

Department: Journalism

Course number: 3045W

Course title: Specialized Reporting

Credits: 3

Contact Person: Wayne Worcester

Q/W: W

Catalog Copy: JOUR 245W. Specialized Journalism Either semester. Three credits.

Prerequisites: JOUR 200W and JOUR 201W. An intensive, semester-long introduction to a single field of reporting, for example, business, science, education, arts, sports, travel or entertainment. Students will examine some of the best work in the specialty and research, report and write original stories in that field. The course can be repeated with a change of topic.

Course Information and [W Criteria](#):

In its present incarnation as a non-W course, JOUR245 does not offer the opportunity for in-depth exposure and hands-on experience that students need in order to further develop as journalists. In current practice, the semester has been apportioned among three specialties, say sports, arts and business. Inevitably, the disparity among disciplines is too great, student reporting experience too light, the semester too brief, and meaningful exposure to the three areas too thin to reasonably support professional-level demand for knowledgeable and insightful reporting.

As proposed, students eligible to take JOUR245W will have had to successfully complete the department's two-semester, upper-division sequence in reporting and writing (JOUR200W and JOUR201W). Thus, they will be better prepared for immersion in a specialty. They will read and discuss some of the best work in the field while being taught how to emulate it with uniquely appropriate research and interviews, and the reporting, writing and rewriting of their own original stories.

If the semester's specialty were sports writing, for example, students might read, discuss and analyze pieces by A. Bartlett Giamatti, Red Smith, Roger Angell, Mike Lupica, Frank Deford and Tom Boswell. They would need to understand and take constructive advantage of the differences between day-to-day, general-assignment news and feature stories and journalism that demands unswerving accuracy, uncommon grace and thoughtful context.

In those ways, the course would dramatically and creatively build on the department's well-established requirements that the work of all students in every journalism course meet rigorous demands for accuracy, adherence to ethical and legal standards, as well as workaday knowledge of universally recognized Associated Press style, word usage, grammar, punctuation and spelling.

A minimum 15 pages of edited, revised and rewritten work would be required. Typically, writing and reporting constitute 70 percent of the grade in the course, with tests making up the remaining 30 percent.

Supplementary Information:

Syllabus Sample

A Sample Syllabus

J245W Specialized Journalism:

Fall 2007 Topic: Sports Reporting

ABOUT THE COURSE: The course this semester is intended to provide you with a broader, keener understanding of sports reporting and the issues it deals with while giving you the opportunity to further develop your own journalistic skills in the specialty. Toward that end, you will learn to write professional, stylish and accurate stories that demonstrate authority and understanding of sports and its audiences, but that first and foremost demonstrates a refined ability to work fairly, gracefully and with accuracy

You will be required to read, analyze and discuss some of the acknowledged best sports writing in the nation, so that you may use it as a tool in your own work. You will be writing and rewriting sports stories under deadline pressure, learning how to produce a single story in stages through serial deadlines, how to prepare background copy in anticipation of breaking hard-news, how to develop features that have substance, how to interview fairly but appropriately, take notes quickly and produce the kind of work that will withstand the hard-eyed scrutiny of sports experts and diehard fans.

Journalism 245w will satisfy one of your writing-course requirements, but remember, these are highly competitive, real-world skills we're talking about. We grade all work rigorously; it would be unfair to do otherwise. Note, too, the course's "W" designation means that in order to pass this course you *must* pass the writing component, the lab portion. If you do not, you will fail the course — regardless of how well you may perform on quizzes, the midterm test or the final examination.

Accuracy, knowledge of AP style, grammar, punctuation and spelling are basic. At least 15 pages of edited, revised and rewritten work will be required. Your writing and reporting will account for 70 percent of the course grade. Tests and quizzes make up the balance of 30 percent.

WEEK 1: Discuss syllabus. Discuss sports writing and news writing. How they differ, how they are the same. Avoid writing like a fan; focus on being a professional observer.

WEEK 2: Discuss sources: how to get them, how to keep them, how to use them. Discuss interviewing, taking good notes, using color detail.

WEEK 3: How to write a “game story?” Writing a straight lead on deadline; writing an optional feature lede. Turning straight leads into optional color ledes.

WEEK 4: Discuss good and bad sports reporting and writing, using professional examples. Homework: Attend a sports event; write “game day” ledes.

WEEK 5: Discuss “game day” stories from previous class; correct, improve stories in class.

WEEK 6: Guest speaker, *Hartford Courant* sports columnist Jeff Jacobs

WEEK 7: Discuss “big event” coverage, including the Olympics, the Super Bowl, World Series and others. In-class writing assignment from Jacobs’ visit.

WEEK 8: **Mid-term exam**

WEEK 9: Discuss feature writing: how to develop a feature, what kinds of features are there, how do they differ from one another, from hard news?

WEEK 10: Research a college athlete to interview; write a newspaper profile.

WEEK 11: Students will cover an on-campus sporting event of their choice, writing a game day story and a feature sidebar.

WEEK 12: Write a sports “news” story about a prominent issue, such as steroid use in baseball.

WEEK 13: In-class writing of “advance” stories and second-day, or follow-up and developing stories.

WEEK 14: Wrap up, review and discuss final exam.

(This syllabus also will cite required texts, and assign deadlines for all reading, original stories and their rewrites. It also will include an explanation of the department’s grading standards, the university’s policy on cheating and plagiarism.)