

## SYLLABUS

ENVIRONMENTAL JOURNALISM  
(COMM 260-01W)  
MWF 9:20-10:10  
Dumbach 233  
Dr. Fletcher (email [cfletch@luc.edu](mailto:cfletch@luc.edu))

**THIS SYLLABUS HAS THREE PARTS:**

- 1. PART ONE PRESENTS DEADLINES FOR TESTS AND ASSIGNMENTS. IT ALSO GIVES THE PERCENTAGE VALUE FOR EACH ASSIGNMENT AND THE OVERALL GRADING SYSTEM.**
- 2. PART TWO PRESENTS THE COURSE OBJECTIVES AND FORMAT.**
- 3. PART THREE PRESENTS THE CLASS SCHEDULE.**

**THIS FORMAT SHOULD HELP YOU ACCESS INFORMATION QUICKLY BY SCROLLING TO “Part One, Part Two, etc.” It also will keep you on top of deadline dates, since they are listed first. You might want to copy “PART ONE: DEADLINES AND GRADING” and “PART THREE: CLASS SCHEDULE” to your phone.**

**IMPORTANT:** You are responsible for knowing the contents of the syllabus. The rules and regulations, especially as they relate to academic integrity (See “Plagiarism” in Part Two) apply whether you have reviewed them or not.

**YOU SHOULD CHECK THE SYLLABUS EVERY WEEK TO KEEP ON TOP OF READINGS AND DEADLINES. ALSO, CHECK SAKAI ANNOUNCEMENTS OR YOUR EMAIL FOR UPCOMING DEADLINES OR CHANGES TO THE SCHEDULE.**

# **PART ONE: DEADLINES, IMPORTANT DATES, AND GRADING TEMPLATE**

## **BREAKDOWN:**

**2/10 “ASK AN EXPERT” PRESENTATION AND WRITTEN SUMMARY DUE. (10 percent of grade)**

**2/21 Grammar Quiz. (10 percent of grade)**

**2/26 MIDTERM EXAM, PART ONE**

**2/28 MIDTERM EXAM, PART TWO (20 percent of grade; each part worth 10 percent (with extra points from quizzes))**

**3/2– 3/7 SPRING BREAK**

**3/9 Responses to prompts for Whitewash due (10 percent of grade)**

**3/12-3/13 LOYOLA’S CLIMATE CHANGE CONFERENCE (Students will cover the keynote speech on Thursday or one of the panels on Friday (10 percent))**

**3/16 Get back midterm exams in class and midterm grades (LOCUS)**

**3/23 DEADLINE TO WITHDRAW WITHOUT “WF” PENALTY**

**4/3 ENVIRONMENTAL JOURNALISM PROJECT ANALYSIS BEGINS (10 percent of grade)**

**4/10-4/13 EASTER BREAK**

**4/24 Unit Test (10 percent)**

**LABS. (20 percent of the grade)** Most Fridays, we’ll write in-class on a topic that fits with what you’ve been learning in class. Other labs will consist of viewing and discussing a sample of environmental journalism. In these labs, you’re expected to contribute to the discussion. You cannot make up a lab unless you have an authorized excuse.

**PARTICIPATION (10 percent of the grade) See below: “How Attendance and Participation. . . “**

**RE-DO’S:** If you receive a B- or lower on one or more of your written labs, I’ll let you do these over, but you must get a different assignment from me. The re-do’s can be handed in at any time during the semester; I’ve also set aside a class for lab re-writes during the last week of class. Whatever grade you receive on the re-do will be your grade of record. If it’s lower than your original grade, I’ll keep the higher grade.

**OUTSIDE ASSIGNMENT RE-DO::** You can submit a re-do for your “Ask An Expert” assignment, interviewing a different expert and presenting to the class, by the last week of class. You can also re-take the Grammar Quiz the last week of class.

**ALL RE-DO’S ARE OPTIONAL.**

- ✓ **Late outside assignments** are graded down 10 points for every day they are late, unless you have a documented reason for the late assignment. They’re graded down 5 points for not making the time deadline (e.g., by 5 p.m.) Lab work is graded down 5 points if it doesn’t meet the end-of-class deadline.
- ✓ **Any assignment that contains a factual error, meaning a major mistake, as in misspelling the name of a source or the subject of your assignment, or giving wrong information, earns a zero. To rectify this grade, you must do a new assignment.**

**HOW YOUR INDIVIDUAL AND FINAL GRADES ARE CALCULATED:**

You’ll be given a certain amount of points for each element of assignments (posted on SAKAI ANNOUNCEMENTS a few weeks before it is due). You’ll be given overall points for the midterm and unit test. These points will be put on a curve and then converted to a letter grade. The curve will be posted after each assignment or test.

