



School of English, Journalism
& European Languages

Unit Outline

HEJ504 Media Writing

Semester 1, 2009

<http://www.utas.edu.au/journalism>

Convenor:	Ms Miranda Harman Room: SocSci 579 Phone: 6226 7146 Email: Miranda.Harman@utas.edu.au
Consultation Hours:	Monday 12-2pm; Wednesday 12-1pm
Unit Description:	This unit introduces students to the practical skills of media writing and is intended to provide students with a strong foundation for work in the media industry. A fundamental appreciation of language will enhance writing skills and give students the tools and flexibility to adapt to a variety of professional settings. Students will gain a deeper understanding of how language operates as well as the methods of media writing and editing.
Unit Aims and Objectives:	This unit is intended to provide students with a strong foundation for the study and practice of journalism. News writing is a distinct and robust form of writing that is the starting point for those wishing to enter the profession. A fundamental appreciation of the English language will enhance news writing skills and give students the tools and flexibility to adapt to a variety of professional settings. Students will gain a deeper understanding of how language operates as well as the methods of journalistic writing and editing.
Learning Outcomes:	At the end of this unit, students should be able to: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Produce newspaper stories of publishable standard• Write concisely and effectively• Understand the language of news• Undertake journalistic research• Conduct interviews
Required Texts:	<i>Practical Journalism: How to Write News</i> , Helen Sissons. London: Sage, 2006. Available at the Co-op Bookshop.

Recommended Texts:	<p><i>Editing Made Easy</i>, Bruce Kaplan. Melbourne: Penguin. Available at the Co-op Bookshop.</p> <p>Other recommended reading is available in the university library or will be provided in workshops.</p>
When Taught:	Wed. 2.10pm – 4pm SB.Arts201.Lab (Media Lab)
Assessment (further details below):	<p>6000 words of internal writing assignments</p> <p>Assignment sheets will be provided during seminars.</p> <p>Block One (workshopped weeks 2-5 and due Week 6, i.e. Monday 30 March, 4pm) 3 x 350-word news stories based on media releases 15% 3 x 350-word news stories based on scenarios 15%</p> <p>Block Two (workshopped weeks 6-8 and due Week 9, i.e. Monday 27 April, 4pm) 2 x 700-word news stories each based on interviews 30%</p> <p>Block Three (workshopped weeks 9-12 and due Week 13, i.e. Friday 29 May 4pm) 2-3 news stories on a related topic based on research and interviews, in total 1500 words. Plus a 1000-word exegesis. 40%</p>

WORKSHOP SCHEDULE

Date	Topic	Reading
Week One 25 Feb	Introduction to Media Writing	<p>Chapters 1 and 2 <i>Practical Journalism</i></p> <p>Chapter 1 Varley, Carolyn, and Tapsall, Suellen Maree. <i>Journalism: Theory in Practice</i></p>
Week Two 4 March	News writing Workshop scenarios and media releases for news story assignments.	<p>Chapter 3, <i>Practical Journalism</i></p> <p>Chapter 1 Bruce Grundy, <i>So You want to be a Journalist</i>,</p>

Week Three 11 March	News structure Workshop scenarios and media releases for news story assignments.	Chapter 4 <i>Practical Journalism</i> Chapters 5 and 6 Conley, D and Lamble, S G, <i>The Daily Miracle</i>
Week Four 18 March	Finding news Workshop scenarios and media releases for news story assignments. Assessment handouts	Chapter 8 <i>Practical Journalism</i> Chapter 13 <i>So You want to be a Journalist</i>
Week Five 25 March	Workshop scenarios and media releases for news story assignments. Workshop assignment drafts.	Chapter 7 <i>Practical Journalism</i> Chapter 9 <i>The Daily Miracle</i>
Week Six 1 April	First assignment due: Monday 30 March Interviewing Workshop news stories based on interviews. Interview 1	Chapters 7 and 8 <i>Practical Journalism</i>
Week Seven 8 April	Workshop news stories based on interviews. Interview 2 Easter break: 9-15 April	Chapter 12 <i>Practical Journalism</i>
Week Eight 22 April	Workshop assignment 2 drafts	Chapter 11 <i>Practical Journalism</i>
Week Nine 29 April	Second assignment due: Monday 27 April Workshop enterprise reporting. Pitch story ideas.	Chapters 5, 6 and 7 <i>So You want to be a Journalist</i>
Week Ten 6 May	Workshop enterprise reporting. Refine story ideas.	Chapter 6 <i>Practical Journalism</i>
Week Eleven 13 May	Workshop enterprise reporting, discuss assignment drafts	Mulligan, 'Breaking out from the Herd'; Sweeney, "Are Plumbers News?" <i>The Journalist's Craft</i>
Week Twelve 20 May	Workshop enterprise reporting, discuss assignment drafts	Worsthorne, 'Dumbing Up'; Wyatt, 'Pinching Men's Bottoms'. <i>The Penguin Book of Journalism</i>
Week 13 27 May	Debrief on learning outcomes, conclude unit Third assignment due: Friday 29 May	

ASSESSMENT

Assessment comprises 6000 words of internal writing assignments.

