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Inside Journalism

Columbia College Chicago

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JANUARY **INSIDE** 1995
JOURNALISM

A Newsletter Published by the Journalism Department of Columbia College

J-CHAIR DIVERSIFIES ESSENCE BOARD

On April 22, 1994, Nat Lehrman, chairman of the j-department, sat in the audience for the seventh annual *Essence* magazine awards. Co-hosted by Vanessa Williams and Sinbad, the awards honored black men from all walks of life.

Hardly black, Lehrman has been on the board of directors of *Essence* for more than 15 years. In 1968, when Edward Lewis and Clarence Smith cultivated the idea for the magazine, they asked other publications for assistance. *Playboy*, Lehrman's old stomping grounds, donated \$50,000 to help *Essence* get started. In exchange, *Playboy* was given stock and a spot on the board of directors.

In 1976, Lehrman became publisher of *Playboy*. Four years later, he joined *Essence's* board of directors, which includes three businessmen, Bill Cosby's wife, Camille, and Congresswoman Maxine Waters.

The only white person on the

board, Lehrman says he doesn't feel uncomfortable at all. "It's a diverse company and everyone feels right at home," he says.

Being on the board keeps the j-department's chairman busy several times a year attending five to six meetings. He is also required to chair the Compensation Committee. He is responsible for overseeing salaries and bonuses. At *Essence's* meetings, Lehrman and the other board members review the magazine's operations, which include advertising, circulation, and editorial.

Being on the board of directors gives Lehrman a perk. As a "special favor to me," the j-department is allowed to send a black female to intern at *Essence* each summer. *Essence* was delighted with the last several Columbia interns and "they really look forward to getting more students from us," he concludes.

-- Chris Seibel



Chairman Lehrman joins Publisher Ed Lewis at *Essence* Awards.

JOURNALISM VS. COMMUNICATIONS (CONTINUED)

The debate between journalism and communications schools takes on a new dimension as editors begin to add their opinions.

Editor&Publisher has run several columns and responses with a number of editors condemning both journalism and communications schools, and advocating a liberal arts education instead.

In the October 22, 1994 issue, Don Corrigan discusses a paper by Kevin Hall, an editor-in-residence at Florida International University's School of Journalism.

Hall emphasized a study that he co-authored. His findings concluded that editors continue to be disappointed in the writing of graduates of journalism school programs.

Corrigan notes several comments that were made by editors in the study. One wrote that "I would take a kid from a non-fiction writing class any day. The kid from the newswriting program will be narrowly focused -- infused with a set of rules but no real appreciation of what moves a reader's soul."

Another editor wrote
continued on page 8



Job Search

By Paula Eubanks

By far, the best preparation for a career as a journalist happens in the j-department classrooms, where you learn the basics of news judgment, reporting, writing and editing.

Yet if you neglect studying the liberal arts beyond the required minimum, you severely limit your ability to succeed once you land a journalism job. Without a liberal arts foundation to your journalism training, you will tend to be less familiar with the common ways of seeing and discussing the world on which you are reporting.

So, as you consider your choice of academic courses for next semester, decide which liberal arts classes could shape you into that "well-rounded" journalist you've heard so much about.

The j-department academic advisor, Harry Parson, and I suggest the following courses for your consideration:

- Introduction to Economics
- History of the American City
- Contemporary History: Understanding the News
- Politics, Government, and Society
- Introduction to Psychology
- U.S. Foreign Policy
- Urban Politics
- Introduction to Sociology
- Education, Culture, and Society
- Law and Society
- Race and Society
- Women and Society
- Family and Community History
- Philosophy I

- Arts, Technology, and Science
- Peace Studies
- Asia I: Early China, India, and Japan
- Topics in History: History of Sports in the United States
- Topics in History: World Civilization
- Introduction to Management
- Introduction to Advertising
- Psychology of Advertising
- Marketing Foundations
- Introduction to Public Relations
- Animal Ecology and Behavior
- Einstein: His Science and His Humanity
- The Blueprint of Life: Genetics
- Business Math
- Biotechnology: The Shape of Things to Come
- Science, Technology and Society
- Scientific Issues Behind the News
- Scientific Investigation: Sherlock Holmes to the Courtroom
- Television and Society
- The Documentary Vision
- History of Cinema
- Topics in Literature: Chicago in Literature
- Mythology and Literature
- Masterpieces of World Literature
- History of Art I
- Human Sexuality Seminar
- Biology: The Living World Around Us
- Chemistry in Daily Life

For detailed information about course content and to discuss your personal needs and options, call Harry Parson in the Academic Advising Office at 312/663-1600, Ext. 621.

