

Media Writing

JOUR 2121-002

Spring 2015

Tuesday, Thursday/ 1 p.m.-3:15 p.m. / Meeman 208

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COURSE REQUIREMENTS

CATALOGUE DESCRIPTION:

Basic instruction in journalistic forms and style; use of computer in composition of news stories and in solution of news writing problems; laboratory writing exercises on computer; one lecture, four laboratory hours per week.

PREREQUISITE:

None

TEXTBOOKS:

Required

- Tim Harrower, *Inside Reporting* 3rd ed. (McGraw Hill, 2010) ISBN 978-0-07-337891-6 (Please keep this book if you plan to take reporting.)
- *The Associated Press Stylebook* (Perseus, 2012) ISBN 0-738-2074-03
- Joe Hayden, *The Little Grammar Book: First Aid for Writers* (Marion Street Press, 2012) ISBN: 978-1933338996

Recommended

- Lauren Kessler and Duncan McDonald, *When Words Collide: A Media Writer's Guide to Grammar and Style* (Thomson and Wadsworth, 2004) ISBN 0-534-56206-X
- William Strunk Jr. and E.B. White, *The Elements of Style*
- A dictionary

CLASSROOM FORMAT:

This is a writing course. Consequently, students will write every week and receive regular feedback and coaching on their work. The class will consist of both lecture and laboratory time to be determined by the instructor.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

- Writing assignments will be completed both inside and outside the classroom. During the semester, each student will complete at least three major assignments written outside of class: (1) a news story based on a single interview; (2) a news story covering a meeting or an event; and (3) a feature or in depth story based on multiple interviews.
- All assignments must have a story slug, date, headline and byline and be filed in a word document that is double spaced with indented paragraphs. Do not put extra space between paragraphs. **If assignments do not follow this format, they will not be graded.**
- Media writing requires knowledge of Associated Press style. Therefore, all writing assignments for 2121 will be written in correct AP style, and all students will complete

five quizzes on basic AP style during the semester. Quiz schedules will be determined by instructors.

- Students will complete an online portfolio as a final project to showcase their work, to begin building a professional online presence and to facilitate future course work and internship placement. The portfolios will include clips, design work, resumes and social media contacts.
- Students must stay informed about the news. They will, at a minimum, read *The Daily Helmsman* and *The Commercial Appeal* every day in order to be prepared for weekly current events quizzes. Newspapers are located in boxes across campus.
- Students will complete a mid-term and a final exam. The mid-term will cover such things as leads, attribution and quotes. The final will include information discussed during the latter part of the semester, short stories written in class, along with AP style.
- All 2121 students also must take a Writing Diagnostic Test at the beginning and near the end of the semester. The initial test scores will not impact course grades, but will be used as part of a department assessment of student achievement. The re-test will be graded.

GRADING:

Lab assignments, quizzes and mid-term:	40 percent
Three outside story assignments:	30 percent
Final Exam:	20 percent
Online portfolio:	5 percent
AP Quizzes:	5 percent

OTHER ISSUES:

Media writing is a practical, hands-on course that teaches you to think critically and write as professionals. Consequently, regular attendance is vital. **In other words, if you don't attend class, it is virtually impossible to get a good grade in this class. When you miss a lab, you cannot make up the work regardless of the reason.** Please do not email the instructor to ask what work was covered during your absence. Instead, check with a classmate. Remember: The work you do in class is worth 40 percent of your course grade.

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 written verification. (A sinus infection is not a medical emergency.) Grammar, spelling, punctuation and AP style are crucial to your success in media writing. We will work in these areas every week, so please bring your textbooks to class.

Coming to class well prepared is equally important. This means reading the assigned chapters in the textbook and staying informed about current events. The lectures almost always refer to events going on in the news at the moment. If you don't read the daily newspaper, you won't know what's going on, you will be unable to participate in the discussion and you won't do well on the current events quizzes. Active participation in class discussion is a good way to earn extra credit. JOUR 2121 is the linchpin for a professional program; please act accordingly.