Your final grade will be an average of all your letter grades on assignments, plus participation in class and lab.

## **HOW ATTENDANCE/PARTICIPATION/CONDUCT IN CLASS CAN AFFECT YOUR GRADE**

Attendance is important throughout the semester. When you miss lectures, you miss information that may appear on tests; you miss learning from others in class; and you miss extra guidelines on assignments and tests that may be given in class. If you miss class, you're responsible for getting class notes and guidelines from another student.

I honor all authorized absences, as in having to travel for sports, debate, or other clubs/activities. I also honor absences for religious holidays. Besides that, **I award each student three free absences from class and three free late arrivals.** It's good to save your three free absences and late arrivals for times you really need them – and best not to use them at all.

Other than authorized absences and three free absences, I record each absence and late arrival, along with your level of participation. Some people may come to class but not participate at all, or rarely participate, which earns them a lower grade than those who both attend and participate.

Besides missing class, the following behaviors, which are distracting to the class, will affect your participation grade: repeatedly being late, leaving during class without a documented reason (See note following this), doing other work in class, texting or viewing texts in class, using a laptop or other device without a documented reason, or rudeness to others in class.

Personal excuses don't count after your three free/authorized absences. You're either here or not here, on time or not on time. Saying your mother made a mistake in getting you reservations back from spring break doesn't work, for example.

Your participation grade will be put on a curve at the end of the semester.

**IF YOU HAVE A DOCUMENTED CONDITION REQUIRING YOU TO MISS CLASS, OR LEAVE CLASS, OR NEED SPECIAL ACCOMMODATIONS ON TESTS, READ THE FOLLOWING:**

**LOYOLA POLICY ON CLASS ABSENCES/LEAVING DURING CLASS/EXTRA TIME FOR TEST-TAKING:**

Here is SAC's policy for obtaining accommodation:

**“Accommodations:** Any student registered with SAC who intends on using their accommodations must provide faculty with an accommodation letter (printed or via email). While students are encouraged to provide faculty with their letter during the first two weeks of classes, students can register with SAC at any point in the semester. However, accommodations are not retroactive and should be provided with advance notice in order for faculty to facilitate accommodations.”

**IF YOU HAVE NEED FOR ACCOMMODATIONS, CONTACT STUDENT ACCESSIBILITY SERVICES ([SAC@luc.edu](mailto:SAC@luc.edu)), 773-508-3700. SAC is located in Sullivan 117.**

## **PART TWO: COURSE DESCRIPTION**

The mission of environmental journalism is to raise public awareness about environmental news and issues. It is, when possible, solution-oriented. It is about being ethical, accurate, fair, and clear, whether reporting, investigating, or advocating for change.

The objective of this course is to enable students to find, report, and present these challenging stories. Guidelines for each assignment will be discussed in class and posted on SAKAI “Announcements” well ahead of each deadline. We will start with exercises that help you to observe closely, ask effective questions, and learn where and how to find reliable sources.

Learning to find and report facts, interview people, and write clearly and concisely will have tremendous benefits for you in whatever career you go into.

### **Required textbooks:**

- Covering the Environment, Wyss, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed.
- Writing and Reporting for the Media, Bender, 11<sup>th</sup> ed.
- Whitewash, Gillam

### **Recommended as background:**

- Healing Earth, free online.

- Website for Society of Environmental Journalists (sej.org).

### **CLASS FORMAT:**

We meet three times a week. The first two days each week concentrate on readings and discussion (unless there are presentations). Friday is lab day, in which students will usually write on deadline in class on something related to what we've learned that week.

**WHEN YOU SEE THAT WE HAVE A WRITING LAB ON FRIDAY, MAKE SURE TO BRING IN YOUR LAPTOP.**

### **OFFICE HOURS:**

My office is at WTC, but I'm teaching at LSC this semester. I can meet with you after this class on Monday (right after class, or until 12:10). On Wednesdays, I can meet with you until 1:30 (in MUND 203). If these times don't work for you and you want to meet at another time, let me know. Always feel free to email me with questions.

**NOTE:** If you're a transfer student, let me know if you'd like to be set up with a student mentor (someone in our class; nothing formal, just someone to ask questions of and get some advice from).

## **PART THREE: CLASS SCHEDULE**

**NOTE:** Deadlines for your presentations, articles, and for exams are given in the following schedule and **ALSO** in your **DEADLINES** section, Part One.

