



# MECO804

## Media Writing and Research

S1 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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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
<u>News Article</u>	20%	April 7, 2014
<u>Advocacy and Persuasion</u>	25%	May 12, 2014
<u>Research Essay</u>	35%	June 17, 2014
<u>Preparation and Participation</u>	20%	June 14, 2014

### News Article

Due: **April 7, 2014**

Weighting: **20%**

#### What you will submit:

- One 600 word news article
- Reflection on the reporting process (apx. 500 words or a 3 minute video/audio\*)
- Research report including backup detailing sources for all facts and quotes
- A transcript of a key interview with quotes used in bold

\*If you would like to prepare an audio or video reflection please discuss this with your lecturer

#### 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.
- You should identify a possible media outlet and consider your intended readership.
- You should strive to be objective, fair and impartial.
- You should strive to do as much original research and reporting as possible.
- 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 interviewees 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:**

- The quality and accuracy of the reporting and attention to detail in each article
- Your approach to each story including its structure, content and style
- Selection and use of facts and statistics
- Choice of sources and appropriate attribution
- Selection and use of quotes
- The success of your interview for this story
- The story's success as a news article
- Your ability to analyse reporting as a cultural form and social practice
- Your understanding of debates in journalism re: objectivity, impartiality and the fourth estate

**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
- 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

## Advocacy and Persuasion

Due: **May 12, 2014**

Weighting: **25%**

### **What you will submit:**

- 800 word article
- Reflection (600 words OR four minute video/audio\*)
- Research report including backup detailing sources for all facts and quotes

\*Please discuss this option with your lecturer

### **Instructions:**

- You must find, report and write a 800 word factual article. This piece of writing should 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.
- 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 quality of your argument as well as 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
- 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.
- 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

## **Research Essay**

Due: **June 17, 2014**

Weighting: **35%**

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 and Participation

Due: **June 14, 2014**

Weighting: **20%**

### **What you will do**

1. Lead a discussion about current news as it relates to the past week's questions and concepts. (Dates tbd)
2. Complete preparation exercises on iLearn site prior to seminar. (Any exercises will be posted by Thursday morning.)
3. Post reflections to your iLearn blog. (Please complete before the next seminar.)
4. Participation and engagement in seminar activities and discussions.

### **Your assessment will be based on**

Your engagement with the course material including key questions and concepts

Your participation in class discussions and debates

Your ability to critically analyse current news and news practices

Your leadership of the news roundup discussion in your assigned week

Your iLearn posts (You must complete 75% of the set exercises.)

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 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 posted by Thursday before the class. Please check the iLearn site BEFORE attending the seminar to ensure you are prepared.

## Unit Schedule

### Each seminar will include:

- a critical and analytical discussion about journalism as a cultural practice and form (including key concepts and ideals, historical context and urgent questions in contemporary practice)
- student-led analysis of contemporary news (weeks 3, 4, 5, 7, 8, 10, 11)
- a practical workshop on techniques
- a discussion of student work

### Schedule

1. Introduction: Reporting Reality
2. Key Concepts: The Fourth Estate, Public Interest and News Values



Technique: Finding Stories and Cultivating Sources

3. Key Concepts: Objectivity, fairness and impartiality

Technique: Reporting and Research: Gathering Facts, Conducting Interviews

4. Key Concepts: Network Technologies and Breaking News

Technique: Finding Angles, selecting facts and quotes

5. News Story Workshop: News Style and Editing for clarity; Student story reports

### **NEWS STORY DUE MONDAY APRIL 7**

6. Key Concepts: Transparency as a new news value

Technique: Introduction to persuasive writing, point of view

### **STUDY BREAK**

7. Key Concepts: Advocacy, Fairness and Impartiality

Technique: Feedback on News stories; responding to critique and rewriting

PLUS Attribution and Reported Speech

8. Key Concepts: Muckrakers, Amateurs and Undergrounds

Technique: Persuasive article workshop

### **ADVOCACY PIECE DUE MONDAY MAY 12**

9. Key Concepts: Participation and Popular Culture

Technique: Identifying and refining your research question

10. Key Concepts: Innovations in research and storytelling

Technique: Identifying reporting opportunities and developing expertise

11. Key Concepts: Curating, Aggregating and editing

Technique: feedback and editing workshop

12. Student Research Reports

13. Student Research Reports

### **RESEARCH ESSAY DUE JUNE 17**

## **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.ht](http://mq.edu.au/policy/docs/academic_honesty/policy.ht)

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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](http://mq.edu.au/policy/docs/grievance_management/policy.html)

Disruption to Studies Policy [http://www.mq.edu.au/policy/docs/disruption\\_studies/policy.html](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/](https://students.mq.edu.au/support/student_conduct/)

## 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](http://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](http://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
- Advocacy and Persuasion
- Research Essay
- Preparation and Participation

### 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
- Advocacy and Persuasion
- Research Essay
- Preparation and Participation

## **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
- Advocacy and Persuasion
- Research Essay
- Preparation and Participation

## **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
- Advocacy and Persuasion
- Research Essay
- Preparation and Participation

## **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
- Advocacy and Persuasion

- Research Essay
- Preparation and Participation

## **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.
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### **Assessment tasks**

- News Article
- Advocacy and Persuasion
- Research Essay
- Preparation and Participation