

**Media Writing**

JOUR 2121-03

Spring 2011

9:10-11:25AM, MW

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**COURSE-SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS****COURSE DESCRIPTION:**

Basic instruction in journalistic forms and style; use of computer in composition of news reports or articles and in solution of news writing problems; laboratory writing exercises on computer; one lecture, four laboratory hours per week.

**PROFESSIONAL VALUES AND COMPETENCIES:**

- think critically, creatively and independently
- write correctly and clearly in forms and styles appropriate for the communications professions, audiences and purposes they serve

**PREREQUISITE:** Pass English Proficiency Test**TEXTBOOKS:*****Required***

- Fred Fedler, *Reporting for the Media* 9th ed. (Oxford University Press, 2004) ISBN 0-195-1699-99
- Lauren Kessler and Duncan McDonald, *When Words Collide: A Media Writer's Guide to Grammar and Style* (Thomson and Wadsworth, 2004) ISBN 0-534-56206-X
- *The Associated Press Stylebook* (Perseus, 2004) ISBN 0-738-2074-03

***Recommended***

- William Strunk Jr. and E.B. White, *The Elements of Style*
- A dictionary

**HOW PROFESSIONAL VALUES AND COMPETENCIES WILL BE MET:****Cognitive Objectives To Be Mastered (Ability To Explain, Analyze, Understand, Think Critically):**

- Recognize the characteristics of news and newsworthiness, demonstrated through current events quizzes, lecture, and workbook exercises
- Acquire basic information-gathering techniques, including interviewing and research, through classroom exercises and field experiences
- Be familiar with libel and journalism ethics through classroom discussion and assignments
- Understand the difference between fact and opinion
- Learn the value of original content

**Performance Standards To Be Met (Demonstrable Skills, Abilities, Techniques, Applied Competencies):**

- Write an entry-level news story utilizing at least three sources and direct quotations.
- Write a speech story.
- Utilize the AP Stylebook in applying basic news writing style rules to lab and outside assignments, pass AP quizzes.
- Demonstrate an ability to write on deadline.
- Score 80 percent or above on a grammar proficiency exam
- Write different types of newsworthy leads.
- Take weekly current events quizzes.

**HOW ASSESSMENT OF STUDENT LEARNING WILL BE MET FOR JOUR2121:**

Basic Media Writing is designed to provide the beginning journalism major with the essential skills that are crucial to careers in journalism, public relations, and advertising. These are the abilities to gather and process information, and, above all, to write effectively. The goal is for each student to have acquired entry-level professional writing skills by the end of the semester.

*Awareness:*

- Learn how journalism works in today’s media environment

*Understanding:*

- understand the difference between fact and opinion;
- appreciate the value of original journalism, of intellectual integrity;
- recognize the qualities of newsworthiness;
- learn the basics of news gathering;
- study the principles of effective story telling

*Application:*

As the first training step toward a career, JOUR 2121 will require students to do the following:

- read and analyze news stories in order to learn what constitutes news;
- practice correct grammar, punctuation and word usage;
- learn AP news writing style;
- practice lead writing;
- develop information-gathering skills and apply them to assignments;
- keep abreast of local, national, and international news

**CLASSROOM FORMAT:**

This is a writing course. Consequently, students will write every week and receive regular feedback and coaching on their work. The class will be consist of both lecture and laboratory time, to be determined by the instructor.

**COURSE REQUIREMENTS:**

- Writing assignments will be completed both in and outside the classroom. During the semester each student will complete three writing assignments produced outside of class: (1) a news article covering a meeting or an event; (2) a news article based on a single interview; (3) a news article based on multiple interviews.
- Read *The Commercial Appeal* front section (A) and the local section (B) Monday through

Sunday. Be prepared for a quiz on the content of these pages of the newspapers. (You may also read the newspaper on the Web.) We will discuss the structure and content of news stories.

