RTD 310 SYLLABUS
Electronic News Writing
Spring 2016

• Instructor: Greg Todd, WSIU-TV News Director
• Contact Info: gregtodd at siu.edu | Office: 618-453-5282.
• Class Meets: 11:00-12:15 p.m. MW, Communications Building 1205.
• Office Hours: 1:30 p.m. - 3 p.m. Monday and Tuesday or by appointment. Comm. 1247J.


The book is carried by the SIU bookstore and online. You may also be able to find it used from students who used the 5th edition in previous semesters. Be sure to get the 5th Edition of the textbook. Other editions will not suffice. It will be necessary to have the textbook on the first day of class.

SYLLABUS: This syllabus provides you with your course requirements and schedule. You should use it to understand course objectives and expectations. It outlines reading and other assignments as well as lecture content so you are prepared to participate in class discussions. It also shows deadlines for completing and submitting assignments on time. All requirements in this syllabus have been carefully structured to help you be academically and personally successful.

COURSE GOALS & LEARNING OBJECTIVES: This course is designed to cover selecting, writing and editing news material for presentation on television, radio, and online. You will learn how to write news stories for electronic platforms, terminology used in the news industry, and how to use software commonly used to write news stories and produce newscasts. The class will give you an opportunity to learn to identify what is newsworthy and the legal and ethical aspects of covering and
writing news on multiple platforms. The class will help prepare you to successfully participate in preparing news material for the River Region Evening Edition platforms. There is a $45 lab fee for the course. Successful completion of RTD 310 earns you 3 credit hours.

COURSE EXPECTATIONS:

- **Attendance.** It is essential for optimal learning experiences in this class because material and information will be presented that are not in the textbook. Please notify your instructor by email *in advance* of absences when possible. It is suggested that you connect with at least one member of the class to obtain lecture/discussion notes if you must be absent from class. The only excused absences are documented illness, death in the immediate family, an official religious holiday, or a documented emergency or natural disaster. Absences other than those listed will adversely affect your final grade. Documentation of an excused absence must be presented to the instructor on the first day you return to class. **Missed work cannot be made up unless the absence qualifies as a documented excused absence.** Four or more unexcused absences will reduce your final grade by for the class by 5%. Excellent attendance with excellent work will positively impact your grade.

- **No Late Arrivals:** Arriving late to class is rude to your fellow students and the instructor because it disturbs the class in progress. Attendance is taken at the beginning of class and no students will be allowed to enter the classroom after class has begun and the door is closed. Missing class due to a late arrival will count as an unexcused absence and missed work cannot be made up.

- **Classroom Discussions.** The success of this class depends upon you taking an active role in classroom discussions. Experience in this class will give you confidence to participate in your other classes and on-air work. Discussions help us to learn from each other.

- **Academic Integrity.** You are expected to submit your original work and adhere to the academic policies of SIU. Any act of academic dishonesty, cheating, or plagiarism will be reported. These acts are taken seriously. If you have any questions, please ask.

- **Freedom in and Responsibility to Our Class.** You are free to express your opinions and share ideas in class. You are responsible for completing your work with excellence, submitting assignments by due dates and treating all class members and your instructor with courtesy and respect.

- **Electronic Device Policy.** In order to facilitate optimal learning and participation in class and to minimize distractions, **cell phones are to be put away and out of your sight during class.** They must be turned off or placed on silent during class. Web surfing, emailing, texting and other social media activities, not directly included in the day’s coursework, are not acceptable during class and are **grounds for being asked to leave class for the day.** **Headphones and ear buds are not permitted during class or in the newsroom during work time.**

- **Email.** Outside of class, your instructor will communicate with you by email using your SIU email address. **You will need to activate and monitor your SIU email account in order to received class information, newsroom shift schedules, and other official university communications.**
COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

- **Reading Assignments.** The reading assignments for this course are described in the course outline below. It is important to complete all reading assignments as scheduled. Some quiz and test questions will come from textbook material that is not discussed in class. Some reading material will be augmented by graded review questions. This represents 10% of the final grade. It is unlikely you will pass this class without completing the reading assignments.

- **Newsroom Writing Shifts:** Each student in RTD 310 is to spend at least one hour each week in the WSIU TV newsroom helping write news stories for the student newscast River Region Evening Edition. Newsroom writing counts as 10% of the final grade. Everyone begins with a grade of 100% for this portion. That is reduced by 5% for each writing shift that is missed.

- **Written Assignments:** All lab exercises and written assignments in class are to be completed as scheduled in the course outline and handed in personally. Emailed work is not accepted. The written assignments in class counts towards 25% of the final grade.

