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Inside Journalism

Columbia College Chicago

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INSIDE JOURNALISM

JANUARY, 1990

A Newsletter Published by the Journalism Department of Columbia College

NEW COURSES

The New Year is bringing three new classes to the j-department.

Students with literary aspirations may find the class "How To Write a Non-Fiction Book" inspiring.

For the future media professional and history buff, there is "Chicago Journalism on Film."

Skilled j-students can create a masterpiece in "Senior Honors Seminar."

This course will be taught by full-time journalism faculty member Carolyn Hulse. Hulse says the seminar will provide an opportunity for students to work at their full capacity. "There isn't enough opportunity for outstanding students to get together and work at a professional level," Hulse says. "This is a chance for students to do what they do best, with guidance."

The class is limited to the top 12 applicants. Hulse says students will be evaluated on an individual basis before being allowed to register for the class.

The class will be taught like a seminar, with advice tailored to students' problems. Students are expected to explore a subject of their choice in depth, requiring intense research, background work and several interviews. Broadcast journalism majors and magazine majors will be allowed to complete the project in their medium of choice.

All students successfully completing the course will receive college recognition as a journalism honors graduate.

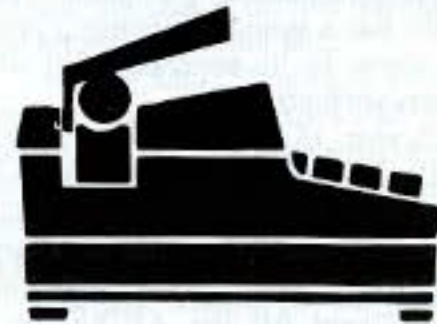
Students enrolling in "Chicago Journalism on Film," a one-credit class, will evaluate the changes in journalism during this century. Norma Green, director of the Weisman Center, says students will study four different versions of the classic film, "The Front Page." Originally written as a play by former journalists Ben Hecht and Charles MacArthur, the story chronicles the lives of Chicago journalists during the notorious newspaper wars of the twenties. The four versions are the original "Front Page," released in 1931; "His Girl Friday," 1940; a 1974 remake of the original; and the most recent, "Switching Channels," 1988.

"Chicago seems to exemplify journalism to the world," says Green. "I want students to look at how journalists are portrayed, and see what has changed over the years and what has stayed the same."

The class will meet once a month on Thursdays. A final paper is required.

"A lot of people have good ideas for a book," says Ada Kahn, instructor of "How To Write a Non-Fiction Book." "They just need to put them into an organized form, and learn to write a book proposal with confidence."

A book proposal is a very extended query letter. It serves as an outline for both writers and publishers, and is used as a selling tool. The proposal can then



be accepted, rejected or re-shaped by the publisher.

Kahn, director of medical communications for Burson-Marsteller public relations, has written and sold several books. "If you feel intimidated by writing a book-length manuscript, just think of it as a series of articles," she says.

The class will be taught like a workshop, with weekly assignments and criticism. It is for those who want to learn how to get their book ideas published. "People who register should have a book topic idea," says Kahn.

In the category of new wine in old bottles is Don Gold's sportswriting course, which will be taught so that it benefits magazine and broadcast students as well as news and reporting specialists. Gold is the j-department's newest full-time faculty member. He advises the *Chronicle*, and directs the department's magazine curriculum.

— Sheridan Chaney

THE WIRE SERVICES

...are great training grounds for young journalists

Journalism students often overlook the best opportunity for internships and entry level positions: the wire services. The Associated Press (AP), United Press International (UPI) and the City News Bureau of Chicago are just three that offer good, basic training in news reporting and writing.

According to T. Lee Hughes, Assis-

SPJ SEEKS TOP STUDENT WORK

The Society of Professional Journalists has announced that it is accepting entries for its annual "Mark of Excellence" competition, honoring the best student journalists in 1989. Regional winners will be chosen in the following categories: Newspapers, Magazines, Photography, Radio and Television. Judging in each category will be based on overall excellence, including criteria such as accuracy, completeness, effectiveness, enterprise and ingenuity, and style. All work must have been published or aired in 1989. For specific guidelines and application form, see Carolyn Hulse in 500-M. Deadline is February 10.

—Carolyn Hulse

tant Chief of Bureau-Editorial of the AP, wire services are often overlooked because they don't serve the public directly. "People are not aware of us and of what we do," he says. "A student can look at TV or read a newspaper and not realize that a substantial portion of what he hears or sees comes from the AP."

