known as Annenberg Media on Tuesday or Wednesday. ***Weekly attendance is mandatory and participation as a working member of the newsroom is a huge part of your grade in this course. Shifts begin in the Annenberg Media Center at 8 a.m. with your lab shift instructor helping you develop or refine a pitch for the student leaders serving as the Annenberg Media editors and producers on duty each day.***

The M.S. students will rotate between several areas of the newsroom. The rotation schedule will be provided to you during Week 1 as you begin training. You are required to do work on each of three areas: video, audio and writing. You must do all of them, and your instructor will make an effort to get

you more time with the area of the newsroom that you prefer. Your shift begins in Week 1 of the semester. You will be part of the morning news meeting and participate in all of the required Annenberg Media trainings.

M.S. students will work at the direction of competitively hired, trained and paid student leaders who make coverage decisions about the stories being pursued for the ATVN television program, the ARN radio broadcast, Annenberg Media social channels and online at uscannenbergmedia.com. Every assignment you work on could be the clip that helps you land a journalism job, or an award waiting to happen, so it's up to you to give it your all. Our goal is to help you learn by doing, and you will improve over the course of the semester.

Students may be asked to do reporting, obtain video or audio footage or edit material for one story or several stories, depending on the needs of the newsroom. Students must complete their work by the deadlines set by student leaders, their lab shift instructors and the faculty providing guidance in the Media Center. Failure to meet deadlines will be factored into the grade for the course. Students must stay in touch via Slack with student leaders while on assignment and consider a full day in the newsroom to be a weekly requirement, not optional, even if you complete your assignment early. Should you have extra time, you could do social media tied to your assignment or help out in another area of the newsroom, or work ahead on another project.

ANNENBERG MEDIA ASSIGNMENTS:

There are no guarantees that your work will appear on ATVN, ARN, uscannenbergmedia.com or the Annenberg Media social channels. You should strive to produce work on every shift that will be published, but if it does not meet Annenberg Media editorial standards then it will not be posted, streamed or aired. It might also need more review and be published or posted later in the week. The best way to get great clips is to attend the mandatory training sessions, be an active participant and ask questions when you need help. The keys to success are arriving on time for each shift with a well-researched pitch that is relevant to a young audience and achievable that day, along with meeting your deadlines.

If anyone is struggling or has concerns, please reach out to Media Center Director Christina Bellantoni for help. She's reachable on the Annenberg Media Center Slack account and via email at christina.bellantoni@usc.edu. Students can also share anonymous feedback [here](#).
<https://bit.ly/AMRaisingIssues>

Over the course of your time working in the newsroom, you will likely produce all of the following elements. Your lab shift instructor will help to guide you as you complete the assignment, and **must** be the first read or set of eyeballs before you submit the work to the student editors.

VIDEO:

On a video day, you will be asked to produce very different kinds of visual content (all of which fulfill your shift requirements). You may produce VOs, VOSOTs, Live Shots and Reporter Packages (with a standup or live shot) for ATVN. You may be asked to complete a Reporter Package or a Natural Sound piece for uscannenbergmedia.com or the social channels. By the end of the Fall semester, every student should have completed at least one Reporter Package for ATVN or for YouTube that required deadline reporting, video, writing and editing for a daily production. That piece must include either a stand-up or a live shot.

AUDIO:

On an audio day, you will be asked to produce very different kinds of audio content (all of which fulfill your shift requirements). You may produce a Q&A, a call-in live hit, extended interviews or reporter pieces. The work will be shared to uscannenbergmedia.com or Annenberg Media social channels. By the end of the fall semester, every student should have completed at least one Reporter Piece for ARN (with the written host intro) that required deadline reporting, audio recording, writing and editing for a daily production.

WRITING:

At least three stories for uscannenbergmedia.com where you are the lead byline should be completed by the end of the Fall semester. Those three assignments require reporting, interviewing, and writing on a daily deadline. Those stories are likely to be between 400 and 800 words, but the exact assignment is up to the discretion of the student leader working on the day of a student's shift. Students must follow writing and reporting best practices and ethics on tight deadlines. All pieces must include a photo or lead image and breaking stories may be updated, expanded and/or rewritten over the course of the day.

Students also are encouraged to work on at least one long-term project. It could be investigative in nature, tied to a beat you want to develop, or something team-based, data-oriented, or primarily visual and published through the Annenberg Media Interactives Desk. Your lab shift instructors will discuss this with you during Week One.

