

# Science Journalism (HPSC0107) Course Syllabus

2021-22 session | Dr Jean-Baptiste Gouyon | Email Address [j.gouyon@ucl.ac.uk](mailto:j.gouyon@ucl.ac.uk)

## Course Information

A practical course in communicating science considering various genres of output for different audiences and on different platforms. Students learn how to write short news stories, profiles, and reportages for broadsheet newspapers and popular science magazines, targeting a range of audiences from educated adults to school children with an interest in science. They write different formats and produce other kind of contents for social media such as podcasts. They interview scientists on their work and present their interviews in writing as well as through podcasting. Issues in the public understanding of science are discussed from this practical standpoint of communication.

This module is time intensive and requires substantial group work. It rests on the idea that the only way to learn how to write is to write as much as possible. The assessment for the module is a mix of formative and summative assessment and assignments.

## Basic course information

Course website:	See Moodle
Moodle Web site:	Search “HPSC0107”
Assessment:	Coursework
Timetable:	See portico
Prerequisites:	None
Required texts:	See reading list
Course tutor:	Dr Jean-Baptiste Gouyon
Contact:	Phone: 020 7679 3490   Email: <a href="mailto:j.gouyon@ucl.ac.uk">j.gouyon@ucl.ac.uk</a>
Web:	<a href="http://www.ucl.ac.uk/sts/staff/gouyon">http://www.ucl.ac.uk/sts/staff/gouyon</a>
Office location:	22 Gordon Square, Room 3.2
Office hours:	Tuesdays, 1-2pm (face-to-face); Wednesdays 2-3pm (Teams) or by appointment ( <a href="mailto:j.gouyon@ucl.ac.uk">j.gouyon@ucl.ac.uk</a> ).

Teaching for this course will be a blend of asynchronous material (lecture videos) and weekly face-to-face tutorials.

Each week of the term will revolve around a theme, which will be addressed in a package of lecture videos. It will be your responsibility to engage with this material.

Alongside the videos you will get a set of formative activities and tasks to complete on a weekly basis. These will include producing and submitting content on which you will receive formative feedback. These practical activities will form the basis of discussion during the weekly tutorials.

The table below provides you with an *indicative* list of the weekly themes for the lecture material and for the practical activities. I reserve the right to change part of this list, or the order of topics, at short notice.

Each week specific items from the reading list are suggested. These are indicative, for those willing to go deeper into one subject.

## Aims & objectives

### **Aims:**

The aim of the module is to introduce students to the basics of science journalism. The module will equip student with foundational skills to use different media and format to effectively communicate scientific ideas. Through this practical approach, students will be invited to reflect on what is science communication, why it is done, what are the social and political roles of science communication.

### **Objectives:**

By the end of the module, students should:

- know how to structure a piece of communication to achieve their aims;
- be able to write short informative texts, for blogs or more traditional news outlets;
- have a sense of what it takes to find good science news story;
- be aware of different ways of communicating scientific idea;
- be able to communicate scientific ideas through different media, using sound, image, or objects, as well as the written word;
- be familiar with the basic principles of interviewing;
- have planned and conducted a reportage;
- be able to coordinate different sources to write a feature piece;
- be aware of sociological issues pertaining to the communication of scientific knowledge.

## Teaching team

<b>Module Tutor</b>	Jean-Baptiste Gouyon   <a href="mailto:j.gouyon@ucl.ac.uk">j.gouyon@ucl.ac.uk</a>
<b>Graduate Teaching Assistant</b>	TBC

## Synoptic Schedule

UCL Week	Lectures	Tutorials	Readings <sup>1</sup>
	Topic	Topic	
20	Why communicate scientific ideas? Communication as co-production of meaning. The active audience.	The role of science journalism - Finding news stories	9; 10; 11; 16; 18; 23
21	Writing to inform. The practice of science journalism – what can you write about and how?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Where do science journalists get their stories from?</li> <li>Writing a news piece. (+ title, standfirst, etc)</li> </ul>	19, chap3
22	Preparing and conducting an Interview: the how and why of interviewing – situated knowledges	Preparing and asking questions	4; 12; 19 (chap7)
23	Planning and Constructing a radio show. The value of multiplying entry points in a story.	Podcasting	4; 14; 20
24	Storytelling Or how to moralise whilst pretending only to describe.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Writing stories = constructing plots, defining characters, finding situations</li> <li>How to construct a magazine</li> </ul>	1, chap8; 19, chap4; 3; 6; 8; 22.
<b>25</b>	<b>READING WEEK</b>		
26	Communicating scientific ideas visually. Is there anything special about images?	Scripting and story-boarding	7; 22
27	Planning and structuring a reportage	Reverse engineering a Reportage; Pitching a story to an editor	19 (chaps1, 5, 6, 9 & 19)
28	Writing a feature article, using various sources to develop an argument.	Assembling a long piece of writing.	19 (chaps13 -17).
29	Data journalism	Using text, image and sound complementarily.	
30	There won't be a formal lecture. Instead each group will present their mini-magazine.	<u>panel discussion</u> : science journalism in practice. With guests.	