Assignment One (due Week 6, i.e. Monday 30 March, 4pm)

3 x 350-word news stories based on scenarios 15%
3 x 350-word news stories based on media releases 15%

You will be provided with scenarios and media releases in the Week 4 seminar. You will have the opportunity to workshop a maximum of two draft stories in Week 5. Please provide copies of drafts for all workshop participants. All drafts and final assignments should be on A4 paper and double spaced. For the purposes of this assignment, you should not contact or attempt to interview anyone, although you are encouraged to use news archives and other resources to research the background to issues. This provides stronger context for your stories. However, the focus of this assignment is news writing skills.

Assessment will be based on the following criteria:

- Ability to write a strong introduction
- Application of journalistic structure to content
- Selection and accurate use of facts
- Use of speech, including direct and indirect quotes and attribution
- Adherence to JMC Style Guide
- News language and overall style, including strength of writing (eg use of verbs, rhythm and cadence) grammar, spelling, punctuation and tense
- Evidence of clear understanding of the issues

Assignment Two (due Week 9, i.e. Monday 27 April, 4pm)

2 x 700-word news stories based on interviews 30%

'Media conferences' will be held in weeks 6 and 7 during class. You should record these conferences, using your own equipment. (Some recording equipment may be available through the office but you are encouraged to have your own equipment.) Following each of these interviews, you will need to produce a 700-word news story that draws on the material provided by the interviewee. You are encouraged to do further research, including with news archives and other documents and possible further interviews. (If you do further interviews, you will be required to submit Interview Consent Forms, available on the JMC website.) You will have the opportunity to workshop one of these stories in draft form in Week 8. Please provide copies of drafts for all workshop participants. All drafts and final assignments should be on A4 paper and double spaced.

Assessment will be based on the following criteria:

- Ability to write a strong introduction
- Application of journalistic structure to content
- Selection and accurate use of facts
- Use of speech, including direct and indirect quotes and attribution
- Adherence to JMC Style Guide
- News language and overall style, including strength of writing (eg use of verbs, rhythm and cadence) grammar, spelling, punctuation and tense
- Evidence of clear understanding of the issue

Assignment Three (due end Week 13, i.e. Friday 29 May, 4pm)

Enterprise reporting and exegesis totalling 2500 words 40%

This assignment task requires you to source, research and write your own news stories. You should aim to produce two to three related news stories, which total 1500 words in length. In week 9 and 10, you should pitch your story ideas to the seminar group. Participants will act as an

editorial team, providing feedback, and development and research ideas. Those who pitch in Week 9 should then have drafts of their stories ready for workshopping in Week 11. Those who pitch in Week 10 should be ready to workshop in Week 12. Weeks will be allocated in Week 8. You are strongly encouraged to have drafts as close as possible to a finished product before workshopping. This ensures that you will receive useful feedback, and will help you achieve higher grades and more polished work. Please provide copies of drafts for all workshop participants. All drafts and final assignments should be on A4 paper and double spaced.

Your stories must include interviews, as well as other journalistic research. You need to submit signed Interview Consent Forms – one for each interviewee – with your final assignment. The number of interviews you include will depend on the issue you are covering, but one interview is rarely sufficient.

You are also required to write a 1000-word exegesis to accompany your stories. An exegesis is a critical explanation or interpretation of your 'creative' component - in this case, your journalism. It should elaborate upon and contextualise your work, providing the opportunity for you to reflect upon your practice and that of other journalists. However, it is important to remember that this is a scholarly piece of work, and not a simple 'diary' or anecdotal retelling of how your journalism was produced. In some cases, it will only obliquely refer to your own journalism, focusing instead on a related scholarly question or problem in journalism studies. Please discuss the content and relationship between your creative and critical components with the unit coordinator if are unsure. You should draw on the readings provided to you throughout semester, as well as other relevant literature on journalism practice and research, for the exegesis, which needs to be properly referenced using the Harvard referencing style.

Assessment will be based on the following criteria:

News stories, as for Assignments One and Two, but also

- Evidence of ability to gather information from a range of journalistic sources, including interviews, direct observation and documents
- Evidence of knowledge of the broader context of your journalistic work, including previous stories on the topic
- Evidence of an understanding of journalistic practice, including news values and ethical and legal frameworks
- Ability to follow news writing conventions in the use of description, anecdotes, introductions, conclusions, speech and style
- Presence of creative flair, including style and tone, within the boundaries of news writing conventions

The exegesis

- Evidence of an understanding on journalistic practice and the broader contexts for your journalistic work
- Ability to structure and write at a level appropriate to postgraduate coursework

Further assignment/workshopping information:

Weekly seminar attendance is required as workshopping is a crucial component of this unit and students cannot successfully complete the unit without participating in this process.