(Paula is the j-department's career advisor. Seek her out in the Career Planning & Placement Office, Wabash Suite 300, Ext. 284.)

GET EXPERIENCE AT THE CHRONICLE

What is the first thing a prospective employer asks you? No, not what's your name, but how many clips do you have?

And the Columbia College *Chronicle* is one way j-students can receive those clips.

Yes, the prospective employer is interested in your grades, but not nearly as much as in your bylines. As a result, j-students who work or write for the *Chronicle* have an advantage over those who don't.

"It shows employers that you took your major enthusiastically, which in turn will compel employers to take you more seriously," says Tracey Robinson, faculty advisor of the *Chronicle*.

The *Chronicle* is especially valuable for the young journalist. It provides j-students with experience to go along with their training. Moreover, the *Chronicle* prepares j-students for real world journalism by teaching what they can expect in the real world, notably deadlines.

Robinson feels participating on school publications is so influential for future journalists that she wants to see it become a requirement for all j-majors to write for the *Chronicle*.

"We must do something in order to make students feel that they should work and write for the newspaper since all of the skills that they need for beginning their careers really begin right here," says Robinson.

It is also true that it is easier to get a story published in the *Chronicle* than in a major newspaper or magazine. J-students should use the opportunity available to them.

Sergio Barreto, the managing editor of the *Chronicle*, emphasizes that clips are crucial to a j-major's career.

"I have no idea how j-students who don't have clips plan on getting a job," says Barreto. "The field is so competitive that you absolutely must obtain clips in order to distinguish yourself."

--Todd Dell' Aringa

SOME J-STUDENTS LACK GOOD GRAMMAR? SAY IT AIN'T SO, JEFF

Student grammar. A contradiction in terms? Some j-teachers complain about verb tenses that are shifted and modifiers that are misplaced or left to dangle. "And" those students who start their sentences with a conjunction are corrupting the Queen's English.

One teacher decided to stop complaining about the problem and do something about it.

Jeff Lyon, director of the j-department's science writing program, urged a student to take a remedial grammar course.

"The student's writing style improved dramatically," says Lyon, whose protege eventually entered grad school.

"This student, who already was a good writer, improved five-fold in terms of correctness. All the creativity was set free because it was no longer limited by mistakes."

Lyon cites several reasons for

poor writing performance in college. For some students, English is a second language fraught with inconsistent rules of usage. Other students have learning disabilities or received weak training in grade school and high school. Whatever the cause is, the effect haunts those who decide to go on to college, in the classroom and in their careers.

"I feel that grammar, usage or style, whatever you want to call it, is a highly underemphasized subject today," says Nat Lehrman, chairman of the j-department. "Students come to college unprepared to be writers.

"Writing without knowing style is like wearing an elegant Armani suit that is crumpled and dirty," says Lehrman. "The substance is there, but the absence of style cheapens the product."

--Tony Scianna

According to the j-tutoring department, students who have difficulties with grammar or writing often fall into three categories:

- Those who need j-related coaching and seek help at the department's tutoring office
- Some who take basic grammar courses or go to the Writing Center (7th floor of the Wabash building) for help in improving their usage skills
- The remaining students are expected to bring themselves up to speed but often fall by the wayside.

"I'm still a little bamboozled that students overlook these services or don't want to take advantage of them," says Jim Sulski, who teaches Intro to Mass Media and is a tutor in the j-department. "I guess (writers) have these big egos but we're not sure how to handle them."

Sulski suggests that students know their own limits and not be ashamed to use available resources to help themselves become better journalists.

"Tutoring does for students what an editor does for a writer," says Sulski.

--Tony Scianna

A POWERFUL IDEA

The early '80s were the dark ages of the journalism department. Students were poorly informed of the department's events, awards and meetings. Trends in the trade were passing too quickly. Was there any light at the end of the tunnel? Yes.