<sup>1</sup>**Readings:** Please note. The numbers for each week refer to the numbers for each item in the reading list (see below).

## Assessments

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### Summary

	Description	Deadline	Word limit	Weight
<b>CW</b>	3' Newscast	21 February 2022, 05:00 PM	N/A	40.0
<b>CW</b>	Mini-Magazine	21 March 2022, 05:00 PM	2,500 wpp	60.0

### **Please Note: All deadlines for submission are at 05:00 PM (UK TIME)**

The two assessments will constitute **your 3,000-word portfolio**.

You are advised to **start working early** on the mini-magazine, as this takes time. The research work for the mini-magazine should feed naturally in the podcast.

### Detail of assessments

#### **3' Newscast**

**Submission date: 21 February 2022**

For this assignment, working on your own, you will produce a **3 (three)-minute radio news segment about a recent piece of research conducted at UCL**. In order to produce this newscast, you will need to identify a recent press release from the UCL press office and work from there. Your newscast has to feature a short interview segment with a scientist.

PLEASE NOTE: Together with the podcast (a sound file) you are required to upload on Moodle a short note (Word document) containing:

- the topic of the podcast and a brief summary (80 words) of the content;
- the name of the UCL research interviewed for the podcast as well as their lab, and/or department;
- the credits for the podcast, including any sound (sound effect, background music...) used.

### Where to listen for examples of Radio shows

- Science Stories:  
<http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b06vy2jd/episodes/downloads>
- The Infinite Monkey Cage:  
<http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b00snr0w/episodes/downloads>
- Level Up Human: <http://leveluphuman.com/>
- The Life Scientific:  
<http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b015sqc7/episodes/downloads>
- Inside Science:  
<http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b036f7w2/episodes/downloads>

### Assessment Criteria for the Newscast

Your work will be assessed against the following criteria:

1. **Science communication value:** *Is the podcast dealing with a science communication topic, i.e. is it an assignment relevant to a science communication course? (E.g.: Is it about research, or scientific practice, or the impact of science on citizens and society, or about a science education project....)*
2. **Effective use of the medium (Sound):** *Is the medium used effectively, e.g. to create a sense of place, to elicit images in listeners' mind, to create an atmosphere. Is the sound quality consistently good throughout? Is editing clean (e.g. no blanks, no word cut short, etc.)*
3. **Structure:** *Is there an introduction, clearly identified segments and a conclusion. Is the essential message coming through clearly at the beginning? Is it clear what the newscast is about?*
4. **News Value.** *Is there news value in this newscast? Is it topical? Will people want to know more about what the newscast is about? How relatable is it? Etc.*
5. **Information value:** *are scientific ideas presented in a creative, yet clear and accessible way? Do we learn something new listening to the newscast?*
6. **Listening value:** *Is the segment pleasant to listen to, surprising, thought provoking, intriguing?*
7. **Length:** *Is the Newscast 3' long?*
8. **Intellectual property:** *Have issues of copyright been properly considered and all the sounds appropriately credited (even public domain ones. In this case you just need to state that they are public domain.)*

## **Mini-Magazine**

**Submission date: 21 March 2022**

### Description

For this assignment you will work in a group. Together, you will produce a mini-magazine. Your mini-Magazine should contain different types of contents, briefs, long reads, profiles, medium format, photo-reportage, even games if you want to. Each group member will be expected to produce different pieces of writing for the magazine, and to sign them.

This varied content should enable you to cover a topic, related to research conducted at UCL. Don't forget that it all needs to be newsworthy, topical, and attractive.

The word limit for your mini-magazine will be determined by the number of people in the group. As a guide, each member will have to contribute up to **2,500 words worth of material and a specific set of formats:**

- **2 pieces @ 50 words**
- **4 pieces @ 100 words**
- **2 pieces @ 500 words (one of which interview-based)**
- **1 feature @1,000 words**

Note that the word count for each piece includes headlines and captions. Some in the group will do copy-editing for the others, which can be traded for less words to produce towards the magazine.

### Working in a group

Within your group you will need to attribute roles. As a minimum, you will need

- an **editor**, who will be in charge of coordinating the project;
- a **copy editor**, who will check all the texts for typos, spelling, grammar;
- and a **graphic designer** to lead on the visual aspect of the project.

All these roles can be assumed collectively, but it helps to have one person in charge of each as well. It does not mean that they must take all the decisions and do everything on their own.

### First Step: Producing a project – submitting it for formative feedback by 24 January 2022

Your first task as a group will be to create a project description for your mini-magazine. You will need to come up with a concept, a topic, a list of rubrics (or at least a sense of the architecture of the magazine, how will you present the content, which formats will you use, etc.?), and a tentative table of content.

The project description will contain a brief (200-300 wrds) description of the topic, its relevance and timeliness. You will need to emphasise its newsworthiness, what makes it worth writing about it now? You will need to indicate what is your target readership (e.g. children, teenagers, young adults, affluent middle class educated, or excluded groups, elderly people, pet lovers, vegans, LGBTIQI+... )

You will then need to sketch out your approach to the topic: What kind of contents will you produce? Remember that some contents are only justified by their news value (briefs), but others are here to provide context and background information, or broaden the perspective (longer formats, features).

