

## **Media Writing**

JRSM 2121-001

Fall 2018

Tuesdays and Thursdays: 9:40 to 11:55AM

202 Meeman Journalism Building

Thomas J. Hrach, Ph.D.

Office: MJ 308

Office Hours: Mondays, 9:30 a.m. to noon; Thursdays noon to 2:30 p.m.

(901) 678-4779 (office)

Email: thrach@memphis.edu

## **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.

### **PREREQUISITE:**

JRSM 1750

### **TEXTBOOKS:**

#### ***Required***

- Tim Harrower, "Inside Reporting" 3rd ed. (McGraw Hill, 2010) ISBN 978-0-07-337891-6
- "The Associated Press Stylebook 2018" ISBN: 978-0-917360-67-1.

#### ***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

### **CLASSROOM FORMAT:**

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

### **COURSE REQUIREMENTS:**

- Students complete writing assignments both inside and outside the classroom. During the semester, each student completes three writing assignments written outside of class: (1) an advance story with at least two interviews; (2) a campus event with at least three interviews; and (3) an event story off campus with at least three interviews and a data source. Students also rewrite all outside stories.

**Note: Rewrites must include the additional reporting discussed in story editing notes. If students do not complete additional reporting, they will receive lower grades than the original stories.**

- Assignments must have a story slug, date and byline and be filed in a word document that is double spaced with indented paragraphs in 11 pt. Verdana type. 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, students write all assignments for 2121 in correct AP style, and they complete quizzes on basic AP style during the semester.
- Students also complete an AP Stylebook Powerpoint presentation during the semester.
- Students must stay informed about the news. They will, at a minimum, read The Daily Helmsman, The Commercial Appeal, and the Daily Memphian every day in order to be prepared for weekly current events quizzes. Boxes across campus provide free copies of the Daily Helmsman and The Commercial Appeal. Students can subscribe to the Daily Memphian at [dailymemphian.com](http://dailymemphian.com).
- Students in all sections of 2121 complete the same mid-term and final exams. The mid-term covers such skills as leads, attribution and quotes. The final includes short stories written in class, along with short answers on news fundamentals and AP style.
- Outside experts may evaluate a story component of the final exam as part of a department assessment of student achievement. This assessment does not impact final grades.
- Students will complete news quizzes and in-class exercises. Those cannot be made up if you do not attend. Extra credit opportunities will be announced to replace in-class exercises.
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**GRADING:**

• Three outside stories	120
• In-class exercises	130
• News quizzes	80
• AP Style quizzes	75
• Midterm exam	20
• Final exam	40
• AP Powerpoint presentation	20
• Stories on online site	15

TOTAL 500

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	63 to 66 percent
D –	60 to 62 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 an in-class exercise, you cannot make up the work regardless of the reason.** There will be some chances to make up by attending a journalism related event of which you will find out in advance. Please do not email the instructor to ask what work was covered during your absence. Instead, check with a classmate. If you miss a news quiz, there is no chance to make it up. There will be a bonus quiz at the end of the semester. 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, so story deadlines are firm. **Late stories will not be accepted, except for major medical emergencies with 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 as required by instructors.
- Coming to class well prepared is equally important. This means reading the assigned chapters in the textbooks and staying informed about current events. JOUR 2121 is the linchpin for a professional program in journalism, so act accordingly.
- Extra credit will be given for attendance at journalism related events. These extra credit opportunities will replace an in-class exercise that is missed.

## TENTATIVE TIMETABLE

### **Week One: Course Introduction**

- Aug. 28 What is news?  
Aug. 30 Accuracy, balance, news values and media lingo  
Read chapter 2 plus pages 88-81 (Harrower)

### **Week Two: Media Writing Basics: News summary leads and the inverted pyramid**

- Sept. 4 Read chapters 3 and 4 (Harrower)  
Specific pages to re-read are noted below.  
Sept. 6 News Quiz 1. Expect a quiz every week.

