

School: Palo Alto High School
District: Palo Alto Unified School District
City: Palo Alto
School / District Web Site www.paly.net

School Course List Contact

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

Course Title: Beginning Journalism
Transcript Title(s)/
Abbreviation(s): BEG JOURN
Subject Area: g-College Prep Elective
Category: English

Grade Level(s) for which this course is designed: 10, 11

Unit Value: 1.0 (one year equivalent)

CATALOG DESCRIPTION

Brief Course Description

Beginning Journalism is an intense introduction to media studies with an emphasis on newspaper writing and magazine writing formats. This is a yearlong course, but it can also be taught as a more intense program. Writing for websites and writing for television broadcast is also discussed. The primary writing styles taught in this course include profile writing, review writing including book reviews, movie reviews, restaurant reviews, product reviews, news writing; in-depth feature writing; opinion writing (including column writing, editorial writing, and opinion pieces), sports writing including (sports news, sports columns and sports features). The course will also give an over view of the history of American journalism from 1776 to the present with a focus on some of the famous journalists including Benjamin Franklin, Ida Tarbell, Lincoln Steffens, Upton Sinclair, Jessica Mitford, Ralph Nader, Carl Bernstein, Bob Woodward, Ben Bradlee, Ted Koppel, Arthur Sulzberger, Art Buchwald, Thomas Friedman. Students also are

introduced to the role and the impact of the media in a democratic society from a sociological perspective. Students will read *Time* magazine on a weekly basis as well as *San Francisco Chronicle*, *San Jose Mercury News*, *N.Y. Times* and *USA Today*. They also read one recently published fiction or non-fiction book of their choice for a book review as well as multiple excerpts from books on a weekly basis. Students will also learn desktop publishing skills including the use of Adobe's *InDesign* and *PhotoShop* as well as *MS Word*. The students' final examination involves the use of these computer skills to demonstrate their writing and layout proficiency. In addition, students will write a short research paper on a famous journalist. Students learn interviewing skills, information analysis skills, writing skills, listening and speaking skills as part of the course. They learn to write with an understanding of audience and purpose. Over the course of the semester, students write twelve articles and revise each one at least twice.

Pre-Requisites: Required: Ninth Grade English grade B or better

TEXTS AND SUPPLEMENTAL INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS

TEXTBOOK 1

Title: Inside Reporting

Author(s): Tim Harrower

Usage: Primary Text

TEXTBOOK 2

Title: The Art and Craft of Feature Writing: Based on the Wall Street Journal Guide

Author(s): William E. Blundell

Usage: Primary Text

TEXTBOOK 3

Title: Will Write for Food: The Complete Guide to Writing Cookbooks, Restaurant Reviews, Articles, Memoir, Fiction and More

Publisher:

Author(s): Diane Jacob

Usage: Primary Text

TEXTBOOK 4

Title: Associated Press Guide to Newswriting

Author(s): Rene J. Cappon

Usage: Primary Text

TEXTBOOK 5

Title: Written into History: Pulitzer Prize Reporting of the Twentieth Century from The New York Times

Author(s): Anthony Lewis (editor)

Usage: Primary Text

TEXTBOOK 6

Title: Writing Opinion for Impact

Author(s): Conrad C. Fink

Usage: _X_Primary Text

TEXTBOOK 7

Title: Pulitzer Prize Editorials: America's Best Writing. 1917-2003

Author(s): Laird B. Anderson (editor) and William David Sloan (editor)

Usage: _X_Primary Text

TEXTBOOK 8

Title: The Best American Magazine Writing 2004 (Best American Magazine Writing)

Author(s): American Society of Magazine Editors

Usage: _X_Primary Text

TEXTBOOK 9

Title: The Best American Movie Writing 1999 (Best American Movie Writing)

Author(s): Peter Bogdanovich (editor)

Usage: _X_Primary Text

TEXTBOOK 10

Title: Sports Media: Reporting, Producing, and Planning

Author(s): Bradley Schultz

Usage: _X_Primary Text

TEXTBOOK 11

Title: The Non-Designer's Design Book

Author(s): Robin Williams

Usage: _X_Primary Text

TEXTBOOK 12

Title: Interviews that Work

Author(s): Shirley Biagi

Usage: _X_Primary Text

TEXTBOOK 13

Title: Elements of Style

Author(s): Strunk and White

Usage: _X_Primary Text

Supplemental Instructional Materials (please describe)

Newspapers including: *The New York Times*, *San Jose Mercury News*, *San Francisco Chronicle*, *Wall Street Journal*, *Palo Alto Weekly*, *Palo Alto Daily News*.

