

David L Woodson

End of Semester Evaluations

Q. What are the things I wish I would have known before I entered the Newscast?

A. I wish I would have had more experience operating a camera before joining the Newscast.

Prior to operating a camera for the Newscast, I had never before worked a camera – not so much as even recording a single shot. I took the Visual Communications course, and I learned how to edit video, but I had never actually worked a camera before. I realize that I am probably in the minority when it comes to this inexperience but I think it would be most efficient if students were required to shoot their own video and edit their own video in the Visual Communications course. I am very grateful that the professor, almost on day one, gave the class some great basic pointers and guidelines – which were all very easy to understand and follow.

One thing I learned as the semester progressed was just how impactful your working partner is. Before I started the class, I was under the impression that if you get a partner that doesn't care about the story then you could just make it up by putting forth extra work. I was wrong. Maybe

it's just me, but if your partner really cares about the story as much as you do, then you are able to "feed" off of that positive energy and creativity thereby producing a better story. But, if your partner would rather just "throw something together" then the story will suffer even if you try your hardest. I realize this may not be everyone's experience, but knowing just how important

group chemistry is to shooting a good piece is one thing I wish I would have been aware of from day one.

Overall this was definitely one of my better classes. I learned a new skill (shooting and editing video) and I met some **very** talented people. I look forward to learning much more from these people and making next year's newscast one that will be talked about many years from now!

Dear Horizon students,

I was going to start this letter out by saying, at the beginning of my first semester on The Horizon, I didn't know what to expect. Then I thought better of that because I am almost certain that every other student doing this assignment most likely will start his or her letter similarly. This brings me to my first point of things I wish I would have known prior to starting The Horizon. Be your own person, develop your own style, find your niche and do not succumb to the norm. Do what works for you, but remember to be unique and distinguish yourself from others. This applies to not only the way you write your stories, but also the way you conduct interviews, establish contacts, etc.

This semester, I found my niche in profiles writing. I remained in the pod for the duration of the semester. I am not sure how much help I can give you in regards to the three other pods, but I think I have profiles down pat.

The best piece of advice I can give you is this: do not wait for your editor to assign you a person to profile. Get out in the field. Spread the word that you are looking for interesting people who have done interesting things to interview. Find people to interview that you find fascinating. It will make your interview and hence your article so much better. Do not get stuck interviewing the president of the math club. Get out there, establish contacts, and find your own interviewees.

Once you have your subject, narrow your focus. Sometimes you do not figure out what your focus will be until you are in the midst of the interview and have really discovered what makes this person unique, but the worst thing you can do is try to include a little bit of everything. Pick a point of focus and hone in on that. I think that was my biggest mistake in my first article ever written. I did not really know what I was doing, and I did not hone in on a single focus. It is best to choose your focus prior or during the interview so that you can ask more detailed questions regarding that specific focus, rather than asking many broader questions.

Another great piece of advice is don't use your secondary sources as simply window dressing. Don't just throw in a quote or two from a secondary source because its required of you. You have no idea how much that secondary source can enhance the quality of your article. Do not settle for simply students at the school. If it is a student who did a police ride-along, contact the cop he rode with. If it is a student who won a pizza creation contest, contact the pizzeria and ask the manager for a few comments.

Take advantage of the fact that you have a great team of editors who are here to help. The door to The Horizon newsroom is (almost) always open. Have questions? Pop on in there. Ask questions. Request guidance. The editors are happy to offer there two cents.

Last, but certainly not least, go to the editing sessions on Fridays. Yes, I know it can be a pain in the butt. Yes, I know you probably have a job and/or kids at home and you look forward to Fridays as a day off. It really is so beneficial, though and helps immensely with the craft of copyediting. Copy editing other stories gives you great practice and better prepares you for those weekly AP style quizzes (so don't leave your stylebook at home!) And if for no other reason, it helps the editors out and provides them with an extra and much appreciated set of eyes.

Good luck!
Annie Malka

Letter to Future Students

There were only a few things I wish I knew before taking The Horizon course. Although the majority of things I wish I knew were taught in this course, having the knowledge beforehand would have made me have a better understanding about broadcasting.

The first thing that I wish I knew beforehand was having experience in broadcasting in general. My high school didn't have a news program specifically for broadcasting. We really didn't have anything towards that field. The terminology taught to us in class and the hands-on experience did help overall, but I would have been able to add more to my stories and productions if I knew everything prior to taking this course.

Another that I wish I knew beforehand was full knowledge of the AP stylebook. Although I had courses that used the AP stylebook, they really didn't fully focus on the book. The quizzes in this course make the students apply the AP stylebook to our broadcasting assignments as well as to the students interested in newspaper writing.

The last thing I wish I knew beforehand was general knowledge of producing a story. The visual communications course offered at IU Southeast gave some information about producing a story so I would recommend taking that course before taking The Horizon.

This course is very helpful for students that want to pursue journalism as their career. Even though I didn't have experience in newspaper writing or broadcasting, everything that I lacked prior to this course I gained after the first semester.

Hello Students,

My name is Leslie and after completing my first semester of The Horizon I feel obligated to give you some advice on things I learned during the semester.

My first piece of advice would be to learn as much AP style as you possibly can. It's important to be able to hand your editor's a story that they won't have to doctor too much. Plus, you have an AP style quiz once a week and knowing AP style is helpful if you don't want to look like an idiot. On that same note, you'll also be quizzed on current events so it's a good idea to watch the news or read the newspaper a few times a week.