- In addition to the writing assignments, you will be expected to successfully complete [with a minimum grade of 80] the Comprehensive Grammar Quiz at <http://myspectrum.memphis.edu>. Log in using your university username and password. You should take the quiz -- which can be taken up to three times -- during the first or second week of the course. You must score at least 80 by March 14, or you will have to drop the class.
- Media writing requires a knowledge of the Associated Press style. All writing assignments for 2121 are expected to be in correct AP style format. During the semester, each student will complete five AP Style quizzes at <http://webct.memphis.edu>. The quizzes may be taken at any time but must be completed by **March 14**.

**Other Issues:**

- Your regular attendance is vital. When you miss a lab you cannot make up the work regardless of the reason. Please do not email the instructor to ask what was covered during your absence. Instead, check with a classmate. Remember: the work you do in class is worth 50 percent—half!--of your course grade.
- Coming to class well prepared is equally important. This means reading the assigned chapters in the textbook and also reading a daily newspaper. JOUR 2121 is the linchpin for a professional program; please act accordingly.

**GRADING:**

Lab writing assignments	50 percent
3 outside assignments	30 percent
Final Exam	10 percent
Grammar exam at WebCT	5 percent
Attendance/participation	5 percent

**TENTATIVE TIMETABLE:****JOUR 2121-003  
Class Schedule for Spring 2011**

Date	Topic/ Assignment	Pages	Additional Info
Jan. 19	Introductions, discussion of syllabus and topics to be covered		
Jan. 24	A condensed history of newspapers and how we came to face the writing challenges we face today.		
Jan. 26	Begin discussion of newspaper style, language and what constitutes news	Chapters 2-6	Have all assigned textbooks by today
Jan. 31	Continue work on newspaper style, language and news value	Chapters 2-6	
Feb. 2, Feb. 7	Interviewing: You have to know how to get the information before you can write it.	Chapter 11	
Feb. 9	Grammar and AP style		Use AP Stylebook and When Words Collide
Feb. 14	Quotes and attribution	Chapter 10	
Feb. 16	Guest speaker, to be announced		
Feb. 21	Basic news leads	Chapter 7	
Feb. 23, Feb. 28	Body of a news story	Chapter 9	
March 2	Grammar and AP style		Use AP Stylebook and When Words Collide
March 7, March 9	Spring Break		
March 14	Alternative leads	Chapter 8	First outside writing assignment due
March 16	Feature stories	Chapter 15	
March 21	Continuation of feature stories	Chapter 15	
March 23	Obituaries: They matter, and here's	Chapter 12	

	why.		
March 28	Specialized types of reporting	Chapter 14	
March 30	Grammar and AP style		Use AP Stylebook and When Words Collide
April 4	Public affairs reporting and learning to interpret documents	Chapter 16	Second outside writing assignment due
April 6	Writing for Broadcast	Chapter 18	
April 11	Writing press releases for the media	Chapter 19	
April 13	Guest speaker, to be announced		
April 18	Libel, privacy and newsgathering issues	Chapter 20	
April 20	Ethics	Chapter 21	Third outside writing assignment due
April 25	Review and discussion of final exam		
April 27	Individual meetings		

## **DEPARTMENT POLICIES**

### **EMAIL:**

You must have your UM email account activated. If you are using another provider such as Google, you are required to have your UM email forwarded to that account. Go to the <http://iam.memphis.edu> website to implement forwarding of UM email. You are required to check your email daily. You are responsible for complying with any email sent to you by your professor or the University.

### **CELLPHONES:**

You must turn them off during class.

### **ATTENDANCE:**

Class attendance is mandatory in the Department of Journalism. You may be assigned a failing grade for the semester for nonattendance, or habitual late arrival. No late work will be accepted without prior arrangements, which are acceptable to your professor. Students may not be permitted to make up any missing work unless it is for an absence due to illness or other catastrophic emergency such as a death in the family that can be documented (e.g. with a doctor's note or a copy of the newspaper obituary). This is a professional program for journalists who are expected to understand and comply with deadlines. If you have some problem making it to class on time make arrangements to fix the problem or consider taking another class. You should consider this class your "job" in the educational process and be on time just as you would elsewhere.

### **CHEATING:**

In addition to university-wide policies stated in the Code of Student Rights and Responsibilities, the Department of Journalism considers making up quotes from sources, turning in substantially the same assignment for credit in two different courses, or a student receiving any assistance from others for work assigned to be done on his/her own, as acts of cheating punishable to the degree determined appropriate by the course instructor and department chair. That may include grade reductions or seeking dismissal of the student from the university.

"Your written work may be submitted to Turnitin.com, or a similar electronic detection method, for an evaluation of the originality of your ideas and proper use and attribution of sources. As part of this process, you may be required to submit electronic as well as hard copies of your written work, or be given other instructions to follow. By taking this course, you agree that all assignments may undergo this review process and that the assignment may be included as a source document in Turnitin.com's restricted access database solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism in such documents. Any assignment not submitted according to the procedures given by the instructor may be penalized or may not be accepted at all." (Office of Legal Counsel, October 17, 2005)

### **ONLINE SETEs:**

You are urged to complete the SETEs evaluation of this. Once your instructor has posted your grade, you can immediately see that grade, provided you completed a teacher evaluation for that class. How to access your evaluation forms: Log in using your UUID and email password; click on the gray "Student" tab; complete an evaluation for each course listed and hit the "Submit" button at the bottom of the form. It will only take a few minutes of your time. We take the evaluations very seriously and use them to improve courses and instructional quality. Your

feedback is essential and will be appreciated.

**DISABILITY:**

Any student who feels s/he may need an accommodation based on the impact of a disability should contact me privately to discuss your specific needs. Please contact the Office for Disability Services at (901) 678-2880 in 110 Wilder Tower Hall to coordinate reasonable accommodations for students with documented disabilities.

**EXIT EXAM FOR ALL JOURNALISM MAJORS:**

All Journalism majors are required to take the Journalism Exit Exam their last semester before graduation. Please contact the Journalism office staff anytime during the semester to sign up. You may take the test anytime there are open lab hours during the semester. You will not be certified to graduate until you have completed the test.

**PROFESSIONAL VALUES AND COMPETENCIES FOR JOURNALISM PROGRAM:**

The Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communication requires that, irrespective of their particular specialization, all graduates should be aware of certain core values and competencies and be to

- understand and apply the principles and laws of freedom of speech and press, for the country in which the institution that invites ACEJMC is located, as well as receive instruction in and understand the range of systems of freedom of expression around the world, including the right to dissent, to monitor and criticize power, and to assemble and petition for redress of grievances;
- demonstrate an understanding of the history and role of professionals and institutions in shaping communications;
- demonstrate an understanding of gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation and, as appropriate, other forms of diversity in domestic society in relation to mass communications.
- demonstrate an understanding of the diversity of peoples and cultures and of the significance and impact of mass communications in a global society.
- understand concepts and apply theories in the use and presentation of images and information;
- demonstrate an understanding of professional ethical principles and work ethically in pursuit of truth, accuracy, fairness and diversity;
- think critically, creatively and independently;
- conduct research and evaluate information by methods appropriate to the communications professions in which they work;
- write correctly and clearly in forms and styles appropriate for the communications professions, audiences and purposes they serve;
- critically evaluate their own work and that of others for accuracy and fairness, clarity, appropriate style and grammatical correctness;
- apply basic numerical and statistical concepts;
- apply tools and technologies appropriate for the communications professions in which they work.

**ASSESSMENT OF STUDENT LEARNING FOR JOURNALISM PROGRAM:**

The Council seeks to promote student learning and encourages experimentation and innovation. Assessment is a system of evaluation of student learning at the course or unit level (as opposed to

grading at the individual level). Three criteria should guide assessment of student learning:

- Awareness: familiarity with specific information, including facts, concepts, theories, laws and regulations, processes and effects.
- Understanding: assimilation and comprehension of information, concepts, theories and ideas.
- Application: competence in relating and applying skills, information, concepts, theories and ideas to the accomplishment of tasks.