

## **Precision Language**

JOUR 7015 – M50

Spring 2011

Online Ecourseware. Monday 5:30 – 8:30PMCT

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## **COURSE SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS**

### **TEXTBOOKS:**

#### ***Required***

- Brian S. Brooks, James L. Pinson, and Jean Gaddy Wilson, *Working With Words: A Handbook for Media Writers and Editors* 7<sup>th</sup> edition (Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2006). **ISBN 0-312-56079-6**
- Brooks et al., *Exercise Book for Working With Words*. **ISBN 0-312-65778-1**

#### ***Recommended***

- Strunk and White, *The Elements of Style*

### **OBJECTIVE OF COURSE:**

The purpose of JOUR 7015, Precision Language, is to strengthen and fine-tune your writing skills. It is designed to help students become more precise as well as versatile writers by diagnosing their writing, polishing their grammar and editing skills, and teaching them to write with clarity, cohesiveness, and concision.

Jour 7015 meets online at [elearn.memphis.edu](http://elearn.memphis.edu). We will hold real-time discussions for an hour each week, from 7:30 – 8:30 CST on Monday night. We are scheduled to meet on Monday from 5:30 to 8:30, but as a class we'll meet to chat from 7:30 until 8:30.p.m. The rest of your class time commitment will be spent at your own discretion through asynchronous discussions at elearn where you will have a place to display assignments, receive handouts, write a blog and communicate with classmates and the instructor during the week. Each week I will post 2 or 3 discussion questions on the bulletin board at [elearn.Memphis.edu](http://elearn.Memphis.edu) that you will address during the week by posting written responses. There will be quizzes over the assigned readings. These quizzes will be taken at the website at your convenience during the week. It is important that the assigned readings for the week be completed by class time so that discussion is from an informed perspective.

### **COURSE REQUIREMENTS:**

JOUR 7015 involves four main components: (a) classroom exercises and assignments; (b) book reviews; (c) chapter projects; and (d) attendance and participation. Participation is measured two ways: your presence at our weekly hour (synchronous participation) of chat and your comments posted to the discussions during the week (asynchronous participation). You can miss one chat session or skip out on the posted discussions one week without penalty.

Each student will review three books—one on grammar, one on style, one on the life of writing.

There are many out there in all three categories: Patricia O'Conner's *Woe Is I*, Anne Lamott's *Bird by Bird*, Stephen King's *On Writing*, William Zinsser's *On Writing Well*, Lynn Truss' *Eats, Shoots & Leaves*, and many, many more. I will post a selective bibliography at the website, but you can ask me about books not on the list. Reviews should be two to three

typed pages, double-spaced, with 1-inch margins. You will also be expected to discuss these books in class.

Students will also write one chapter of their own for a grammar book and one for a style book.

Chapters should run at least five pages and be precise and reliable, well-designed and interesting. You will submit this assignment as a PDF document.

Weekly discussion questions; some are talked about in the class chat time and some are answered during the week in written form and posted at [elearn.memphis.edu](http://elearn.memphis.edu).

As with any media employer, I am not concerned with *why* you can't show up; I just care that you show up. Your grade will suffer if you skip class. Conversely, students with perfect attendance and a superb record of participation get a slight boost.

### **How to participate in this online class**

We will hold a real-time discussion each Monday from 7:30 – 8:30 p.m. using the Wimba Classroom.

### **ONLINE PROTOCOL FOR SYNCHRONOUS CLASSES:**

- First, take time to familiarize yourself with Wimba, the software that the University will be using for online class meetings this semester. You'll find two links to be especially helpful:
  - Wimba Classroom Getting Ready Guide  
<[http://www.wimba.com/assets/resources/WC\\_Getting\\_Ready\\_Guide.pdf](http://www.wimba.com/assets/resources/WC_Getting_Ready_Guide.pdf)>
  - Wimba Classroom Student Participant Guide  
<[http://webhelp.wimba.com/WC/v6\\_1/Participant\\_Guide/](http://webhelp.wimba.com/WC/v6_1/Participant_Guide/)>
- Second, make certain you understand how Wimba functions. The software is not a radical departure from Wimba Voice. If you have difficulties, please contact the Wimba help desk for answers to your questions (available 24/7). All you need do is get to a point at which you're ready to participate when the class meets for the first time.
- Third, test the audio and video components. You'd be best served by using a headset with a boom microphone. Reason: the headset will keep the mic at a constant distance from your lips, producing consistency in sound quality, which everyone will appreciate.
- Fourth, your instructor will send you a website address via email for your individual class.

