

Precision Language

JRSM 1750-M50

Summer 2023

Prof. Ashley Craig

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Virtual office appointments available upon request. Email to set up appointment.

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.

Prerequisites

None

Textbooks, Software and Required Materials

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

ISBN: 978-0-07-351200-6

Very strongly recommended: *Associated Press Stylebook*. 2019 Edition.

Note: The latest electronic version of the AP Stylebook is available for a yearly subscription fee, and it comes with your purchase of the print version from the Associated Press store. The iPhone/Android app will serve you well.

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. Weekly quizzes also coincide with each chapter. Students may take quizzes twice. The highest score will be recorded.

Assignment instructions and all deadlines are posted on Canvas at the beginning of the semester.

There are no surprises. Students are expected to follow instructions and submit work on time.

Accessing the course website

1. Go to the University of Memphis eLearn home page: <http://memphis.instructure.com>
2. Log in using your University of Memphis username and password.
3. In the summer 2023 course list, click on the link for JRSM 1750 to enter the course and read the instructions on the welcome page.
4. Please do not use the internal Canvas email system on the course web page. Use your regular University of Memphis email to correspond with me. I may not see these emails, as they do not alert me in a manner that allows me to see your message as it comes through.

Course Requirements

- Exercises and writing assignments to be completed via Canvas
- Weekly quizzes
- Final news story

Grading

A+ = 96.5-100%; A = 92.5-96.4%; A- = 89.5-92.4%
B+ = 86.5-89.4%; B = 82.5-86.4%; B- = 79.5-82.4%
C+ = 76.5-79.4%; C = 72.5-76.4%; C- = 69.5-72.4%
D+ = 66.5-69.4%; D = 59.5-66.4%
F 0-59.4%

Grade Breakdown

Quizzes: 50%
Writing assignments: 30%
News story and story rewrite (WA6 and 7): 20%

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. Although some of these concepts might seem elementary to a university student, a perfected sense of grammar is essential in our profession.

Audio and video lectures coincide with the assigned textbook chapters. You must take the time to read the book and be prepared to study the online content. These assignments, along with instructions and examples of how to successfully complete them, are available in Canvas on the first day of class.

Time management is crucial in a summer course. None of the assignments should be particularly difficult or time consuming but waiting until the last minute to attempt them is not advised.

DEADLINES: Unless otherwise specified, all assignment deadlines are Sunday at 11:59 p.m. Deadlines for this course are firm and posted from the first day of the semester. All work must be turned in via Canvas.

LATE WORK: I will not consider any requests for deadline extensions received less than 48 hours before the assignment deadline, and requests will only be approved in extenuating circumstances. Your first approved extension will be granted with no penalty if your work is received within three days of the published deadline. Subsequent late assignments will be penalized 10 points per calendar day, up to four days. After the fourth day, I will not accept your work.

TECHNICAL SUPPORT: Computers and network access can be finicky. Unfortunately, providing tech support is beyond my capabilities. As a University of Memphis student, you are entitled to ask for help from the IT helpdesk. It is in your best interests to call as soon as you are aware of the problem, and not to wait until the last minute to begin your work. There are two ways to

access the University of Memphis IT helpdesk: call 901-678-8888, or log in to the website (umhelpdesk.memphis.edu) to open a ticket.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Each week's assignments are due at 11:59 p.m. Sunday unless otherwise noted.

Unit One: Writing with Accuracy and Precision

Module 1: Course Introduction

Course Intro, Best Practices and Writing Tips

Reading: Kessler, Ch. 1-2 Assignments: A Short Description

1.1: Welcome and Introductions, Why Grammar Matters

1.2: 8 Parts of Speech, 10 Secrets to Writing Well

Module 2: Seeking Clarity

Sentence Structure & You

Reading: Kessler, Ch. 3-4 Assignments: Quiz 1, Other Grammatical Terms

2.1: Clarity & Composition

2.2: Verbs and how to Use them

Module 3: Maximum Verbiage

Nouns & Pronouns

Reading: Kessler, Ch. 5 Assignments: Quiz 2, Types of Pronouns, Rules of Agreement

3.1: Expanding your Repertoire

Module 4: Sentence Building Blocks, Part I

Verbs, Adjectives and Adverbs

Reading Kessler, Ch. 6 Assignments: Quiz 3, Quiz 4, Verb Exercise, Parts of Speech

4.1: Sentence Building Blocks, Part 1

4.2: Coming to a Subject-Verb Agreement

Module 5: Sentence Building Blocks, Part II

Punctuation & Powering Your Sentences

Reading: Kessler, Ch. 7 Assignments: Quiz 5, Quiz 6, Review So Far, Rules of Modification & Unity

5.1: Sentence Building Blocks, Part 2

5.2: Punctuation and Powering Your Sentences

Module 6: Sentence Building Blocks, Part III

Putting It All Together: Prepositions. Conjunctions. Interjections. Sentences and Syntax.