IMPORTANT: If you are competitively selected via the audition process for an on-air role with ATVN, ARN, The Rundown or any other voluntary position, that does NOT count toward fulfilling your shift requirements. Please keep your full-day work assignment in mind as you plan your other commitments in the Fall semester. You also should not schedule interviews for other classes on the day of your shift.

No assignments that are curation or aggregation work are allowed.

Be assured that we do NOT **require** you to produce a published piece during every week you work at Annenberg Media, but you must arrive for your weekly shift on time, actively participate and execute an assignment each week in order to receive a full participation grade for each shift. In some weeks, you might be contributing to many stories as you meet the demands that mirror those of a professional newsroom, or you might be working with a team on one large story. Unexcused absences let your team down and can negatively impact your grade in this course.

Course Notes and Policies

Onboarding

You have received a set of instructions related to working in the newsroom. Most students have completed these tasks but they are copied below and you can use them as a checklist in order to get full credit. Students must come to their first shift with a properly set up Slack account, along with the other items.

1. Join Slack

Set up your profile with a photo of your face, details filled out, and your pronouns both in your name and display name. That's to make our newsroom as inclusive as possible.

<https://bit.ly/AMSlackWorkspace>

2. Make sure you have taken 45 seconds to fill out this form, which will help us make sure we know what you'd like to be called (not all your official USC emails tell us that!) and how to pronounce your name.

<https://bit.ly/MCGradOrientation2022>

3. Fill out the tech policies form

This allows you to get into the building on the second floor and through the back doors. This will take about 5 minutes: <https://annenbergprograms.com/technical>

4. Set up your Annenberg Media author bio and send the link to your instructor

Bio must include a photo and a few sentences to describe yourself. If you need a reminder, send a Slack note to Graham Clark Stecklein. Here's an example: <https://www.uscannenbergmedia.com/author/cassie-esparza/>

Required Readings, hardware/software, laptops and supplementary materials

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/)

Students will be graded on adherence to AP style in assignments, including when writing about race and ethnicity. The updated AP style guidelines include capitalizing Black and deleting the hyphen in terms such as Asian American.

The following style guides will be available on BB:

NLJJA Stylebook on LGBTQ Terminology: <https://www.nlgja.org/stylebook/>

National Center on Disability and Journalism: <https://ncdj.org/style-guide/>

Native American Journalists Association: <https://najanewsroom.com/reporting-guides/>

National Association of Black Journalists: <https://www.nabj.org/page/styleguide>

Asian American Journalists Association: <https://aaja.org/2020/11/30/covering-asia-and-asian-americans/>

The Diversity Style Guide: <https://www.diversitystyleguide.com>

The NAHJ Cultural Competence Handbook: <https://nahj.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/NAHJ-Cultural-Competence-Handbook.pdf>

Transjournalist Style Guide: <https://transjournalists.org/style-guide/>

SPJ Diversity Toolbox: <https://www.spj.org/diversity.asp>

Annenberg also has its own style guide that students can access through the app Amy the Stylebot on the Annenberg Media Center's Slack workspace. Annenberg's style guide is being developed with input from students, and whether or not students use our guide, they can provide valuable input here: <http://bit.ly/annenbergediting>

In addition, Annenberg Media's Guide for Equitable Reporting Strategies and Newsroom Style

(<https://bit.ly/AnnMediaEquitableReportingGuide>) created by students, has detailed guidelines on thoughtful language and best practices for creating journalism respectful and reflective of a diverse world. Along with other useful resources, it can be found on Blackboard and is incorporated into Amy the Stylebot (mentioned above).

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 with issues that limit their ability to participate fully in class. Please reach out to a professor and/or advisor for help connecting with these resources. They include the Annenberg Student Success Fund, 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, and other scholarships and awards.

News Consumption and Knowledge of Current Events

As journalists, you should keep up with what is happening on campus, in the Los Angeles area, in the United States and around the world. USC provides subscriptions for students, staff and faculty to The New York Times and the Los Angeles Times, as well as the Wall Street Journal.

