

Science Journalism (HPSC0107) Course Syllabus

2019-20 session | Dr Jean-Baptiste Gouyon | Email Address 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:	https://moodle.ucl.ac.uk/course/view.php?id=38849
Assessment:	Coursework
Timetable:	See portico
Prerequisites:	None
Required texts:	See reading list
Course tutor:	Dr Jean-Baptiste Gouyon
Contact:	Phone: 020 7679 3490 Email: j.gouyon@ucl.ac.uk
Web:	http://www.ucl.ac.uk/sts/staff/gouyon
Office location:	22 Gordon Square, Room 3.3
Office hours:	Tuesdays, 12-1 pm, Thursdays 12-1 pm; or by appointment (j.gouyon@ucl.ac.uk).

Synoptic Schedule

UCL Week	Lectures	Tutorials	Readings ¹
	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"> Where do science journalists get their stories from? Writing a news piece. (+ title, standfirst, etc) 	19, chap3
22	Storytelling Or how to moralise whilst pretending only to describe.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Writing stories = constructing plots, defining characters, finding situations How to construct a magazine 	1, chap8; 19, chap4; 3; 6; 8; 22.
23	Preparing and conducting an Interview: the how and why of interviewing – situated knowledges	Preparing and asking questions	4; 12; 19 (chap7)
24	Planning and Constructing a radio show. The value of multiplying entry points in a story.	Scripting and performing	4; 14; 20
25	READING WEEK		
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	Convergence: what skills journalists need to possess?	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.	

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

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>

FORMATIVE ASSIGNMENTS

Please Note

Each week every course participant should come to the tutorial prepared to present a piece of science journalism that they have found in the press. Additionally, two persons in the class will each week be responsible for preparing a short scientific press review, of the scientific news stories which have made the headlines. A list will be drawn in the first class.

Please be mindful of the fact that the formative assignments set up for each week are not optional. They are here for pedagogical purposes.

Assessments

Summary

	Description	Deadline	Word limit	Weight	Deadline for Tutor to provide Feedback
CW	Article analysis	29 January 2020, 05:00 PM	1000 words	10.0	12 February 2020
CW	3' Newscast	19 February 2020, 05:00 PM	N/A	30.0	4 March 2020
CW	Mini-Magazine	25 March 2020, 05:00 PM	3,500 wpp	60.0	8 April 2020

Please Note: All deadlines for submission are at 05:00 PM

The three assessments will constitute **your 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

Summative Assessment (i.e. marked)

Article analysis

Submission date: 29 January 2020

For this assignment, you will write a 1000-word analysis of Barbara Ehrenreich's 'Humans were not centre stage': how ancient cave art puts us in our place' (*The Guardian*, 12 December 2019).¹ You will have to **reflect** on the writing style, the structure, the storyline, how science is brought in the piece, how it is used, and how it is made relevant to readers. You will need to construct **an argument** about how you evaluate this piece of writing as a piece of science journalism.

This means that you need to provide a definition of what you believe are the aims and functions of science journalism. Remember what we discussed in class; science journalism can be about many things. It is not necessarily just about educating, it can also be about informing and prompting debate about science or forwarding a science-informed worldview. In the present case, a theme worth exploring is the

The aim of this assessment is to get a sense of how you reflect on science journalism, and also to encourage you to closely engage with a piece of writing. You should avoid simply being descriptive, and instead try and be analytical, and demonstrate your capacity for **critical thinking**. Try and answer this question: "How does the piece under scrutiny feed into your reflection about the aims and functions of science journalism?" There is no right or wrong answer here. I am just looking for evidence of your capacity to formulate interesting and original ideas.

3' Newscast

Submission date: 19 February 2020

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.

Assessment Criteria for the Radio Show

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*

¹ Available here: <https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2019/dec/12/humans-were-not-centre-stage-ancient-cave-art-painting-lascaux-chauvet-altamira>

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 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 Podcast 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.)*

Note that a recording studio is available for you to use in the STS department (22 Gordon Square, room 4.3). Details about booking the studio will be communicated in class.

The department also owns a number of voice recorders that can be borrowed to conduct interviews in the field. These should be borrowed with me (j.gouyon@ucl.ac.uk).

Mini-Magazine

Submission date: 25 March 2020

Description

For this assignment you will work in a group. Together, you will produce a mini-magazine. The word limit for your mini-magazine will be determined by the number of people in the group as each member will have to contribute **3,500 words worth of material**. For instance, a group of five will need to produce 17,500 words in total.

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.

Working in a group

Within your group you will need to attribute roles. At 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 responsibilities 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 3rd February 2020

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, LGBTQ+...)

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, but others are here to provide context and background information, or broaden the perspective.

You will then provide an outline of the structure of your magazine, with planned rubrics and key pieces.

Overall, this project should fit on 2 A4 pages, 3 at most. You will submit it on Moodle by 3rd February 2020. It will not be marked, but you will receive formative feedback on it, and will be able to come and discuss it with me, or Scott Keir.

Second Step: produce the magazine.

Once you will be set on your project, you will need to actually produce the magazine. You will need to hold regular editorial meetings 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 **25 March 2020**.

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. **Style**
5. **Variety of sources**
6. **Effective use of source material**
7. **Copy editing**
8. **Something extra**

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 aim;
- 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

Module Tutor	Jean-Baptiste Gouyon j.gouyon@ucl.ac.uk <u>Office hours</u> : Tuesdays 12-1 & Thursdays, 12-1, or by appointment. Gordon Square 22, room 3.3.
Graduate Teaching Assistant	Scott Keir scott.keir.18@ucl.ac.uk

Reading list

TWO GOOD ALL-ROUNDERS ON JOURNALISM:

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.