You will then provide an outline of the structure of your magazine, with planned rubrics and key pieces. Ideally each rubric should vary in the type of content and provide a specific entry point in the magazine.

**Overall, this project should fit on 2 A4 pages, 3 at most. You will submit it on Moodle by 24 January 2022. It will not be graded, but you will receive formative feedback on it, and you will be invited to come and discuss it with a member of the teaching team.**

### Second Step: producing the magazine.

Once you are set on your project, you will need to actually produce the magazine. You will need to hold regular editorial meetings (once a week is a good regularity) to keep track of how everyone is progressing and decide on the different practical aspects of the production.

You will need to agree on a **timeline** and **deadlines** within the group, for everyone to deliver their copy, for a first draft of the complete magazine to be assembled, etc. Submission date for this assignment is **21 March 2022**.

### Assessment Criteria for the mini-magazine

Your mini-magazine will be assessed against the following criteria:

1. **Structure**
2. **News value**
3. **Information value**
4. **Is the content journalistic (i.e. does it provide evidence of leg-work; is there a variety of voices in the pieces to cover the different sides of a story)?**
5. **Variety of sources**
6. **Effective use of source material**
7. **Copy editing**
8. **Something extra**

## Reading list

### FOUR GOOD ALL-ROUNDERS ON JOURNALISM:

Burns, L. S. & B. J. Matthews (2018). *Understanding Journalism, Third Edition*. Sage.

Angler, M. W. (2017). *Science Journalism. An introduction*. Routledge

Harcup, T. (2009). *Journalism, principles and practice, second edition*. Sage.

Hennessy, B. (2013). *Writing feature articles*. Taylor & Francis.

1. Bauer, M.W. and Bucchi, M. eds., 2008. *Journalism, science and society: Science communication between news and public relations*. Routledge.
2. Baym, G. (2007). Crafting new communicative models in the televisual sphere: Political interviews on The Daily Show. *The Communication Review*, 10(2), 93-115.
3. Campbell, J. (2008). *The hero with a thousand faces* (Vol. 17). New World Library.
4. Clayman, S. and Heritage, J., 2002. *The news interview: Journalists and public figures on the air*. Cambridge University Press.
5. Cotter, C. (2010). *News talk: Investigating the language of journalism*. Cambridge University Press.
6. Curtis R (1994) 'Narrative form and normative force: Baconian story-telling in science', *Social Studies of Science*, 24: 419-461. Silverstone 1987 Narrative strategies on Television
7. Dijck, J. V. (2006). 'Picturizing science: The science documentary as multimedia spectacle'. *International Journal of Cultural Studies*, Vol.9, 5-24.
8. Ekström, M. (2000). Information, storytelling and attractions: TV journalism in three modes of communication. *Media, Culture & Society*, 22(4), 465-492.
9. Gregory, J. (2016). Problem science society. *Science Museum Group Journal*, 6(06). (DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.15180/160607>)
10. Gregory, J. (2016). The price of trust--a response to Weingart and Guenther'. *JCOM: Journal of Science Communication*, 15(6). 1-5
11. Gregory, J. and Miller, S., 2000. *Science in public*. Basic Books.
12. Heritage, J. (2002). Designing questions and setting agendas in the news interview. *Studies in language and social interaction*. Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum, 57-90.
13. Kochan, J. (2013). Subjectivity and emotion in scientific research. *Studies in History and Philosophy of Science Part A*, 44(3), 354-362.



14. Lacey, K. (2011). Listening overlooked: an audit of listening as a category in the public sphere. *Javnost-The Public*, 18(4), 5-20.
15. McKee, R.(1997). *Story: Substance, Structure, Style, and the Principles of Screenwriting*. New York: Regan Books.
16. Meyer, G. (2016). In science communication, why does the idea of a public deficit always return?. *Public Understanding of Science*, 25(4), pp.433-446.
17. Nash, J. (1999). Freaks of nature: images of Barbara McClintock. *Studies in History and Philosophy of Science Part C: Studies in History and Philosophy of Biological and Biomedical Sciences*, 30(1), 21-43.
18. Nielsen, K.H. (2013). Scientific communication and the nature of science. *Science & Education*, 22(9), pp.2067-2086.
19. Randall, D., 2007. *The universal journalist*. Pluto Press.
20. Redfern, M, (2008) "Speaking to the word: radio and other audio" in Holliman, R., Thomas, J., Smidt, S., Scanlon, E. and Whitelegg, L., 2009. *Practising science communication in the information age: Theorising professional practices*. Oxford University Press:178-192.
21. Shapin, S. (2012). The sciences of subjectivity. *Social Studies of Science*, 42(2), 170-184.
22. Silverstone, R. (1984). Narrative strategies in television science—a case study. *Media, Culture & Society*, 6(4), 377-410.
23. Silverstone, R.(2005). 'The Sociology of Mediation and Communication'. In Calhoun, C, Rojek, C, and Turner, B (Eds). *The Sage Handbook of Sociology*. London: Sage, pp. 188-207.