For workshopping, students will need to provide copies of drafts for all workshop participants.

When including interview material in stories, students will need to attach a signed interview consent form, which will be provided in seminars and is also available at <http://fcms.its.utas.edu.au/arts/journalism/>.

All writing in this unit should follow the JMC Program Style Guide, which will also be provided to you in seminars and is also available at <http://fcms.its.utas.edu.au/arts/journalism/>.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Submission of Assignments

Students are required to submit a signed cover sheet with every assignment. This includes a declaration that all material submitted is their own work except where there is clear acknowledgement or reference to the work of others and that they have read the University statement on Academic Misconduct (Plagiarism) on the University website at www.utas.edu.au/plagiarism or in the Student Information Handbook. Assignment cover sheets are available from the School office or the School website. **Assignments submitted without a signed cover sheet will not be marked.** Students who submit assignments without a signed cover sheet will be contacted once via their UTAS email address; in such instances the cover sheet must be completed within two weeks of the due date.

All assignments must be submitted in hard-copy (not by email) and placed in the essay box at the School office on or before 5pm on the due date. Students are required to keep copies of all submitted assignments. Assignments submitted on time will be returned within three weeks of the due date; once on time assignments have been returned no further late assignments will be accepted. All marked assignments will be returned in tutorials unless otherwise advised.

Late Assignments

Late submissions will be penalized as follows: 10% of the available marks per day for the first five (5) working days and 50% on the following day. Late work will be accepted without penalty if accompanied by a medical certificate for the relevant period or a letter from a counsellor in the case of a serious non-medical reason.

Difficulties with your Studies

If you are experiencing difficulties with your studies or assignments, have personal or life planning issues, disability or illness which may affect your course of study, you should raise these with your lecturer and/or one of the following Student Services staff as soon as possible:

- Learning Skills Adviser
- Disability Adviser
- Careers Adviser
- Student Counsellor

University Statement on Plagiarism and Academic Integrity

"**Plagiarism** is a form of cheating. It is taking and using someone else's thoughts, writings or inventions and representing them as your own; for example, using an author's words without putting them in quotation marks and citing the source, using an author's ideas without proper acknowledgment and citation, copying another student's work.

If you have any doubts about how to refer to the work of others in your assignments, please consult your lecturer or tutor for relevant referencing guidelines, and the academic integrity resources on the web at <http://www.utas.edu.au/tl/supporting/academicintegrity/index.html>.

The intentional copying of someone else's work as one's own is a serious offence punishable by penalties that may range from a fine or deduction/cancellation of marks and, in the most serious of cases, to exclusion from a unit, a course or the University. Details of penalties that can be imposed are available in the Ordinance of Student Discipline – Part 3 Academic Misconduct, see <http://www.utas.edu.au/universitycouncil/legislation/>."

The University and any persons authorised by the University may submit your assessable works to a plagiarism checking service, to obtain a report on possible instances of plagiarism. Assessable works may also be included in a reference database. It is a condition of this arrangement that the original author's permission is required before a work within the database can be viewed.

Assignment Presentation

The Journalism, Media and Communications discipline uses the Harvard style of referencing. Please see <http://www.utas.edu.au/journalism/> for a brief introduction. For journalistic writing, refer to the JMC Style Guide, also available at <http://www.utas.edu.au/journalism/>.

For journalistic assignments, you must not use material gathered for a story, including interviews, for assessment in more than one unit. If in doubt, please discuss with your unit coordinator.

Equipment

Please note that this unit may require access to sound and/or video recording equipment and that while the school will provide access to equipment during tutorials, access to equipment outside of tutorials is not guaranteed. Where the loan of equipment is possible students will be required to sign and agree to the terms and conditions of the loan, including the penalties for late return, as presented at the time of the loan.

Marking Scale

The following distribution of marks and grades is applied in assessing your work:

- High Distinction (HD)—80-100%
- Distinction (DN)—70-79%
- Credit (CR)—60-69%
- Pass (PP)—50-59%
- Fail (NN)—0-49%

All marks are subject to moderation.

IT Support

Learning online—for online learning and Vista support – <http://www.utas.edu.au/coursesonline/>
Information Technology Services—for general IT Support (includes link to UTAS download website)

<http://www.utas.edu.au/servicedesk/student/index.html>

Library Services—for information literacy support – <http://www.utas.edu.au/library/>

Help Desk (email HelpDesk@utas.edu.au or 6226 1818, within University 1818)