**Changes in the schedule may be made, depending on our progress through the material.**

Readings should be completed and ready for discussion before the relevant classes each week. Some readings may be added during the semester if they're particularly helpful.

The more you read journalistic style, the better you're able to practice it. A good habit is to read the Science Section of the *New York Times* every Tuesday. It usually has a number of environmental articles. As a Loyola student, you have free access to the NYT.

**NOTE: Readings are due on date indicated. Make sure you bring in your Bender textbook and your laptop for lab on Fridays, unless instructed otherwise.**

**Labs can't be made up, except if you have an authorized absence, but I will drop your two lowest grades on the labs at the end of the semester.**

### **1/13-1/17 FOCUS: OVERVIEW. WHAT IS JOURNALISM? WHAT IS ENVIRONMENTAL JOURNALISM?**

1/13 Introduction. Syllabus highlights. **Important:** You're responsible for knowing the contents of the syllabus.

1/15 **Before class, read:**

- ✓ Bender, Chapter 1, to p. 6. STOP at "The News As A Business." Resume with sidebar (green box) on p. 9. Study Figure 1-5, p. 11 (You'll use this format in labs and in outside assignments).
- ✓ Fake news: <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/01/08/world/australia/fires-murdoch-disinformation.html?auth=login-email&login=email>
- ✓ Bender, Chapter 2 (Read through "Reporter's Guide to Accuracy," p.23)

**In class:**

- ✓ Talk about "Ask An Expert" assignment, due 2/10
- ✓ Discuss readings.

1/16 "ASK AN EXPERT" GUIDELINES WILL BE POSTED ON SAKAI ANNOUNCEMENTS.

1/17 **Lab. Don't need Bender book for this lab. News characteristics.**

**1/20-1/24 FOCUS: WHAT IS ENVIRONMENTAL JOURNALISM?  
HOW DO YOU FIND AND REPORT ON STORIES? HOW DO  
YOU ORGANIZE DIFFERENT TYPES OF STORIES?**

1/20 Martin Luther King Day. No class.

**1/22 Before class, read:**

- ✓ Wyss, Chapter 1. Read to p. 14
- ✓ Bender, Chapter 9: STOP at “The Narrative Style,” p. 194.
- ✓ Bender, Chapter 7, through “The Reporter’s Guide to Writing Leads,” p. 151
- ✓ Bender, Chapter 11, p. 11(how to set up your story)

**In class:**

- ✓ Story organization.

**NOTE:** Your lab on Friday will be on writing news leads. Make sure you review Chapter 1, p. 11 (for news story format) and Chapter 7 before the lab. Starting this Friday, 5 points will be taken off any paper with incorrect slug, etc., order.

1/24 Lab. Lead writing

**1/27-1/31 FOCUS: HOW DO YOU WRITE IN JOURNALISTIC  
STYLE? WHAT IS MEANT BY OBJECTIVITY IN  
JOURNALISM? HOW CAN YOU WRITE WITH NO  
CREDIBILITY-BUSTING GRAMMAR/PUNCTUATION  
ERRORS?**

**1/27 Before class, read:**

- ✓ Bender, Chapter 3.
- ✓ Bender, Chapter 6, p. 111-112 (Stop at “Reporting Grief”).
- ✓ Wyss, Chapter 14. SKIP “Taking Sides,” p. 222-223. RESUME with “Defining the Task, p. 223 to end of chapter.

**1/29 Before class, read:**

- ✓ Bender, Chapter 4
- ✓ Bender, Appendix B, pp. 455-457
- ✓ Review of some common mistakes

**1/31 LAB:** Grammar/Punctuation/Common Mistakes pre-quiz.

**The pre-quiz will be corrected and given back to you, but you won't receive a grade on it (other than knowing how many errors you made); the goal is to get feedback so you learn what elements you need to work on for Grammar/Punctuation Quiz on 2/21.**

**2/3- 2/7 FOCUS:WHAT DO JOURNALISTS NEED TO KNOW ABOUT REPORTING SCIENCE? WHAT DO SCIENTISTS NEED TO KNOW ABOUT WRITING JOURNALISM? HOW DO YOU COVER A MEETING OR EVENT?**

**2/3 Before class, read:**

- Wyss, Chapters 3 and 4 (SKIP "Journalists Doing Science," p. 61-62). RESUME with "Understanding Scale", p. 62 to end of chapter.
- Bender, Chapter 10
- Bender, Chapter 9, starting with "Explain the Unfamiliar," p. 199 through p. 204.

