

Advanced Reporting

Journalism 4120/6120-01

Fall 2012

5:30-8:30 p.m. Monday, Meeman Journalism Building, Room 206

Prof. Otis L. Sanford

318B Meeman

Office Hours: Monday and Wednesday 2 p.m. to 4 p.m.; Thursday 3:30 to 5 p.m.

Phone: 678-3669

E-mail: o.sanford@memphis.edu

COURSE 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 the public's need to be informed; topics vital to a large urban society.

PREREQUISITE:

Jour 3120

COURSE MATERIALS:

No textbook required, but you must own an Associated Press Style Manual and must read *The Commercial Appeal* and *The Daily Helmsman* every day. Free copies of *The Commercial Appeal*, *USA Today* and *The New York Times* should be available at various locations around campus, including Jones Hall and the library. Reading *The Commercial Appeal* online only is not sufficient.

CLASSROOM FORMAT:

Class will be conducted through lecture and discussion and regular writing assignments. Most writing assignments will be done outside of class but there will be some done during class sessions.

GRADING:

A: 90-100

B: 80-89

C: 70-79

D: 60-69

F: 59 and below

Writing Assignments

Students will complete four major writing assignments. They are stories from the police/fire department, city council or county commission, criminal or federal court and either politics or local public education. Each is worth 15 points toward the final grade, and additional points can be earned by re-writing assignments for a better grade.

In-Depth Writing Assignment

An in-depth writing assignment on a topic to be identified later is worth 40 points and additional credit will be given for re-writing.

GRADUATE STUDENTS:

In addition to the work described above, graduate students are required to write an 8-10 page paper on a topic related to public records, computer-assisted reporting and public affairs reporting.

TENTATIVE TIMETABLE:

(Dates subject to change)

Police/fire story due – Sept. 10

Re-write of police/fire story (if necessary) due – Sept. 17

City Council/Shelby County Commission story due – Oct. 1

Re-write of city council/county commission story (if necessary) due – Oct. 8

Criminal/federal court story due – Oct. 15

Re-write of criminal/federal court story (if necessary) due – Oct. 22

Education story due – Nov. 5

Re-write of education story (if necessary) due – Nov. 12

In-depth reporting assignment due – Nov. 26

Re-write of in-depth assignment (if necessary) due – Dec. 3

Graduate student paper due – Dec. 3

All deadlines must be strictly met in keeping with professional standards. Each assignment will be reduced one letter grade for every class period it is late.

ASSESSMENT

PROFESSIONAL VALUES AND COMPETENCIES FOR JOURNALISM 4120/6120:

- 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;
- understand various style and grammar issues and apply them in each of their writing assignments;

- demonstrate an understanding of what constitutes hard-hitting and compelling news leads and the successful utilization of sources. The goal is to show students that well-written in-depth news comes not from Internet sources, but rather from people sources and authentic documents;
- apply tools and technologies appropriate for the communications professions in which they work.

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.
- Students will learn and apply computer assisted reporting techniques
- Students will learn to discern which Internet sources are legitimate for news stories and which are not.

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

- Students will report on fire and police, criminal/federal courts and public meetings, such as a City Council, county commission and school board meeting.
- 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'.
- Because this is an election year, students will monitor all types of media during a two-month period and give an in-depth analysis of the media's coverage of the election process. Students will prepare a short written summary of the analysis and will give their report orally at the first class after Election Day.
- Students will learn the elements of newswriting style and grammar and will be quizzed on grammar during the course of the semester.
- Students will be tested regularly on current events and legal terminology.
- Students will be required to look for the human element in each story written.
- Students must show that they have interviewed sources in person.
- 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 suitable for publication in The Commercial Appeal. The story will be on a major public issue involving at least six news sources. This assignment will count 20 percent of the final grade.

HOW ASSESSMENT OF STUDENT LEARNING WILL BE MET FOR ADVANCED REPORTING

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'/county commission, the courts and an 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.

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.

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 course. 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 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.