Half of the American people have never read a newspaper. Half never voted for president. One hopes it is the same half.

– Gore Vidal

Course description: The emphasis will be on news writing, methods of gathering news, and the revision and organization of news stories. We also will discuss significant news events, libel, and ethics. Prerequisite: eligibility for English 1A.

You are invited to join a community of learners, exploring the fascinating world of news reporting and the communications media. The emphasis will be on print journalism, but the skills you learn will be the foundation for any related profession, including public relations and broadcast and online journalism.

Writing, especially in journalism, is an exercise in critical thinking. You will be asked to write like a journalist: fairly presenting both sides of an issue, relying upon facts instead of general impressions, writing your articles with fairness and balance.

Journalism requires a different kind of writing than you are probably used to. It is simple, clear, direct. Don’t try to impress the reader with big words and long, complicated sentences. You’re trying to communicate information, often in an entertaining way, but always clear, to the point and accurate.

You will learn to:
1. Recognize news.
2. Interview sources.
3. Write hard-news leads and soft leads.
4. Organize and write a hard-news story.
5. Research and write a feature story.
7. Revise your work, rewrite awkward phrases, rethink your stories.
8. Use *The Associated Press Stylebook* to check style, spelling and grammar.
9. Recognize libel and reason through ethical problems.
10. Become more aware of the world around you, and how it impacts you.

Expect to write a lot, both in and out of class. Good writers are not born, they are made through hard work and attention to detail. You will write several stories, and practice writing different types of leads. You will read a newspaper daily, preferably *The Los*
*Angeles Times* or *The Orange County Register*, and be prepared to discuss the news at each class. Bring your books and writing tools to class each time and be ready to write!

**Textbooks:**
- *The Associated Press Stylebook*.

Much of life is showing up. Each time you miss a class, you miss crucial information and writing practice you need to learn and do well. **Please contact me by e-mail or telephone if you have to miss a class.** I will ask you to sign a pledge to attend class regularly. True, life and the flu sometimes gets in the way of your education, but getting to class must be a high priority. Make sure your family and/or employer understand that.

On occasion, I will need to contact you between classes, either individually or as a group. Therefore, I need your e-mail address. Please check your e-mails daily.

Keep up on the reading assignments. The textbook includes explanations and examples that will help you understand the concepts taught in this class. If you do your reading, I guarantee that your writing, your understanding of what it means to be a journalist and a writer, and your grades will benefit.

Turn in your stories on time. Excessive lateness will result in a penalty on your grade. I also can’t give you the timely feedback you will need to do future assignments better. If you can’t make it to class, you may turn work in by e-mail or to room LIB 318G.

Plagiarism is punished severely. Submit your stories electronically to Turnitin.com, which detects and prevents plagiarism. Remember always to turn in your work twice – once in a printed copy to me, and again electronically to Turnitin.com.

Class assignments will include stories that are typical for beginning journalists; tests on leads, style, and current events; and a final exam that will test your knowledge and understanding of issues brought up in class and in the textbook. Your grade will be helped by your regular attendance and your participation in class discussions. We will frequently break up into small groups to discuss stories and journalistic issues. I also will ask you to keep an informal journal, reflecting on what you have learned.

**Your grade will be based roughly on the following percentages:**
- 15 percent: Final exam
- 35 percent: News stories
- 15 percent: Leads test
- 15 percent: Style tests
- 10 percent: News quizzes
- 10 percent: Class participation
I may drop students for excessive absences, but ultimately the responsibility for dropping
the class, if you cannot continue, is yours. Do not assume I will do it for you.

- **Aug. 31:** Last day to drop with a refund.
- **Sept. 21:** Last day to drop the class without a “W,” or elect CR/NC option.
- **Nov. 1:** Last day to drop the class with a “W”

## Course schedule

### Week 1:
Tuesday, Aug. 21

**Introduction, review of syllabus.**
- Read for Thursday: Rich, Chapter 1.
- Analyze news Web sites for discussion on Thursday.

Thursday, Aug. 23

**How is journalism changing? Lottery story.**
- Clip one article each from the *L.A. Times* and *O.C. Register* on the same subject. Be prepared to discuss the differences on Tuesday.
- Write: Lottery story, 1-2 pages, due next Tuesday.

### Week 2:
Tuesday, Aug. 28

**What’s news? Style and grammar.**
- Read for Thursday: Rich, Chapter 2.
- Register on Turnitin.com

Thursday, Aug. 30

**Writing a basic news story. Leads.**
- Read for next Tuesday: Rich, Chapter 3.

### Week 3:
Tuesday, Sept. 4

**Curiosity, story ideas. News quiz.**

Thursday, Sept. 6

**Field trip to the O.C. Register.**
- Read for next Tuesday: Rich, Chapter 7.

### Week 4:
Tuesday, Sept. 11

**Hard & soft leads. Verbs. Style quiz.**
- Lead and style practice.
- Read for next Tuesday: Rich, Chapter 5.

Thursday, Sept. 13

**Interviewing. Smoking story.**
• Write: smoking story, 2 pages, due Sept. 25.

Week 5:  
Tuesday, Sept. 18
  **Revising your story. Writing tight.**
  • Read for Thursday: Rich, Chapter 4.