- **Discussions.** The purpose of the discussions is to help provide you with an opportunity to communicate with the rest of your class as well as the instructor. Be sure to follow the course outline to know what discussion entries are expected. Your participation grade also depends on the level of quality of your discussion entries as well as your comments to other student entries.

- **Quizzes and Tests.** In addition to scheduled quizzes and tests, unscheduled pop quizzes can also count towards your grade. Quizzes and other course work listed above may be rescheduled or dropped at the instructor’s discretion. The quizzes represent 25% of the final grade. The final exam grade counts as 30% of the final class grade. The final exam will be scheduled during finals week, May 9-13. You will be notified in class of the date and time the university has set for our class final. Note: **The final cannot be taken at an earlier time.** It is the student’s responsibility to plan accordingly.

GRADING WEIGHT AND SCALE:

Grades are based solely on the criteria below. All graded work is counted. Extra credit is not available. Grades are not curved or rounded up. Missed or late work counts as a zero unless documentation is provided within the guidelines described above in “Attendance.”

- Writing exercises in class: 25%
- Quizzes: 25%
- Textbook review questions: 10%
- Weekly newsroom lab shift: 10%
- Final exam: 30%
- 90% or better = A
- 80-89% = B
- 70-79% = C
- 60-69% = D
- Less than 60% = F
COURSE OUTLINE

January

Wednesday 1/21: Class overview, introductions, syllabus review, your goals. What is news? What is newsworthy? Introduction to news writing.


Wednesday 1/28: Before class read pages 41-58 in the Broadcast News Handbook. Writing a Reader in NewsKing. Newsroom writing shifts begin next week. Please make sure you are signed up for a weekly shift and assigned a time. The lab portion of your grade is reduced by 5% for each day missed.

February


Wednesday 2/3: Quiz #1 - material covered so far.

Monday 2/8: Read pages 103-123 in the Broadcast News Handbook before class. Story format styles in TV news. Write a VO in NewsKing.

Wednesday 2/10: Read 138-146. Write a VO/SOT in NewsKing.


Wednesday 2/24: Read pages 153-166 and 179 in BNH before class. Reading Review #5 due. Writing a news Package.
**Monday 2/29:** Before class, read 291-306 in BNH. Writing for the Web.

**March**

**Wednesday 3/2:** Using social media in news. Web research and fact checking.

**Monday 3/7:** Quiz #2.

**Wednesday 3/9:** Read pages 273-290 before class. Quiz #2 results review. Social media use drill.

**Spring Break**

March 14-18. No assignments prior to the first day back to class.

**Monday 3/21:** Interviewing techniques. In-class interview and writing project.

**Wednesday 3/23:** Read pages 63-81 in BNH before class. Reading Review #6 due.

**Monday 3/28:** Sports writing. Read BNH 177-187 before class. Write a sports story in class.

**Wednesday 3/30:** Read pages A1-A5 in the Appendix near the back of the book before class. Grammar.

**April**

**Monday 4/4:** News Producing. Read 193-205 in BNH before class. Writing practice. Reading Review #7 due.

**Wednesday 4/6:** Newscast Producing. Read 205-214 in BNH before class.

**Monday 4/11:** Quiz #3.

**Wednesday 13:** TV lives shots Read 229-246 in BNH before class. Reading Review #8 due. No newsroom writing shifts next week.

**Monday 4/18:** Media ethics. Read pages BNH pages 249-271 before class. Reading Review #9 due. No newsroom writing shifts this week.

**Wednesday 4/20:** Laws affecting the news media. This is the last week of newsroom writing shifts.
Monday 4/25: Quiz #4. This is the last week of newsroom writing shifts.


Monday 5/2: Final Exam Review.

Wednesday 5/4: Final exam preps, course conclusion, Q & A, last day of class.

FINAL EXAM: The final exam will be given at the time the university assigns us during the week of May 9-13. If another class of yours deviates from the assigned schedule and creates a conflict with the scheduled final exam time for RTD 310, you must work out an alternate time with the deviating class. Note: The final cannot be taken at an earlier time. “It is a policy of the University that no final examination be given prior to the scheduled final examination period, and that students be given their examinations at the designated times. Any deviation from this policy must be approved by the Dean of the College.”

