

**LOYOLA UNIVERSITY CHICAGO**  
**COMM 205-21W, Spring 2016**  
**Reporting and Interviewing**  
**SOC 015; Tu-Th 2:30--3:45 pm**

**Instructor:** Randy Minkoff

Email: [rminkoff@luc.edu](mailto:rminkoff@luc.edu) (best method of communication)

**Overview**

This course is designed to be practical and interactive, covering the basics of news reporting and interviewing for all aspects of journalism (print, broadcast, Internet). I bring my expertise as a former nationally established journalist who spent my career in print and broadcast journalism as a reporter, editor writer, and broadcaster.

You will learn how to write and edit cohesively and concisely, how to interview subjects in a wide variety of areas from hard news, business, entertainment, and feature and sports journalism. Instruction will be given on how best to get information from a source as well as deciphering news releases and reports. In addition, reporting techniques will be discussed from actual news issues of the time as well as using reporting/interviewing skills in preparing editorials, columns and blog pieces. There will also be special guest lecturers who will share their experiences. Each week there will be a different assignment. You will present these during the in-class lab sessions.

**What you need**

You will need: the latest AP stylebook & an audio tape recorder or other recording device.

You are expected to take extensive notes during all classes and field trips, as a different topic will be addressed each week. You are strongly encouraged to actively participate in all dialogue and discussion. We will move quickly through the semester. Important note: it is highly recommended you are actively aware of what's current in local, national and international. When guest speakers are in attendance you must do prior research which will be part of your grade in addition to the assignments.

**Grade**

Graded assignments will be lettered A-F. These will be based upon the following criteria: Active participation in class and in the field; demonstration of a thorough understanding of all elements of interviewing and reporting; clean, creative, and *original* writing (plagiarism of , fulfilling assignments *on time*, and completion of a written mid-term and practical final exam. It is *imperative* that you are present and on time for *all* classes; if you have to miss a class, notification **MUST** be made immediately. It will be up to you to obtain in-class notes and assignments from your classmates. **DEADLINES WILL BE STRICTLY ADHERED TO WITH NO EXCEPTIONS.**

## **SCHEDULE (Subject to Change)**

### **Week of Jan. 19**

**Overview:** Explanation of how class will work and the importance of deadlines. There will be icebreaker internal interviews of classmates and an assessment of reporting/interviewing in that week's Phoenix. Style issues in stories will be reviewed from the AP stylebook.

### **Week of Jan 26**

**In-class lab:** Differences in interviewing and reporting for the various journalism publications (wire service, newspapers, internet sites, broadcast and magazines). How social media is impacting--and often times interfering--with good reporting/interviewing skills. Dealing with "off the record" interviews and "no comment" responses from subjects. The evolution of reporting and how it has changed in the minds of editors as well as the public. You will be asked to compare a similar interview that was done in all mediums to state examples of who did the most accurate job on the subject.

### **Week of Feb. 2**

**Guest speakers:** Former Tribune reporter/Travel editor Alan Solomon and his wife, current internet and former wire service reporter Carrie Muskat. They will go into depth on the art of the interview and how to get the best quotes from challenging subjects. Also how to handle potentially controversial issues.

### **Week of Feb 9**

**Plagiarism:** The issue of taking quotes/information from other sources; what constitutes plagiarism, embellishment, & fabrication. Attribution and taking information out of context; Previous high profile cases where a reporter took short cuts in reporting and the lasting impact it has had on culture and the public's view of reporters. What is considered proper practice in the world of social media and the Internet.

### **Week of Feb 16**

**Political reporting/interviewing:** Interviewing political officials and candidates can be among the most challenging for reporters. We will review how best to get the answers you want rather than the one the subject wants to give. An overview of the Freedom of Information Act and how to use it. Keeping the interviewee on subject; avoiding long quotes and evasive answers. Dealing with spokespeople; finding the right person to talk to during an emergency or crisis.

**Week of Feb. 23**

**Guest speaker:** Tom Petersen, former news director at WGN and a former television reporter, will give his insight in to covering stories for broadcast compared to print/internet with a special focus on covering city government and city politics.

**Week of March 1**

**Mid-term exam:** In-class written exam based on the techniques covered.

**Week of March 8**

**Spring break/no class**

**Week of March 15<sup>t</sup>**

**The tough interview:** A screening of the movie “Frost/Nixon”; discussion of how to prepare for an interview with an unwilling subject, how to edit down long quotes and rambling answers.

**Week of March 22**

**Business reporting:** The challenges in covering a technical field; how to take jargon and put it in words that the general public will understand & avoiding ‘businesspeak’. Dealing with a plethora of numbers/facts and making them make sense to the average reader. You will be assigned a story regarding business and college.

**Week of March 29**

**Sports reporting:** Reporting on sports teams/individuals in sports ranging from the most popular (football, baseball) to lesser known sports in an Olympic year (canoe/weightlifting etc). How to talk to the right person at the right time after a game and what to do when they are not cooperative. Avoiding boosterism and being a fan instead of a reporter. You will have the opportunity to interview players/coaches/administrators from Loyola or other college, an Olympic national governing body, or a professional team.

**Week of April 5**

**Entertainment reporting:** Covering the business of show business, local to Hollywood. Review of the practice of puff journalism sites and programs. How to avoid rumors, internet gossip and innuendo and do factual reporting on an individual or company; television/movies in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and the challenges presented by streaming video, pay and cable vs. traditional over- the-air broadcasts.

**Week of April 12**

**Editorial/blog & commentary writing.** Although you are given much more leeway in the field of opinion writing, reporting and interviewing are essential elements to support an argument.. You will be asked to research a subject and come up with an editorial, commentary and blog post on the issue, supported with facts, research and interviews.

**Week of April 19 and 26**

**Preparation for and administration of Final Exam.**

**One of these weeks there will be class only one day. Review of the course in preparation for final exam to be held either April 26, 28 or May 5. It will be held over two days and will require a pre-assigned paper to be turned in on the second day of the exam and a written quiz to be conducted on the first day. As the date nears specific dates and requirements will be provided.**