In 1986, the department received what it needed -- a monthly publication summarizing all the goods that formative journalistic minds find appealing. Chairman Nat Lehrman felt that one of the ways to introduce togetherness to the department was to start a newsletter. "What's unique about the newsletter is that it is produced by students," says Lehrman.

The birth of *Inside Journalism* brought the first compilation of information about the department, by the department, to the students, faculty and administration at Columbia.

Eight years ago things weren't so easy. Photos were not scanned directly onto a computer making them easily accessible--photos had to be taken to the printer where plates were made of the image and photographed right onto the copy. *IJ* began with a Ventura desktop publishing program and moved to Pagemaker in the spring of '93. So *IJ* is much sharper, more visually interesting, and darn if it doesn't make us look like we know what we're doing up on the 13th floor of the South Campus. "I'm in it for the money, and I can't make the cake without the clips, but seriously I like the fact that I have this chance at a hands-on education," says *IJ* staffer John Harris on his involvement in the production of the newsletter.

Aside from what the students of Columbia get from *IJ*, the newsletter is the idea that keeps on giving. "The single message that *IJ* gets across is that we are a cohesive, coherent department that should inspire pride," Lehrman concludes.

--Matt Kurten

FIVE CLASSES TO A FABULOUS FUTURE

Each spring, the j-department offers a bouquet of specialized electives designed to add something extra to the j-student's repertoire.

The following five courses, devised to hone a writer's skills like the point of freshly sharpened pencil, are offered by Columbia's j-department.

• **Covering Urban Affairs:**

While Les Brownlee is on sabbatical, this class will be taught by Thom Clark, president of the Community Media Workshop. The course focuses on the South Loop neighborhood surrounding Columbia.



Thom Clark

Clark's hands-on approach takes students to the streets where news is born.

"There are a lot of stories in this part of Chicago that are often missed by major media outlets," says Clark.

"Students who are decent writers and excellent reporters can expect to get clips."

Clark intends to funnel student stories to senior editorial staff at the *Reader*, *New City*, the *Neighborhood Works*, *Tempo*, *Chicago* magazine, the *Columbia Chronicle* and community newspapers.

• **Alternative Press:** Students

learn to embrace the term "freedom of the press" after taking this course, which is taught by Norma Green, director of the j-graduate program.

The class offers broad perspectives of both the mainstream and multi-



Norma Green

cultural press and familiarizes students with alternative outlets -- voices of the disenfranchised.

"It's important to see why these media were begun," says Green, whose class also covers the historical back-

grounds of alternative media. "These groups empowered themselves by creating their own news outlets."

• **The Business Beat:**

Business issues aren't confined to the stock market and corporate revenues. They affect lives in every demographic

stratum.

"Business involves the economy, taxation, real estate technology, jobs, the technology revolution and other things that impact ordinary people every day," says Carolyn Hulse, director of news reporting and writing, who teaches the course. "Students who know how to write about business and the economy will have a competitive edge when they enter the job market."

Beginning in the spring of 1995, the course will be offered to both undergraduate and graduate students.

• **Opinion Writing:**

Lend some credibility to your views by taking this



Carolyn Hulse

class. Taught by *Sun-Times* city hall reporter, Mary Johnson, this course shows students how to support written opinions with facts.

"Typical writing classes teach students to work within the confines of formu-

las and ethical guidelines," says Johnson. "Here they learn to debate in class, as long as they can support their arguments with research and statistics."

"Students leave this course more confident about their writing and they learn that their voices are no less important than anyone else's."

• **Science and the**

Media: Covering today's fast-paced technologies requires a good writer's judgment and a flair for analogy in order to communicate to the

public.

Scientific concerns are tightly woven into the fabric of many news stories; from radon gas seeping through cracked basement floors, to the possible approval of the abortion pill, RU-486.

"You can't always divorce non-scientific stories from scientific components," says Jeff Lyon, who teaches the course and is a writer for *Chicago Tribune*



Jeff Lyon



Mary Johnson

Magazine. "Journalists inevitably have to cover science or medical concerns at some time in their careers."

--Tony Scianna

MY SUMMER IN NEW YORK

New York has a way of shaking things up and moving them around. For me, they've landed in perspective.

