Feature Story

LOCAL REPORTERS WANT STUDENTS TO SEE BEYOND THE CAT FASHION SHOWS IN BROADCAST NEWS

By Camila Navarrette, Senior Journalism Major

When most of the university community leaves campus, 15 students head to class. Media, Film, and Journalism Studies students brave winter evenings twice a week to take the Broadcast & Visual Journalism course. Led by 9News journalists for more than 30 years, the class teaches students the essentials of broadcast journalism straight from the source.

DU alumnus John Fosholt (MA '75) taught the evening class from 1979 while working as an investigative producer and multimedia producer for 9News-Denver. The veteran journalist recruited 9News colleague Anne Herbst as a co-professor in 2013 after teaching the class for more than 30 years. Herbst, a senior multi-skilled journalist and proclaimed “one-man band,” took over the class after Fosholt’s retirement in 2015.

Acknowledging the demanding and often erratic hours of the newsroom, she searched for a colleague to balance the class’ commitments.

"She asked [the newsroom], ’does anyone have a master’s degree?’ I was like, ’I do!’" said Megan Jurgemeyer, managing editor at 9News and Associate Professor for the Broadcast & Video Journalism course.

Between balancing their time in the newsroom and behind the camera, Herbst and Jurgemeyer planned the course to mirror the professional expectations students will encounter in the field. In the course, students are required to write scripts and to film and edit videos using the principles and practices of a broadcast journalist. Local reporters like Linda Kotsaftis (BA ’84) are slated as guest lecturers to answer students’ questions on reporting in the field and working in a newsroom.
Each class begins with a news snippet and the basic question of "what worked and what didn't?" Breaking down the natural sounds, shot selections and sound bites utilized in the clip, students deduce the most effective ways to tell a local story.

"My goal is to give everyone a baseline understanding of what television news is today and what it entails to work in the business," explained Jurgemeyer. Given the growing media market, Jurgemeyer promotes responsible discussions and professional integrity to battle the "expanding pool" of news sources. Besides providing students with the reporting skills they'll need in the newsroom, Jurgemeyer wants to instill what it means to be a "responsible consumer of news."

Expanding on Jugemeyer's points, Herbst wants to remove the stigmatization of local news. "I think a lot of times TV broadcast local news gets kind of a bad rep as silly puppy or kitty stories," said Herbst. Acknowledging the associations commonly tied to TV news, she wants to show that broadcast journalism is a viable career choice.

"I want to show people that this is fun," said Herbst. Through the class, Herbst hopes to inspire "the next great local TV journalist doing anything - being a reporter, being an editor, being a photographer, being a multi-skilled journalist, and a one-man band."

"It's not all cat fashion shows, you know? It's kind of like Anchorman , but it's really not," said Herbst.

Jurgemeyer calls on students to guide broadcast journalism's transition.

"TV news isn't going to look like it does now forever but that doesn't mean it's going to die," said Jurgemeyer. "There's ways for it to evolve and we need young, creative minds to help it do that."

"This class has gotten people jobs. I should probably say that in class," laughed Herbst. "It's a good taste of broadcast."