**2/5 Before class, read:**

Bender, Chapter 15. SKIP p. 308 and pp. 311-312, "The internet brings pornography to children." NOTE: Use this chapter and your lecture notes to cover a Climate Change Conference event next month.

- **In class: STUDENTS WILL GET BACK THEIR GRAMMAR/PUNCTUATION PRE-QUIZ. DISCUSS COMMON ISSUES.**

**2/6 STUDY GUIDELINES FOR GRAMMAR and PUNCTUATION QUIZ (2/21) WILL BE POSTED ON SAKAI ANNOUNCEMENTS**

2/7 Lab.

**2/10-2/14 FOCUS: “ASK AN EXPERT” PRESENTATIONS”**

**2/10 “ASK AN EXPERT” PRESENTATION AND SYNOPSIS DUE.** (WRITTEN SYNOPSIS SHOULD BE EMAILED BEFORE CLASS OR HANDED IN AFTER CLASS; 10 POINTS OFF IF SYNOPSIS IS LATE).

**In class:** Take notes on the presentations. Questions on these will appear on the midterm.

2/12 “ASK AN EXPERT” PRESENTATIONS CONTINUE

2/13 **GUIDELINES FOR MIDTERM EXAM AND PROMPTS FOR READING WHITEWASH WILL BE POSTED ON SAKAI ANNOUNCEMENTS TODAY.**

2/14 Lab. Lead writing for news story

**2/17-2/21: FOCUS: HOW TO WRITE A NEWS FEATURE STORY. YOUR ETHICAL ROLE AS AN ENVIRONMENTAL JOURNALIST: FAIRNESS AND ADVOCACY. INTERVIEWING.**

2/17 **Before class, read:**

- ✓ Bender, Chapter 17 to p. 352. Stop at “Types of Feature Stories.”
- ✓ Bender, Chapter 8

**In class:**

- ✓ Discuss your coverage of a live event at Climate Change Conference NOTE: Bender, Chapter 17 and today’s lecture gives you the format for writing your CCC article.

2/18 Make sure you register for Climate Change Conference! (3/12, 3/13)

**GUIDELINES FOR WRITING YOUR CCC EVENT ARTICLE WILL BE POSTED ON SAKAI ANNOUNCEMENTS LATER TODAY. REVIEW BENDER, CHAPTERS 15 AND 8, AND NOTES FROM 2/5 TO HELP WITH YOUR COVERAGE**

**2/19 JOURNALISTIC INTERVIEWING BASICS. INTERVIEWING FOR DIFFERENT PLATFORMS. INTERVIEWING SCIENTISTS, REGULATORS AND ADVOCATES.**

**Before class, read:**

- Wyss, Chapter 5
- Bender, Chapter 11, box titled “Steps in preparing for an interview,” p. 235. Then go to p. 236, “Researching Sources and Topics” and read to p. 238. STOP at “Conducting the Interview.” READ p. 240 box titled “Interview traps to avoid.” Last, read p. 247.
- Bender, Chapter 10
  
- Read: <http://www.poynter.org/2016/7-tips-for-conducting-better-interviews-with-scientists/413311/>

**2/20 GUIDELINES FOR TEACH-OUT FOR SEJ AWARD WINNERS WILL BE POSTED ON SAKAI ANNOUNCEMENTS. STUDENTS WILL RECEIVE THEIR ARTICLE/DOCUMENTARY/PODCAST THRU EMAIL.**

**2/21 GRAMMAR QUIZ**

2/24 Midterm review. Lab.

**2/26 MIDTERM, PART ONE**

**2/28 MIDTERM, PART TWO**

**3/2-3/7 MIDTERM BREAK/NO CLASS**

**3/9-3/13 FOCUS: WHITEWASH.**

**3/9 Bring in prompt responses to Whitewash.**

**In-class: Group teach-outs based on prompts for Whitewash. Review guidelines for covering a speech or event for your CCC coverage this week. (SEJ conference speech/interview report). If there’s an event during**

class time, we'll cover it for lab on Friday – I'll post on SAKAI ANNOUNCEMENTS.

3/11 No reading. Discussion of Whitewash continues.

3/12 Climate Change Conference starts (You may want to cover the keynote speech tonite)

3/13 Climate Change Conference continues (You may want to cover one of the panels)

In class: Lab, here or at CCC (TBD)

3/16-3/20 FOCUS: REPORTING ON ENVIRONMENTAL DISASTERS. IDENTIFY PITFALLS. GOALS: REPORTING ETHICALLY. REACTIVE VS. PROACTIVE REPORTING.