Coming to New York was always a dream of mine--and when you have a dream for so long, it becomes an ideal. In my *Artist-in-the-Street-Poets-in-the-Cafe* vision, it was a harsh reality to find heaps of garbage cluttering the streets and huddled homeless sleeping on doorsteps. New York's rich/poor contrast and psychologically-fueled edge shocked me; but then I think that New York is here to wipe out suburban blandness and throw you--head first--into life.

I became a part of the American Society of Magazine Editors internship program through an unusual situation and I left, 11 weeks later, surrounded by the same confusing circumstances. As both a visual and verbal journalist, my internship at *Town & Country* was based, primarily, in the art/design/production departments--the only ASME intern, out of 42, to do so. My immediate supervisor was the art director, and I learned how to recognize great from good photography, set up a productive photography schedule for the Paris couture shows, research stock photography, deal with color separation, brain storm on interesting angles to illustrate copy--basically I found myself immersed in the world that I've been studying and learning for so long. I even had the opportunity to do a personal favor for Ethel Kennedy (but she did not offer to introduce me to her nephew.) However, through it all, my mixed journalism background constantly confronted me with the choice that I will ultimately have to make: *do I want a career based primarily in editorial or design?*

Every week the ASME interns were scheduled to attend a luncheon, where we were exposed to some of the greatest magazine personalities in the business--everyone from John Mack Carter of *Good Housekeeping* to Ellen Levine of *Redbook*. We spoke with former ASME interns who are now freelancing and met other ASME alum--success stories of New York interns turned New York professionals. However, everyone that I encountered was either a writer or an editor, and I soon found myself ready to leave art direction behind in favor of XYWrite and IBM.

But then came week number eight. Our weekly ASME excursion took us to *Rolling Stone* and Fred Woodward, the magazine's art director for the past seven years. As I found myself immersed in the field that I came to New York wanting to be a part of, I once again discovered why I love art direction and design. "This is as good as it gets," Fred confided, intriguing me while he--almost humbly--spoke of his own career path: working for smaller Memphis publications, while taking the time to develop his personal design philosophy. As he spoke of his confidence--or lack thereof--in his early design years, I began thinking about my own confidence--or lack thereof--at this point in my own design career. "From time to time," Fred offered, "I would come to New York to test the waters...not to find a job--I wasn't ready for New York--but to just feel its direction, to get some feedback on my work and to push myself to work harder."

Choices. That is what Fred Woodward offered me. The choice of jumping into an established New York mass market publication or making New York wait,

taking the time to develop a personal creative philosophy and my own identity as a designer.

That doesn't mean that I will reject any New York offer that might pass by me in my initial job searches. It just means that the offer to grow currently outweighs the offer of a quick, exhausting, ride up the magazine business ladder of success.

My experience this past summer in New York is what changed my vision of an *ideal career path*. Whether my quest leads me to Seattle, San Francisco, Atlanta, or even back to New York, it is a quest that is driven by pure opportunity and not by any romantic notions about having a business card from *Harper's Bazaar* or *Men's Journal*.

I understand the rationale of by-passing all those *small steps* in between graduating from college and the world of New York magazines, but needing that constant challenge to succeed at breaking new ground is what brought me into this business and what has kept me here throughout college. Staying fresh and original is the basis of any artist's life.

Our means of survival is a creative one. Whether your job is designing the latest *Ray Gun* spread or drafting a *Newsweek* business clip you are creating art. The lifestyle we all have chosen is one where there are no right and wrong answers. Always changing. Always moving. It never slows down. It's about pictures and words and making a marriage of the two.

It's about an ideal.

--Georgine Panko



Georgine Panko

CORMAN BRINGS EXPERIENCE TO THE JOB

Steve Corman, the new director of broadcast journalism, comes to Columbia with impeccable credentials: he's been a writer and TV producer for 30 years and has garnered eight Emmys.

Corman started his career working at WIND radio, writing and producing programs. After staying at WIND for about six years, Corman left radio and decided to pursue a career in television. He signed on with Channel 5, and continued to work there for 12 years. During his stay, he worked on virtually every newscast they had.

His main body of work, however, was producing the news. "For over five years I worked the 6:00 news, which was then anchored by Carol Marin and Jim

Ruddle," says Corman. "I worked on other newscasts including the 4:30, when it was a one hour format. I also did the 10:00 and some sports production for awhile."

