

Critical reflection journalism portfolio



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The portfolio is designed to showcase my work and abilities as a potential journalist. In putting together my portfolio, I was guided by my interests; principles of journalism as taught in class and the requirements of the module. In the portfolio, I wrote about a train driver who blamed a non-existent bad weather for jumping the platform; the ‘dishonest’ and double standard manner the Cameron led coalition has handled the issue of tax avoidance involving *Starbucks* and the cases of looted funds from developing countries coming into the West, including Britain. I also wrote about the possibility that British universities may be turning out Islamic ‘terrorists’. There was also an interview with a Social Worker, who chose to remain anonymous, on the difficulties of effectively discharging social care work.

The first thing I noticed with the module was the fast pace of activities required to meet my portfolio requirements. Ordinarily my class work tends to move fairly slowly. The truth is I was not prepared for the speed and discipline portfolio production demands. More importantly I had problems picking a news event to cover out of all the options suggested. There is a reason. In my first year at the university, for one of my journalism modules the class was asked to cover a particular lecture at the University’s Stratford campus. The whole exercise ended in agony. I ended up trying to make sense of a highly technical Science lecture and to make it relevant and interesting to an audience that was not scientific or particularly interested in how scientists go about their research. It was a nightmare.

I must have done something however because I did very well with the copy. It was a difficult exercise and I believe I made a mental note to stay away from such assignments in the future. This explains therefore, my decision to

write on economic and business topics. In one or two of my copies I veered to political issues but at the heart of all this was my passion for issues affecting my native African roots, the perceived injustices, inequalities, inefficient and corrupt regimes in African countries and Nigeria in particular. The general view is that such regimes are largely sustained by the patronising Western powers.

I have conducted interviews before but was unprepared for an interviewee who wanted to remain anonymous. I was therefore unsure of how to retain credibility for my copy on social work without betraying the confidentiality I promised my interviewee. I decided therefore to tie the piece to the Baby P scandal. The core of the story was the burden of expectations society placed on the professionals who work in the social care work without, as they see it, “adequate resources and remuneration”, and also without making allowance for the fact that care service is not an exact science. Getting someone to speak on record for this piece was not easy and so, rather than ask around I decided to take the advice by Formichelli, Linda & Diana Burrell (2003), and “... found my own source”. Another advice I took to heart was to “give my interviewee a verbal ‘thanks’” after the interview.

The module instilled in me a number of significant transferable skills. The first is the need to be organised. Nothing significant is achieved without detailed and thorough planning. I have also taken an ‘entrepreneurial’ attitude to work and learnt to be focused on the ‘consumer’ – the audience. Most importantly, I was learnt to have an eye for newsworthy stories, with my target audience at the back of my mind. For example I was in that *Southeastern* train that jumped the platform but was still able to write the <https://assignbuster.com/critical-reflection-journalism-portfolio/>

story in the third party. I have learnt how to write news and features for publication. I learnt to generate ideas, to research those ideas and to produce copies based on those ideas, to a high standard. I have also been able to detail proposals to a high degree and therefore in my view in a position to pitch for commission with editors. But I am still learning

The module also helped me to take advantage of new social media tools with which journalists can communicate with their audiences. I am now able to confidently upload copies to websites, where allowed. I am also able to write directly online and given the fact that the internet and social media tools can now be monitored, I am able to apply journalism principles responsibly.

These principles include my obligation to truth; discipline of verification and to recognise the platform as a forum for public criticism and compromise. I am aware also that I am allowed to exercise my personal conscience and take full advantage of my blog and twitter accounts.

I have come away from the module recognising the primacy of traditional journalism values, particularly that of fact verification. I recall a situation concerning the copy I submitted for publication on the *risingeast.co.uk* website on the looting and transfer of funds from developing countries, particularly Nigeria to the West. Dr. Andrew Calcutt, my module tutor was unwilling to publish certain parts of that copy until he had evidence that is already in the public domain on the individuals named in the piece. I went back and sourced more than thirty one pages of newspaper articles for him. I appreciated his position especially when he said he was acting on advice from the legal department. This informed my approach to all the pieces that I submitted. Additional values I picked on include: truth, clear and clean

writing. These are core skills and knowledge that I believe will make me a competitive player in the contemporary media and journalism industries.

I have learnt to think clearly and to make sense of the world around me; I also learnt to communicate clearly and directly; and to work co-operatively with colleagues. To be organized in my work is to be able to meet deadlines and to present my stories and their ideas to other people.

The module helped me to eliminate the boundaries between print, multimedia and broadcast, and to be strong on good writing and critical thinking. It was uplifting seeing my module leader present a fresh approach to my first copy in minutes. I told myself, with time and practice, I'll be like that. I learnt in practical terms how to identify workable and unique angles to news stories and features and how to remain focused on the message that I wish to convey. Another outcome was the how and why I should forget I have an opinion when putting a copy together. I am allowed to have an opinion but that opinion must not get in the way of the story I am telling my audience. I believed I managed that in the copies in my portfolio.

I have always had an interest in following news, both serious and the mundane. This module reinforced this trait, which I consider one of my strengths. I am at home reading news online, in print and on mobile devices. One other strength I believe I have and which is essential to my programme is that of curiosity. I tend to observe and explore, asking questions, even in my everyday life. I read newspapers and magazines, watch news on television and listen to news on radio and still query them, trying to see them from different angles to see if they will come out the same way. I tend

to stretch myself and to do things I wouldn't normally do, if only for the experience. This is essential to journalism. Lastly, I believe that any journalistic story must remain significant, interesting and relevant. I know I am good at this, but also mindful of the need to keep the news comprehensive and proportional.

I appreciate that though I did not produce as many copies as I proposed to deliver, I am encouraged by the fact that I have picked up the necessary knowledge and skill to do so should I be able to work up the necessary discipline to effectively manage my time. I also note that I need to improve on my research efforts, particularly into the academic overview of journalism as a discipline.

Nonetheless I have learnt a lot from this module. I know in practical terms what News is; I know how to recognise my audience and what it wants; how to write a story and how to pitch it to an Editor. I have picked up skills, I have met challenges which my training has helped me to get round. I have knowledge of how institutions work, and have highly developed communication skills which will work to my benefit. I am on my way.

Bibliography

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