Film including: *An Inconvenient Truth* (important issues), *Born into Brothels* (international issues), *Enron: The Smartest Guys in the Room* (investigative reporting).

Students will have lectures from editors and reporters from local newspapers and from Knight Fellows at Stanford University.

COURSE CONTENT

A. Course Purpose. *What is the purpose of this course? Please provide a brief description of the goals and expected outcomes. Note: More specificity than a simple recitation of the State Standards is needed.*

1. Students will read and comprehend newspaper articles, magazine articles and books by analyzing how the articles are written and the rhetorical devices are used.
2. Students will begin the study of researching, writing and editing for journalistic purposes.
3. Students will read and respond to culturally significant articles from mainstream publications as well as from selected texts to better understand American and global current events.
4. Students will write coherent and well-written articles showing an understanding of audience and purpose.
5. Students will learn how to write well under time pressure.
6. Students will learn to listen critically and learn to ask difficult questions in a news setting.
7. Students will learn the value of the revision process; each essay turned in will be revised a minimum of two times.
8. Students will compose articles of at least 700 words reflecting their understanding of each of the following formats: features, news, opinion, reviews, and sports.
9. Each of the journalistic writing styles listed in # 8 encompasses coherent and focused expository, persuasive, narrative and informational writing
10. Students will work in give oral presentations in class that demonstrate a logical pattern of organization regarding current events.
11. Students will complete a full-sized (14" x 22") model page with articles they wrote during the semester demonstrating their skill in desktop publishing and using *InDesign* and *PhotoShop*.
12. Students will learn editing marks and editing skills by exchanging essays and peer editing. The teacher will correct the editing as well as make suggestions to the writer.
13. Students will start the process of learning how to work as a member of a learning community learning community, in preparation for the Advanced Journalism program, by working in groups on multiple projects, by having peer editing groups, by

collaborating on story ideas and assignments.

14. Students will analyze critical news from major news organizations worldwide and work in groups to write articles relating to their analysis.
15. Students will learn desktop publishing skills using *InDesign* and *PhotoShop*.
16. Students will be introduced to first amendment rights, libel laws, and the responsibility of the press.
17. Students will have a brief introduction to the history of American journalism.
18. Students will be introduced to Web journalism and using the Internet to get information
19. Students will learn how to blog using Blogger and learn how to write effectively on a topic of their choice.
20. Students will keep a digital portfolio of all their work using *Google Docs & Spreadsheets* (free online word processor and storage area)

B. Course Outline. *Detailed description of topics covered. Show examples of how the text or readings are incorporated into the topics covered.*

- *Elements of Style* is used every week of the semester
- Every week students will read from a packet of excerpts from the books listed for the course.
- History of American journalism will be woven into the course.
- Libel laws using specific cases will be part of the course

WRITING STYLES THAT WILL BE COVERED IN THE CLASS:

Week 1-4: Personality features/profile

Introduction to writing a personality profile. Students read profiles in *Wall Street Journal*, *Investor Business Daily*, *New York Times*, *Time* magazine and others. These in-depth profiles are contrasted with the shorter profiles found in newspapers daily. Students are required to find a profile in their newspaper, bring it to class, and discuss with other students. They are then asked to find a profile in a magazine and contrast that with the newspaper profile. Each day several profiles are presented, content is analyzed and writing style discussed. Students will read up-to-date profiles about people in the news. Examples of profiles can be found on the websites of the above listed publications.

Students are also introduced to feature lead writing and given examples of descriptive leads, narrative leads, summary leads, and shocking statement lead. Students are given an introduction to interviewing techniques and note taking techniques. After brief study of profiles, students are then randomly placed in pairs and asked to interview each other and using one of the models, write a personality profile about each other. Students will read excerpts from *Interviews That Work* by Shirley Biagi and *The Art and Craft of Feature Writing: Based on The Wall Street Journal Guide* by William E. Blundell.

Students will also study the laws of libel using multiple examples from real life situations as well as material from the Student Press Law Center. Laws and ethics of the press are woven into each writing style each week and discussed weekly.

