MECO804
Media Writing and Research
S1 Day 2015

Dept of Media, Music & Cultural Studies

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### General Information

**Unit convenor and teaching staff**  
Margie Borschke  
*marginie.borschke@mq.edu.au*  
Y3A 159  
by appointment (before or after class is best)

**Credit points**  
4

**Prerequisites**  
Admission to MFJ

**Corequisites**

**Co-badged status**

**Unit description**  
This unit focuses on the core skills that underpin journalism as a media practice including, reporting and research techniques and approaches to storytelling and representation across media. It also covers critical material on journalism and the contemporary media landscape, including ideals of objectivity, advocacy, and the use and function of news media.

### 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](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.
General Assessment Information

Submission instructions:

All assessments (except the preparation blog) should be submitted online via the relevant Turnitin link on iLearn.

Please submit each assessment as a SINGLE document.

Your preparation blog will be assessed as a whole at the end of the semester. No submission is necessary.

News Stories and Feature Stories will be assessed on the following criteria:

· The success of your article as a piece of news or feature writing 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
· Choice of sources and appropriate attribution
· Selection and use of quotes and paraphrasing
· Your approach to the genre including the quality of the story's structure, content and style
· The story’s success as a piece of objective (news) or persuasive writing (feature)
· Your ability to analyse the reporting process and product as a cultural form and social practice
· Your understanding of key debates in journalism about objectivity, fairness, advocacy, opinion and the fourth estate

Assessment Tasks

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Weighting</th>
<th>Due</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>News Article</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>27 March, 2015 5pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feature article</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>May 15 2015 5pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seminar Preparation Blog</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>weekly; May 29, 2015 5pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Essay</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>week 13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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News Article

Due: 27 March, 2015 5pm
Weighting: 20%

What you will submit:

- 600-700 word news article plus a suggested headline (Draft due in class March 24)
- 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

Please see iLearn for detailed instructions

Please see general assessment information for assessment criteria

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

Feature article

Due: May 15 2015 5pm

Weighting: 25%

What you will submit:

- 1000-1200 word feature plus headline (draft due in class May 12)
- 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

Please see iLearn for detailed instructions

Please see general assessment information for assessment criteria

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.
- Identify and evaluate the key concepts underpinning the role of the fourth estate.
Seminar Preparation Blog

Due: weekly; May 29, 2015 5pm
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.

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.

5. Write reflections on activities as requested.

Weekly deadline: MONDAYS by 5pm

Assessment criteria:

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:

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

Research Essay

Due: week 13
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 and you will be asked to present your research topics in weeks 10, 11 and 12. Students are encouraged to ask difficult questions and to follow their passions.

**Alternate formats may be discussed with your lecturer

**Assessment criteria:**

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.
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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.

3. **Social Reading:** You should be reading all of your fellow students blogs and any relevant shared stories before attending the weekly tutorial.

**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:


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/)

Results
Results shown in iLearn, or released directly by your Unit Convenor, are not confirmed as they are subject to final approval by the University. Once approved, final results will be sent to your student email address and will be made available in eStudent. For more information visit ask.mq.edu.au.

Student Support
Macquarie University provides a range of support services for students. For details, visit [http://students.mq.edu.au/support/](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
Graduate Capabilities

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

Assessment tasks
• News Article
• Feature article
• Seminar Preparation Blog
• Research Essay

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.
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Assessment tasks
• News Article
• Feature article
• Seminar Preparation Blog
• Research Essay

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
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Assessment tasks

• News Article
• Feature article
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• Research Essay

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

Assessment tasks

• News Article
• Feature article
• Seminar Preparation Blog
• Research Essay
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 article
- Seminar Preparation Blog
- Research Essay

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.
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