

MACQUARIE UNIVERSITY
DIVISION OF SOCIETY, CULTURE, MEDIA AND PHILOSOPHY
DEPARTMENT OF INTERNATIONAL COMMUNICATION

ICOM 823 Writing for [International] Media (Print)

STUDY GUIDE, SEMESTER 2, 2008

Unit Overview

This unit covers writing print journalism from an international perspective. Students are given instruction in writing for different international audiences. The lectures cover strategies for writing effective news articles, feature articles, press releases and public relations documents for a wide range of publications.

Theoretical enquiry will explore the historical, organisational and aesthetic contexts of writing for international media. Students will analyse English language newspapers from Asia, Europe and North America. As the semester progresses, emphasis will be placed increasingly on the acquisition of practical writing skills.

Unit Value: 4 Credit Points

Contact Details

Lecturer: Howard Gelman
Phone: Business hours: 9571 9994
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Time: Tuesday 2–3pm
Room: F9C

Unit Outcomes

In this unit, students will learn the following discipline based skills:

- Research and non-fiction writing skills
- Newsgathering, interviewing and news reporting skills
- Understanding of editorial cultures, structures and decision making processes
- Print news story production and editing skills
- Individual and group presentation experience
- Understanding of cross-cultural communication
- Cross-cultural insight

Generic Skills

University study does not only aim to provide you with knowledge and skills in a particular academic discipline, but also in research, work and expression skills that will help you in later employment. These are known as generic skills. The generic skills you will be learning in this unit are:

- Group-based work and presentation collaboration
- Time management and organisational skills
- Interpersonal communication and negotiation skills
- Cross-cultural empathy
- Independent library and online research skills
- Advanced essay and report writing
- Oral presentation

Class times

Seminar time 3–6pm, Tuesday

Location C5A 401

Attendance at the seminar is compulsory. Absence from more than two seminars without adequate documentary evidence (e.g. medical certificate) could lead to exclusion from the unit and an automatic fail grade.

Principal Dates

Written Assignment 1 due:	Week Five
Written Assignment 2 due:	Week Seven
Written Assignment 3 draft due:	Week Eleven
Written Assignment 3 final due:	Week Thirteen

Study Times

Seminar/Workshop: The first half of the class is devoted to lecture, discussion and examination of writing techniques. The second half consists of writing workshop assignments that are an important part of the practical skills component of the course. **Attendance at both sessions is compulsory.** In addition to attendance and participation in the writing workshops, students should devote at least 3 hours per week throughout semester to complete readings, undertake research and prepare assignments for the subject.

Topic Schedule

Week 1 – What’s the story?

Course overview. What is expected? What is a story? What kind of stories do journalists tell? Introduction to journalistic prose.

Workshop: Writing a news story.

Week 2 – Style and substance.

Elements of journalistic style. Writing for an audience. Writing for a purpose.

Workshop: Individual presentation (3-5 minutes) ‘My local newspaper.’

Week 3 – Anatomy of a newsroom

The newsroom is where the stories are gathered, written, put together, edited and assembled for the newspaper. The role of the editor. How an editor works. What editors love and hate.

Workshop: Be your own editor.

Week 4 – Departments and Departments

Newspaper hierarchy. News genres. Introduction to the news “round”, including crime reporting, celebrity watching and gossip, education, science writing and sports reporting.

Workshop: Reporting an event.

Week 5 – Now I see you, now I don’t

Research. Sources of information. Gathering and using information. Taking notes.

Workshop: Presentation of group assignments.

Week 6 – PR or PS

The role of the public relations industry and the media release. Public relations writing and the public service announcement.

Workshop: Write a press release

Week 7 -- Write and Wrong

Ethical considerations of journalism. An introduction to legal issues surrounding print news.

Workshop: Avoiding libel in your articles. Screening of *Outfoxed* and *Media Report*.

Week 8 – Writing a Review

Elements of review and consumer guide writing. Role of the investigative reporter and their sources.

Workshop: Screening of *All the President's Men*. Write a review of the film.

Week 9 – Q&A

Conducting an interview - arranging it, doing it, recording it. Types of interviews. Types of interviewees. Constructing a story from an interview. Choosing and editing quotes.

Workshop: Conduct an interview. Taking notes and logging an interview.

Week 10 – Writing the feature article

What is a feature? What are the main elements of feature writing? Outlining and constructing a feature. Targeting your story to the right magazine.

Workshop: Outlining the magazine article

Week 11 – Featuring the feature

News features, profiles, colour writing, opinion and humour. Writing a profile – the competing motivations of the profiler and the profiled.

Workshop: Write the lead paragraph for a profile.

Week 12 – Fact and fiction

Exploring the relationship between fiction writing and journalism, and how each has been influenced by the other. Using the devices of narrative fiction to shape a feature article.

Workshop: The fifty-word short story.

Week 13 – Markets and Course Review

Wider markets for writing. Business writing for specialist magazines. Corporate writing, such as annual reports, promotional material. Review.

Workshop: Course review.

Unit Texts

Set text:

Strunk, W and White, EB (1999). *The Elements of Style*. Fourth edition. Boston, USA. Allyn and Bacon.

Required Reading:

The following collection of required readings for this unit will be provided to students:

Week Two

McLuhan, E and Zingrone, F (1995), *Essential McLuhan*, London, Routledge, pp 149-51.

Week Three

White, Sally (1996), *Reporting In Australia*, “Newspaper Ingredients”, Sydney, Macmillan pp 27-33

Week Four

“Duties of an Editor” (reader).

Week Six

Cadzow, Jane (2001), “The hidden persuaders” in *The Sydney Morning Herald*. Sydney. John Fairfax Publications. Also, “Views of Public Relations” (reader).