Through the USC library, you have access to many regional news outlets and a variety of publications that cover specific communities. You should be familiar with publications covering the many communities of Los Angeles such as The Los Angeles Sentinel, The Los Angeles Blade, The Los Angeles Wave, La Opinión, L.A. Taco, The Eastsider, The Armenian Weekly, High Country News, the Asian Journal and others. You should keep up with the Daily Trojan and uscannenbergmedia.com, including USC student-led verticals Dímelo and Black., listen to NPR and news radio, watch local and national television news, read news email newsletters and push alerts and follow news organizations social networks, including Twitter, Instagram and TikTok. You're encouraged to sign up for Nieman Lab's newsletter, which publishes brief, readable articles on important issues in the media. Following the news will sharpen your judgment and provide good (and bad) examples of the state of mainstream journalism.

Communication

You must communicate with your instructor and the student editors on your assigned shift day via the Annenberg Media Slack workspace. (This is not the same as the USC Annenberg Slack you are automatically signed up for via your courses.)

Feel free to contact your instructor anytime using any available means.

Grading

a. Breakdown of Grade

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. If you must miss a shift because of documented illness or emergency, you must notify your instructor and student editors via the newsroom Slack workspace 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.

You will not be graded on your Annenberg Media material. You can receive full credit in this class if you show up to each shift on time, willing to learn and actively participating in the newsroom.

Assignment	% of Grade
Completion of Media Center onboarding tasks	10%
Participation in all required training sessions	20%
On-time arrival and full participation in each of the newsroom rotations	50%
Completion of source reflection assignment during pause week	20%
TOTAL	100%

b. Grading Scale

95% to 100%: A	80% to 83%: B-	67% to 69%: D+
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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

All assignments will be edited on a professional basis and you will be judged first on the accuracy, fairness and objectivity of your stories. You will then be evaluated for broadcast style, editing, production value, originality and the ability to meet deadlines. You also must adhere to the [Annenberg Media ethics policies](#) at all times. Your work produced for Annenberg Media will not be graded. Your instructor instead will be **the first edit or set of eyeballs** and will provide you feedback as you improve over the course of the semester.

Assignment Submission Policy

Students will work under the guidance of student editors and with the support of faculty, instructors and coaches. You will submit written stories via Google document with open edit privileges, or through iNews, Trello or the other systems used by the Annenberg Media newsroom. Every week, you should arrive with your own story ideas. Instructors will discuss current stories and review the previous week's work. You must check in with your instructor and student editors before you leave at the end of the workday. **In most cases, that is 6 p.m. In some cases, it will be later.**

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.

2022 AP Stylebook: (https://libproxy.usc.edu/login?url=http://www.apstylebook.com/usc_edu/ **NOTE: USC STUDENTS HAVE FREE ONLINE ACCESS. CLICK LINK**)

Please note there are new [AP style guidelines](#) about race and ethnicity, which include capitalizing Black and deleting the hyphen in Asian American. The [NLGJA Stylebook on LGBTQ Terminology](#) includes more detailed information about accurate coverage of the LGBTQ community.

Annenberg also has its own style guide that students can access through the app Amy the Stylebot on the Annenberg Media Center's Slack workspace. Annenberg's style guide is being developed with input from students, and whether or not students use our guide, they can provide valuable input here: <http://bit.ly/annenbergediting>

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.

Add/Drop Dates for Session 001 (15 weeks: 8/22/22 – 12/2/22)

Link: <https://classes.usc.edu/term-20223/calendar/>

Friday, September 9: Last day to register and add classes for Session 001

Friday, September 9: Last day to drop a class without a mark of "W," except for Monday-only classes, and receive a refund for Session 001

Friday, September 9: Last day to change enrollment option to audit for Session 001

Friday, September 9: Last day to change a Pass/No Pass to a letter grade for Session 001

Friday, September 9: Last day to purchase or waive tuition refund insurance for fall

Tuesday, September 13: Last day to add or drop a Monday-only class without a mark of "W" and receive a refund or change to Pass/No Pass or Audit for Session 001

Friday, October 7: 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, November 11: Last day to drop a class with a mark of “W” for Session 001

Course Schedule: A Weekly Breakdown

Important note to students:

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.

Newsroom shifts start at 8 a.m. If you are not here at that time, you are late.

