

**Department:** Journalism

**Course number:** 3XXXW

**Course title:** PUBLIC AFFAIRS REPORTING

**Credits:** 3

**Contact Person:** Wayne Worcester

**Q/W:** W

**Catalog Copy:** JOUR2XXW. (JOUR3XXXW) Public Affairs Reporting Either semester. Three credits. Prerequisite: ENGL 110, 111 or 250 \*and\* JOUR 201W. Juniors and seniors only. In-depth reporting on state and local government - municipal agencies, boards, commissions, courts, public safety, schools. Field Trips required.

**Justification:** --Demand for Journalism Department courses has risen dramatically over the past few years, as have the number of Journalism majors and double-majors. Progressive and necessary incremental changes to the major's two-semester foundation sequence of news writing courses ~ JOUR 200w and JOUR201w ~ have accommodated that growth while intensifying students' reporting, writing and rewriting experience. Aspiring journalists also need a more focused and sophisticated exposure to the rigors of covering the daily workings of state and municipal government so that they may fairly, accurately and effectively report stories of importance to the community.

**W Criteria:** :

"We learn by doing," as the saying goes, and that clearly applies to this course. Public Affairs Reporting is designed to give students a close-up view of the way municipal and state governments and their agencies work, but in a way that directly informs and lends authority to their writing. With faculty guidance, they will mine local and state government venues for information on which to base timely, accurate, fair and gracefully presented stories. The students' work will be edited and commented upon in detail. One-on-one consultations are always appropriate and, indeed, expected. As the enclosed syllabus shows, the course demands that students' production over the course of the semester substantially exceed the university-required minimum of 15 pages of revised and edited work. The syllabus also states flatly that if students do not achieve passing grades in the writing component of Public Affairs Reporting, which carries a 60 percent grade weight, they will fail the course.

**Supplementary Information:**

yllabus: -PUBLIC AFFAIRS REPORTING

JOUR 2XXW (JOUR3XXXW)

## ABOUT THE COURSE

This course is exclusively for journalism majors. To be eligible, you must already have taken JOUR201W;

you may not take the two courses concurrently. The course has three primary goals:

To increase your understanding of state and local government, the courts and legal system so that you

may cover those areas as a knowledgeable reporter, regardless of the medium.

To teach you how to gather information through interviews, public records and other government sources

and use it as the backbone of your own original, hard-news and feature stories.

To further develop and sharpen your reporting and writing skills so that you may work without partiality

to gender, race, ethnicity, socio-economic status, physical or mental impairment, religious or political

belief.

## MEETINGS

Your work schedule for the semester must permit you enough flexibility to cover meetings that are held at night.

## SUMMARY OF MAJOR WORK AND GRADE BREAKDOWN

Exams 20 percent

Writing Assignments 60 percent

In-depth Story 20 percent

## REQUIRED TEXTS AND READINGS

Getting the Story: An Advanced Reporting Guide to Beats, Records and Sources by Henry H. Schulte and Marcel Dufresne (1994, MacMillan)

The Associated Press Stylebook and Briefing on Libel Law (2006, Perseus).

The Hartford Courant.

## COURSE POLICIES

Public Affairs Reporting carries with it a „W%o designation, meaning that you must pass the writing component

in order to pass the course. If you do not, you will be given a failing grade~ regardless of how well you do on

any of the tests.

Students will write and rewrite six assigned stories of at least three pages each as well as in-depth story of six

pages. All writing assignments must be turned in on deadline unless emergency arrangements have been made

with the lab instructor at least 24 hours prior.

Otherwise, stories filed after deadline will not be accepted; a grade of zero will be recorded. For class purposes,

deadline is the minute the class begins on the day the assigned story is due. Do not arrive late.

## REWRITES:

All stories will be rewritten and turned in within one week of receipt of the edited, graded original. Late rewrites will

not be accepted. Period. If you must miss a lab and need to turn in a rewrite, arrange to have it delivered on time.

An effective rewrite may improve your score by up to two letter grades, but there are no guarantees. A weak or poorly

executed rewrite may lower your grade.

The properly rewritten story goes well beyond small changes and corrections of errors in punctuation, style, verbiage,

word choice and grammar. A good rewrite addresses questions and problems noted in the editing of the original,

and most often reflects additional research, more reporting and tighter, better focused and more graceful writing.

