

## **Advanced Media Writing**

JOUR 7015-001, M50

Fall 2015

5:30-8:30 p.m. W

MJ208 and online

Dr. Roxane Coche

Office: MJ328

Office Hours: T-TH, 11:45-12:30; W, 2-3:30; and by appointment

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### **COURSE REQUIREMENTS**

**CATALOG/COURSE DESCRIPTION:** Designed to help students become more precise as well as versatile writers by diagnosing their writing, polishing their grammar and editing skills, and teaching them to write with clarity, cohesiveness, and conciseness.

**PREREQUISITE:** None

#### **OBJECTIVES:**

During the semester, you will build on skills learned in previous courses to:

1. Deepen your understanding of journalistic ethics;
2. Enhance your capacity to judge the newsworthiness of events and ideas;
3. Improve your analysis abilities when reading news and feature stories;
4. Hone key skills, such as gathering, assessing and developing rapport with sources;
5. Develop your skills of verification and fact-checking;
6. Strengthen your competence in writing clear, concise, accurate and interesting news stories;
7. Produce stories based on information obtained from primary sources;
8. Work through and hone your problem-solving skills;
9. Gain practical experience in advanced and specialized news coverage.

#### **TEXTBOOKS:**

##### **Required:**

The *Glamour of Grammar: A Guide to the Magic and Mystery of Practical English*, by Roy Peter Clark (Little, Brown & Company, 2010); *The Elements of Style*, Strunk & White, (various editions, all good); Various editions of The Commercial Appeal, The New York Times or Wall Street Journal, The New Yorker, specialty publications and non-fiction narratives as assigned (most available online).

##### **Recommended:**

*On Writing Well*, by William Zinsser (Harper, 1998); *Eats, Shoots & Leaves* by Lynn Truss (Gotham, 2004); *Sin and Syntax* by Constance Hale (Broadway, 1999).

**FLIPPED CLASSROOM:** This course is mainly experience-based. You are expected to do all assigned readings at home and it will be assumed that you have. We will discuss this material and I will of course answer any question you might have, but most of our class time will be spent writing, doing exercises and critiquing each other's work so that you get as much experience as possible.

## **GRADING:**

Your course grade is based on your involvement and participation in the course, six stories written during the semester, a final exam and a semester-long team project. Detailed descriptions of those are below. Final grades will be calculated as follows:

Involvement and participation	15%
Stories	30%
Final Exam	20%
Project (using Print, Web and Video)	35%

NOTE: Evaluation/grading of writing assignments will be weighted toward individual progress and improvement.

### Involvement and Participation (15%)

Class attendance is mandatory in the Department of Journalism. 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.

To allow for illness and other unforeseeable misfortunes, you are permitted two absences in the semester. If you must miss class, it is your responsibility to get in touch with me and/or your peers to ask about course content and possible assignments. Any lateness of more than 5 minutes counts as half an absence. From the third absence on, I will deduct 10 points for each class you miss from your involvement and participation grade (5 points if you’re late).

You may be assigned a failing grade for the semester for nonattendance, or habitual late arrival.

Furthermore, my role is to efficiently guide the class throughout the semester, but it is your responsibility, as a class, to bring all projects to fruition. This course will be successful only if all of you participate. Thus, part of your overall grade will be determined by your active involvement in class, group activities and discussions. This includes online activities.

Each of you will have to write and post online a 600-word summary of the main news of a given time period. A schedule will be agreed upon in the beginning of the semester to decide who is in charge of the summary at what time. All of you should respond to these summaries in order to create a class discussion about current news.

### Stories (30%)

You have 6 assignments during the semester:

1. News story due September 7
2. News analysis story due September 21
3. Profile due October 5
4. Feature story due October 21
5. Opinion story due November 4
6. Story with numbers due November 18

Stories will be assessed based on the following criteria:

- Depth and accuracy of reporting;
- Strength of your lede, nut graph, overall story structure and AP Style;
- Brevity of your writing (don’t use four words when you can use only one);
- Clarity of your writing;

- Strength of your multimedia components;
- Meeting deadlines;
- Thoroughness of your analysis.

