



MECO804

Media Writing and Research

S2 Day 2014

Dept of Media, Music & Cultural Studies

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General Information

Unit convenor and teaching staff

Unit Convenor

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Y3A Building, Hub 147, Room 159

Thursdays 2-3

Credit points

4

Prerequisites

Admission to MFJ

Corequisites

Co-badged status

Unit description

This unit focuses on the core skills that underpin news, feature and opinion writing. Areas covered include: news writing, feature writing, opinion writing, researching stories, and interviewing techniques. The unit also covers critical material on journalism, notions of objectivity and the history of the fourth estate.

Important Academic Dates

Information about important academic dates including deadlines for withdrawing from units are available at <https://www.mq.edu.au/study/calendar-of-dates>

Learning Outcomes

On successful completion of this unit, you will be able to:

Apply advanced reporting, research and writing techniques to produce articles for print and online media

Discriminate between, and analyze, the various writing styles and reporting techniques for various journalistic mediums.

Critically appraise and analyze the research material on journalism and media.

Identify and evaluate the key concepts underpinning the role of the fourth estate.

Critically examine the history of journalism and identify opportunities and challenges for the future of journalism

Assessment Tasks

Name	Weighting	Due
News Article	20%	September 9, 2014
Feature Story	25%	October 10, 2014
Research Essay	25%	November 10, 2014
Preparation Exercises and Blog	30%	Weekly (Before Class)

News Article

Due: **September 9, 2014**

Weighting: **20%**

What you will submit:

- 600 word news article plus a suggested headline
- one 140 character shareline (i.e. a tweet that summarizes your story)
- 500-word reflection on the reporting and writing process (Alternately, you may submit a 3 minute video/audio reflection)
- Research report backup detailing sources for all facts and quotes
- A transcript of a key interview with quotes used in bold

Instructions:

- You must find, report and write a 600 word news story. In the seminars we will discuss how to find stories and you are encouraged to workshop and present your work before submission.
- Suggest a headline and shareline (i.e. a 140 character tweet) to engage your audience and promote your work
- You should strive to be fair and impartial.
- You are expected do as much original research and reporting as possible in the given time frame.
- You should conduct **at least two interviews** for your story. Be sure to include the names, title and contact details (phone and email) in your research backup.
- Attach a transcript of a key interview with the quotes used in bold. This will include your questions and the interviewee's unedited responses.
- Your story should contain quotes and they should be properly set up and attributed. It's best to use quotes from your interview but in some cases you may need to use quotes from another source. If you do so you must identify the source of the quote.
- At the top of page, please note the intended date of publication and suggest a headline
- You must list **all sources** for your story in your research back-up. Provide links or copies to any reports or other news stories you may have used.
- You should be able to produce transcripts or recordings of interviews if requested.
- Write a brief **reflection** on the reporting process. Identify challenges and shortcomings. What

reporting or writing techniques did you use to overcome these problems? Why is this story in the public interest? What were the advantages and disadvantages of taking an objective and impartial stance? How would you follow up on or expand this story? How would you adapt the story's content for other media forms?

The assessment of the news story will be based on:

- You must find, report and write a 600 word news story. In the seminars we will discuss how to find stories and you will have the opportunity to workshop and present your work before final submission.
- You should strive to do as much original research and reporting as possible.
- You should strive to be objective, fair and impartial.
- The success of your headline and a suggested shareline or tweet to summarize and engage
- You should conduct **at least two interviews** for your story. Be sure to include the names, title and contact details (phone and email) in your research backup.
- Attach a transcript of a key interview with the quotes used in bold. This will include your questions and the interviewee's unedited responses.
- Your story should contain quotes and they should be properly set up and attributed. It's best to use quotes from your interview but in some cases you may need to use quotes from another source. If you do so you must identify the source of the quote.
- You must list **all sources** for your story in your research back-up. Provide links or copies to any reports or other news stories you may have used
- You should be able to produce transcripts or recordings of interviews if requested.
- Write a brief **reflection** on the reporting process. Identify challenges and shortcomings. What reporting or writing techniques did you use to overcome these problems? Why is this story in the public interest? What were the advantages and disadvantages of taking an objective and impartial stance? How would you follow up on or expand this story? How would you adapt the story's content for other media forms?

