

# Media Writing I

JRSM 1750-M51

Spring 2025, 2<sup>nd</sup> POT

Virtual/Asynchronous

UofM Global

## Prof. Dana Albright

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**Office Hours:** Virtual, by appointment

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## COURSE REQUIREMENTS

### Catalog description

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

### Prerequisites

None

### Textbooks, Software and Required Materials

Miller, T. I., & Kessler, L. (2016). *When words collide: A Media Writer's Guide to grammar and style*. Cengage Learning.

Associated Press Stylebook, 56th edition or online access at <https://www.apstylebook.com>

### 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 will 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 online learning home page: <http://memphis.instructure.com>
2. Log in using your University of Memphis username and password.
3. In the published 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 at [dpaisley@memphis.edu](mailto:dpaisley@memphis.edu).
- 5.

## 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%

## Grading system:

A: Final drafts publishable in a reputable newspaper or magazine

B: Final drafts publishable with minor editing

C: Final drafts publishable with editing/revision

D: Final drafts not publishable

F: Failure to complete assignments, meet deadlines

Additionally, instructors grade story assignments in Track Changes — the editing component of Word — to encourage effective feedback and learning. All students are responsible for learning how to use this software, as well as how to navigate course materials on Canvas. You can find tutorials in the “Getting Started” link for this class

## Grade Distribution:

Feature stories & assignments: 80%

Classroom discussion/participation: 15%

Online portfolio: 5%

## AI-assisted writing and ChatGPT use

ChatGPT and similar AI tools, though useful in many contexts, are inappropriate for use in this course. An important outcome of this course is to strengthen your own abilities as a thinker and writer. That is only possible when you do your own work. You may not submit work that is written wholly or partially by an AI tool. Assignment submissions may be run through AI detection software. If your submission appears to have been written using AI, you may either receive a failing grade or be asked to resubmit the assignment.

## 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.

You must take the time to read the posted story examples as well as take the time to do independent, unassigned reading 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.

None of the assignments should be particularly difficult, but waiting until the last minute to get started on 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 accept late work, except for extenuating circumstances. Any revised deadline must be approved by me prior to posted deadlines.

**TECHNICAL SUPPORT:** Computers and network access can be finicky. However, tech problems are not an acceptable reason for missing deadlines. As a University of Memphis student, you are entitled to help from the IT helpdesk. It is in your best interest to call the helpdesk as soon as you are aware of the problem. 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](http://umhelpdesk.memphis.edu)) to open a service ticket.

## COURSE SCHEDULE

### Unit One: Writing with Accuracy and Precision

#### *Week 1, Mar. 17: Course Introduction*

Course Intro, Best Practices and Writing Tips

Reading: Kessler, Ch. 1-2

Sentence Structure & You

Reading: Kessler, Ch. 3-4

1.1: Welcome and Introductions, Why Grammar Matters

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

2.1: Clarity & Composition

2.2: Verbs and how to Use them

#### *Week 2, Mar. 24: Maximum Verbiage; Sentence Building Blocks, Part I*

Nouns & Pronouns

Reading: Kessler, Ch. 5

Verbs, Adjectives and Adverbs

Reading Kessler, Ch. 6

3.1: Expanding your Repertoire

4.1: Sentence Building Blocks, Part 1

4.2: Coming to a Subject-Verb Agreement

#### *Week 3, Mar. 31: Sentence Building Blocks, Parts II and III*

Punctuation & Powering Your Sentences

Reading: Kessler, Ch. 7-9

5.1: Sentence Building Blocks, Part 2

5.2: Punctuation and Powering Your Sentences

6.1: Sentence Building Blocks, Part 3

6.2: Word Choice Style, Substance & Appealing to the Senses in Writing.

7.1: Common Grammar Pitfalls

7.2: Giving Power to your Words

### Unit Two: Preparing for Media Writing

#### *Week 4, April 7: Making the News*

News Judgment & The Elements of Newsworthiness; News Summary Leads

9.1: The Elements of Newsworthiness & Where News Comes From

9.2: Anatomy of a News Article & News Judgment

10.1: Writing News Summary Leads

10.2: Even More News Summary Leads

*Week 5, Apr. 14: What's Good Information; Direct Quotes; Your Story*

Source Types. Information Gathering. Media Literacy; Interviewing. Introduction to quoting expert sources.

News story assigned.

11.1: Sourcing & You

11.2: Your Media Diet

12.1: Introduction to Quoting Expert Sources

12.2: Final Writing Assignment Discussion

13.1: The Pitch

13.2: Sources Follow-up

*Week 6, Apr. 21: Editing*

Interviewing and Writing

14.1: Monitoring progress

Editing and rewriting news stories. Rewrite assigned.

15.1: Editing and Rewriting

15.2: Story Return Discussion

*Final Week, Apr. 28: Editing, continued*

16.1: Final Review

16.2: Story Deadline

*News Story Due*

Deadline: 11:59 p.m. Wednesday, May 7

*Note: The semester ends Wednesday, April 30; however, I am giving students until May 7 to turn in the final story. This deadline is firm and cannot be extended for any reason absent a letter from the Dean of Students and with the approval of the department chair. I must have adequate time to read and grade your story before final grades are due.*