

**Precision Language**

JRSM 1750-001

Spring 2018

2:20-3:45 p.m., MW

Meeman 100

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**COURSE REQUIREMENTS****CATALOG DESCRIPTION:**

Introduction to grammar and writing style for use in journalism and mass communication; foundations of research and information gathering, media literacy, and plagiarism.

**PREREQUISITE:**

None

**TEXTBOOKS:**

Required: Arnold, G.T. (2013). *Media Writers Handbook 6th ed.* New York: McGraw Hill.

ISBN: 978-0-07-351200-6

*Associated Press Stylebook*. 2017 Edition.

**CLASSROOM FORMAT:**

This course teaches the basic skills of writing and grammar. Sometimes, this will be a review for you. Other times, this will address new material. Each class will have a lecture that addresses the content. On your own time, you will complete homework activities associated with that lesson.

**COURSE REQUIREMENTS:**

1. Weekly exercises to be completed via eCourseware.
2. Writing assignments
3. Three exams
4. Final exam: Failure of the final exam will result in failure of the course regardless of previous average.

**GRADING:**

**A** = 90 to 100%

**B** = 80 to 89%

**C** = 70 to 79%

**D** = 60 to 69%

**F** = 59% and lower

Plusses and minuses will be given.

<b>Assignment</b>	<b>% of Final Grade</b>
Weekly quizzes	15%
Writing assignments	30%
Case study paper	10%
Tests	30%
Must Pass Final Exam	15%

**OTHER ISSUES:**

This course is essential to your success in the Department of Journalism and Strategic Media. It builds the grammatical skills necessary for clear and effective writing.

Lectures for each week coincide with the readings for that week. Please take the time to read the book and be prepared to study the online content. While some of these concepts seem elementary, a perfected sense of grammar is essential in our profession.

This course requires you to do work outside of class. Please stay on top of the weekly assignments. Late work will not be accepted.

**DEADLINES:**

All deadlines are firm. This is journalism and mass communication. Late work will not be accepted. Exceptions will be made for reasonable circumstances if the student notifies the instructor **prior to or on** the due date. Work must be turned in via eCourseware.

**TENTATIVE TIMETABLE:****Week 1: Jan. 15-19**

Course Introduction. 25 Ways to Improve Your Writing Immediately.

Homework: Quiz 1.

Assigned Reading: Arnold, Chapter 1.

**Week 2: Jan. 22-26**

Are These Distinctions Worth Making? News judgement. Elements of Newsworthiness.

Homework: Quiz 2, WA 1.

Assigned Reading: Arnold, Chapter 2.

**Week 3: Jan. 29-Feb. 2**

Language Lapses. Message Analysis/Info Gathering. Ways of knowing.

Homework: Quiz 3, WA 2.

Assigned Reading: Arnold, Chapter 3.

**Week 4: Feb. 5-9**

It's Nobody's Guess. The Trouble with "Only." One Potato Two Potatoes. Library Research Skills.

Homework: Quiz 4. WA 3.

Assigned Reading: Arnold, Chapters 4-6.

**Week 5: Feb. 12-16**

Excising the Excessive. "I Don't Sound Like a Vice President." Internet Research Skills.

Homework: Quiz 5, WA 4.

Assigned Reading: Arnold, Chapters 7-8.

**Week 6: Feb. 19-23**

Exam 1. Nouns. Pronouns. Agreement.

Homework: Quiz 6.

Assigned Reading: Arnold, Chapters 9-11.

**Week 7: Feb. 26-March 2**

Verbs and Verbals. Subject-Verb Agreement.

Homework: Quiz 7.

Assigned Reading: Arnold, Chapters 12-13.

**Week 8: March 5-9**

Spring Break

**Week 9: March 12-16**

Adjectives. Adverbs. Comparison. Interviewing.

Homework: Quiz 8, WA 5.

Assigned Reading: Arnold, Chapters 14-16.

**Week 10: March 19-23**

Prepositions. Conjunctions. Interjections. Sentences and Syntax. Informal sources.

Institutional sources. Scholarly sources.

Homework: Quiz 9, WA 6.

Assigned Reading: Arnold, Chapters 17-20.

**Week 11: March 26-30**

Exam 2. Media Literacy.

Homework: WA 7.

**Week 12: April 2-6**

Periods. Question Marks. Exclamation Marks. Commas. Writing for media.

Homework: Quiz 10.

Assigned Reading: Arnold, Chapters 21-24.

**Week 13: April 9-13**

Semicolons. Colons. Dashes. Parentheses and Brackets. Slashes and Hyphens.

Apostrophes. Quotation Marks. Sensitivity.

Homework: Quiz 11.

Assigned Reading: Arnold, Chapters 25-31.

**Week 14: April 16-20**

Exam 3. Review for Final Exam.

Homework: Case study paper.

**Week 15: April 23-25**

Review for Final Exam.

**Final exam: 1-3 p.m., Wednesday, May 2**

**FIVE PILLARS OF JRSM1750**

- *Professionalism*: Students learn the implications of accuracy in language. They explore styles and grammar used in professional media applications.
- *Writing*: Students develop grammar and writing skills through discussion and exploration of grammar specific to journalism and mass communications.
- *Multimedia*: Students explore the use of grammar for multimedia application.
- *Critical Thinking*: Students explore options for creating and sourcing media content, addressing diverse publics, and managing audiences.
- *Media Literacy*: Students are exposed to the vocabulary and grammar of media production. Students learn how media is researched, sourced, and prepared through multiple assignments.

**ASSESSMENT****PROFESSIONAL VALUES AND COMPETENCIES FOR JRSM1750:**

- 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
- Demonstrate an understanding of professional ethical principles and work ethically in pursuit of truth, accuracy, fairness and diversity
- Think critically, creatively and independently
- 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

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

***Cognitive objectives to be mastered (ability to explain, analyze, understand, think critically):***

- Develop advanced understanding of grammar as used in mass communication.
- Establish a working knowledge of Associated Press style.
- Understand media language respectful of a diverse audience.
- Critically examine the language used in media as persuasive and communicative.
- Distinguish between fact and opinion.
- Expand knowledge of the resources available for communications professionals.

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

- Examination of grammar skills specific to journalism and mass communication
- Examination of Associated Press writing style
- Examination of understanding of current events
- Examination of research techniques and available resources.

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

*Awareness:*

- Becoming aware of specific language for journalism and mass communication.

*Understanding:*

- Use of grammar and style to communicate clearly, precisely, and succinctly.

*Application:*

- Passage of examinations concerning grammar, style, AP preferences, and basic information-gathering skills.

**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 JRSJ 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.