(866) 350-4978 (USA/Canada)

0800 007 6788 (UK)

(703) 956-3917 (other)

[technicalsupport@wimba.com](mailto:technicalsupport@wimba.com)

[www.wimba.com/technicalsupport](http://www.wimba.com/technicalsupport)

In addition to that time, you must **participate online two days a week at any time** to receive full credit for asynchronous participation. Asynchronous participation takes place in the DISCUSSION area (see upper right navigation bar at the site) of the website. Each week I will post at least two discussion threads (named Week X DQ-1 thread, Week X DQ-2 thread). As part of your weekly assignments, you will post a response (of at least 150 words) to each of the two DQs. These responses will be graded as an assignment (not as participation). For the participation part, you will comment on at least two of your classmate's responses (this will make sense once we get started!).

To recap: Once you locate this weekly “discussion thread,” you will click “reply” to submit your response for the weekly discussions. Two submissions of **at least 150 words** each are to be posted on the discussion board, one per day, not two in one day. To post your response, I suggest you write it in a Word file that you can save on your computer. Then, click on “new message” at the thread area and copy and paste your response into the message box. For the subject line of your message use your last name and the question to which you are responding, like this:

Subject line: Miller DQ-1 response

Read the responses of classmates and make at least two comments each week. That’s not much and that is the minimum requirement! Please post many more—saying as much as you want to contribute to the discussions. Add your observations, add comments about the readings, ask questions relevant to the week’s topics. I will also make comments and enter this discussion. Read the handout on How To Talk online located in the content area for more insights. Finally, I hope you will enjoy blogging about your language and grammar insights. Each of you will write a weekly (at least) blog that can be published outside of the elearn environment if you so desire. Each week I will post a blog focus suggestion just in case you need a starting point for the week, but blog as your insights about language lead you. Blogging will be graded as a weekly assignment and you earn full credit for completion.

At the end of each week I’ll evaluate your responses and contributions and send you private feedback. You can check your weekly score in the gradebook, too.

**GRADING:**

Exercises and weekly discussions, assignments, blog: 40%

Book Reviews: 20%

Chapter Projects: 20%

Attendance and Participation: 20%

Participation will be measured by your postings on the discussion board at the Web site and your contributions during the weekly real-time class. Late work is penalized 10 percent for each day beyond deadline. No work is accepted after 4 days beyond the original deadline

**OTHER ISSUES:**

If you need extra help, please ask.

**JOUR 7015-M50**  
**Class Schedule for Spring 2011**

Date	Topic/ Assignment	Pages	Additional Info
Week 1 Jan 17-23 online only	No real-time chat since Monday is a holiday. Let's get the website discussions going! Writing overview. Grammar Basics.	Ch. 1	
Week 2 Jan 24 - 30	Real time chat Jan 24 7:30 – 8-30 The Life of a Sentence	Ch. 2	
Week 3 Jan. 31 – Feb 6	Real time chat Jan 31 7:30 – 8-30 Subjects and Objects	Ch. 3	1 <sup>st</sup> review due
Week 4 Feb 7 - 13	Real time chat 2/7 7:30 – 8-30 Feb 7 Verbs	Ch. 4	
Week 5 Feb 14 - 20	Real time chat 2/14 7:30 – 8-30 Agreement	Ch. 5	
Week 6 Feb 21 - 27	2/21 7:30 – 8-30 Modifiers	Ch. 6	
Week 7 Feb 28 – March 6	Real time chat 2/28 7:30 – 8-30 Word Order	Ch. 7	2 <sup>nd</sup> review due
	Spring break March 7 - 11		
Week 8 March 14 - 20	Real time chat 3/14 7:30 – 8-30 Usage. Avoiding the “isms”	Chs. 8 and 13	
Week 9 March 21 - 27	Real time chat 3/21 7:30 – 8-30 Punctuation	Ch. 9	
Week 10 March 28 – April 3	Real time chat 3/28 7:30 – 8-30 Spelling	Ch. 10	
Week 11 April 4 - 10	Real time chat 4/4 7:30 – 8-30 Objectivity and Clarity	Ch. 11	3 <sup>rd</sup> review due
Week 12 April 11 - 17	Real time chat 4/11 7:30 – 8-30 Concision	Ch. 12	
Week 13 April 18 - 24	Real time chat 4/18 7:30 – 8-30 Writing and editing for Web	Ch 16.	
Week 14 April 25 - 27	Real time chat 4/25 7:30 – 8-30		<b>Chapter projects due.</b>

**Notes:**

*Dates:* Last day of classes for UM is Wednesday April 27.

*Reading:* Reading should be done by the date assigned. I will drop your two lowest exercise scores.

## **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.