I have found that it is useful to sometimes ask for advice from someone who is more experienced. If you have a question, just ask. Your professor and your editors would much rather you ask them about something you're not sure of than correct your mistake later.

Next, it is important to remember that you are now writing for a newspaper. It's not an English class so you can't procrastinate until the last minute and still turn in a story. Scheduling interviews and photo opportunities takes time and patience, especially if you have a subject that is uncooperative. Sometimes you have to interview people who don't really want to talk to you, it is important that you do your research so that you can make the most out of what they do decide to give you.

My last piece of advice is for photographers. You will often be shooting in unfavorable conditions. It is important to keep a level head and be professional, don't panic. If it is cold outside and you have an indoor shoot, do not leave your camera in the car the night before or the day of your assignment. It will get cold. This hasn't happened to me but it has happened to people I know.

Your camera, like your glasses, will fog up when you walk into a warm area. It will take time for your camera to return to room temperature and by then you may have lost an opportunity for a great shot and if enough condensation builds up, you can ruin a perfectly good lens.

Always arrive early and stay late so that you can make the most of the opportunity and work out any bugs that might come up.

I know that writing for The Horizon sounds a bit intimidating, and it is at first. However, there are always people around to answer questions and help you along the way. You'll try new things and sometimes mess up but it will be alright. You will have a blast and make tons of new friends in the process.

And remember, if all else fails and you're worried about your grade, Ron loves snicker-doodle cookies.

Sincerely,
Leslie Radcliff

Jolie Stone

My advice for the new students coming in to the Horizon would be to study the AP Style guide religiously. The average person would not think it would be that difficult to correct sentences but it definitely is and it is not just common sense. Another piece of advice is to do the extra work and go the extra mile to make sure that every piece of the assignment is turned in how correctly and on time. If stories and/or photos are not turned in on time then it is hard for the editors to put their pages together and to get feedback to the writers. Something else that is important to grasp is to get your information and your sources quoted correctly. It is hard enough as it is to obtain the information needed for a story or for a cutline, so why not make sure it is done correctly.

The Horizon is a fun and rewarding class to be in. As a photographer I have personally learned a lot about the photojournalism aspect of the class. I may not be a professional but hopefully I will be one day in large thanks to IUS and the Horizon. I look forward to coming back to the Horizon next semester and continue taking photos and editing them. In the end, take this class seriously and it will pay off.

Dear future newscast students,

Considering this is something I never thought of as something I wanted to do I think it gives me an interesting perspective. I've always considered myself a print journalist. I've never been comfortable in front of the camera, never been good at talking in public. And most importantly I viewed broadcast journalism as something that was on a different planet from print journalism. But I was wrong. It is very similar in many ways even in format. In print you always lead with the top news story on the front page, the same can be said for broadcast. In print you tease the big feature story to keep your readers reading. In broadcast the same is applied, it is surprisingly similar.

Even the story structure is similar, starting with an anchor intro, a headline. Then you go to the reporter with the setup for the story, who, what, where, when and possibly why, the lede. Then you go to the people to tell the story using sound bites, the quotes. After I started realizing what a broadcast journalist really does I realized that a journalist is a journalist it's just the media that is different and how the media is used to tell the story. I really didn't expect to find that many similarities but am pleasantly surprised to find out that it wasn't as bad as I thought.

The biggest thing I have learned is that your first story is always your hardest, in print and broadcast. If you look at the video from my first stand up I look like I'm about to puke I'm so nervous. No matter what I say no matter how hard I try I can't seem to get the words out that I want to. The reason was I didn't prepare something beforehand I just figured I could say what I needed to, no problems, I was wrong. The second story I did I wrote my stand up before and you can tell, I did it in one take and it was exactly what needed to be said. This can be said for print as well as broadcast; you get back the effort you put in. If you don't prepare and work hard you won't see the results you want to, I know. Sometimes I thought that the story would just write or

tape itself and it doesn't. That's one of the biggest things I have learned over the course of my time with The Horizon. If I had to do it all over again I would have worked a lot harder and made sure I was better prepared than I am right now. Truly the worst thing you can do is not work hard, this is an opportunity to work and learn, and if you look at it as just another class you are severely mistaken.

Sincerely,

Josh Barber

Future Horizon students:

Before going into “Writing for Mass Media” I wasn’t sure what to expect. There are many things you will never learn until you are put in that situation, and I think reporting is one of them. Listen to the advice I have, but realize that you’re going to have to find your own way of doing things. If you don’t have your own style, you’re not going to stand out. Standing out is what makes a journalist a success. So, my first piece of advice: be unique.

You have to figure out what works best, and that will probably take more than one or two interviews, articles, snapshots, etc. Eventually you’ll get it right. Be patient.

When you do get it right, it’ll feel great. You’ve finally accomplished something. Keep that confidence and use it on your next project.

Don’t get sloppy. If you start skipping steps, you’re going to forget something:

Get a decent background on everything you are covering, before the event.

Talk to people. Most of them will be happy to talk to you.

Keep your facts straight.

Double check the spelling of the name.

Always keep a camera in your hand.

Make sure your tape recorder is **on**.

Make sure to keep an open mind.

Brittany Powell