A student who wants to work for the AP must have at least 18 months of experience as a reporter for a newspaper or radio or TV station. The AP also has a summer internship program (now in its seventh year) for minority students.

Each year, 15 interns are chosen nationally to work in one of the AP bureaus for 13 weeks. If they are successful — and most are — they are offered a nine-month probationary job. An applicant for the AP Summer Minority Internship Program must be a full-time junior, senior or graduate student at the time of application. Hughes adds, "A journalism background is not required, but it does help." Applicants must pass a comprehensive writing evaluation.

Hughes, the recruiter for the state of Illinois, recently visited Columbia to talk with minority journalism students about the internship. Although Columbia has not yet provided a winner, four Columbians are presently working for AP. Lynda Horton, a 1989 graduate, is a general assignment reporter while Karla Thornton, MacArthur Savage and Greg Walker are office assistants.

The City News Bureau has earned a reputation for being a great starting place for j-students. Many of the best Chicago journalists earned their credentials at City News.

Joseph Reilly, editor and general manager, gives City News reporters a workout. "We try to make reporters productive by giving them as many as three to five stories a day," he says. Several Columbia graduates are beginning their careers at City News. They include '89 grads Anne Marie Obiala and Kelli Kirkpatrick.

Reilly says new reporters should be self-assured and aggressive. "And," he adds, "they should have a strong sense of curiosity."

To inquire about a position, send a resume and a letter stating why you want to work for the City News Bureau. Include up to 12 clips. Experience with a community or school

ALTERNATE AVENUES FOR J-STUDENTS

The biggest concern expressed by j-students is the supposed scarceness of editing and writing jobs out in the "real world."

Well, there are more jobs than you think — if you're willing to explore alternative paths.

Many of these opportunities are in trade organizations, special interest groups and nonprofit associations. According to an article in the *Chicago Tribune* by Carol Kleiman, the job market in these fields is growing rapidly. Although it may be helpful to know the intricacies of the particular company or industry in question, it is not essential. Jack J. Podell, publisher and editorial director of the American Bar Association Press, said in the article, "...what is critical is what kind of editor and writer you are...." Therefore, writing and reporting skills take precedence over expertise in a particular trade.

"We're looking for writers, editors, artists, photographers, typesetters and book acquisition editors," says Podell. "We want people who have clarity of writing and exposition and ideas that come to life."

One of the advantages of working for a trade or association publication is that the staffs are usually small. Employees may have the opportunity to wear many publishing hats.

On the other hand, if you are an expert in a field and wish to work in your area, rest assured. There are publications for almost any topic of interest. So j-students, when looking for that first job after graduation, consider your interests and explore these alternative avenues.

—Brita C. Jablonsky

newspaper will enhance your chances.

"UPI is an institution rooted in covering stories as they happen," says Steven Guimann, assistant managing editor for state and regional news. He was a 10-year veteran of newspaper and radio news before he joined the New York bureau.

"At UPI, we are unlike a newspaper because deadlines are consistent with the breaking news. There aren't a lot of beats and we cover the news as it's happening," he says.

Guimann hires people who "think fast, work fast, are very organized, curious about the world around them, and are interested in what's going on."

Though UPI rarely hires people fresh out of college, Guimann, in conjunction with the Society of Professional Journalists, enlists the help of organizations like the National Association of Black Journalists to recruit minorities. "We don't have an organized program, but to keep our staff diverse, we interview candidates at job fairs." About 80 percent of new hires are working journalists.

Although Guimann doesn't discourage those who want to consider a career in the wire services, he encourages working at a newspaper or radio or TV station first. Guimann adds, "It's valuable experience to see

how wire copy is handled along with local copy."

So if you're ambitious, energetic and versatile, consider working for a wire.

—Gayle Mitchell

SCHMOOZING

Some students wonder if it's what you know or who you know that determines success after graduation. It seems one perpetuates the other, and both are equally important.

What you know is essential. Without talent you can know everyone from the publisher to the copy boy, and those contacts will be virtually useless. Prospective employers place a great deal of value on high GPAs. They tend to assume academically successful students will be equally successful employees.

Who you know (or schmoozing, as Chairman Lehrman has been heard to say) is not clear cut. If a student has talent and admirable grades, what difference does it make who she does or does not know? Competition—stiff competition—is what makes schmoozing worth pursuing.

