

Aurélien Breeden, graduate from the Joint Master Journalism and International Affairs



"Journalism is a field where any experience is good experience"

May you describe your academic and professional background?

I spent five years at Sciences Po in Paris - three for the bachelor program followed by two in the joint [Journalism School / PSIA](#) masters degree, with a focus on international security. I graduated in 2013 and freelanced for a little over a year, mostly doing video editing and production work at [France 24](#) and [iTélé](#). I was hired as a reporter at the [New York Times](#) Paris bureau in the summer of 2014, and have been there ever since.

What is your job title today? How is your daily routine?

I am still a reporter at the New York Times Paris bureau, covering France and all things related. I do not have a specific beat, and the job involves a mix of general news, features and analytical stories, as well as newer formats like explainers or live briefings. The Paris office is bigger than many foreign bureaus but still small compared to a regular newsroom, and the job involves monitoring French news, identifying and reporting out stories that are relevant for us, and coordinating with other desks or correspondents on international coverage. In-depth analysis and rich feature reporting are still staples of the bureau, but the pace of our international coverage has increased tremendously, and we have to respond quickly to big breaking news stories. I have also become increasingly involved in the translation of select NYT stories from English to French.

were the main takeaways from your degree?

As a reporter who juggles between covering France and helping reporters in the U.S. or elsewhere work on big, international stories, the joint degree Journalism and International Affairs was particularly well-suited. It combined practical, hands-on journalism experience with a more analytical training in the histories, ideas and frameworks that govern international relations - a combination of micro and macro, never letting the particulars of a situation obscure the bigger picture, and vice-versa. Journalism is different from many other professions because much of it is learned on the job, where writing and reporting skills are quickly put to the test. But the joint degree helped lay the foundations that made that process easier.

What memories did you keep from your school, your cohort, your teachers?

I was part of the very first batch of dual degree students, and I have good memories of working with a small, tight-knit group of students from very different backgrounds. The number of students has since increased, but I know that spirit still exists. Having teachers who were professional journalists or writers was one of the school's most important aspects. It gave us precious insight into the inner-workings of the media industry, and it also gave us a leg up when looking for internships. In my case, that proved instrumental: the connections I made interning at the New York Times bureau during my time at Sciences Po are what helped me secure the reporting job further down the road.

What advice could you give to a student who would like to become a journalist?

Journalism is a field where any experience is good experience - regardless of the medium or the location. The fundamentals of good reporting are the same in broadcast and in print; the skills in forming a network and identifying the right sources are the same in France and in the United States. It is, of course, important to hone the skills that are most applicable to your goals - if you want to work in print, write as much as you can, read the works of journalists you admire, and get as many clips as possible under your belt. But my point is that there is no single path towards that goal, and sometimes that path zigs and zags. So don't hesitate to apply to the internships that seem interesting but different from what you are looking for, don't be afraid to look out of your comfort zone, and don't worry about immediately getting that dream job. The pay-off might be further down the road, but as long as you are "doing" journalism, it will be there.

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- [Contacter Aurélien Breeden sur LinkedIn](#)