Topics Covered:

- How to find, conceive, plan, research, report and write short news articles on deadline
- How to write a lead/intro
- How to assess sources and find and verify facts
- How to conduct interviews and select quotes
- How to select appropriate facts and statistics
- An understanding of newsworthiness and news practice
- How to write for a target audience
- How to summarize, edit and promote your work
- An understanding of objectivity as an ideal and practice and its relationship with the fourth estate

On successful completion you will be able to:

- Apply advanced reporting, research and writing techniques to produce articles for print and online media
- Discriminate between, and analyze, the various writing styles and reporting techniques for various journalistic mediums.
- Critically appraise and analyze the research material on journalism and media.
- Identify and evaluate the key concepts underpinning the role of the fourth estate.
- Critically examine the history of journalism and identify opportunities and challenges for the future of journalism

Feature Story

Due: **October 10, 2014**

Weighting: **25%**

What you will submit:

- 800-1000 word feature plus headline
- one 140 character shareline (i.e. a tweet that summarizes your story)
- 500-word reflection on the reporting and writing process (or a three-minute video/audio*)
- Research report including backup detailing sources for all facts and quotes

Instructions:

- You must find, report and write a 800 word factual article. This piece of writing may also advocate a position or have a clear point of view. You are encouraged to workshop and present your ideas in the seminars before submission. Your story may be related to your collaboration with reporters at 2SER but it must be your own original work.
- You should strive to build your argument based on original reporting and research
- You must list **all sources** for your story in your research back-up. Provide links or copies to any reports or other news stories you may have used.
- You should be able to produce transcripts or recordings of interviews if requested.
- Write a reflection on your reporting and writing process (as in assessment 1). Also reflect on the advantages and disadvantages of advocacy and persuasion for factual reporting and writing.

The assessment will be based on:

- The success of your article as a piece of non-fiction writing, the relevance of your argument and the rigour of your reporting.
- The quality and accuracy of the reporting and attention to detail in each article
- Selection and use of facts, statistics and anecdotes
- Your approach to persuasive writing including the quality of the story's structure, content and

style

- Choice of sources and appropriate attribution
- The story's success as a piece of persuasive writing
- Your ability to analyse the reporting process and product as a cultural form and social practice
- Your understanding of key debates in journalism about advocacy, opinion and the fourth estate

Topics Covered:

- How to find, conceive, plan, research, report and write persuasive pieces on deadline
- How to craft a persuasive argument or position that relies on solid reporting and research
- How to assess sources and find and verify facts
- How to conduct and use interviews and select quotes
- How to summarize, edit and promote your work
- An understanding of key debates in journalism about advocacy, opinion and the fourth estate

On successful completion you will be able to:

- Apply advanced reporting, research and writing techniques to produce articles for print and online media
- Discriminate between, and analyze, the various writing styles and reporting techniques for various journalistic mediums.
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Research Essay

Due: **November 10, 2014**

Weighting: **25%**

The final task is a 2000 word research essay. You will devise your own research question related to current challenges and opportunities in journalism. Suggested topics and approaches will be discussed in the seminars. Students are encouraged to ask difficult questions and to follow their passions.

Your essay should demonstrate:

A strong understanding of key ideas in journalism studies and contemporary problems and opportunities faced by the media

The ability to critically assess and contextualise the work in this field.

The ability to develop a unique and original argument.

Clarity and precision of expression.

Originality of thinking and approach.

The ability to create a concise and sophisticated argument within the word limit.

On successful completion you will be able to:

- Discriminate between, and analyze, the various writing styles and reporting techniques for various journalistic mediums.
- Critically appraise and analyze the research material on journalism and media.
- Identify and evaluate the key concepts underpinning the role of the fourth estate.
- Critically examine the history of journalism and identify opportunities and challenges for the future of journalism

Preparation Exercises and Blog

Due: **Weekly (Before Class)**

Weighting: **30%**

What you will do

1. Complete preparation exercises and reports and post to your iLearn blog prior to seminar. (Exercises will set in class and posted to iLearn.) Some of your entries will be your reflections on group reporting and research tasks and others will involve collaborative tasks.
2. Write a weekly news round-up using Storify. You should include stories from five different days.
3. Lead a short discussion about current news as it relates to the past week's questions and concepts. (Dates tbd)
4. Keep a story idea log. Post at least one story idea/lead per week

Your assessment will be based on

Your engagement with the course material including key questions and concepts

The success and quality of your blog posts as pieces of reporting, research and writing. (You must attempt all of the set exercises.)

