

SPECIALISED REPORTING WORKSHOP

MINDFUL FEATURE WRITING ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Level of Course: Bachelor Level Final Year Special Project

Course Description: The general news reporting techniques of who said what to whom and where and how could create news reports that lacks context and worse sensationalized for entertainment rather than information. Writing features is an art that go beyond mere reporting the above to deeper analysis and context. When addressing issues of Sustainable Development this is an essential element of news reporting and feature writing. Thus it needs development of good research and analytical skills, including deep listening and the ability to think in order to analyze. In the series of workshops we also introduce the added dimensions of mindfulness principles to news reporting and feature writing. This course incorporates elements of the Development Reporting and Human-Centric Reporting modules, but, with a more practical oriented approach to teaching/training.

Mode: A series of 3-4 hour (half day) seminar style workshops followed by field-work and feature writing/production.

Required and Recommended Texts:

- Dixit, Kunda (1997). Reporting as if the Earth Matters, IPS, Manila
- Gunaratne, Shelton, Pearson, Mark and Senarath, Sugath (eds) (2015), Mindful Journalism and News Ethics in the Digital Era, Routhlege, New York.
- Johnson, Carla (2005), 21st century Feature Writing, Pearsons, USA
- Quebral, Nora.C (2012), Development Communication Primer, Southbound, Malaysia – retrieve from <http://www.southbound.com.my/downloads/QuebralCruzPrimer2012.pdf>
- Seneviratne, Kalinga (ed) (2006). Media's Challenge: Asian Tsunami and Beyond, AMIC, Singapore
- Sharma, Dinesh. C (2007), Development Journalism: An Introduction, Ateneo de Manila University, Philipines
- Wheeler, Sharon (2009), Feature Writing for Journalists, Routledge, USA

Course Description and Outline: This module is a combination of workshop style sessions and field work. It will include four (4) workshops, one (1) day of field work, half day of writing and half day of presentation and feedback. This course could be spread across a semester with weekly or fortnightly sessions. This could also be a stand-alone course for training working journalists as well. It could be best offered as a week-long specialized training course of workshops and field work.

Day 1:

Workshop 1: Introduction to Feature Writing (Duration – 4 hours)

Discuss basic news production and techniques of feature writing. Emphasize the importance of research, interviews and writing leads. Do a number of class exercises on interviewing, writing leads and using quotes to link stories.

Workshop 2: Mindful Feature Production and its Application to Sustainable Development Goals (Duration – 4 hours)

Introduce the principles and concepts of mindfulness in news production and how it applies to researching and compiling a feature story. Also introduction to Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and relate these to mindful communication methodologies in gathering of news stories.

Day 2:

Workshop 3: Developing An Idea and Constructing a Feature Story (Duration – 4 hours)

What makes a good feature? Explore the process of developing a story idea and constructing a feature story – the research, structure, leads, continuing and linking the story, where to stop and how. Different interviewing techniques and methods of obtaining interviews will be discussed along with ethical aspects of the exercise. In the last hour of the class, students will draft a story pitch to be presented at the next workshop.

Workshop 4: Pitching A Feature Story (Duration – 2-4 hours)

During this class each student will pitch a feature story idea to the lecturer and obtain his/her approval to proceed with the story. A skeleton structure of the feature may be constructed.

Day 3:

Field Work - Gathering Material, Interviews and Analysis (Duration – 6-8 hours)

Students will work on the field to gather the story including doing interviews for it. Analyse data / material collected and structure the story.

Day 4:

Writing Story, Presentation and Feedback (Duration – 6-8 hours)

The story may be completed in the morning and presented in the afternoon. Feedback will be given with tips to improve it if necessary. Copy will be provided for grading.

Assessments: The assessments and grading for this module may include the story pitch and the final feature story. This is a hands-on course module designed to introduce skills in writing feature stories adopting mindful communication principles and addressing issues related to SDGs.

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