

Advanced Media Writing

JRSM 7015-001, M50

Fall 2017

5:30-8:30 p.m. Thursday

MJ212 and online

Instructor: Prof. Otis L. Sanford

Office: 318B Meeman Journalism Building

Office Hours: Monday, 1:30 p.m. to 4:30 p.m. Wednesday 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m.

or by appointment

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COURSE REQUIREMENTS**CATALOG DESCRIPTION:**

Designed to help students become more precise as well as versatile writers by diagnosing their writing, polishing their grammar and editing skills, and teaching them to write with clarity, cohesiveness, and conciseness.

PREREQUISITE:

Graduate status

OBJECTIVES:

During the semester, you will build on skills learned in previous courses to:

1. Deepen your understanding of journalistic ethics;
2. Enhance your capacity to judge the newsworthiness of events and ideas;
3. Improve your analytical abilities when reading news and feature stories;
4. Hone key skills, such as newsgathering, organization, and developing rapport with sources;
5. Develop your skills of editing, verification and fact-checking;
6. Strengthen your competence in writing clear, concise, accurate and interesting news stories;
7. Produce stories based on information obtained from primary sources;
8. Work through and hone your problem-solving skills;
9. Gain practical experience in advanced and specialized news coverage.

TEXTBOOKS:**Required:**

The *Glamour of Grammar: A Guide to the Magic and Mystery of Practical English*, by Roy Peter Clark (Little, Brown & Company, 2010); *The Elements of Style*, Strunk & White, (various editions, all good); Various editions of The Commercial Appeal, The New York Times or Wall Street Journal, The New Yorker, specialty publications and non-fiction narratives as assigned (most available online).

Recommended:

On Writing Well, by William Zinsser (Harper, 1998); *Eats, Shoots & Leaves* by Lynn Truss (Gotham, 2004); *Sin and Syntax* by Constance Hale (Broadway, 1999).

HYBRID CLASSROOM FORMAT:

- Blue Jeans is a web-based video conferencing platform. Students in the M50 section will receive an invitation to join Blue Jeans from your instructor.
- This hybrid class, with students on campus and also online synchronously, operates in a seminar format.
- Online students must have a stable Internet connection, speakers and a microphone (or a headset with a built-in mic). Headsets can be purchased for approximately \$20. Students will need to be able to have video turned on for the entire class. Online students will not be permitted to attend class using a cellphone.
- Class time will primarily be spent in discussion of theories, issues, and applications. To that end, on campus and online students must complete the assigned readings and be prepared to discuss the night’s topic. Please note that failure to attend class or to actively take part — even if all your assignments are turned in on time and done acceptably — will significantly affect your final grade.

THE CLASSROOM EXPERIENCE:

This course is mainly experience-based. You are expected to do all assigned readings at home and it will be assumed that you have. We will discuss this material and I will of course answer any question you might have, but most of our class time will be spent writing, doing exercises and critiquing each other’s work so that you get as much experience as possible.

GRADING:

Your course grade is based on your involvement and participation in the course, five stories written during the semester, a final exam and a semester-long team project. Detailed descriptions of those are below. Final grades will be calculated as follows:

Involvement, attendance and participation	10%
Stories	30%
Final Exam	20%
Project (using Print, Web and Video)	30%
Portfolio	5%
Research colloquium	5%

NOTE: Evaluation/grading of writing assignments will be weighted toward individual progress and improvement.

ADDITIONAL ASSIGNMENT:

Graduate students must attend and write a one-page reflection paper about at least one Research Colloquium sponsored by the Department. Attendance and papers will count for at least 2% of your course final grade. Dates for the colloquia are: Friday, Sept. 22, Friday, Oct. 20 and Friday, Nov. 17. All at are Noon in 212 MJ. Those who cannot attend will receive instructions about remote viewing from your instructor.

Students enrolled in more than one course (JOUR 7000, 7015, 7050 and 7100, and 7330) may write multiple reflections of one research presentation as long as the topic is customized to the individual class. For example, for JOUR 7050, a student should reflect on theories, while for 7330, a student should reflect on the use of social media.

Involvement and Participation (10%)

Class attendance is mandatory in the Department of Journalism and Strategic Media. 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.