Your ability to critically analyse current news and news practices.

The clarity of your expression and your attention to detail.

Please note: *This assessment is about engagement. A willingness to experiment, to take risks*

and make mistakes is encouraged.

On successful completion you will be able to:

- Apply advanced reporting, research and writing techniques to produce articles for print and online media
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Delivery and Resources

Required Reading

1. **Assigned readings:** Please check the iLearn site for links or citations to required readings. All readings will be available either through the internet or via eReserve in the library.
2. **News Reading:** All students should be conducting an independent study of one national and/or international news site (e.g. *The Sydney Morning Herald*, *The Australian*, *The Guardian*, *The New York Times*). You should allocate an hour each day for news reading.

Seminar Preparation

Students will be required to complete short assignments and exercises on the iLearn site before attending class. Instructions will be announced in class and posted to iLearn. If you miss a class please check the iLearn site BEFORE attending the seminar to ensure you are prepared.

Unit Schedule

Please check iLearn for the schedule.

Policies and Procedures

Macquarie University policies and procedures are accessible from [Policy Central](#). Students should be aware of the following policies in particular with regard to Learning and Teaching:

Academic Honesty Policy http://mq.edu.au/policy/docs/academic_honesty/policy.html

Assessment Policy <http://mq.edu.au/policy/docs/assessment/policy.html>

Grading Policy <http://mq.edu.au/policy/docs/grading/policy.html>

Grade Appeal Policy <http://mq.edu.au/policy/docs/gradeappeal/policy.html>

Grievance Management Policy http://mq.edu.au/policy/docs/grievance_management/policy.html

[t/policy.html](#)

Disruption to Studies Policy http://www.mq.edu.au/policy/docs/disruption_studies/policy.html *The Disruption to Studies Policy is effective from March 3 2014 and replaces the Special Consideration Policy.*

In addition, a number of other policies can be found in the [Learning and Teaching Category](#) of Policy Central.

Student Code of Conduct

Macquarie University students have a responsibility to be familiar with the Student Code of Conduct: https://students.mq.edu.au/support/student_conduct/

Additional information

MMCCS website https://www.mq.edu.au/about_us/faculties_and_departments/faculty_of_arts/departments_of_media_music_communication_and_cultural_studies/

MMCCS Session Re-mark Application <http://www.mq.edu.au/pubstatic/public/download/?id=167914>

Information is correct at the time of publication

Student Support

Macquarie University provides a range of support services for students. For details, visit <http://students.mq.edu.au/support/>

Learning Skills

Learning Skills (mq.edu.au/learningskills) provides academic writing resources and study strategies to improve your marks and take control of your study.

- [Workshops](#)
- [StudyWise](#)
- [Academic Integrity Module for Students](#)
- [Ask a Learning Adviser](#)

Student Services and Support

Students with a disability are encouraged to contact the [Disability Service](#) who can provide appropriate help with any issues that arise during their studies.

Student Enquiries

For all student enquiries, visit Student Connect at ask.mq.edu.au

IT Help

For help with University computer systems and technology, visit <http://informatics.mq.edu.au/help/>.

When using the University's IT, you must adhere to the [Acceptable Use Policy](#). The policy applies to all who connect to the MQ network including students.

Graduate Capabilities

PG - Discipline Knowledge and Skills

Our postgraduates will be able to demonstrate a significantly enhanced depth and breadth of knowledge, scholarly understanding, and specific subject content knowledge in their chosen fields.

This graduate capability is supported by:

Learning outcomes

- Apply advanced reporting, research and writing techniques to produce articles for print and online media
- Discriminate between, and analyze, the various writing styles and reporting techniques for various journalistic mediums.
- Critically appraise and analyze the research material on journalism and media.
- Identify and evaluate the key concepts underpinning the role of the fourth estate.
- Critically examine the history of journalism and identify opportunities and challenges for the future of journalism

Assessment tasks

- News Article
- Feature Story
- Research Essay
- Preparation Exercises and Blog

PG - Critical, Analytical and Integrative Thinking

Our postgraduates will be capable of utilising and reflecting on prior knowledge and experience, of applying higher level critical thinking skills, and of integrating and synthesising learning and knowledge from a range of sources and environments. A characteristic of this form of thinking is the generation of new, professionally oriented knowledge through personal or group-based critique of practice and theory.

