

Media Writing

JOUR 2121-005

Spring 2015

2:40 to 4:45 p.m. Tuesday and Thursday

Meeman Journalism Building Room 212

Thomas J. Hrach, Ph.D.

308 Meeman

Phone: 678-4779

thrach@memphis.edu

Office hours: 9 to 11:30 a.m. Mondays; 1 to 3:30 p.m. Fridays

COURSE REQUIREMENTS**CATALOGUE 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:

None

TEXTBOOKS:***Required***

- Tim Harrower, *Inside Reporting* 3rd ed. (McGraw Hill, 2010) ISBN 978-0-07-337891-6
- *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 in and outside the classroom. During the semester, each student will complete three writing assignments produced out of class: (1) news story covering a meeting or an event; (2) news story based on a single interview;

- and (3) in-depth news story based on multiple interviews.
- All assignments must be filed in a word document that is double spaced with indented paragraphs. If assignments do not follow this format, they will not be graded.
 - 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, resumes and blogs and will facilitate future course work and internship placement.
 - Students will read *The Daily Helmsman* every day as well as the front section (A) and the local section (B) of *The Commercial Appeal* Monday through Friday, and then be prepared for a quiz on the content of these newspaper pages. The Daily Helmsman and The Commercial Appeal are available for free on campus Monday through Friday.
 - Media writing requires knowledge of the Associated Press style. All writing assignments for 2121 are expected to be in correct AP style format. During the semester, each student will complete five AP Style exercises on the ecourseware site for 2121. Deadlines for passing the AP quizzes will be determined by the instructor.
 - All 2121 students also must take a writing diagnostic test at the beginning and the end of the semester. The first test scores will not impact course grades, but will be used as part of a department assessment of student achievement. The second time it is taken it will be part of the final exam.

GRADING:

Lab assignments (26 * 5)	130 points
Quizzes (10 points * 10)	100 points
Outside stories (40 points * 3)	120 points
AP Style Exercises (5 * 10)	50 points
Final Exam:	50 points
Online portfolio:	30 points
 Total	 480 points

GRADING:

- A 93 to 100 percent
- A – 90 to 92 percent
- B + 87 to 89 percent
- B 83 to 86 percent
- B – 80 to 82 percent
- C + 77 to 79 percent
- C 70 to 76 percent
- D + 67 to 69 percent
- D 60 to 66 percent
- F 0 to 59 percent

OTHER ISSUES:

Media writing is a practical, hands-on course that teaches you to think and write as professionals. Consequently, regular attendance is vital. **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 50 percent (that's half!) of your course grade.

Meeting deadlines is essential for media professionals. In other words, story deadlines are firm. Late stories will not be accepted. 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. JOUR 2121 is the linchpin for a professional program; please act accordingly.

This class follows the department policy on plagiarism and fabrication. Any of the three outside stories and their re-writes found to have been plagiarized or fabricated will receive a zero or that assignment.

TENTATIVE TIMETABLE

Week of:	Topic	Tuesday	Thursday
Jan. 20-22	Course Introduction; What is news?		
Jan. 27-29	Changing face of Media; Introduction to AP Style	Writing Diagnostic Test	
Feb. 3-5	How news comes together; No class on Thursday (but there is an assignment)	Quiz 1	1 AP Style Exercise
Feb. 10-12	Accuracy and the inverted pyramid; the five Ws and ledes	Quiz 2	First Outside story due
Feb. 17-19	More ledes	Quiz 3	2 AP Style Exercise
Feb. 24-26	Story structure and nut graphs; The Super Source	Quiz 4	Re-write first outside story due
March 3-5	Quotes and attribution; story ideas and sources	Quiz 5	Second outside story due
Mach 17-19	Using the Internet		3 AP Style Exercise
March 24-26	Diversity in news coverage; Observation and taking notes	Quiz 6	Re-write second outside story due
March 31- April 2	Interviewing; Speeches, meetings and events	Quiz 7	Third outside story due
April 7-9	Creating online portfolios; More interviewing; features and soft news	Quiz 8	4 AP Style Exercise
April 14-16	Attribution;	Quiz 9	Re-write third outside story due
April 21-23	using the Web as a source Writing digital news	Quiz 10	Online portfolio due
April 28	Covering a beat; writing an obituary	Bonus quiz	
May 5		Final Exam – 1 p.m.	

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.