

Just before the start of the fall semester, it was reported in the media that more journalists have now been killed in the war Iraq the past two years than in all the years of the Vietnam conflict dating back to the late 1950s. These reporters felt it important and necessary to go to the Middle East to see the war up close for us. They literally gave their lives so that we might have more information and perspective on how the Iraq situation is really going.

I suspect they would not be all that impressed or proud with their colleagues on television last week who covered the arrival of Hurricane Katrina. Instead of a noble cause for the good of our society, journalists on-air last Monday seemed to be jumping at the chance to have Katrina take a shot at killing them.

What was worse and irresponsible, all the 24 hour cable news networks seemed more than happy to show their antics in those dangerous wind and blinding rain conditions. Anchor people, back in their safe and cozy studios, made it worse by verbally applauding such reporter "bravery and courage." It all came across as pure stupidity. How responsible is it for TV people to report government orders to evacuate, then leap at the chance to do just the opposite? For students working on degrees in broadcast journalism, this was the most shameful and idiotic learning experience they could have seen.

Sure it is all about shrinking ratings, attracting viewers and making money in the process. And yes, with so many TV outlets now vying for our attention, the network and local station piece of the ratings pie is getting smaller and smaller by the day. But talk about the lowest common denominator approach! Those TV reporters out in the hurricane looked like "street clowns", each willing to say and do anything just to get attention. Why not give the audience some credit for having brains and maturity. Mount a camera securely at a location, put a dummy there if need be to depict the impact on human flesh, then model responsible behavior and take cover. It's no wonder why people think TV folks are so shallow.

How about some basic common sense folks? Before journalists jump down the throats of the feds, state and local officials for botching the aftermath rescue and relief efforts, point a finger at your own poor thinking and unconscionable behavior. No wonder more and more people are electing not to watch local and network TV News. Too many clowns, not enough substance. TV people might focus on being better caretakers of the language. There is a huge difference between calling the minority victims in New Orleans "evacuees" vs. "refugees." Those African-Americans were born here, and not in a "third world country." They have enough to deal with now. Why put a stereotyped label on their fight for survival?

MCOM 72: REQUIREMENTS for- Journals Analyzing Media Strategies

1. Get the topic assignment in class each week. Never elect to pick your own focus.
2. Be clear on what Prof. Rucker wants all to focus on. Ask all questions in class, not by e-mail to him later.
3. Do research online. Look for pertinent interesting facts, quotes, info to include weekly in JAM report.
4. Take notes on your reactions to that info. Add some of your reactions to your weekly JAM reports.
5. **TYPE ONE PAGE, DOUBLE-SPACED weekly, NEVER go past one page.**
6. Use size 12 font...Times New Roman or Arial style...never use bold fonts.
7. Manually set margins like my sample. Empty space suggest weak efforts & gets a grade reduction.
8. GET TO THE POINT QUICKLY. Don't waste space or ramble. Write succinctly. Be word precise.
9. Correct spelling and grammar in all weekly JAMs. Edit your writing. Always make a good impression.
10. Number JAMS & TITLE at the top like you see on the sample page. Add no other info, just that.
11. Make sure your name and class meeting time is on every weekly JAM report, no exception.
12. Keep all JAMS in numerical order in a simple, flat binder. Nothing elaborate please.
13. NO COVER PAGE OR CREATIVE GRAPHICS EVER. JAM #1 is the first thing in the binder.
14. As the weeks go along, you **may NOT go back, re-write, replace or make any changes to previous JAM reports**. Prof. Rucker must always see what he wrote on previously reviewed JAMS.

JAMS

GRADING: Everyone starts with an "A." It stays that way all semester if you simply follow ALL directions above. Your ability to do so is always being evaluated.

Grades go down when you don't fully comply. There are NO extra credit opportunities to boost JAM report grades. You are being evaluated strictly on how well you meet assigned weekly focus and offer support information. No excuses for not bringing JAM binders to class every Thursday. Be prepared to discuss what you wrote. Your opinions are not being graded. Research info must be included in JAMS and be accurate. Beware of some web sites.

Prof. Rucker collects JAM binders in class periodically and unannounced. He will review them and add a stamp or remarks. Follow all recommendations he makes. No remarks mean you are doing the JAM correctly. His original remarks and stamps MUST REMAIN in binders ALL semester. Make no changes or substitutions ever. JAM grades always drop when you don't follow directions above or the remarks made by Prof. Rucker for improvement.

Do not volunteer to submit another student's JAM folder in class. You jeopardize your own grade by doing so. Individual students must turn in their own JAMS in class, and not at Prof. Rucker's office. JAMS may NOT be turned into the main Journalism office. NO CREDIT will be given.