Reading: Kessler, Ch. 8 Assignments: Quiz 7, Quiz 8, Recognizing Prepositional Phrases, Conjunctions

6.1: Sentence Building Blocks, Part 3

6.2: Word Choice

Module 7: Breathing Life Into Your Words

Style, Substance & Appealing to the Senses in Writing.

Readings: Kessler, Ch. 9 Assignments: Quiz 9, Quiz 10, Grammar True & False

7.1: Common Grammar Pitfalls

7.2: Giving Power to your Words

Unit Two: Preparing for Media Writing

Module 8: Break

Module 9: Making the News

News Judgment & The Elements of Newsworthiness.

Assignments: Writing Assignment 1, Writing Assignment 2

9.1: The Elements of Newsworthiness & Where News Comes From

9.2: Anatomy of a News Article & News Judgment

Module 10: News Summary Leads

News summary leads.

Assignments: Writing Assignment 3

10.1: Writing News Summary Leads

10.2: Even More News Summary Leads

Module 11: What's Good Information?

Source Types. Information Gathering. Media Literacy.

Assignments: Writing Assignment 4

11.1: Sourcing & You

11.2: Your Media Diet

Module 12: Direct quotes

Interviewing. Introduction to quoting expert sources. News story assigned. Watch video/lecture.

Assignments: Writing Assignment 5

12.1: Introduction to Quoting Expert Sources

12.2: Final Writing Assignment Discussion

Unit Three: Practice

Module 13: News story

Making Your Story Happen

Assignments: Writing Assignment 6

13.1: Class devoted to "The Pitch"

13.2: Sources Follow-up

Module 14: Editing

Editing and rewriting news stories. Rewrite assigned. In-class editing workshops.

Editing/Rewriting Assignment

Story Return Discussion

14.1: Editing and Rewriting

Module 15: Story rewrites due.

Assignment: Writing Assignment 6 (Revision).

15.1: Final Review

15.2: Story Deadline

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.

Electronic devices

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 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.

Students may not use or submit work from a previous course, even if it is the same course being repeated, to fulfill requirements for assignments in another course. If students wish to substantially rework the original submission, or to work with the same general idea, that may be permissible upon discussion with and written approval from the professor of the current course. All written work will be checked for policy adherence via TurnItIn.com. All creative work will be checked for policy adherence by the professor, and judged against previous submissions. The only exception to this policy is the student's online portfolio and its attendant pieces (for example, the résumé and logo).

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 and strategic 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 rating originality of your ideas. Also to evaluate proper use and assignment of sources. As part of this process, you may require to submit electronic as well as hard copies of your work. Other instructions to follow may also be given. By taking this course, you agree that all assignments may undergo this review process. The assignment may be included as a source document in Turnitin.com's restricted access database. It is solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism in such documents. Assignments not submitted according to the instructor's procedures may be penalized or may not be accepted at all. *(Office of Legal Counsel, October 11, 2018)*

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 and accommodations

Students who need an accommodation based on the impact of a disability should contact the Office for Disability Resources for Students at 901-678-2880 in 110 Wilder Tower Hall to coordinate reasonable accommodations for students with documented disabilities.

Diversity and inclusivity

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

Student 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.

COVID-19 protocols for this course

COVID-19 Health and Safety Policy - Masks and Social Distancing

Faculty, staff, students and visitors are expected to monitor current health and safety measure requirements posted to our website and shared through other official communication channels including, but not limited to University email. Definitions related to those requirements and

enforcement mechanisms appear in the [COVID-19 Health and Safety Policy \(GE2040\)](#). Please be reminded that the University currently requires that all persons, regardless of vaccination status, wear masks indoors and in places where appropriate social distancing is not possible.

Classroom experiences from recent semesters have shown that the campus community generally understands and complies voluntarily with the mask requirement. The policy does permit faculty members to take action for non-compliance of mask use. Additionally, if students have concerns about faculty or staff mask use, contact Human Resources at hr@memphis.edu or 901.678.3573. Faculty who are delivering on-campus instruction may remove their face mask to teach, provided they are located within a delineated teaching area that is no less than 6 feet from students.

Student Health

Students who are experiencing symptoms such as sneezing, coughing or a higher than normal temperature should inform me by email so they can be excused from class and should stay home. Students should contact their health care provider or the Student Health Center at <https://www.memphis.edu/health/>.

Students who have a positive COVID-19 test should contact the Dean of Students at deanofstudents@memphis.edu or 901.678.2187.

Testing & Notification

The University will continue to provide testing for the entire campus community. The details regarding test availability and locations can be found [here](#). Do not come to campus if you are experiencing symptoms, are in isolation or quarantine due to positive test results or exposure, pending test results, or have reason to believe you have come in contact with the virus.

Student Resources

Students who need additional resources can contact the Dean of Students Office at <https://www.memphis.edu/deanofstudents/crisis/index.php>.