	Topics/Daily Activities	Readings and Homework	Deliverable/Due Dates
Week 1 8/23	<p>Introductions, syllabus review, onboarding check and overview.</p> <p>You will be trained and do exercises to prepare you for the newsroom.</p>	<p>Review content found on this sheet of Annenberg Media QR codes.</p>	<p>Onboarding checklist from syllabus.</p>
Week 2 8/30	<p>You will be trained and do exercises to prepare you for the newsroom.</p> <p>You will learn about the source reflection assignment you’ll be doing in Week 9.</p> <p>You’ll be given your rotations for the semester.</p>		<p>Familiarize yourself with these guides linked below. (click the links):</p> <p>USC Annenberg Media Resources — links to schedules, tools, guidelines, etc.</p> <p>Legal Guide — writing about crime, minors, courts. Using anonymous sources.</p> <p>Annenberg Media Guide to Equitable Reporting Strategies and Newsroom Style</p> <p>11 Style Rules to Know Now: Review of AP style.</p>
Week 3 9/6	<p>Students doing writing rotation first will attend 8:30 a.m. news meeting and get an assignment. Students on other rotations will continue technical trainings.</p>		
Week 4 9/13	<p>All rotations will attend 8:30 a.m. news meeting and get an assignment. Students on TV and radio rotations will produce for run through broadcasts.</p>		
Week 5 9/20	<p>The student-led Annenberg Media newsroom is up and</p>		

	<p>running fully. You will work on stories as assigned by the producers and 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 in consultation with your instructor.</p> <p>All students engage in newsroom production per the rotations.</p>		
Week 6 9/27	All students engage in newsroom production per the rotations.		
Week 7 10/4	All students engage in newsroom production per the rotations.		
Week 8 10/11	All students engage in newsroom production per the rotations.		
Week 9 10/18	<p>PAUSE WEEK: Complete source reflection assignment. Submit via Google doc to your instructor no later than 3 p.m.</p> <p>You also will participate in trainings</p>	Come in having read provided material on importance of source tracking.	
Week 10 10/25	All students engage in newsroom production per the rotations.		
Week 11 11/1	All students engage in newsroom production per the rotations.		
Week 12 11/8	All students engage in newsroom production per the rotations.		
Week 13 11/15	All students engage in newsroom production per the rotations.		
Week 14 11/22	NO NEWSROOM PRODUCTION THIS WEEK	NO NEWSROOM PRODUCTION THIS WEEK	Thanksgiving Recess: Wednesday, Nov. 23, to Sunday, Nov. 27
Week 15 11/29	COMPLETE COURSE EVALUATION AFTER FINAL SHIFT IN NEWSROOM		THERE IS NO FINAL IN THIS CLASS

Annenberg Media Wrap Party and group photo Monday, Dec. 5 from 3-5 p.m.			
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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, <https://policy.usc.edu/research-and-scholarship-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

<https://eeotix.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.symlicity.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 Student Accessibility Services - (213) 740-0776

osas.usc.edu

Support and accommodations for students with disabilities. Services include assistance in providing readers/note takers/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

uscса.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/annenberg-scholarships-and-awards>

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.

Annenberg Student Emergency Aid Fund

<https://annenberg.usc.edu/current-students/resources/annenberg-scholarships-and-awards>

Awards are distributed to students experiencing unforeseen circumstances and emergencies impacting their ability to pay tuition or cover everyday living expenses. These awards are not intended to cover full-tuition expenses, but rather serve as bridge funding to guarantee students' continued enrollment at USC until other resources, such as scholarships or loans, become available. Students are encouraged to provide as much information in their application, as well as contact their academic advisor directly with questions about additional resources available to them.

About your instructor

Alan Mittelstaedt started as an adjunct instructor in 2003 and joined the full-time faculty in Fall 2009 to help manage Annenberg Digital News, which produced Neon Tommy, the forerunner of uscannenbergmedia.com, where he now is a faculty advisor. During the previous decade, he was news editor at Los Angeles' alt-weeklies, including seven years at the L.A. Weekly, where he wrote a political column and oversaw six hard-nosed reporters. His mainstream newspaper jobs include city editor at the Portland (Maine) Press Herald and at the Pasadena Star-News, and investigative reporter and editor at the San Bernardino County Sun, where he was named Employee of the Year despite questioning many decisions of his Gannett bosses. At 15, he published his first article called "Deschooling Society: The Evils of Compulsory Education," and handed out 1,000 copies at his rural Virginia high school over the protests of his principal, who threatened to suspend him.