#### SUBSTITUTE ASSIGNMENTS:

If you have a legitimate conflict or difficulty in covering an assigned meeting, the instructor may approve alternate

coverage, but permission must be given well in advance.

The story will be due at 3 p.m. the day after the meeting, and must include the meeting agenda.

#### STYLE:

Students are expected to follow AP style. You are free to use your stylebooks on all stories and assignments, but if

you fail to follow style and consistently make careless mistakes your final grade will suffer.

**SOURCE LIST:** Each outside writing assignment and in-depth story must be accompanied by a list of all of your

sources, including the names and titles of all persons interviewed and quoted. Phone numbers must be provided for

each source. Your instructors may require further fact-checking.

**PLAGIARISM:** In general, plagiarism is passing off someone's words or ideas as your own. Plagiarism is unacceptable

and evidence of plagiarism may be grounds for failing the assignment or the course. The Student Conduct Code was

recently revised including the section on academic misconduct. Portions of the University Policy on Cheating are being

distributed along with this syllabus. Please review it. The complete code is available at

<http://vm.uconn.edu/~dosa8/code2.html>.

## ~Class Schedule~

### Public Affairs Reporting

Class 1     Lecture ^ Introduction to public affairs reporting.

              Read Ch. 1 The Changing Face of News and

              Ch. 2 The Working Journalist

Class 2     Lecture - How to cover a beat.

              Read Ch 19 The Press as Watchdog

### Local Government

Class 3     Lecture - Observing and covering a meeting, taking effective notes.

              Read Ch. 4 Covering Municipal Government

Class 4     Lab - Write the meeting story from prepared notes.

              Assignment 1 due at end of class on lab meeting story.

              Read Ch. 5 Covering the County.

Class 5     Field Trip - Attend a meeting of the Windham Board of Selectmen.

Class 6     Lecture/Lab ^ Discuss the meeting, how to write the story, begin writing.

              Read Ch. 7 Authorities and Other Special Districts.

Class 7     Lecture - Discuss how to develop a bigger story.

              Assignment 2 is due ^ the Windham meeting story.

Class 8     Lecture/Lab - Review Assignment 2, discuss the developed story.

Class 9     Discussion ^ Students decide on the subject of their in-depth story.

Class 10    Lecture - Covering the education beat

              Assignment 3 is due ^ the Windham developed story.

Read Ch. 13 The Education Beat.

Class 11 Lab write the education story.

Assignment 4 is due at end of class ^ the education story.

Class 12 Exam one on local government.

State Government

Class 13 Lecture - What to expect from state government.

Read Ch. 6 Reporting on State Government.

Class 14 Lecture - How to handle a press conference.

Read Ch. 14 Politics and the Reporter.

Class 15 Field Trip - Attend a press conference with the Governor of Connecticut.

Assignment ^ Student notes for in-depth story are due to instructor.

Class 16 Lecture/Lab - Discussion of the Connecticut legislature

Assignment 4 is due ^ the press conference story.

Class 17 Discussion of in-depth stories.

Class 18 Field Trip - Attend the Connecticut General Assembly;

cover a legislative hearing.

Class 19 Lecture/Lab - Discuss the legislative hearing; begin story on the hearing.

Class 20 Exam Two on State Government

Assignment 5 is due ^ the legislative hearing story

Law Enforcement and the Courts

Class 21 Lecture/Lab ^ Discuss the in-depth stories, begin writing.

Class 22 Lecture ^ the basics of covering the courts.

Read Ch. 9 The Judicial Process and

Ch. 12 Covering the Criminal Courts.

Class 23 Field Trip ^ Hartford criminal courts, cover a trial.

Draft of the in-depth is due.

Class 24 Lecture/Lab ^ Discuss the criminal trial, begin writing story.

Class 25 Lecture ^ covering civil cases, appeals.

Read Ch. 10 Covering Civil Actions.

Assignment 6 is due ^ the trial story.

Class 26 Lecture ^ the basics of police reporting.

Read Ch. 11 Law Enforcement.

Class 27 Lab ^ Work on the revised in-depth story

Class 28 Lab ^ Final draft of the in-depth story is due.

Final Exam 3 on law enforcement and the courts.