

## **Media Writing**

JOUR 2121-M50, Summer 2012

Instructor: Darrin M. Devault, M.A.

Office: Meeman Journalism Building, Room 332

Office Hours: By appointment

Office Phone: (901) 678-2405; Cell Phone: (901) 569-6353

Email: darrin.devault@memphis.edu

## **COURSE 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.

**PREREQUISITE:** You must pass the English Proficiency Test before taking this course. If you haven't yet done so, please contact the department office (901-678-2401) immediately for more details.

### **TEXTBOOKS:**

#### ***Required:***

- Tim Harrower, *Inside Reporting*, 2nd ed. (McGraw Hill, 2010) ISBN: 978-0-07-337891-6
- Lauren Kessler and Duncan McDonald, *When Words Collide: A Media Writer's Guide to Grammar and Style* (Thomson and Wadsworth, 2008) ISBN-13: 978-0-495-05025-4
- Christian, D. (ed.), *The Associated Press Stylebook and Briefing on Media Law*, The Associated Press, 2010. ISBN: 978-0-917-36054-1

#### ***Recommended:***

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

### **CLASSROOM FORMAT:**

This is a writing intensive course delivered online in an asynchronous format. Students will write every week and receive regular feedback and coaching on their work.

Students must have Internet access and Microsoft Word or other word processing software that generates a ".doc" or ".docx" extension.

### **COURSE WEBSITE ADDRESS: (The course page will open on June 4, 2012.)**

1. Go to the University of Memphis home page: <http://www.memphis.edu>
2. Click on the "MyMemphis" link at the bottom of the left column menu.
3. Log in using your University of Memphis username and password.
4. Click on the "eCampus Resources" tab.
5. In the center column of the page, click on the blue UofM eCourseware link
6. Down on that page, in the Summer 2012 course list available to you, click on the link for JOUR 2121 – M50 to enter your course and read the instructions on the welcoming page.

### **COURSE REQUIREMENTS:**

- Writing assignments will be completed both in and outside the classroom. During the semester each student will complete three writing assignments produced out of class: (1)

a news article covering a meeting or an event; (2) a news article based on a single interview; (3) a more in-depth news article based on multiple interviews.

- All students will complete an online portfolio as a final project to showcase their work and to begin building a professional online presence. The portfolios will include clips, design work, résumés and blogs and will facilitate future course work and internship placement.
- Students will read their local daily newspaper (print or online) as well as *USA Today*. (Visit <http://www.usatoday.com>.) Be prepared to discuss current events on the Discussion Board.
- In addition to the writing assignments, you will be expected to successfully complete [with a minimum grade of 80] the Comprehensive Grammar Quiz on the eCourseware site for JOUR 2121. The deadline for passing the quiz will be determined by the instructor.
- Media writing requires knowledge of Associated Press style. All writing assignments for JOUR 2121 are expected to be in correct AP style format. During the semester, each student will complete five AP Style quizzes on the eCourseware site. Deadlines for successfully completing the AP quizzes will be determined by the instructor.

#### **GRADING:**

Lab assignments and quizzes	400 points
Three outside story assignments	360 points
Mid-term exam	50 points
Final exam	50 points
Online portfolio	40 points
Class discussions	100 points
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1,000 points</b>

#### **Grading Scale:**

A=900-1,000 points  
B=800-899 points  
C=700-799 points  
D=600-699 points  
F=599 and fewer points

#### **OTHER ISSUES:**

Media writing is a practical, hands-on course that teaches you to think and write like professionals.

Meeting deadlines is essential for media professionals. In other words, story deadlines are firm. Late stories will not be accepted, except for medical emergencies with verification.

Grammar, spelling, punctuation, and AP style are crucial to your success in media writing. We will work in these areas every week, so please consult your textbooks regularly.

Preparing for class is equally important. This means reading the assigned chapters in the textbook and staying informed about current events. JOUR 2121 is the linchpin for a professional program; please act accordingly.

**TENTATIVE TIMETABLE:**

<b>Week 1: The Story of Journalism (June 4-10)</b> <b>How Newsrooms Work</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Introduction to Associated Press style</li></ul>	Chapter 1 Chapter 2 & pages 56-57
<b>Week 2: Newswriting Basics continued (June 11-17)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Accuracy, the five Ws and leads</li><li>• Story structure and nut graphs</li></ul>	Chapter 3
<b>Week 3: Newswriting Basics (June 18-24)</b>	Chapter 3
<b>Week 4: Reporting Basics (June 25-July 1)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Story ideas and sources</li><li>• Interviewing</li><li>• <b>First Outside Story – Due by Sunday, July 1</b></li></ul>	Chapter 4
<b>Week 5: Reporting Basics continued (July 2-11)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Quotes and attribution</li><li>• <b>Summer Break (July 4-8)</b></li></ul>	Chapter 4
<b>Week 6: Covering the News (July 12-18)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Police, crime and courts</li><li>• Speeches, meetings and events</li><li>• <b>Mid-term Exam (covering Chapters 1-5; available July 12-15)</b></li><li>• <b>Second Outside Story – Due by Wednesday, July 18</b></li></ul>	Chapter 5
<b>Week 7: Beyond Breaking News (July 19-25)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Features, profiles and enterprise projects</li><li>• Investigative reporting and package planning</li><li>• Sidebars, editorials and columns</li></ul> <b>Creating an Online Portfolio</b>	Chapter 6
<b>Week 8: Law and Ethics (July 26-Aug. 1)</b> <b>Online Reporting</b>	Chapter 7 Chapter 8
<b>Week 9: Broadcast News (August 2-9)</b> <b>Public Relations</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Third Outside Story – Due by Sunday, August 5</b></li><li>• <b>Final Exam (covering Chapters 6-10; available August 5-9)</b></li><li>• <b>Online Portfolio (due by August 8)</b></li></ul>	Chapter 9 Chapter 10

## ASSESSMENT

### 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

### 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 or event 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.
- Discuss current events and textbook material weekly with classmates on the Discussion Board.

### HOW ASSESSMENT OF STUDENT LEARNING WILL BE MET FOR JOUR 2121:

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 storytelling

#### *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

### **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 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.