

# Science Journalism (HPSC0122) Course Syllabus

2022-23 session | Dr Jean-Baptiste Gouyon | e-mail 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 “HPSC0122”
Assessment:	Coursework
Timetable:	See portico
Prerequisites:	None
Required texts:	None
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
<b>Office hours:</b>	Thursdays, 12-1pm (face-to-face); or online (Teams) or by appointment ( <a href="mailto:j.gouyon@ucl.ac.uk">j.gouyon@ucl.ac.uk</a> ).

Teaching for this course takes the form of weekly 2-hour face to face sessions, starting with a short lecture followed by practical activities. Some sessions will require preparatory work on your part, in the form of reading, or collection of material.

Each week of the term will revolve around a theme.

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.

## 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>	David Tennison   <a href="mailto:avy.tennison.12@ucl.ac.uk">avy.tennison.12@ucl.ac.uk</a>

## Synoptic Schedule

UCL Week	Date	Topic	Practical activities
20	12 January 2023	Writing: Inverted Pyramid Structure, Essential Message, Five Essential Questions	Short format writing
21	19 January 2023	The media relationship with science – history of science journalism. A story of mutual dependence.	Critical engagement with press releases
22	26 January 2023	Moving away from rational entertainment: What is science? Should science journalists be scientifically trained? What does it mean to be “scientifically trained”?	Looking at a research centre’s website to find out what questions can be asked, what stories can be told, and how this can change the public relation with science.
23	02 February 2023	Researching stories - Sources	Framing, choosing sources to explore a story. Interviewing
24	09 February 2023	Researching stories - Field work	Producing a 2’ podcast.
<b>25</b>	<b>READING WEEK</b>		
<b>Deadline for the individual 3’ newscast: 21 February, 5pm.</b>			
26	23 February 2023	Designing a Magazine – thinking of audiences	Breaking down a big topic into several of its components.
27	02 March 2023	Objectivity – balance – subjectivity – Objectivity as intersubjectivity.	Long form writing
28	09 March 2023	The journalistic voice – Reading a feature	In preparation for this session please read Ronan Farrow’s feature on Pegasus in <i>The New Yorker</i> (April 2021).
29	16 March 2023	News values: what are news values for science journalism? Science journalism as political journalism - Engaged journalism	The case of nuclear fusion
30	23 March 2023	Career talk: Q&A with a professional science journalist	

## Assessments

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### Summary

	Description	Deadline	Word limit	Weight
<b>CW</b>	3' Newscast	21 February 2023, 05:00 PM	N/A	40.0
<b>CW</b>	Mini-Magazine	21 March 2023, 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 2023**

For this assignment, working on your own, you will produce a **3 (three)-minute radio news segment about a recent science story**. Any story that occurred after 1<sup>st</sup> December 2022 is acceptable. Your newscast **must** feature a short interview segment with a source relevant to your chosen story. A typical example is a science segment in the *Today* programme on BBC Radio 4.

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

- the topic of the newscast and a brief summary (80 words) of the content;
- the details of the person interviewed for the newscast;
- the credits for the newscast, including any sound (sound effect, background music...) used.

## Assessment Criteria for the Newscast

Your work will be assessed against the following criteria:

1. **Science communication value:** *Is the newscast 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 2023**

### 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 science. 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.

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.