This graduate capability is supported by:

Learning outcomes

- Apply advanced reporting, research and writing techniques to produce articles for print and online media
- Discriminate between, and analyze, the various writing styles and reporting techniques for various journalistic mediums.

- Critically appraise and analyze the research material on journalism and media.
- Identify and evaluate the key concepts underpinning the role of the fourth estate.
- Critically examine the history of journalism and identify opportunities and challenges for the future of journalism

Assessment tasks

- News Article
- Feature Story
- Research Essay
- Preparation Exercises and Blog

PG - Research and Problem Solving Capability

Our postgraduates will be capable of systematic enquiry; able to use research skills to create new knowledge that can be applied to real world issues, or contribute to a field of study or practice to enhance society. They will be capable of creative questioning, problem finding and problem solving.

This graduate capability is supported by:

Learning outcomes

- Apply advanced reporting, research and writing techniques to produce articles for print and online media
- Discriminate between, and analyze, the various writing styles and reporting techniques for various journalistic mediums.
- Critically appraise and analyze the research material on journalism and media.
- Identify and evaluate the key concepts underpinning the role of the fourth estate.
- Critically examine the history of journalism and identify opportunities and challenges for the future of journalism

Assessment tasks

- News Article
- Feature Story
- Research Essay
- Preparation Exercises and Blog

PG - Effective Communication

Our postgraduates will be able to communicate effectively and convey their views to different social, cultural, and professional audiences. They will be able to use a variety of technologically supported media to communicate with empathy using a range of written, spoken or visual formats.

This graduate capability is supported by:

Learning outcomes

- Apply advanced reporting, research and writing techniques to produce articles for print and online media
- Discriminate between, and analyze, the various writing styles and reporting techniques for various journalistic mediums.
- Critically appraise and analyze the research material on journalism and media.
- Identify and evaluate the key concepts underpinning the role of the fourth estate.
- Critically examine the history of journalism and identify opportunities and challenges for the future of journalism

Assessment tasks

- News Article
- Feature Story
- Research Essay
- Preparation Exercises and Blog

PG - Engaged and Responsible, Active and Ethical Citizens

Our postgraduates will be ethically aware and capable of confident transformative action in relation to their professional responsibilities and the wider community. They will have a sense of connectedness with others and country and have a sense of mutual obligation. They will be able to appreciate the impact of their professional roles for social justice and inclusion related to national and global issues

This graduate capability is supported by:

Learning outcomes

- Apply advanced reporting, research and writing techniques to produce articles for print and online media
- Discriminate between, and analyze, the various writing styles and reporting techniques for various journalistic mediums.
- Critically appraise and analyze the research material on journalism and media.
- Identify and evaluate the key concepts underpinning the role of the fourth estate.
- Critically examine the history of journalism and identify opportunities and challenges for the future of journalism

Assessment tasks

- News Article
- Feature Story

- Research Essay
- Preparation Exercises and Blog

PG - Capable of Professional and Personal Judgment and Initiative

Our postgraduates will demonstrate a high standard of discernment and common sense in their professional and personal judgment. They will have the ability to make informed choices and decisions that reflect both the nature of their professional work and their personal perspectives.

This graduate capability is supported by:

Learning outcomes

- Apply advanced reporting, research and writing techniques to produce articles for print and online media
- Discriminate between, and analyze, the various writing styles and reporting techniques for various journalistic mediums.
- Critically appraise and analyze the research material on journalism and media.
- Identify and evaluate the key concepts underpinning the role of the fourth estate.
- Critically examine the history of journalism and identify opportunities and challenges for the future of journalism

Assessment tasks

- News Article
- Feature Story
- Research Essay
- Preparation Exercises and Blog

Changes since First Published

Date	Description
30/07/2014	I had to make some changes to the assessment deadlines and instructions. Deadlines are now one month a part (week 5, 8, 13) and I have made some small tweaks to clarify instructions.