

Precision Language

JRSM 1750-001, 501

Spring 2019

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

Meeman 100 and Varnell Jones 204

Dana Cooper

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Office hours: noon – 2 p.m. MW or by appointment

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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

REQUIRED TEXTBOOKS:

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

ISBN: 978-0-07-351200-6

Associated Press Stylebook. 2018 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:

- Weekly exercises to be completed via eCourseware.
- Writing assignments
- Three exams
- Final exam: **A score of less than 70% on 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

Neither plusses nor minuses will be given.

Assignment	% of Final Grade
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 assigned textbook chapters. You must take the time to read the book and be prepared to study the online content. Although some of these concepts might seem elementary to a university student, 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. All assignments, along with instructions and an example of how to successfully complete them, are available in eCourseware on the first day of class.

There are no surprises.

LATE WORK POLICY:

All deadlines for work in this course are already posted in eCourseware. Late work will be accepted in reasonable circumstances if the student notifies the instructor well in advance of the due date. Notifying the instructor when the deadline is imminent or has already passed is not sufficient.

Without documentation, late assignments will be assessed a penalty of one letter grade per calendar day. After three days, late work will not be accepted.

All work must be turned in via eCourseware. Work submitted via any other means will be left unacknowledged and ungraded.

PLAGIARISM:

Committing a single act of plagiarism is a career-ending move. A detailed discussion of what constitutes plagiarism and academic dishonesty will occur early in the course. Each student will be required to submit a signed plagiarism contract prior to the first writing assignment. **Writing assignments will not be graded without a plagiarism contract on file.**

TENTATIVE TIMETABLE:

Week 1: January 14-18

Monday, 1/14: Course Introduction. Plagiarism. Diagnostic Quiz.
Wednesday, 1/16: 25 Ways to Improve Your Writing Immediately.
Homework: Signed plagiarism policy contracts, Quiz 1
Assigned Reading: Arnold, Chapter 1.

Week 2: January 21-25

Monday, 1/21: No class
Wednesday, 1/23: Are These Distinctions Worth Making? News judgement. Elements of
Newsworthiness.
Homework: Quiz 2, WA 1.
Assigned Reading: Arnold, Chapter 2.

Week 3: January 28-February 1

Monday, 1/28: Language Lapses.
Wednesday, 1/30: Message Analysis/Info Gathering. Ways of knowing.
Homework: Quiz 3, WA 2.
Assigned Reading: Arnold, Chapter 3.

Week 4: February 4-8

Monday, 2/4: It's Nobody's Guess. The Trouble with "Only." One Potato Two Potatoes.
Wednesday, 2/6: Library Research Skills.
Homework: Quiz 4. WA 3.
Assigned Reading: Arnold, Chapters 4-6.

Week 5: February 11-15

Monday, 2/11: Excising the Excessive. "I Don't Sound Like a Vice President."
Wednesday, 2/13: Internet Research Skills.
Homework: Quiz 5, WA 4.
Assigned Reading: Arnold, Chapters 7-8.

Week 6: February 18-22

Monday, 2/18: Review.
Wednesday, 2/20: Exam 1.

Week 7: February 25-March 1

Monday: 2/25: All about nouns and pronouns.
Wednesday: 2/27: Noun-pronoun agreement.
Homework: Quiz 6.
Assigned Reading: Arnold, Chapters 9-11.

Week 8: March 4-8

SPRING BREAK. No class meeting.
Homework: Quiz 7
Assigned Reading: Arnold, Chapters 12-13 (corresponds to Quiz 7)

Week 9: March 11-15

Monday, 3/11: Verbs and verbals (recap). Adjectives and adverbs. Comparison.

Wednesday, 3/13: Interviewing. Story writing.

Homework: Quiz 8, WA 5.

Assigned Reading: Arnold, Chapters 14-16.

Week 10: March 18-22

Monday, 3/18: Prepositions. Conjunctions. Interjections.

Wednesday, 3/20: Sentences and Syntax.

Homework: Quiz 9, WA 6.

Assigned Reading: Arnold, Chapters 17-20.

Week 11: March 25-29

Monday, 3/25: Review.

Wednesday, 3/27: Exam 2.