After a successful career at 5, Corman picked up and moved to the west coast, and took over the executive producer's spot at KNSD in San Diego. It was there, Corman says, that he achieved his greatest bodies of work. "I was in charge of a program called Third Thursday. It was basically a town hall forum. It was nice to give a service of that kind to the community."

After spending more than thirty years of his life in the media, Corman has won many coveted awards, including his eight Emmys dealing with spe-

cial programs. Two of them were for sports, and the others were for news and special events. The most important one, Corman says, is one he received while in Chicago. "We did a piece called 'Gangs: The New Chicago Mob.' It came out around the late '70s or early '80s. It's rather prophetic when you see what kind of problems we have today."

Although this is his first time teaching at Columbia, he is not new to the profession. While working at Channel 5, he taught news production at both Roosevelt and Northwestern Universities. He is currently teaching two classes at Columbia: Broadcast Journalism in the graduate program, and Writing and Producing Television News.

--John Harris

WRITTEN IN STONE

When Julie Sacharski, 25, was a journalism student at Columbia College, she had a startling revelation: she didn't want to become a beat reporter. So she added p.r. and marketing classes to her journalism core, and then landed a good job in corporate communications.

As Senior Communications Coordinator for Stone Container Corporation's quarterly magazine, *CornerStone*, Sacharski has more responsibilities to deal with in a week than a newspaper beat reporter has in a month. Not only is she responsible for writing and editing a magazine that is distributed to more than 30,000 workers, Sacharski also coordinates all photography and video, and writes promotional announcements.

Working at Stone Container is something she finds rewarding, and Sacharski says she owes it all to the help of one of her previous journalism teachers.

"Carolyn Hulse told me about

the job and what it entailed. Basically, she said I was well-suited for it," recalls Sacharski.

"Combining the marketing courses with my journalism gave me the direction I wanted."

But journalism was at the heart of what she studied. She worked on the *Chronicle* for two years, and became the editor of *Inside Journalism*. Sacharski knew what she was good at.

"I wanted to learn different styles of writing. I didn't want to be a beat reporter and work at a newspaper," she reflects.

Hulse recommended that she intern at the *Chicago Tribune*. Sacharski found herself comfortable working in the newspaper's office of employee relations. After graduating in June 1991, Sacharski landed the job at Stone Container as Communications Coordinator, and was later promoted to the position she holds today.

A small paragraph in the magazine informs the reader that

CornerStone is printed on uncoated groundwood paper that contains recycled content.

"Stone Container is all about paper and paper packaging. I respect this company, and I feel that it shows in my work," says Sacharski.

"It's important to know what employees want. If you're not doing for the employees, then you're not doing your job," she says.

Finally, the advice Sacharski offers graduating journalism students won't sound new, but it's realistic. Having an open mind about the future and not getting discouraged is important. Also, she says, realize that the first job in journalism may not be the dream job that everyone hopes for.

"Sometimes in the beginning you have to take a lesser job in order to find the niche that you're meant for," Sacharski concludes.

--Sally Shorr

ONE THOUSAND PAGES OF LIFE

Coordinator of Outreach Programs and j-instructor, Les Brownlee has spent the better part of his almost four scores of life being an African-American man of firsts in the field of journalism.

Indeed he has pioneered the way for people of color.

However, Brownlee never equated what he was doing with pioneering. He was just trying to "get a job" he says.

Brownlee was the first African-American editor-in-chief of a literary publication in college. The first African-American inducted into the Society of Professional Journalists. The first African-American city newspaper reporter and the first African-American broadcast reporter. He was also the first African-American president of the Chicago Headline Club.

During the spring semester of 1995, Brownlee will be on sabbatical, as well as continuing work on his autobiography.

"I lived a rather colorful life," he says and all one needs for confirmation is his resume.

Brownlee hopes to begin editing his one thousand pages of life by fall.

Brownlee has also written children's books, in addition to hundreds of magazine articles.

There is hesitation in his voice as he talks about his sabbatical, because he'll be separated from one of his loves--teaching.

J-student April Knox knows firsthand of his dedication and his commitment to his students.