When studying personality profiles, students will be read personality profiles or biographical information about historical figures in American journalism: Dr. H.D. Shepard, *New York Morning Post*; Benjamin Day, *New York Sun*; James Gordon Bennett, *New York Herald*, Horace Greenley, *New York Tribune*; Henry J. Raymond, *New York Times*; Joseph Pulitzer, *New York World*; William Randolph Hearst, *New York Journal and San Francisco Examiner*. Each of these people will be discussed in the historical context of the time. Also, at this time students will be asked to select one historical journalist and do a research paper about that person. In writing the paper, students will be required not only to discuss the life of the person, but also to discuss the historical context in which that journalist wrote. Here is the list of well-known journalists from which the students can choose:
<http://www.infoplease.com/ipea/A0777379.html>

Week 4-7: **Movie reviews**

Students will read excerpts from *Best American Movie Review Writing 1999* edited by Peter Bogdanovich. They will read six excerpts, but particularly “Riskineque: How Robert Riskin Spoke Through Frank Capra and Vice Versa” by Joseph McBride and “Nine Great Movies” by Roger Ebert. Students will also read recent movie reviews in the San Jose Mercury News, New York Times and San Francisco Chronicle and compare reviews and writing styles of the reviewers. They will also discuss movie reviews versus DVD reviews. Students will be asked to get a movie review, analyze it and bring it to class to share. Students will then be required to see a movie to review and write a movie review based on one of the models given in class. Students will also study the history movie reviewing by going back into the USC Annenberg’s Image of the Journalist in Popular Culture.

Week 8-11: **Restaurant reviews**

Students will read excerpts from *Will Write for Food: The Complete Guide to Writing Cookbooks, Restaurant Reviews, Articles, Memoir, Fiction and More* by Diane Jacob. They will read restaurant reviews published in local newspapers and compare the lead, organization of material, writing style and content of the reviews. Students are required to obtain a review to share with the class. Students will then go to local restaurants in groups of four, review the restaurant and write a review based on one of the models discussed in class. . Each student is required to write a review. Students will have talks by local food writers about their experiences as food writers and food critics.

Week 12-14: **Music reviews**

Students will read concert reviews and CD reviews from *Rolling Stone*, *San Jose Mercury News* and online sites including *Metacritic* and *Stylus*. Students will bring in reviews from their own reading that will be the basis for comparison, analysis and discussion. We will discuss lyrics and the way that they impact the listener. The teacher will present several classic albums from a variety of genres and discuss how they may be reviewed. Students will examine the relationship between movie reviews

and movie studios and look at the impact of movie reviews on the success/failure of movies. They will also look at the history of music reviewing and discuss how it has changed over the years. Students can access previous movie reviews by using the Google archive search which they can find on the Google news homepage.

Week 15-17: Product reviews

Students will go online to find multiple product reviews, specifically technology reviews, food reviews, and service reviews. They will share the reviews in groups and we will analyze the writing styles of these reviews. They will continue to work on leads, on setting the tone in the article, and on gearing the article for a specific audience. We will also discuss the changes in technology over the past years in the newspaper production world. Students will access CNet online (www.cnet.com), PCWorld (www.pcworld.com) and Consumers Reports. They will read the reviews of a variety of products and compare the reviews. At the end of the unit, students will pick a product and review it; it can be anything from a technology product to a food product.

Weeks 18-20: Publishing

Students will set up a Blog at www.Blogger.com where they will be able to easily upload their work to their blog from the *Google Docs & Spreadsheets* program they have been using to write, store, and collaborate on documents. It is simple for students to upload their documents to the web; all they need to do is click on “blog” and Docs automatically uploads it to their blog. Students can have an individual blog and also their can be a class blog on the following: movie reviews, product reviews, restaurant reviews, music reviews. These are all the writing styles in the first semester and it will give students an authentic audience for their writing without costing the school or district any money for publishing. Personality features of students will not be published without the permission of the student; however, students can publish a blog about famous journalists. Teachers can easily check each student’s portfolio of work by accessing the student’s *Docs & Spreadsheets* account.