To allow for illness and other unforeseeable misfortunes, you are permitted two absences in the semester without it affecting your grade. If you must miss class, it is your responsibility to get in touch with me and/or your peers to ask about course content and possible assignments. Any lateness of more than 10 minutes counts as half an absence. From the third absence on, I will deduct 10 points for each class you miss from your involvement, attendance and participation grade (5 points if you're late).

You may be assigned a failing grade for the semester for nonattendance, or habitual late arrival.

Furthermore, my role is to efficiently guide the class throughout the semester, but it is your responsibility, as a class, to bring all projects to fruition. This course will be successful only if all of you participate. Thus, part of your overall grade will be determined by your active involvement in class, group activities and discussions. This includes online activities.

Each of you will have to participate in a regular summary of the main news events of a given time period. A schedule will be agreed upon in the beginning of the semester to decide who is in charge of making sure the summary is completed. All of you should respond to these summaries in order to create a class discussion about current news.

Stories (30%)

You have 5 assignments during the semester:

1. General news story due September 14
2. News analysis story due October 5
3. Profile due October 26
4. Feature story due November 16
5. Opinion story with at least one interviewed source due November 30

Stories will be assessed based on the following criteria:

- Depth and accuracy of reporting;
- Strength of your lede, nut graph, overall story structure and AP Style;
- Brevity of your writing (don't use four words when you can use only one);
- Clarity of your writing;
- Strength of your multimedia components;
- Meeting deadlines;
- Thoroughness of your analysis.

Note: Errors of fact will lower the grade for each story by 4 points each with the exception of proper names, which will cost 10 points **each** time they appear incorrect in a story. This deduction is not an arbitrary punishment. Such errors go to the heart of credibility for you and your organization. Errors can also have serious legal ramifications, such as libel suits. Each story will undergo rewrites as needed.

Final Exam (20%)

Each of you will be given a story to cover with a strict (short) deadline to turn it in. The exam will be graded based on the same criteria as the six stories you will write during the semester.

Project (30%)

You will team up for a semester-long multimedia journalism project. You and your partner(s) will choose a timely topic to report on throughout the semester. You will have to build an audience (don't hesitate to use social media) and update it at least once a week. What follows are the minimum requirements for this final project. Be inventive, be creative, don't limit yourself to these guidelines. You're journalists. Report on the topic to the best of your ability and with all the tools at your disposal!

You are welcome to use some of your homework toward this project, but be aware that homework assignments are individual while you have (a) partner(s) for this project.

By Thursday, September 14 at the end of class [Project Assignment 1]:

- Decide on a topic
- Begin setting up a website with at least two pages:
 - About / Contact page
 - Presentation of topic
- Email me a link to the website by 9:30 p.m.

By Thursday, September 28 at the end of class [Project Assignment 2]:

- Start building an audience for your website. Set up social media accounts.
- Email me when the website is updated and ready

By Thursday, November 30 at 8:30 p.m. [Final Project]:

- Have at least 12 stories overall including
 - At least one audio story
 - At least one photo slideshow (may be on a different page)
 - At least one video reportage
 - At least 2 story packages that integrate text and visuals and/or sound
- Email me when the website is updated and ready for final review

TENTATIVE TIMETABLE:

Note: What follows is a tentative schedule. The syllabus is a general plan for the course; the instructor reserves the right to make changes as the semester progresses. If there are any changes, you will of course be notified in a timely manner.

Week 1, August 31

On the Agenda: Course Introduction, Syllabus Overview, brief writing exercise (not graded)

Week 2, September 7

On the Agenda: Discuss assigned readings + Reviewing the Basics of In-Depth Newswriting and Reporting: The layers of reporting, researching and writing depth and analysis pieces, working with and interviewing sources, etc. + Writing exercises

Assignment: Read Part 1 of textbook

Week 3, September 14

On the Agenda: Discuss assigned readings + Review/critique news stories 1 + Project discussion

Assignment: Read Part 2 of textbook, General news story due by 8:30 p.m.

Week 4, September 21

On the Agenda: Discuss assigned readings + In class writing exercise or spots news coverage of campus event.

