

Las Positas College  
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## Course Outline for MSCM 2

### JOURNALISM: INVESTIGATIVE NEWS

Effective: Fall 2003

#### I. CATALOG DESCRIPTION:

MSCM 2 — JOURNALISM: INVESTIGATIVE NEWS — 3.00 units

News and feature writing, emphasizing investigative reporting, research techniques, and story presentation.

3.00 Units Lecture

#### **Strongly Recommended**

ENG 1A - Critical Reading and Composition  
or

-

#### **Grading Methods:**

Letter Grade

#### **Discipline:**

	<b>MIN</b>
<b>Lecture Hours:</b>	54.00
<b>Total Hours:</b>	54.00

#### II. NUMBER OF TIMES COURSE MAY BE TAKEN FOR CREDIT: 1

#### III. PREREQUISITE AND/OR ADVISORY SKILLS:

**Before entering this course, it is strongly recommended that the student should be able to:**

A. ENG1A

#### IV. MEASURABLE OBJECTIVES:

**Upon completion of this course, the student should be able to:**

- A. develop appropriate investigative topics and research strategies;
- B. analyze investigative news stories for content and execution;
- C. demonstrate standard journalistic style, including lead writing, story organization, and effective use of quotes and transitional devices;
- D. interview for pertinent information with professional note-taking standards and effective questioning techniques;
- E. write an in-depth investigative news feature of 1,200 words;
- F. identify and avoid libelous writing, invasion of privacy, and unethical writing.

#### V. CONTENT:

- A. Investigative reporting
  - 1. Overview
  - 2. The investigative reporter
  - 3. Developing as a reporter
  - 4. Finding stories
  - 5. How to pursue an inquiry
  - 6. Interviews
  - 7. Research and documents
  - 8. How to write the story
- B. Analysis of the media
  - 1. Investigative articles
  - 2. News features
  - 3. Standard topics of investigative journalism
    - a. Government coverage
    - b. Consumer affairs
    - c. American capitalism
    - d. Companies
    - e. Crime
    - f. Security and intelligence
    - g. Human rights issues
    - h. Coverage abroad

- C. Practice writing
  - 1. Writing and rewriting leads
  - 2. Interviewing live sources
  - 3. Eliminating wordiness
  - 4. Rewriting for clarity
  - 5. Completing at least eight major writing assignments, totaling 6,000 words
- D. Critiquing the media
  - 1. Critiquing student writing (with revisions)
  - 2. Critiquing the daily press
  - 3. Analysis of critiques: the role of media revisited
- E. Completion of three special investigative projects, organized for final presentation, individually and in groups

#### VI. METHODS OF INSTRUCTION:

- A. **Lecture** -
- B. Small group and whole class discussion
- C. Films, video tapes, and recordings
- D. Guest presentations by investigative reporters or those impacted by investigative reporters
- E. Possible field trips to different media companies
- F. Reporting simulations
- G. "Live" interview and note-taking situation.
- H. Individual/group evaluation of student and professional prose
- I. Deadline writing situations
- J. Instructor conferences
- K. Written work, including summaries, papers, and exams

#### VII. TYPICAL ASSIGNMENTS:

- A. Reading and Writing: 1. Read Chapter 4 in *Investigative Reporting: A Study in Technique*, "Finding the Stories: and write a one-page paper identifying some possible sources for stories. B. Writing: 1. complete a 1,000-word investigative piece on a campus-based issue under deadline.

#### VIII. EVALUATION:

- A. **Methods**
- B. **Frequency**
  - 1. Weekly writing assignments, quizzes and written work
  - 2. monthly examinations
  - 3. semester long preparation of portfolio of work

#### IX. TYPICAL TEXTS:

- 1. Brooks, Brian S., James L. Pinson, and Jean Gaddy Wilson *Working with Words: A Handbook for Media Writers and Editors*. 5th ed., Bedford/St. Martin's, 2003.
- 2. Houston, Brant, Len Bruzzese, and Steven Weinberg *The Investigative Reporter's Handbook*. 5th ed., Bedford/St. Martin's, 2002.
- 3. Merrill, John C. *Journalism Ethics: Philosophical Foundations for News Media*, Bedford/St. Martin's, 2002.
- 4. Spark, David *Investigative Reporting: A Study in Technique (Journalism Media Manual)*, Focal Press, 1999.
- 5. Wicker, Tom *On the Record: An Insider's Guide to Journalism*, Bedford/St. Martin's, 2002.

#### X. OTHER MATERIALS REQUIRED OF STUDENTS: