

Reporting Public Issues

JOUR4120/6120-001

Spring 2011

5:30-8:30 p.m. Monday, Room 208MJ

Instructor: Candy Justice

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COURSE SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS**CATALOGUE/COURSE DESCRIPTION:**

Analyzing and writing news reports about government, courts, energy, economy, taxes, education, environment, medicine and science; emphasis on relationship between current issues and public's need to be informed; topics vital to large urban society.

PROFESSIONAL VALUES AND COMPETENCIES FOR JOURNALISM 4120:

- 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 gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation and, as appropriate, other forms of diversity in domestic society in relation to mass communications
- 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
- apply basic numerical and statistical concepts;
- apply tools and technologies appropriate for the communications professions in which they work.

PREREQUISITE:

Jour 3120

TEXTBOOKS:

No textbook required, but you must own an Associated Press Style Manual and must read the Commercial Appeal every day.

HOW PROFESSIONAL VALUES AND COMPETENCIES WILL BE MET:

Cognitive Objectives To Be Mastered (Ability To Explain, Analyze, Understand, Think Critically):

- Students will recognize and critically analyze the role the press plays as a watchdog of

- government and other public organizations.
- Students will develop the finer techniques of information gathering including searching public records, interviewing uncooperative or hostile news sources, sensitivity in reporting on disasters and tragedies and avoiding manipulation by political image makers and other news sources.
- Students will learn the importance of a diversified press corps and diverse news sources.
- Students will develop writing skills that emphasize fairness, balance, clarity and in-depth understanding of complex public topics.
- Students will discuss and analyze various ethical dilemmas in public affairs reporting.

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

- Students will report on fires, police, criminal courts, elections and public meetings, such as a City Council.
- Students will conduct an in person search of public records and bring back answers to six specific questions. Each student's questions will be different from the other students'.
- During election years, students will monitor all types of media during a two-month period and turn in an indepth analysis of the media's coverage of the election process. These reports will be presented in class after Election Day.
- Students will be tested on current events and legal terminology.
- Students will demonstrate the ability to meet strict deadlines.
- Students will conclude the semester by using their acquired interview techniques, public records gathering ability and writing skills to produce an investigative or in depth news story on a public issue involving at least six news sources.

HOW ASSESSMENT OF STUDENT LEARNING WILL BE MET FOR REPORTING PUBLIC ISSUES:

Application:

- Public Records Scavenger Hunt (students are given information to retrieve from public records), or students conduct an audit of campus administrative departments to see if they are complying with the open records laws.
- As students write public affairs stories, part of the evaluation is use of diverse sources and exercising cultural sensitivity. For example, you don't identify a person racially unless it is part of a complete physical description of a dangerous suspect still at large. Ie: The suspect was described as a white man in his late 20s with blonde hair, blue eyes and about six feet tall.
- The students writing and information gathering will be evaluated on the criteria of truth, fairness, accuracy, ethics and diversity.
- Students are graded down if they are not objective and discerning in deciding which material to put into the story and what to leave out.
- Students are taught and graded on their application of creative and ethical interview techniques.
- Students will write five stories on the subject of crime, fire, city council, elections and criminal court trials and one in-depth, multi-source story on a public affairs issue or problem.
- Whenever a story involves statistics, percentages or other numerical data, student must double check their calculations.
- Use various media to obtain secondary data.

CLASSROOM FORMAT:

Class will be conducted through lecture and discussion and occasional writing assignments done during class. Most writing assignments will be done outside of class. Laptops and other electronic devices are strictly prohibited during class.

GRADING:

A: 90-100

B: 80-89

C: 70-79

D: 60-69

F: 59 and below

- Five of the writing assignments (police, fire, election, city council and criminal court) constitute 60 percent of your final grade
- The in-depth writing assignment constitutes 20 percent of your final grade
- All other assignments and tests, such as current events tests and public records assignment, count 20 percent.

GRADUATE STUDENTS:

Graduate students will also be required to write a paper on a topic and of a length to be approved in advance by the instructor.

TENTATIVE TIMETABLE:

Because of the time sensitive nature of many of the assignments, the entire semester cannot be mapped out at the beginning. Therefore, you will receive a timetable of deadlines in one-month portions.

All deadlines must be strictly met in keeping with professional standards. No assignment will be accepted late.

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.