Building Emergency Response Protocols for Syllabus:

University’s Emergency Procedure Clause: Southern Illinois University Carbondale is committed to providing a safe and healthy environment for study and work. Because some health and safety circumstances are beyond our control, we ask that you become familiar with the SIUC Emergency Response Plan and Building Emergency Response Team (BERT) program. Emergency response information is available on posters in buildings on campus, available on BERT’s website at www.bert.siu.edu, Department of Public Safety’s website www.dps.siu.edu (disaster drop down) and in the Emergency Response Guideline pamphlet. Know how to respond to each type of emergency.

Instructors will provide guidance and direction to students in the classroom in the event of an emergency affecting your location. It is important that you follow these instructions and stay with your instructor during an evacuation or sheltering emergency. The Building Emergency Response Team will provide assistance to your instructor in evacuating the building or sheltering within the facility.

Students With a Disability: Instructors and students in the class will work together as a team to assist students with a disability safely out of the building. Students with a disability will stay with the instructor and communicate with the instructor what is the safest way to assist them.
**Tornado:** During the spring semester we have a Storm Drill. Pick up your belongings and your instructor will lead you to a safe area of the basement. No one will be allowed to stay upstairs. Stay away from windows. The drill should not last more than 10 minutes. You must stay with your instructor so he/she can take roll. Students need to be quiet in the basement as the BERT members are listening to emergency instructions on handheld radios and cannot hear well in the basement.

**Fire:** During the semester we have a Fire Drill.

Pick up your belongings and your instructor will lead you to either the North or South parking lot depending on what part of the building your class is in. You must stay with your instructor so he/she can take roll. As soon as the building is all clear, you will be allowed to return to class.

**These drills are to train instructors and the Building Emergency Response Team to get everyone to a safe place during an emergency.**

**Bomb Threat:** If someone calls in a bomb threat, class will be suspended and students will be asked to pick up their belongings, evacuate the building and leave the premises. Do not leave anything that is yours behind. We will not allow anyone back into the building until the police and bomb squad give us an all clear. **DO NOT USE YOUR CELL PHONES.** Some bombs are triggered by a cell phone signal.

**Shooter in the Building:** If it is safe to leave, move to a safe area far from the building away from where the shooter is located. If anyone has any information about the shooter, please contact the police after they have gone someplace safe.

If it is not safe to leave, go into a room, lock the door and turn out the lights. Everyone should spread out and not huddle together as a group. Don't stand in front of the door or in line of fire with the door. Students' chair and desks should be piled in front of the glass and door as a barricade and the teacher's desk, podium and anything movable can be pushed against the door. This is intended to slow down any attempts to enter the classroom. If it looks like the shooter is persistent and able to enter, make a lot of noise and have the students use everything in their backpacks to throw at the shooter to distract him.

Silence all cell phones after one person in the room calls the police and informs them of their location and how many people are in the room. **Be quiet and wait for the police to arrive.** The police are looking for one or more shooters, and they have no way of knowing if the shooter is in the room people are hiding in. For this reason, when the police enter the room, no one should have anything in his/her hands and each person MUST raise his/her hands above his/her head.

**Earthquake:** In the event of an earthquake, you are advised to take cover quickly under heavy furniture or crouch near an interior wall or corner and cover your head to avoid falling debris. Outside the building are trees and power lines and debris from the building itself that you will need to stay away from. In the building, large open areas like auditoriums are the most dangerous. Do not try to escape on a stairway or elevator. Do not hide under a stairway. We do not recommend that you stand in a doorway because the door could shut from the vibrations and crush your fingers trapping you there.

**Rave Mobile Safety Alert System:** We recommend that you sign up for the Rave Mobile Safety Alert System. It is a new system that replaces the WENS system to alert you through emergency text
messages on your cell phone and emails for emergencies on campus, weather reports and emergency school closures. You have to sign up. If you were signed up for WENS it does not roll over. You have to sign up for Rave Mobile Safety Alert System. Go to Saluki Net, go to my records tab, under SIUC Personal Records, click on View My SIUC Student Records, Under Main Menu click on Personal Information, click on View and Update Addresses and Phones, in the middle of the page click [Update Addresses and Phones], under phones click Primary: This will take you to Update Addresses and Phones – Update/Insert, under primary phone number for this address put in your cell phone and submit. For more information, visit dps.siu.edu, contact SalukiTech at 453-5155 or salukitech@siu.edu.

CPR/Defibrillator and First Aid Class: If you would like to take a CPR/Defibrillator and/or First Aid class, contact LaVon Donley-Cornett, lavong@siu.edu or call 453-7473.

Women's Self Defense Classes are offered to female students faculty and staff by the Department of SIU Public Safety. For more information contact Officer Mary Stark marys@dps.siu.edu.