Week 12: April 1-5

Monday, 4/1: Punctuation

Wednesday, 4/3: Media Literacy.

Homework: Quiz 10, WA 7.

Assigned Reading: Arnold, Chapters 21-24.

Week 13: April 8-12

Monday, 4/8: Advanced punctuation.

Wednesday, 4/10: Sensitivity in writing.

Homework: Quiz 11.

Assigned Reading: Arnold, Chapters 25-31.

Week 14: April 15-19

Monday, 4/15: Review, case study paper assigned.

Wednesday, 4/17: Exam 3.

Homework: Case study paper.

Week 15: April 22-26

Monday, 4/22: Review for Final Exam.

Wednesday, 4/24: Continued review.

Last Day of Classes: April 24

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

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
- 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

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.

JOURNALISM AND STRATEGIC MEDIA 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 graduate students are to begin in JRSM 7002. Students are to contribute to it in every skills course thereafter. The portfolio should contain samples of the student's work from courses and/or professional experiences and should develop as the student builds skills. Portfolios will undergo a final, external review while students are enrolled in their capstone courses.

Students may use any type of web hosting for their portfolios, but it must have an independent and professional URL. Students may use any content management system, but students are encouraged to use WordPress, Wix, or SquareSpace. Students are encouraged to consider purchasing a URL and hosting if they plan to use the portfolio for a long term, but they 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 lives, via a common email service, such as Gmail.

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 writing 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:

Students must have their UofM email accounts activated. Students using another provider, such as Google, are required to have all UofM email forwarded to that account. Students should go to the <http://iam.memphis.edu> website to implement forwarding of UofM email. Students are required to check their email daily. They are responsible for complying with any email sent to by professors or others in the University.

MOBILE PHONES AND LAPTOPS:

Some classes require a tablet, laptop or a smartphone. Others do not. Instructors will set the policy for their specific classes.

ATTENDANCE:

Class attendance is mandatory in the Department of Journalism and Strategic Media. Students may be assigned a failing grade for the semester for nonattendance or habitual late arrival. No late work will be accepted without prior arrangements with the class 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). Journalism and Strategic Media is a professional program, and students are expected to understand and comply with deadlines. Students who have some problem making it to class on time should make arrangements to correct the problem or consider taking another class. Students should consider this class as a "job" in the educational process and be on time just as they would elsewhere.

COURSE REPETITION:

Majors and minors who fail to earn the minimum passing grade ("C-") in a class required by their program of study in Journalism and Strategic Media more than three times will be dropped from the program.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY:

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 students receiving any assistance from others for work assigned to be done on their own, as acts of cheating punishable to the degree determined appropriate by the course instructor and department chair. Punishment may include grade reductions or seeking dismissal of the student from the University.

Further, as this is a journalism/mass media 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:

Students are urged to complete the SETEs evaluation of this course. Once the instructor has posted grades, student can immediately see that grade, provided they have completed a the SETE for that class. To access evaluation forms, students should log in to MyMemphis using their UUIDs and email passwords; click on the gray “Student” tab; complete an evaluation for each course listed and hit the “Submit” button at the bottom of the form. Completing the SETE will only take a few minutes. Faculty take the evaluations very seriously and use them to improve courses and instructional quality. Student feedback is essential and is appreciated.

DEADLINES:

All deadlines are firm. This is journalism and strategic media. Students needing an extension on an assignment must receive approval from the 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 must follow the AP Stylebook and accepted rules of grammar and punctuation. Students are responsible for learning these rules and checking their work for errors.

DISABILITY:

Students who need an accommodation based on the impact of a disability should 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. Media 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.

STUDENT SUPPORT:

Students who are experiencing personal or academic challenges including, but not limited to food or housing issues, family needs, or other stressors, should visit the Office of Student Accountability, Outreach & Support page to learn about resources that can help: <https://www.memphis.edu/saos/sos/crisis-resources.php>. Any student who faces personal challenges including, but not limited to securing their food or housing and believes this may affect their performance in the course is urged to contact the Office of Student Accountability, Outreach & Support (901-678-2187) located in the University Center, Suite 359 for assistance. Students may also talk with course instructors about the challenges they are experiencing. Instructors may be able to assist in connecting with campus or community support.