According to Bill Gaines, *Chicago Tribune* reporter, Pulitzer Prize winner and part-time j-instructor, schmoozing helped him to land a job on the paper.

Gaines, formerly a radio news reporter covering northwest Indiana, had worked with a **Tribune** reporter covering the same area. When the reporter was promoted, he recommended Gaines for the open position.

Each year, colleges and universities send hundreds of qualified graduates into the job market to fill a limited number of entry-level positions. Anything a graduate can do to distinguish himself from the pool is of inestimable value. Thus, an applicant who possesses a recommendation from a respected industry member, along with a notable GPA and solid internship experience is more likely to be noticed.

All of the j-department's part-time faculty are men and women working in the industry. Get to know them, and establish yourself as a serious student. Every little bit helps

—Muriel Whetstone

NINTH ANNUAL FISCHETTI DINNER

Mark Russell may have stolen the show, but the scholarship fund raked in the dough, at the 9th Annual John Fischetti Scholarship Endowment dinner, held Nov. 28 at the Chicago Hilton and Towers.

Good food and lots of laughs is the best way to describe the atmosphere in the Grand Ballroom. More than 400 professional communicators and journalists attended, among them the 21 j-students receiving the award. This year a record \$51,000 was raised.

Mark Russell, the popular political humorist, kept the audience in stitches with his commentary on current events.

"I especially liked his statement that if the presidency is seen as America's apple pie, and the vice-presidency as a piece of pie, then Dan Quayle is a twinkie," said Gayle Mitchell, a two-time Fischetti recipient.

Students declared the banquet a smash. "I thought the food was great," says Tanya Bonner, junior j-student, and a scholarship recipient.

Lambert Der, editorial cartoonist of the **Greenville (S.C.) News**, was awarded first prize in the John Fischetti Editorial Cartoon Competition. Paul Conrad placed second, and also received a special award.

—Svetlana Lalic

FLEMING HONORED

The prestigious Kogan Scholarship for excellence in journalism was awarded to Columbia student Mary Fleming this past semester.

The award, given for the first time in 1989, and administered by the Chicago Bar Association, was divided in two. A pair of top journalists, Joel Daley of Channel 7 News, and Lynett Myers of the **Chicago Tribune**, were given the honor of choosing their favorite journalism schools, each for a \$1000 scholarship. Daley selected Northwestern and Myers chose Columbia.

"I took a course in newswriting at Columbia that really prepared me for what I am doing now," said Myers who received her accolade from the CBA for her coverage of Chicago's criminal courts. "The instructor made us write and report on current urban affairs. It was very realistic," she said.

Kogan, the award's namesake, is the

recently deceased father of Rick Kogan, the **Tribune's** radio/television critic, and an instructor in Columbia's j-department. Colleagues say Kogan was a legend in Chicago journalism as a critic for the **Chicago Sun-Times** and a contributor to other publications.

Nat Lehrman, chairman of Columbia's j-department, recommended Fleming because "she's very bright, gets good grades, and is a hard worker. Mary is also planning to go to law school, which I felt was another reason she should receive this particular award," Lehrman said.

Fleming said, "I always promised myself that I would return to school, receive a college education and become a professional." She thinks her journalism background will complement her choice of law school.

"I'm still waiting for the results of my LSAT, so if you see me crying you'll know why," Fleming said.

Judging from her many accomplishments, it's unlikely she'll need to shed tears. She's received six awards for her accomplishments, including a scholarship from the Women's Relief Corps, the Muddy Waters Foundation, and two consecutive John Fischetti scholarships. She is also the 1989 Merit Scholar for the j-department.

When asked which of her many awards is the most meaningful, she said, "They are all of equal value to me because they remind me that I am not just getting older, I'm getting better."

—Irene Lobo

STUDENT NEWSCASTERS FIND THE WRITE STUFF IN RADIO NEWS

In radio news, talk is cheap.

And for those students who think having a nice "radio" voice will land them a job in radio news, David Roe, News Anchor/Reporter with WBBM News Radio 78 AM, says "They are absolutely wrong. Writing is the most important thing. A person has to have good news judgment. The voice just usually comes along with it."

Roe adds that he spends at least four hours per day on the air as an anchor or reporter and the same amount of time writing stories or rewriting wire copy in preparation to go on the air.

