

Media Writing
JOUR 2121-M50
Spring 2016

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COURSE REQUIREMENTS

CATALOG DESCRIPTION:

Basic instruction in journalistic forms and AP style; information gathering and composition of news stories; media literacy. One lecture hour, four laboratory hours per week.

TEXTBOOKS:

Required:

- Tim Harrower, *Inside Reporting*, 3rd ed. (McGraw Hill, 2013) ISBN: 978-0-07-352617-1
- Joe Hayden, *The Little Grammar Book: First Aid for Writers*, (Marion Street Press, 2012) ISBN: 978-1933338996
- *The Associated Press Stylebook and Briefing on Media Law* (Perseus, 2012) ISBN: 0-738-2074-03

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. All assignments **MUST** be filed in a “.doc” format; type must be double spaced with indented paragraphs.

COURSE WEBSITE ADDRESS: (The course page will be January 19 to May 8, 2016.)

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 Spring 2016 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 a series of writing lab assignment as well as three writing assignments produced out of class: (1) a news article based on a single interview; (2) a news article covering a meeting or an event; (3) a more in-depth news article based on multiple interviews. When article rewrites are due, the original edited article must be turned in at the same time. Rewrites will not be graded without the original article. **Your instructor does not accept late work.**
- All assignments must have a story slug, date 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 JOUR 2121 will be written in correct AP style, and all students will complete quizzes on basic AP style during the semester. Your instructor will determine the quiz schedule.
- 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 coursework and internship placement. The portfolios will include clips, design work, résumés and social media.
- Students will read their local daily newspaper (print or online) as well as *The Washington Post* (www.washingtonpost.com) and *USA Today* (www.usatoday.com). Be prepared to discuss current events on the Discussion Board.
- Students will complete a mid-term exam and a final exam. The mid-term exam will cover such things as leads, attribution and quotes. The final exam will include writing short news briefs and/or stories along with exercises in Associated Press style.
- All JOUR 2121 students also must take a Writing Diagnostic Test at the beginning and the end of the semester. The initial test score will not impact course grades, but will be used as part of a department assessment of student achievement. The re-test will be graded.
- 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:

Writing lab assignments and quizzes	380 points
Three outside story assignments	360 points
Mid-term exam	40 points
Final exam	60 points
Online portfolio	40 points
Class discussions	120 points
TOTAL	1,000 points

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 as 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:

Week 1: The Story of Journalism (January 19-24)

- Course introduction.
- What is news?
- Online discussion of current events.
- Assigned reading: Chapter 1; Chapter 2 (pages 18-21)

Week 2: How Newsrooms Work (January 25-31)

- The changing face of news.
- How news comes together. Who's who in the newsroom.
- Parts of a story. Tools in the reporter's toolbox.
- Writing Diagnostic Test #1.
- Online discussion of current events.
- Assigned reading: Chapter 2

Week 3: Media Writing Basics (February 1-7)

- The five Ws and basic news leads.
- Accuracy and the inverted pyramid.
- Introduction to AP style.
- Online discussion of current events.
- AP Style Quiz #1.
- Assigned reading: Chapters 2-3

Week 4: More on Media Writing Basics (February 8-14)

- More on leads.
- Story structure and nut graphs.
- Online discussion of current events.
- AP Style Quiz #2.
- Assigned reading: Chapter 3

Week 5: Even More on Media Writing Basics (February 15-21)

- Beyond the basic news lead.
- The “super source” and secondary sources.
- Quotations and attributions.
- Online discussion of current events.
- AP Style Quiz #3.
- Assigned reading: Chapters 3-4

Week 6: Reporting Basics (February 22-28)

- More on quotations and attributions.
- Observing and taking notes.
- Developing story ideas and sources.
- Online discussion of current events.
- Outside Article #1 due Feb. 28 (refer to Deadline checklist on page 59)
- Assigned reading: Chapter 4

Week 7: More on Reporting Basics (Feb. 29 – March 6)

- More on quotations and attributions.
- Diversity in news coverage.
- Online discussion of current events.
- Mid-term exam available Feb. 29 to March 4.
- Assigned reading: Chapter 4

Week 8: Interviewing (March 14-20)

- Interviewing techniques.
- Using the Internet as a source.
- Online discussion of current events.
- Outside Article #1 rewrite due by March 16 (refer to Rewriting/Editing sections on pages 52-55)
- Assigned reading: Chapter 4

Week 9: Covering the News (March 21-27)

- In-depth interviewing techniques.
- Covering accidents, speeches, meetings and events.
- Online discussion of current events.
- AP Style Quiz #4.
- Outside Article #2 due March 27 (refer to Deadline checklist on page 59)
- Assigned reading: Chapters 4-5

Week 10: Features and Soft News (March 28 – April 3)

- Types of features and soft news articles.
- Writing profiles.
- Feature story structures.
- Online discussion of current events.
- Assigned reading: Chapter 6

Week 11: Beyond Breaking News (April 4-10)

- Investigative reporting.
- Package planning and enterprise projects.
- Online discussion of current events.
- AP Style Quiz #5.
- Outside Article #2 rewrite due by April 6 (refer to Rewriting/Editing sections on pages 52-55)
- Assigned reading: Chapter 6

Week 12: Digital Journalism (April 11-17)

- Writing for digital media.
- Creating an online portfolio.
- Online discussion of current events.
- Outside Article #3 due April 17 (refer to Deadline checklist on page 59)
- Assigned reading: Chapter 8

Week 13: Beat Coverage (April 18-24)

- Covering a beat.
- Writing an obit.
- Working with editors. Polishing your work.
- Outside Article #3 rewrite due by April 24 (refer to Rewriting/Editing sections on pages 52-55)
- Assigned reading: Chapter 5 (pages 94-97)

Week 14: Law and Ethics; Putting It All Together (April 25-27)

- Journalistic ethics. Press rights. Libel and copyright law.
- Writing Diagnostic Test #2.
- Online Portfolio due April 27.
- Assigned reading: Chapter 7

Week 15: Final Exam (available April 29 – May 3)

FIVE PILLARS FOR 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.

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 concentrations.

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.

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 her/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. Students are permitted three total unexcused absences without penalty. After three absences, the student's final grade will be deducted one letter grade for each absence. After seven unexcused absences, the student will fail the course. Absences for illness and other catastrophic emergencies, such as a death in the family, must be documented (e.g. doctor's note or obituary) to be excused from the total absence count. Students with excessive unexcused absences are encouraged to withdraw from the course prior to the drop deadline.

DEADLINES:

All deadlines are firm. This is journalism and mass communications. Assignments turned in late will NOT be graded. Late work is not accepted unless prior arrangements have been made with the instructor. Students are NOT permitted to make up assignments, quizzes, tests, etc. that occurred during an unexcused absence. Students who will miss class and/or a deadline because of an excused absence are expected to notify the instructor immediately upon knowing the absence will occur; exceptions will be made for reasonable circumstances. Students who are absent during the final exam are not permitted to make up the exam and will earn a grade of 0, which might result in failure of the course.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY:

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, a student receiving any assistance from others for work assigned to be done 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 department chair. Penalties might include grade reductions 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, but the way they are described can.
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 respect. Discriminatory, derogatory and threatening language or behavior will not be tolerated. Further, students are expected to consider their work through a diverse mind. Mass communications 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 in this class 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.