TENTATIVE CLASS SCHEDULE:

Week 1: Course Introduction

Tues., 1/20: Introductions. Expectations for the semester. Review of syllabus. What is news? The story of journalism, changing media landscape. Introductory writing assignment. Read Chapters 1 and 2

Thurs., 2/22: How newsrooms work in 2015. How a story comes together. Who's who in a newsroom.

Week 2: Newswriting basics, AP Style

Tues., 1/27: AP Style, Accuracy, the Five W's. Read Chapter 3

Thurs., 1/29: AP style; Writing Diagnostic test; Writing basic news leads. Read Chapter 3

Week 3: Newswriting basics continued

Tues., 2/3: Refining leads, making them better. Read Chapter 3

Thurs., 2/5: No Class, Tennessee Press Association meeting

Week 4: More newswriting basics

Tues., 2/10: More work on lead writing, where stories come from.

Thurs., 2/12: More AP style. After the lead, the inverted pyramid. Read Chapter 3

Week 5: Fundamentals of Reporting

Tues., 2/17: Writing the complete story. Read Chapter 4

Thurs., 2/19: Quotes, attribution and transitions. Read Chapter 4

Week 6: More Reporting Basics

Tues., 2/24: Thinking, reporting critically. Developing a style, plugging holes, making the story better. Read Chapter 4

Thurs., 2/27: Finding and using sources, doing research. Read Chapter 4

FIRST OUTSIDE STORY DUE

Week 7: Even More Reporting Basics

Tues., 3/3: Mandatory attendance of First Amendment lecture. Read Chapter 4

Thurs., 3/5: Mid-term exam

REWRITE OF OUTSIDE STORY DUE

March 9-13: Spring Break

Week 8: Speeches and Meetings

Tues., 3/17: The fine art of a fine speech story

Thurs., 3/19: Covering meetings effectively. Read Chapter 5

Week 9: Public Affairs Reporting

Tues., 3/24: Government reporting. Read Chapter 5

Thurs., 3/26: Covering politics, courts, crime. Read Chapter 5

Week 10: Features

Tues., 3/31: How to find feature stories. Read Chapter 6

Thurs., 4/2: Narrative writing. Read Chapter 6

SECOND OUTSIDE STORY DUE

Week 11: Online Reporting

Tues., 4/7: Writing on a tight deadline. Read Chapter 8

Thurs., 4/9: Investigative, online journalism. Read Chapter 8

REWRITE OF OUTSIDE STORY**Week 12: Creating Online Portfolios**

Tues., 4/14 Setting up your online portfolio

Thurs., 4/16: The importance of obituary writing Read Chapter 5

Week 13: Law, Ethics and Libel

Tues., 4/21: Understanding Libel, Ethical Decision Making. Read Chapter 7

Thurs., 4/23: Retake writing diagnostic test

THIRD OUTSIDE STORY DUE**Week 14: Wrap-up**

Tues., 4/28: What we've learned. Review for the Final

REWRITE OF THIRD OUTSIDE STORY DUE

Thurs., 4/30: Study Day

Week 15: Final Exam To Be Announced**DEPARTMENT POLICIES****PORTFOLIO REQUIREMENT:**

All Department of Journalism undergraduate students are required to develop and maintain an active portfolio of their work. Students are to begin the portfolio in JOUR 2121 and contribute to it during every skills course thereafter. The portfolio should contain samples of the student's work from courses and/or professional experience and should develop as the student builds skills. Portfolios will undergo a final review while students are enrolled in the capstone course for their concentration.

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 <http://iam.memphis.edu> 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. Personal student information, such as grades, is restricted to your UM email address.

MOBILE PHONES AND LAPTOPS:

Some classes require a tablet, laptop or a smartphone to be used during class or to complete class assignments. Others do not allow them. Your instructor will set the policy for his/her specific 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. Your instructor will set the policy for his/her specific class. Students with excessive absences are encouraged to withdraw from the course prior to the drop deadline.