Week Seven

White, Sally (1996) *Reporting in Australia*, “The Interview”, Sydney, Macmillan pp74-88.

Week Nine

Uko, Ndaeyo, “Hard News is no News”, James Cook University, 2005.

Week Ten

Hennessy, Brendan (1997). “The Writing Process” in *Writing Feature Articles*, 3rd edition, pp 43–56.

Week Eleven

Hennessy. “Article Types and their Markets”, pp 68–90.

Week Twelve

Editor’s marks: www.colorado.edu/Publications/styleguide/symbols.html

Assessment

Attendance, Writing Workshop Participation and Discussions Value 15%

Students are expected to participate in discussions of the readings allocated for tutorials and to attend and be punctual for lectures and tutorials. Students must participate in **at least 90%** of the workshop writing assignments and complete all take home reports, which are an important part of class participation. Details about tutorials and how to get good grades are provided in the FAQ section of the course outline

Submitting work for assessment:

All written work must be submitted in hard copy (on paper and double spaced) directly to the lecturer on or before the due date. It is the student’s responsibility to plan ahead to ensure research, interview, fact-checking and PLUS+ requirements are met prior to handing in their assignments. Failure to meet deadlines without evidence of illness or serious misadventure

will result late penalties of up to 5% of total available marks for each day the assignment is overdue.

Assignment One, Class Presentations (duration 15 minutes): Value 20%

Group assignment: Each group will be assigned a newspaper for analysis using course readings and class discussion as a guide. You will be provided with a detailed list of review items to discuss. Each member of the group will provide a written summary **of not more than 500 words**, giving a brief analysis and evaluation of that student's research for the group. Presentations are to be conducted in class during **Week Five**. Executive summaries must be handed in by the end of **Week Six**.

Assignment Two, Written News Report (maximum 750 words): Value 25%

In keeping with the news genre, and considering what you have learned about the aim and purpose of print news production, you will write a piece of journalism based on a specific area, such as business, government, education, science writing or sports reporting with an international focus. **Assignments must be handed to the lecturer in class by week seven.**

Assignment Three, Feature Article & Description (total 1500 words): Value 40%

Write a feature article (maximum 1000 words) on a topic approved by the lecturer. This article will be written for a specific publication. The article will be accompanied by a short description (maximum 500 words) of the intended publication, a brief analysis of its audience, and discussion how the feature article has been written to suit the intended publication. **The 500 word short report must be brought to class with you in week eleven, while the final feature article is due in class on week thirteen.**

Grades, scaled marks and grade points

Assignments and presentations will be marked on the following scale:

HD	High Distinction	85-100	4
D	Distinction	75-84	4
CR	Credit	65-74	3
P	Pass	50-64	2
PC	Pass Conceded	45-49	1
F	Fail	0-44	0

To achieve a credit grade there must be evidence of critical analysis, knowledge and familiarity of key concepts from the course, material drawn from readings and lectures, and appropriate referencing. In addition to the requirements for a credit, to attain a distinction or better there must be reference to additional literature sources, creative presentation and individual field research.

PLUS

All students are required to participate in the MUCIC PLUS program. A briefing will be provided at the beginning of semester. Students required to have their assignments vetted progressively by one of the designated PLUS staff will lose 10% of the total mark for an assignment if they do not have their work vetted progressively as required.

Student support services

Macquarie University provides a range of Academic Student Support Services. Details of these services can be found at <http://www.student.mq.edu.au>. A department feedback forum will be held Thursday, 11/10/2007 from 1–2pm at E5A 107.

Plagiarism

Plagiarism is the unacknowledged use of other peoples' work or ideas. It is a serious academic offence. It is your responsibility to know what plagiarism is, and how to avoid it. More information can be found in the Division of SCMP Essay Writing Guide, or at www.student.mq.edu.au/plagiarism/

Human Ethics

Please note that research projects involving human participants must be conducted in conformity with the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Research Involving Humans (1999) More information of the University's Human Ethics Guidelines is provided at www.ro.mq.edu.au/eth_hum.htm.

Frequently asked questions

Where and what is the Centre for International Communication?

Check the website www.mucic.mq.edu.au

Where do I submit written work?

Hardcopies of written work should be submitted to the Information Desk on the Ground Floor of W6A, by the due date. **Assignments submitted by email will not be marked.** Assignments should have a completed **MUCIC cover sheet**, the lecturer's name and other details completed. Assignments will be date stamped by the Information Office.

Late Submission of Work

All assignments that are received at the Information Office in W6A after the stated submission deadline may have up to 5 % of the total mark assigned to that assignment deducted for each day (including weekends and holidays) that the work remains unreceived. A penalty will be avoided if an extension is sought and received before the deadline for submission is reached. Students who submit their work to the Information Office one week after the due date, where no extension has been granted and where there are no extenuating circumstances, should only expect to receive a mark for that work. Markers are under no obligation to provide further comments on the work.

Where do I collect my graded paper?

Papers will be returned to students after marking by the lecturer during class sessions. A portion of class time will be set aside for overall evaluation of the written assignments. Final project essays will be returned to the Information Office in W6A for collection by students

What are references?

Written academic assignments usually require a student to explore a topic, consider theoretical approaches, and provide examples to support arguments. To achieve these ends they usually need draw on a variety of written or others sources. Students should use the Harvard referencing style and not use footnotes or endnotes.

Instead use in-text referencing which state the author, date of publication and page number. for information about the Harvard style see

<http://www.lib.gla.ac.uk/researchskills/citationstyle.shtml>

Writing Tools at <http://www.fas.harvard.edu/~wricntr/html/tools.htm> is a site with useful information on writing assignments. Media reports also require references, however the method of referencing differs from academic essays. Course content in this unit will carefully

address a range of ways journalists use for referencing facts, information, opinions and sources in newspaper and magazine news and feature stories.