3/16 Before class, read about the first on-the-scene reporting of an environmental disaster. Then, read about contemporary disaster reporting:

- [http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/ancient/romans/pompeii\\_portents\\_01.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/ancient/romans/pompeii_portents_01.shtml) STOP AT "SIGNS AND PORTENTS" SECTION
- <http://www.u.arizona.edu/~afutrell/404b/web%20rdgs/pliny%20on%20vesuvius.htm> DON'T NEED TO READ FOOTNOTES
- <http://dartcenter.org/resources/covering-recovery-context-background-challenges-preparing-major-disasters>
- <http://dartcenter.org/content/arun-karki-reporting-without-home>
- <http://www.poynter.org/2015/breaking-news-best-practices-reaching-and-interviewing-witnesses-and-victims-of-trauma/376312/>

In class: View "Harder Than We Thought."

Get midterms back. Check LOCUS later for grade at midterm.

3/18 ETHICAL ISSUES OF CONTEMPORARY DISASTER REPORTING:

- Bender, Chapter 5, “Privacy,” p. 89-92. SKIP “Appropriation.” RESUME reading with “Newsgathering Issues, p. 93-96.1/
- Bender, Chapter 6, p. 104-106. Read sidebar on p. 106: “six guides to ethical decisions.” SKIP “Ethics Issues Regarding Conduct” on p. 106. Resume reading with p. 107 to 109. SKIP “Eliminating Conflicts of Interest,” p. 109-110. SKIP “Maintaining Objectivity,” p. 111. 112. Resume with “Reporting Grief,” p. 112-117 (Stop at “Deciding When to Name Names”).
- Bender, Chapter 14, “Ethics of Visual Journalism,” p. 288-291 (Stop at “The Digital News Package”).

**In class:** Discuss readings. Talk re engagement journalism and preventing disasters (London Tower Block disaster).

**3/20 DEADLINE FOR ARTICLE COVERING ONE TALK AT CCC. Email to me by 5 p.m. Lab.**

**3/23-3/27 FOCUS: WRITING/PRODUCING OPINION PIECES. WRITING FOR BROADCAST/DIGITAL MEDIA. LONG-FORM ENVIRONMENTAL JOURNALISM.**

**3/23 Before class, read:**

- ✓ Wyss, Chapter 11.
- ✓ <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/01/10/opinion/sunday/how-to-help-climate-change.html?searchResultPosition=1>
- ✓ Bender, Chapter 12, p. 253-257 STOP at “Guidelines for Copy Preparation.”
- ✓ Bender, Chapter 13, p. 273, “Formatting Stories for Digital Media” to end of chapter.

**3/25 Before class, read:**

- Wyss, Chapter 10
- <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2015/07/20/the-really-big-one>

- <https://www.newyorker.com/tech/elements/how-to-stay-safe-when-the-big-one-comes>  
<https://www.newyorker.com/tech/elements/how-to-stay-safe-when-the-big-one-comes>

**3/27 Lab.**

**3/30-4/3 HALLMARKS OF INVESTIGATIVE REPORTING**

**3/30 Before class, read;**

- Wyss, Chapter 2, p. 26 (“Muckraking” to p.29.)
- Bender, Chapter 19. SKIP p. 405
- <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/07/31/climate/the-city-of-my-birth-in-india-is-becoming-a-climate-casualty-it-didnt-have-to-be.html>

**4/1 Before class, read:**

**Bender, Chapter 5, bottom p. 80: “Libel” to p. 89. STOP at “Privacy.”**

**4/3 “Toxic City: Sick Schools” in class. Take notes.**

**4/6-4/8 TEACH-OUTS ON SEJ WINNING JOURNALISM BEGIN. Have your synopsis emailed to me before class, or hand in as a hard copy afterwards. Ten points off if late. NOTE: Take notes on each. Questions will be on Unit Test last day of class.**

**4/10-4/13 EASTER BREAK. NO CLASS.**

**4/15-4/17 TEACH-OUTS CONTINUE.**

**4/16 STUDY GUIDELINES FOR UNIT TEST (4/24) WILL BE POSTED ON SAKAI ANNOUNCEMENTS.**

**LAST WEEK OF CLASS: LAB RE-WRITES, GRAMMAR RE-TAKE, AND UNIT TEST**

**4/20 GRAMMAR QUIZ RE-TAKE.**

**4/22 LAB RE-WRITES (FOR LABS YOU HAVE NOT YET HANDED IN)**

**4/24 LAST DAY OF CLASS. UNIT TEST (10 percent of grade)**