### **Week Three: Media Writing Basics: News summary leads, mini stories and AP style**

- Sept. 11 Bring AP Stylebook to class  
Sept. 13 Read chapter 3, pages 56-63 (Harrower) News Quiz 2

### **Week Four: Media Writing Basics: Quotes and attribution, single source stories**

- Sept. 18 Read chapter 4, pages 82-85 (Harrower)  
Sept. 20 News quiz 3.

**SINGLE SOURCE STORY DUE**

**Week Five: Media Writing Basics: More quotes, attribution and advance stories**

Sept. 25 In-class advance story practice  
Sept. 27 AP Quiz No. 1 (addresses)

**Week Six: Media Writing Basics: Story structure and nut graphs**

Oct. 2 Read Chapter 3 pages 48-51 (Harrower)  
Oct. 4 News Quiz 5

**ADVANCE STORY DUE**

**Week Seven: Midterm Exam and Covering Events**

Oct. 9 Read chapter 4, pages 70-81 (Harrower)  
AP Style Quiz 2 (Numbers)

Oct. 11 **MID-TERM EXAM**

**ADVANCE STORY REWRITE DUE**

**Week Eight: Fall Break (Oct. 13 – 16)**

Oct. 16 Class canceled for fall break.

Oct. 18 **EVENT STORY DUE (GROUP)**

**Week Nine: Media Writing Basics: Source (people, experts and data) and Interviewing**

Oct. 23 Interviewing and the keys to that skill  
AP Style Quiz 4

Oct. 25 Finding people to interview  
News Quiz 6

**Week 10: Story Rewrites**

Oct. 30 Read chapter 4, pages 68-69 (Harrower)

Nov. 1 **EVENT STORY REWRITE DUE**

Take AP Quiz. No. 3 (money, time, dates)

News Quiz 7

**Week 11: Clarity, conciseness, transitions**

Nov. 6 Read chapter 3, pages 52-63

Nov. 8 News Quiz 8

**EVENT STORY DUE (INDIVIDUAL)**

**Week 12: Portfolios, media law**

Nov. 13 Discussion of online sites

Continue AP Style presentations

Nov. 15 Discussion of media law

News Quiz bonus

**Week 13: Ethics**

Nov. 20 Discussion of media ethics

Continue AP Style presentations

Nov. 22 **THANKSGIVING BREAK NO CLASS**

**REWRITE EVENT STORY DUE**

**Week 14: What makes good writing**  
Nov. 27 Looking at some Pulitzer Prize winning stories  
Continue AP Style presentations  
Nov. 29 Discussion of alternate ways to present news

**Week 15: Wrap up and review**  
Dec. 4 Review for final exam.  
Dec.6 Show off stories on online site

**Week 16: Exam week**  
Dec. 11 **FINAL EXAM**

### **FIVE PILLARS OF JRSM2121**

- *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:* Students learn 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 JRSM2121:

- 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
- 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 current tools and technologies appropriate for the communications professions in which they work, and to understand the digital world

### HOW PROFESSIONAL VALUES AND COMPETENCIES WILL BE MET:

#### ***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.
- Learn ramifications of news practices.
- Be knowledgeable about developments in the media industry.

#### ***Performance standards to be met (demonstrable skills, abilities, techniques, applied competencies):***

- Write an entry-level news stories with multiple sources, including relevant data.
- Attribute sources correctly for both direct and indirect quotes.
- Write effective news summary leads and nut graphs.
- Demonstrate an ability to write on deadline.
- Practice basic five-shot sequence for photo packages.
- Write informative captions in two-sentence news format.
- Use social media for communicating and reporting.
- Use the AP Stylebook in applying basic news writing style rules to lab and outside assignments.
- Take AP style quizzes.
- Take weekly current events quizzes.

## **HOW ASSESSMENT OF STUDENT LEARNING WILL BE MET:**

### *Awareness:*

- Learn how journalism works in today's media environment
- Discuss the difference between legitimate and fake news
- Recognize the role of the press in a democracy

### *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:*

- 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

## **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.