Assignment: Read Part 3 of textbook.

Week 5, September 28

On the Agenda: Discuss assigned readings + Review/critique news stories 2 + Profile Writing: Looking for a newsworthy or otherwise unique or interesting profile subject, keeping your objectivity, finding the "truth" about your subject (+ Discussion of Project if time allows)

Assignment: Read Part 4 of textbook. News analysis story due by 8:30 p.m.

Week 6, October 5

On the Agenda: Discuss assigned readings + Profile Writing, cont. (addressing concerns and difficulties with the story) + Project

Assignment: Read Part 5 of textbook. News analysis story due by 8:30 p.m.

Week 7, October 12

On the Agenda: The importance of feature writing, finding your feature peg, experimenting with leads and alternative forms of reporting and writing + Review/critique profiles + Project

Assignment: Online readings.

Week 8, October 19

On the Agenda: Feature writing, cont. + Project

Assignment: Online readings

Week 9, October 26

On the Agenda: Investigative reporting and its impact + Project

Assignment: Online readings, Profile story due by 8:30 p.m.

Week 10, November 2

On the Agenda: Review/critique news stories + The role of opinion writing, research and reporting as the backbone of good opinion writing, finding your “editorial voice.” + Project
Assignment: Online readings

Week 11, November 9

On the Agenda: Opinion writing, cont. + Project
Assignment: Online readings, Opinion story due at the end of class.

Week 12, November 16

On the Agenda: Covering Demographics and Stories with Numbers + Project
Assignment: Online readings

Week 13, November 23

Thanksgiving

Week 14, November 30

On the Agenda: Wrapping up the class. What we’ve learned. How to use it and where you go from here. Opinion story due and online project completed.

Project due on Thursday, November 30 at 8:30 p.m.

Final Exam to be announced

DEPARTMENT POLICIES

PORTFOLIO REQUIREMENT:

All students in the Department of Journalism and Strategic Media are required to develop and maintain an active portfolio of their work. Undergraduate students are to begin the portfolio in JRSM 3900 and contribute to it from every course thereafter. The portfolio should contain samples of the student's work from his/her courses and/or professional experience and should develop as the student builds skills. Portfolios will undergo a final, external review while students are enrolled in the capstone course for their majors.

Students may use any type of web hosting for their portfolios, but it must have an independent and professional URL. The department requires students to use WordPress to build their portfolio sites. Students are encouraged to consider purchasing a URL and hosting if they plan to use the portfolio for a long term, but must keep the portfolio active for six months following graduation from the University of Memphis.

Students should have a professional email address they plan to use throughout their professional life, via a common email service, such as Gmail or Yahoo.

All portfolios must contain the following items:

- Samples of work from courses and/or professional activities. (Example: Broadcasting students must include a video reel)
- A current résumé
- A personal profile
- Contact information/means of contact
- Social media links

Students might wish to include a blog, video reels, photograph galleries, SoundSlides presentations, design PDFs, audio files, and Storify pieces as examples of professional work. The professional work should ultimately be tailored to the career the student seeks after graduation. Thus, each student's portfolio should show a unique blend of work.

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.

MOBILE PHONES AND LAPTOPS:

Some classes require a tablet, laptop or a smartphone. Others do not. Your instructor will set the policy for her/her specific class.

ATTENDANCE:

Class attendance is mandatory in the Department of Journalism and Strategic Media. 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 because of 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 and Strategic Media 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.

Further, as this is a journalism/mass communication class, students are expected to comply with copyright law, and must have sufficient permission to use any copyrighted materials used in creative projects, unless otherwise informed in cases of exercises or reproduction.

"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.

DEADLINES:

Remember there's a reason "DEAD" makes up half the word "deadline." All deadlines are firm. This is journalism and strategic media. If you get into trouble, talk to your instructor. Exceptions will be made for reasonable circumstances if the student notifies the instructor prior to the due date.

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.

DISABILITY:

Any student who feels s/he may need an accommodation based on the impact of a disability should contact your instructor privately to discuss your specific needs. Please contact the Office for Disability Services at 901-678-2880 in 110 Wilder Tower Hall 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:

Always 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.