Week 21-24 : News Reporting

Students will use the *Associated Press Guide to Newswriting* in their study of news. Students will cut out one news story per day from the newspaper and analyze the writing style and the information in the story. The multiple news story writing styles will be presented during this two week period all emphasizing the inverted pyramid structure. Students will also cut out 5 news leads per day and analyze them for sentence structure, information presented, organization, number of words per lead, number of sentences per lead. News leads will be contrasted with feature leads and review leads. Students will have four opportunities to write news stories, each about 400 words. The first two stories will be from facts given at a two mock news conferences in class. The second two stories will be from facts gathered by the students from real life situations in the school or community. Objective writing will be stressed and students will have multiple lessons on distinguishing fact from opinion.

Students will discuss major news stories of the twentieth century including the Watergate scandal and power of the press in a democratic society. Students will examine the role and impact of the press in America today by examining news stories

from multiple news sources. Students will set up a Google personalized homepage and select news six news feeds (RSS feeds) from around the world and compare the reporting of the same story from a variety of perspectives. They will also discuss the major news stories of the 20th century and the impact of that reporting on actions that followed. Students will use this website to access the 100 most significant stories of the 20th century: <http://www.newseum.org/century/finalresults.htm>

Students will first practice news lead writing in controlled exercises in which the teacher provides the facts. Next students will learn to write entire news stories in a variety of formats again with facts either taken from textbooks or created by the teacher. Each news story will be peer edited and then corrected by the teacher. Finally, students will be sent out to write news stories of their own. They need to gather the facts, check for accuracy, and then write up the story in news style. Students are required to read the paper daily on a regular basis, but in this unit they are also required to cut out two stories from page one of a newspapers---the lead and the second and third paragraphs, tape them to a sheet and analyze the writing.

Week 25-28: **Opinion writing and column writing**

Student will read excerpts from *Writing Opinion For Impact* by Laird B. Anderson and *Pulitzer Prize Editorials: America's Best Writing, 1917-2003* in their study of opinion writing. Students will also read editorials from major newspapers and compare the writing and view points. They will be learning the structure for effective argumentative writing, emphasizing a strong thesis statement with clear supporting paragraphs. They will select their own topics from current events and write an opinion piece that is 600 words long. They will also learn how to write effective editorial and opinion article leads and contrast them with the news leads they just wrote the week before. The next week they will write 600- word columns, also opinion pieces, but differing significantly from opinion pieces. While many columns employ the same expository format as opinion pieces, other columns can be subject specific or humorous. Students will study humor writing and understand the cultural context of humor.

The history of American journalism will continue to be integrated into the curriculum as students examine the top news stories of the 20th century:

http://www.newseum.org/century/finalresults_movie.htm

The class as a group will discuss the reporting of the Scopes monkey trial and the impact of that reporting on public opinion at that time. They will also look at the impact today of the opinion pieces about Intelligent Design and Darwin's Theory of Evolution and how these stories impact decision making.

The class will also look at the Iraqi war reporting and examine the role of the media in public support for or against the actions taken by the White House by examining news articles from a variety of online sources as well as from *Time* magazine. Students can set up a Google homepage and include RSS feeds to that homepage from news sources of their choice. Recommended news feeds include *The New York Times*, *The International Herald Tribune*, *CNN*, *MSNBC*, *Reuters*, *BBC News* and *The Washington Post*.

Week 29-32: **Feature writing.**

Students will spend everyday reading and discussing a variety of features from the *New York Times Magazine*, *Time Magazine* the *New Yorker Magazine*. They will discuss and analyze writing styles, leads, story structure, conclusions as well as the Wall Street Journal Feature Formula. We will also read online Wall Street Journal feature stories and contrast the feature writing styles of the various magazines. Students will have three weeks to write a feature of their choice which must be localized. Students are required to conduct at least two interviews for their feature as well as do online research for background information. Features must be at least 1,000 words long and be revised and peer edited several times. They will also read excerpts from *The Art and Craft of Feature Writing* by William Blundell.

Students will continue their study of the history of American journalism by reading about the formation of newspaper chains including Hearst and Scripps-Howard, the formation of newspaper press associations, and the rise of syndicated columnists and articles that took place at the beginning of the twentieth century. Students will do a webquest finding information and share their findings with the class

Students will study the changes in the magazine industry and look at some of the icons of American magazine journalism including by studying the history of *Atlantic* magazine, *Look* magazine, *Time* magazine, and *The New Republic*. They will also view *Shattered Glass*, the sad story of Stephen Glass and his work as a reporter for *The New Republic*. The movie also warns students about the dangers of plagiarism and fabricated information.

