

Reporting

Journalism 3120-004

Fall 2014

Tuesdays/Thursdays (5:30 – 6:55 p.m.)

Meeman Journalism Building 206

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COURSE REQUIREMENTS

CATALOGUE/COURSE DESCRIPTION:

Gathering news using basic journalistic tools and techniques. Writing assignments will take place in lab and field.

PREREQUISITE:

Media Writing, Journalism 2121

REQUIRED MATERIALS:

- *The Associated Press Stylebook and Briefing on Media Law*, (New York: Basic Books, 2014). Students should have this from Media Writing. No need to buy an updated version.
- Tim Harrower, *Inside Reporting* 3rd ed. (McGraw Hill, 2010) ISBN 978-0-07-337891-6 (This is the same text used in 2121, so you should have a copy.)
- A smart phone and access to a laptop or a desktop computer. Students cannot rely on using university computer labs. Journalists today need to be in constant contact with the Internet and social media, so make sure you have the devices to make that happen.
- A camera or smart phone that allows students to take digital photographs.

RECOMMENDED MATERIALS:

- Kessler, Lauren and McDonald Duncan *When Words Collide: A Media Writer's Guide to Grammar and Style* (Thomson-Wadsworth, 2001). Students may have this from Media Writing. No need to buy an updated version.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

- Assignments will be completed both in and outside the classroom, so attendance and participation are vital. Class time is also valuable for lecture and discussions about news, writing, various reporting techniques and upcoming assignments, so please be on time. Students who arrive more than 15 minutes late will be counted as absent.
- Here's how attendance works: I will check the roll every class period. I'm not interested in hearing excuses. You get **three** free passes during the semester. After you cash in the passes, missed classes are reflected in your final grade. For example, if you miss two additional classes, your final grade drops a letter grade. If you miss two more, your grade drops again. If you enrolled in this class, it means you are available at the time it starts. And it your responsibility to be there on time.

- Be sure to join our class Facebook page, because if you miss a class, it is your responsibility to find out from a classmate what is due. Do not count on me to answer messages about missed work.
- There are no exams in reporting, but quizzes will be given regularly on current events, assigned readings and classroom discussions. Why? Because if you are taking reporting, you must be informed about news, locally, regionally and nationally. Also, you should know who the major newsmakers are. For example, if you don't know who the mayor of Memphis is, or the governor of Tennessee, or the vice president of the United States, you should not be taking this class. That's basic stuff for Journalism students. Also, you cannot make up news quizzes.
- At the start of the semester, you will select a beat related directly or indirectly to the University of Memphis and the university district. The beat will shape your news reporting for the semester. Most of your assignments will be posted to your beat blogs or portfolio. Think about your beat carefully and be sure you are genuinely interested in the subject. Also narrow your beat as much as possible. The more specific you are about your beat, the easier it will be to develop story ideas and to attract followers to your blog.
- Again, you must stay informed about the news and about newsmakers. It is impossible to be a good reporter unless you are informed about local, national, even international news. During the semester, we will likely cover a governmental meeting as a group during class hour.
- All assignments must be filed to the ecourseware drop box by midnight (11:59 p.m.) on the day they are due. **Late assignments will NOT be accepted, no exceptions.** It is extremely important that you recognize the importance of deadlines in news and learn to file assignments on time. Don't wait until the last minute to begin reporting and writing your stories. You will have an opportunity to make up one missed assignment with an additional extra credit assignment by the end of the semester.
- All assignments must be written in third person in a structure that conforms to standard media writing guidelines. Assignments will be graded on content, story structure, accuracy, word count, grammar, punctuation and AP style. **One point will be deducted from story grades for every mistake in AP style, spelling, punctuation and grammar, so edit your work carefully.**
- Additionally, all assignments must conform to these specifications: All stories must be double-spaced with indented paragraphs and filed in a word document that is identified with a date, a byline and a headline appropriate for blogs. **DO NOT FILE ASSIGNMENTS IN THE TEXT DOCUMENT PROVIDED BY MAC. If assignments don't meet these specifications, they will not be graded.**
- And finally, all rewrites MUST be accompanied by the original edited story. **Rewrites turned in without the original story will not be graded.**

And finally, the attached course outline is a tentative schedule of this class. A flexible syllabus is necessary so we can respond to news events as they occur in real time. Deadlines for assignments may change, so please check assignment due dates regularly.

Reporting 3120 continues to develop the skills learned in media writing with increased emphasis on finding sources and writing more complex content. Additionally, reporters today need to work in different ways on multiple platforms, so this class also will integrate reporting with headline writing, photography and social media.