"Communication is the key," says

J-EMPLOYMENT/SALARY FIGURES RISING

The Survey of Journalism and Mass Communications Graduates in 1988 revealed promising beginning employment results for J-graduates entering the newspaper industry. Of approximately 20,557 former students surveyed, 34.3% landed jobs with dailies, weeklies and wire services, up from 30.5% in 1987. The percentage of employed minority graduates also increased—32.4% in 1988 compared to 24.4% in 1987.

After holding steady both in 1987 and in 1986 at a median of \$268 per week, salaries on dailies rose to \$310 per week in 1988; the median salary on weeklies increased from \$249 in 1987 to \$275 in 1988. Additionally, 22.9% reported earning more than \$400, while 8.2% earn \$500 or more per week.

The high percentage of employed graduates participating in internships (75.5%) indicates the degree of value placed on the experience by media executives. Unfortunately, the proportion of college interns has declined despite an adequate number of available internship opportunities.

—Muriel Whetstone



Columbia's radio station replicates the real world.

Chris Berry, executive editor of WBBM. "You want to talk to your audience—not at them." Berry says a radio newscaster and reporter does this not just by great vocal skills but especially by "writing clearly, concisely, and in a conversational manner."

Student newscasters and reporters at Columbia's radio station, The Source! WCRX 88.1 FM, are learning these valuable lessons.

Kevin Baerson, a senior radio major, co-anchors four newscasts on Wednesdays, this semester, with radio student Julie Olszowka. Baerson joined WCRX as a street reporter in spring 1988. "Writing is tremendously downplayed in radio. People don't know what goes into the preparation of a radio newscast. It's a lot of work," Baerson says.

Baerson and Olszowka have their first newscast at 3:50 p.m., before which, they rewrite and organize wire copy for their broadcast. Each newscast lasts approximately four minutes and contains national and local stories, sports, and a kicker at the end of a newscast, all of it similar to the format of professional radio newscasts.

Karen Cavaliero, general manager of WCRX, says everything is done professionally at the station. Students must submit a cover letter and a resume, along with a tape of their work in radio when applying for a news position on the station.

Baerson says, "You have to do everything you would do to get a job at a real radio station. You have someone to answer to. If you miss your newscast, you may be released."

"Radio news writing is different from newspaper writing," says Cavaliero. Most newscasts only have three minutes of hard news. Then you look at the much more complete

coverage in newspapers. You can't possibly give people that much information in a 20-second story."

Cavaliero says the key to radio newswriting is finding the guts of the story. "If the newscast is in-

teresting, the listener will want to know more," Cavaliero says.

Radio newswriting may be easier to master because of the short stories and simple sentences. Yet, according to Roe, it is the immediacy of radio reporting that is much more challenging than newspaper reporting and writing. "If you're working as a reporter and you get in a situation where you have to cover a breaking story, you have to make snap decisions about what to read on the air. Or you have to take a half hour news conference and turn it around immediately for your newscast."

Yet, it is the immediacy that lured some professionals and radio news students behind the microphone instead of behind the camera, where one is seen by millions of people.

"When a breaking story happens, a radio newscaster is the first to deliver it on the air," Roe says. Roe joined newscasters around the country in being the first to announce the plane crash of flight 232 in Sioux City, Iowa.

Radio stations can be more immediate because they don't have to hook up cameras, gather crew, or touch-up makeup before broadcasting information live.

Baerson and Olszowka prefer the anonymity of radio. "I don't have to worry about what I look like. I'm a self-conscious person. I feel more relaxed and it comes through in the way I present my material," Olszowka says.

"I don't have to dress up, worry about how I look, or if I have a zit on my nose," Baerson says.

Students like Baerson and Olszowka who perform well have opportunities to advance to managerial positions, such as news director. Senior Deborah Fencel currently holds that title.

Fencel encourages j-students to apply

for news positions at the station because of the valuable experience. The station currently has 12 newscasters, but can use 20. "Someone who can write as well as broadcast will be more impressive to employers," Fencel says.

Berry says job opportunities for grads aspiring for careers in radio news are not as abundant as they were eight years ago. At that time the Federal Communication Commission (FCC) eliminated the requirement that the all-music stations have news broadcasts, even though they were still required to provide a public service to listeners.

But Karen Hand, news director and morning anchor with the all-music WBBM FM and a part-time radio department instructor, says "If the market wants a lot of news, then there will be a lot of news." She says Chicago is one such market.

Indeed, the windy city now has two all news radio stations, with WMAQ the most recent addition. Anyone wanting to write radio news in the Chicago area will find opportunities aplenty at the local news stations.

—Tanya Bonner

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