Knox, a student in Brownlee's News Reporting II class, says she respects Brownlee because he's been in the field for so long and at 79, he's still encouraging and inspiring young students. "I think that's remarkable," Knox says.

Brownlee says he is most proud of those he has inspired to get into the world of journalism. Among those are WLS-TV's Russ Ewing; j-instructor, j-grad and *Sun-Times* reporter Lee Bey; Art Golab, who is also a j-grad and *Sun-Times* reporter; and Dr. Pam Johnson, who he's known and mentored since she was a 10-year-old girl. Today Johnson, who holds an esteemed position at Gannett Publishing, is in charge of 23 newspapers.

Brownlee says he would like to see more of his "brothers and sisters in the media," for a better balance of reporting.

He is also concerned with the plight of inner



Les Brownlee

city children. They "aren't getting a good education," he says and emphasizes how we haven't learned to start taking care of our less fortunate.

While on sabbatical Brownlee will have the opportunity to indulge himself in another one of his passions--baking.

"What exactly does this "icon," as j-department Nat Lehrman calls him, bake?"

"You name it," he says, and recalls being known as "the muffin man," because of the myriad of muffins he could bake.

As for retirement, Brownlee, who was inducted into the Chicago Journalism Hall of Fame in 1993, promptly says, "I'll retire to the cemetery."

--**Tanisha N. Douglas**

MY SUMMER IN KENTUCKY

I wanted to share my wonderful summer experience at the *Lexington (Ky.) Herald-Leader* with you. This is my third internship, but my first in print. It also was one of my best.

The *Herald-Leader* is a Knight-Ridder publication with two Pulitzer prizes to its credit and a circulation of 125,000; 165,000 Sunday. Its internship program is held every summer, and hundreds of students from around the state of Kentucky vie for the three news intern spots, one sports spot and three copy editing spots.

I was extremely fortunate to have my first print internship with the *Herald-Leader* because it takes its internship program seriously.

I can't stress enough the importance of experience before applying for the internship. Many papers will look to see if you've worked on the school paper, or if you are taking classes to sharpen and strengthen your writing skills.

JOURNALISM VS. COMMUNICATIONS (CONTINUED)

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about too much time being spent on related issues such as journalism history that "would be better spent on just plain writing and writing and writing."

On the other hand, some journalism instructors still feel that the education of j-students is on the right track.

"Good journalism schools provide students with the best education college can offer," says Kathy Goldman, a part-time journalism instructor at local community colleges. Journalism is a discipline in which students learn organizing, editing and writing skills.

"The skills that journalists need are writing and editing and

While at the *Herald-Leader* I covered positions on all news desks, as well as features and business sections. I covered everything from horse farms to penny shortages to low-rider cars and trucks. That was the most encouraging part of the internship, being able to float around and try my hand at all the desks to determine what I did best.

At first, I was nervous about diving into a new city, but I soon found that the editors at the *Herald-Leader* were committed to making my internship a good one. Whenever I had questions, there was always someone there to help me out. At the same time, they didn't hold me by the hand -- I was trusted to do a good job. I was treated in a highly professional manner.

The best part of my internship came when they entrusted me with a breaking story regarding city hall and a payroll tax problem with citizens. My editors worked with me to prevent errors, and the story turned into a

then they need more writing and editing," comments Goldman. "These skills need to come from teachers who have experienced the kinds of things their students will be experiencing." If universities feel that they have to place their j-courses under the communications roof, then let them. As long as these basic courses are still taught by professionals, then it should not matter.

"Writing is a craft, especially journalistic writing. It does not come naturally, it needs to be taught, and taught by professionals," Goldman concludes.

--Patricia Frey

three-day follow-up that made front-page news each time.

It was at that point that I realized that being a truly good journalist takes discipline and dedication. Don't expect to come in at 9 a.m. and leave at 5 p.m. -- no, this is a job where you come in at 5:30 a.m. and leave at 9 p.m. (if that's what it takes) to make your story the best.

I came out of my ten-week experience with a total of 31 clips and a solid reporting experience. Now, as I look forward to graduation I take my new knowledge and hope it will help me land a full-time job.

-- Lisa Ramirez

INSIDE JOURNALISM

A newsletter produced by and for students of the Journalism Department

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