Thursday, Sept. 20
  **Sources and the Internet. News quiz.**
  • Read for next Tuesday: Rich, Chapter 22, pp. 465-72.

Week 6:  
Tuesday, Sept. 25
  **Writing a profile. Style quiz.**
  • Write: profile story, 2-3 pages, due Oct. 4.
  Read for Thursday: Rich, Chapter 8.

Thursday, Sept. 27
  **How does it all fit together? Style quiz.**
  • Analyze story for structure.

Week 7:  
Tuesday, Oct. 2
  **Writing practice. News quiz.**
  • Read for Thursday: Rich, Chapter 18.

Thursday, Oct. 4
  **Writing a city council story.**
  • Write: city council story, 2-3 pages, due Oct. 16.
  • Read for next Tuesday: Rich, Chapter 19.

Week 8:  
Tuesday, Oct. 9
  **Covering government. Math for journalists.**

Thursday, Oct. 11
  **Leads practice.**

Week 9:  
Tuesday, Oct. 16
  **Writing practice. News quiz.**

Thursday, Oct. 18
  **Leads test.**
  • Read for Tuesday: Rich, Chapter 20.
Week 10:  Tuesday, Oct. 23  
**Writing a crime story. Presentation. Style quiz.**
- Write: crime story, 2-3 pages, due Nov. 1.

Thursday, Oct. 25  
**Crime reporting.**
- Read for next Tuesday: Rich, Chapter 13.

Week 11:  Tuesday, Oct. 30  
**Accuracy & libel. News quiz.**

Thursday, Nov. 1  
- Read for next Tuesday: Rich, Chapter 10.

Week 12:  Tuesday, Nov. 6  
**Writing a press release. Style quiz.**
- Write a press release, due Nov. 15.
- Read for Thursday: Rich, Chapter 14.

Thursday, Nov. 8  
**Ethics: Do the right thing.**
- Read for next Tuesday: Rich, Chapter 15.

Week 13:  Tuesday, Nov. 13  
**Sensitivity. News quiz.**
- Read for Thursday: Rich, Chapter 9.

Thursday, Nov. 15  
**Writing a feature story.**
- Brainstorm three ideas for a feature story.
- Write: feature story, 3 pages, due Nov. 29.
- Skim for next Tuesday: Rich, Chapter 11-12.

Week 14:  Tuesday, Nov. 20  
**Blogs, broadcast and web writing. Style quiz.**
- Read for next Tuesday: Rich, Chapter 17.

Thursday, Nov. 22  
**Thanksgiving holiday**
Week 15: Tuesday, Nov. 27

**Story telling. Covering a beat. News quiz.**
- Read for Thursday: Rich, Chapter 21.

Thursday, Nov. 29

**Writing about disasters.**

Week 16: Tuesday, Dec. 4

**Writing practice. Style test.**
- Read for Thursday: Rich, Chapter 23.

Thursday, Dec. 6

**Preparing for the final exam. Careers in journalism.**
- Last day to turn in uncompleted work, except for final.

**Final exam day: Tuesday, Dec. 11, 12:45 – 2:45 p.m. Take your final exam.**
The Journalism 101 Responsibility Pledge
John Westcott / Fall 2007

By taking this class, I pledge:

1. I will attend class regularly and on time. (In return, your instructor pledges to make every class worth attending.)
2. If I miss class for any reason, I will call or e-mail Mr. Westcott so he won’t think I was kidnapped by gypsies.
3. During class I will give my full attention to Mr. Westcott, not the girl/boy in the third row. I will participate in class discussions.
4. I will do all my assignments and turn in my work on time. I understand excessive lateness will be penalized.
5. I will turn in my stories twice: once to Turnitin.com, and again to Mr. Westcott.
6. I will keep up on my reading in the textbook, understanding that it is necessary to truly understand the material.
7. When I’m having trouble, I will not wait until the last day of the semester to ask for help.
8. When on my computer during class, I will not go to MySpace, check the sports scores or otherwise stray from the subject.
9. If I’m having trouble with my English skills, I will seek help from Mr. Westcott and use resources on campus if necessary. I understand commas and apostrophes are not extinct species.
10. I will read a newspaper every day or otherwise keep up with the news on radio, TV or the Internet. I will prepare for news quizzes.

_________________________            ____________
Signature                        Date
You want to get an A? Read on…

Get Organized:

- Read the syllabus thoroughly and check it often.
- Attend every class possible.
- Resolve conflicts with your work schedule and family commitments.
- Let the instructor know if you must be absent, and arrange to get your work done.
- Keep all handouts and notes together in your binder. Bring them to class each day.
- Always bring your textbook and stylebook to class.

Work Efficiently:

- Read your assignments to make sure you understand what is expected.
- Work on assignments early to avoid last-minute pressure and late papers, and to allow yourself adequate time to find errors and improve the work.
- Take thorough notes for later use.
- Keep up on your reading.
- Relate each assignment to the class as a whole.
- Be a self-starter, work independently, and ask questions when your efforts fail.
- Don’t rush your writing assignments. Good writing doesn’t come cheaply.
- When you are done with a story, use your stylebook and a dictionary to make sure your spelling, numbers and punctuation are correct.
- Look over returned tests and papers. Make sure you understand why anything is marked wrong.