

JOUR367
JOUR667
Capital News Service Broadcast Bureau
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The “courses” that I teach for the Philip Merrill College of Journalism are unique. We are not classroom based. Rather, undergrad students in J367 (all seniors) and the master’s students in J667 are with me four days a week (8:30a-7p Tu-We-Th & 9-noon on Fridays) serving as reporters, videographers, writers and anchors for the three times a week (live) newscast that we produce. That show, *Maryland Newsline*, airs on UMTV, the cable station operated by the Merrill College. UMTV is a part of the cable systems (Comcast and FIOS) in both Montgomery and Prince George’s Counties so our show is available for viewing in the half-a-million homes in those two counties. In addition, the stories reported by my students also appear on our collective Capital News Service website (cnsmaryland.org).

Since my students are part of our overall Capital News Service, their video packages are frequently picked up by our clients and featured on their websites. Those clients include: the Washington Post (washingtonpost.com), the Baltimore Sun, the Frederick News-Post and the Salisbury Daily Times (delmarvanow.com), to name just a few of the places our stories have appeared.

Also, my students are often called on to turn their video packages into text stories which, again, are featured on our own website as well as those of our many clients. I should also mention that we are **not** a campus-based news service. Instead, we cover the entire state with a heavy emphasis on public affairs reporting. We go where the stories are to be told—it could be as far away as Western Maryland or the Eastern Shore or as close as our own campus.

Because my “class” is a news bureau (which serves as a capstone course for our undergrads and the final course for master’s students in our public affairs reporting program), the enrollment is limited: it ranges from 5-10 every semester with a mix of graduate and undergraduate students.

So, this is a real world class with real deadlines and real clients. As such, the students also assigned beats which are reporting areas of concentration, although they are not exclusive topics. Our beats regularly include education, politics, economic development, criminal justice and the environment.

For the coming fall, I actually have two students officially assigned to the environment as their beat. I’ve already told each of them that I am expecting them to produce at least a couple of stories on the topic of sustainability. But, in

addition, I am challenging the other students in my CNS broadcast news bureau, (at least for the fall semester) to come up with their own stories about sustainability. It will be a theme for the semester (and the environment has been a major area of concentration for ALL of our CNS bureaus—there are four—so it's a perfect fit).

Part of the “learning” in my “class” deals with the reporters’ (students) coming up with story ideas in addition to expanding their skills and abilities to do the story (visually). It’s a skill they’ll need—and highly valued--in their next (paying) job.

That said, I do help to prime the pump, as needed. To that end, in my syllabus, I’ve mentioned that there are a number of sustainability projects on campus that they should/could check into (although not all would necessarily make for good television stories). I will be encouraging my students to reach out to the departments on campus to see how we might be able to “tell” their various “sustainability stories.” In addition, I will be challenging my reporters to find related stories in our community at-large as well.

Hopefully, we’ll have a wide variety of sustainability related stories which will air on *Maryland Newsline* and be published on CNS client websites over the course of the semester—perhaps even beyond.

The bottom line: the students will not only grow their journalism skills but will be helping to inform the larger audience about the topic of sustainability. A win-win for all of us.