Week 33-35: **Sports writing**

Students will use excerpts from *Sports Media: Reporting, Producing, and Planning* by Bradley Schultz in their study of sports writing. While they will review sports features and sports columns, this unit focuses on sport news reporting. Students will compare stories on the same game that appear in several different papers to see how each reporter's interpretation is different. Students will then be required to go to a school sports event or a professional sports event and write a 500-word story about the game.

Students will study the history of sports reporting by looking at the famous sports reporters including Henry Chadwick, George W. Daley, Dan Daniel, Egan, Ring Lardner, and Leonard Koppett. And Tim Murnane.

Week 36-37: **Book reviewing.**

Students will select a fiction or non-fiction book published in the last six months. The book is actually selected in at the beginning of the semester so that students have sufficient time to read the book. They read book reviews in the *N.Y. Times Book Review* section, *The New Yorker Magazine*, and online at a variety of sites. Students read three book reviews and then in groups discuss the leads, the organization, the writing style, the tone and the effectiveness of the support. They use these book reviews as models for their own book review. Students discuss the differences between book reviews and book reports that they write in their English class.

Integrated into each week of the program: **Desktop publishing and elements of design**

Desktop publishing is woven into the curriculum through the year. Students are made aware of newspaper layout and design and the teacher will discuss design elements when discussing the newspaper students are reading that day. Most major newspapers provide free classroom sets to teachers simply by requesting them.

Throughout the years, students will read *The Non-Designer's Design Book* to understand the elements of design. They will then be asked to find examples in newspapers and magazines that illustrate the design principles. This can be done in class on a routine basis. Students will also read Tim Harrower's *Newspaper Designer's Handbook* and apply the principles of both books to their own final project which consists of creating either one page from a full-sized newspaper (the student newspaper is a broadsheet) or an 8 page spread using the student magazine *Verde* as a model. Students must use four of their stories from the semester on the page; in addition, they learn to take digital photos, upload them, and include them on their page. Students are graded on a) their page design b) implementing the principles of design c) the story quality d) meeting deadlines.

Students will also learn to use *InDesign*, an Adobe desktop publishing program, *PhotoShop* for manipulating photographs, and *Illustrator* for creating infographics.

Students will keep a digital portfolio of all their work using Google Docs, an online word processor that allows students to store all their work not only for this course but for any advanced journalism courses they may take.

Week 39-40: **Review and final project**

Students review all the writing styles they have and work on their final project, an authentic assessment of everything they have learned during the semester. They create a newspaper page or pages or a series of magazine pages where they layout their work. They pick what they consider their best stories and use them in the final publication. They are also responsible for taking photos to accompany the stories.

C. Key Assignments: *Detailed descriptions of the Key Assignments including tests, and quizzes, which should incorporate not only short answers but essay questions also. How do assignments incorporate topics? Include all assignments that students will be required to complete.*

Final project

Students will create one large (14x22) newspaper page with four of their best stories using *InDesign* and *PhotoShop*, or alternatively, they will create an 8-page magazine spread using one story and demonstrating knowledge of graphic design, fonts, text presentation, magazine layout. The final project will be shared with the class.

Final examination

Students hold a press conference with an important local figure; for example, the mayor, a congressman, a controversial figure. The press conference lasts 40 minutes after which the students have 1.5 hours to write the story and lay it out using *InDesign* on an 8.5 x 11 pre-formatted page that they create themselves the week prior to the exam. Students demonstrate their ability to listen well, ask good questions, take good notes,

synthesize the information in a short period of time, decide up the appropriate format for the story, write the story, edit the story, place the story on the page, write a headline for the story, place the picture and print it out.

D. Instructional Methods and/or Strategies

Primary method of instruction is lecture and group work using newspapers, magazines and the Internet.

E. Assessment Methods and/or Tools

Authentic assessment and mastery learning are the primary methods of assessment. Students must demonstrate proficiency in all the writing styles; they are given unlimited opportunity to revise the articles within a fixed time period. Most students revise two to three times per article. Students demonstrate their knowledge of writing style, lead construction, audience, and tone through their writing and through their final examination. The final exam is an opportunity for students to demonstrate their mastery of their skill level in writing, layout, design and software skills.

F. Reading. Describe the reading requirements for this course.

(this is embedded in information above)

G. Writing. Describe the writing requirements for this course. Include the number and length of papers and essays required.

(this is embedded in information above)