More specific reporting and writing goals for this class include:

- Developing storytelling skills with words and photographs
- Writing with ease, accuracy, and speed
- Finding sources for specific beats
- Polishing writing mechanics and AP style
- Reporting with social media
- Writing headlines and captions
- Publishing stories in print and/or online
- Building professional online portfolios

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GRADING:

- Class assignments: 65 percent
- Current event quizzes, AP style quizzes, and in-class work: 25 percent
- Final in-depth story: 10 percent

TENTATIVE TIMETABLE FOR REPORTING

Week One: Reviewing the basics: Interviewing and accuracy
Aug. 26: Course introduction
Aug. 28:

Week Two: Reviewing the basics: Observation and detail
Sept. 2: Read chapter four (Harrower)
Sept. 4: **Assignment One Due: Descriptive writing**
 Current events quiz: The Commercial Appeal

Week Three: Covering events and taking photos
Sept. 9: Read pages 106-116 (Harrower)
Sept 11: **Assignment Two Due: Professional portfolio**
 Class canceled.
 SAVE THE DATE: Sept. 13: Students must cover the Cooper-Young Festival, the tailgate party of the Southern Heritage Classic, or the Association of Food Journalists convention at the downtown Peabody **Sept. 11 or 12**. Registration required for the writers' convention.

Week Four: Developing beats and sources
Sept. 16: Read pages 94-95 (Harrower)
Sept. 18: **Assignment Three Due: Event story**
Current events quiz: The Memphis Flyer

Week Five: Developing story ideas
Sept. 23:
Sept. 25: **Assignment Four Due: Story ideas**
AP style quiz

Week Six: Understanding Digital Media
Sept. 30: Read Chapter Eight (Harrower)
Oct. 2: **Current events quiz: Twitter news feeds**

Week Seven: Embracing Social Media
Oct. 7:
Oct. 9: **Assignment Five Due: Q and A story**
AP style quiz

Week Eight: **Fall Break (Oct. 11-14)**
Oct. 14: **No class.**
Oct. 16: Tweet up field trip
Assignment Six Due: Twitter and Storify

Week Nine: Covering lectures/meetings
Oct. 21: Re-read pages 106-109 (Harrower)
Oct. 23: **Assignment Seven Due: Lecture or meeting story**
Current events quiz: The Commercial Appeal

Week 10: Writing Features
Oct. 28: Read pages 116-128 (Harrower)
Oct. 30: **AP style quiz**

Week 11: Headlines and captions
Nov. 4: Election Day
Nov. 6: **Assignment Eight Due: News feature**
Current events quiz

Week 12: Editing Your Work
Nov. 11:
Nov. 13: **Assignment Nine Due: News feature rewrite**
AP style quiz

Week 13: Learning from The New York Times
Nov. 18:
Nov. 20: **Current events quiz: The New York Times**

Week 14: Thanksgiving Holiday (Nov. 26-30)
Nov. 25: No class.
Nov. 27: No class.

Week 15: Final Portfolios

Dec. 2: **Assignment 10: Final portfolios due.** (This assignment is weighted more heavily than some others because all stories must be rewritten and reflect editing changes. Points will be deducted if stories are not rewritten.)

Dec. 4: Study Day.

ASSESSMENT

PROFESSIONAL VALUES AND COMPETENCIES FOR REPORTING:

- Understand and apply the principles and laws of freedom of speech and press, including the right to dissent, to monitor and criticize power and to assemble and petition for redress and grievances.
- 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.
- 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, 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.

HOW PROFESSIONAL VALUES AND COMPETENCIES WILL BE MET:

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

- Students will become better informed about local and world events.
- Students will improve grammar, punctuation, word usage and AP style knowledge.
- Students will learn to identify and develop multi-sourced, issue stories.
- Students will become more confident interviewers and more skilled at identifying experts for stories.
- Students will learn to background stories through various forms of research.
- Students will improve their writing skills.
- Students will learn to balance views in a story and to achieve fairness and accuracy.
- Students will learn to use multi-platform reporting tools to gather news, including video, digital photography, social media and blogs.
- Students will learn to monitor developments and cover a beat.

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

- Occasional quiz on textbook content, required readings and/or current events.
- Students will learn to develop multi-source stories through the writing of individual stories.
- Students will identify and interview experts appropriate for each story.
- Students must learn to gain background through research background interviews and Internet searches.

- Students will critique the writings of other students and will critique all stories weekly with suggestions for improving.
- Students will turn in phone numbers or email addresses of all sources used for accuracy checks by the instructor.
- Students complete assignments that require them to utilize multiple media, including video etc.
- Students will be responsible for monitoring events and issues on their beat and for developing stories on the beat.
- Course will culminate in final project involving students publishing content online on a news blog.

HOW ASSESSMENT OF STUDENT LEARNING WILL BE MET FOR REPORTING:

- Students will be urged to interview sources to fulfill the watchdog role as part of covering a beat.
- Students will learn about databases they can use for statistics for stories and will complete an assignment using these databases to find specific facts and information.
- Students will post stories along with photographs and graphics online.
- Students will learn about the importance of verification, attribution and accuracy in all completed projects.
- Students will come up with their own story ideas to cover a beat.
- Students will complete numerous written assignments that will be published. They will be asked to learn the basics of audience analysis and online metrics.
- Students will complete numerous assignments requiring writing. They will submit drafts and make changes based on instructor feedback. They will present final projects to the class.
- Students will produce blogs covering a beat and utilizing video cameras, digital cameras, online blog sites, social media and other technologies vital to today's journalism.

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 able 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;
- evaluate critically 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.

CELL PHONES:

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 must 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)

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 she/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.