DEADLINES:

All deadlines are firm. Assignments turned in late will **NOT** be accepted unless arrangements have been made with the instructor.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY:

In addition to university-wide policies stated in the Code of Student Rights and Responsibilities, the Department of Journalism considers any fabrication of content and/or sources, misappropriation and plagiarism of facts or other content, turning in substantially the same assignment for credit in two different courses, receiving any assistance from others for work assigned to be completed on his/her own, and violations of copyright law as acts of academic dishonesty punishable to the degree determined appropriate by the course instructor and/or department chair. Penalties might include grade reductions, failure of the course and/or 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).

Intellectual property and copyright guidelines

1. Ideas cannot be copyrighted.
2. Anything set down in a tangible form, i.e., written, is by law copyrighted.
3. If, in a paraphrase, your work is “substantially similar” to a copyrighted work, you are guilty of copyright infringement.
4. A citation indicates where you got material. However, that portion you do not show as a direct quote must be “substantially original” to you. In other words, you can’t just paste in something from another’s work, put a citation at the bottom and call it your own. You need a full rewrite in your own words and syntax so the unquoted material is “substantially original” to you.

Plagiarism: From UM Student Handbook: The term “plagiarism” includes, but is not limited to, the use, by paraphrase or direct quotation, of the published or unpublished work of another person without full or clear acknowledgement. It also includes the unacknowledged use of materials prepared by another person or agency engaged in the selling of term papers or other academic materials.

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 me privately to discuss your specific needs. Please contact the Office for Disability Services at 901-678-2880 in 110 Wilder Tower to coordinate reasonable accommodations for students with documented disabilities.

DIVERSITY:

Students are required to respect the differences of others and treat all persons with civility. Discriminatory, derogatory and threatening language or behavior will not be tolerated. Further, students are expected to consider their work through a diverse mind. Mass communication reach a mass audience, and students should be aware of how those messages are received by a diverse audience.

WEATHER POLICY:

Check with local media and the University of Memphis website regarding inclement weather. If the university is closed or classes are canceled, this course will not meet. However, students will still be responsible for that day's work.

AP STYLE AND GRAMMAR:

All written work should follow the AP Stylebook and accepted rules of grammar and punctuation. If you don't know the style for a particular phrase, look it up or ask your classmates or the instructor.

FIVE PILLARS OF JOUR 2121

- *Professionalism:* Students learn the professional skills and expectations of today's media environment by focusing on the basics: ethics, interviewing sources, writing news stories, and editing stories for accuracy and fairness. Students also have opportunities to publish stories in the campus newspaper.
- *Writing:* As the first writing course in the journalism curriculum, 2121 teaches students basic newswriting techniques. Coursework emphasizes grammar, sentence structure, AP style, leads, story organization, quotes, and attribution. Along with classroom and homework assignments, students write three outside stories: an advance story, an event or lecture story, and a news feature.
- *Multimedia:* Students learn how to use and distinguish social media as a professional tool with in-class assignments and a class Facebook page. Additionally, students build an online portfolio to showcase their professional skills, work experience, and writing samples.
- *Critical Thinking:* Students integrate the skills necessary to meet deadlines and to write accurate and professional news stories. Along with grammar and writing techniques, students learn to work independently, to develop story ideas, to interview sources, to organize information from multiple sources.
- *Media Literacy:* Students stay informed about news, newsmakers, and the business of media companies through classroom discussions, assignments, and weekly current events quizzes. Students also learn the basics of how news is written, packaged, and produced.

ASSESSMENT

PROFESSIONAL VALUES AND COMPETENCIES FOR JOUR 2121:

- 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 FOR JOUR 2121:

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 story assignments.
- Be familiar with libel and journalism ethics through classroom discussion and assignments.
- Understand the difference between fact and opinion.

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.
- Write a news feature.
- Use 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.
- Write different types of newsworthy leads.
- Take weekly current events quizzes.

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

Basic 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 story telling

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 writing leads, nut graphs, and indirect and direct quotes;
- Develop information-gathering skills and apply them to assignments;
- Organize information into a news story;
- 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 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.