Note: Errors of fact will lower the grade for each story by 4 points each with the exception of proper names, which will cost 10 points **each** time they appear incorrect in a story. This deduction is not an arbitrary punishment. Such errors go to the heart of credibility for you and your organization. Errors can also have serious legal ramifications, such as libel suits.

### Final Exam (20%)

Each of you will be given a story to cover with a strict (short) deadline to turn it in. The exam will be graded based on the same criteria as the six stories you will write during the semester.

### Project (30%)

You will team up for a semester-long multimedia journalism project. You and your partner(s) will choose a timely topic to report on throughout the semester. You will have to build an audience (don't hesitate to use social media) and update it at least once a week. What follows are the minimum requirements for this final project. Be inventive, be creative, don't limit yourself to these guidelines. You're journalists. Report on the topic to the best of your ability and with all the tools at your disposal!

You are welcome to use some of your homework toward this project, but be aware that homework assignments are individual while you have (a) partner(s) for this project.

*By Wednesday, September 16 at the end of class [Project 1]:*

- Decide on a topic
- Set up a website with at least two pages:
  - About / Contact page
  - Presentation of topic
- Email me a link to the website by 9:30 p.m.

*By Wednesday, September 30 at the end of class [Project 2]:*

- Start building an audience for your website. Set up social media accounts.
- Email me when the website is updated and ready

*By Tuesday, November 24 at 8 p.m. [Final Project]:*

- Have at least 12 stories overall including
  - At least one audio story
  - At least one photo slideshow (may be on a different page)
  - At least one video reportage
  - At least 2 story packages that integrate text and visuals and/or sound
- Email me when the website is updated and ready

### **TENTATIVE TIMETABLE:**

Note: What follows is a tentative schedule. The syllabus is a general plan for the course; the instructor reserves the right to make changes as the semester progresses. If there are any changes, you will of course be notified in a timely manner.

### **Week 1, August 26**

On the Agenda: Course Introduction, Syllabus Overview, writing exercise (not graded)

**Week 2, September 2**

On the Agenda: Discuss assigned readings + In-Depth Newswriting and Reporting: the layers of reporting, researching and writing depth and analysis pieces, working with and interviewing sources, etc. + Writing exercises

Assignment: Read Part 1 of textbook

**Week 3, September 9**

On the Agenda: Discuss assigned readings + Review/critique news stories 1 + Project discussion

Assignment: Read Part 2 of textbook, News story due Monday, September 7 at noon.

**Week 4, September 16**

On the Agenda: Discuss assigned readings + Millennials for Memphis Mayoral Debate at Rose Theatre

Assignment: Read Part 3 of textbook.

**Week 5, September 23**

On the Agenda: Discuss assigned readings + Review/critique news stories 2 + Profile Writing: Looking for a newsworthy or otherwise unique or interesting profile subject, keeping your objectivity, finding the "truth" about your subject (+ Project if time allows)

Assignment: Read Part 4 of textbook, News analysis story due Monday, September 21 at noon.

**Week 6, September 30**

On the Agenda: Discuss assigned readings + Profile Writing, cont. + Project

Assignment: Read Part 5 of textbook.

**Week 7, October 7**

On the Agenda: The importance of feature writing, finding your feature peg, experimenting with alternative forms of reporting and writing + Review/critique profiles + Project

Assignment: Online readings, Profile story due Monday, October 5 at noon.

**Week 8, October 14**

On the Agenda: Feature writing, cont. + Project

Assignment: Online readings

**Week 9, October 21**

On the Agenda: Feature writing, cont. + Project

Assignment: Online readings, Feature story due at the end of class.

**Week 10, October 28**

On the Agenda: Review/critique news stories + The role of opinion writing, research and reporting as the backbone of good opinion writing, finding your "editorial voice." + Project

Assignment: Online readings

**Week 11, November 4**

On the Agenda: Opinion writing, cont. + Project

Assignment: Online readings, Opinion story due at the end of class.

**Week 12, November 11**

On the Agenda: Covering Demographics and Stories With Numbers + Project

Assignment: Online readings

**Week 13, November 18**

On the Agenda: Covering Demographics and Stories With Numbers, cont.+ Project  
Assignment: Online readings, Story with numbers due at the end of class.

**Project due on Tuesday, November 24 at 8 p.m.**

**Week 14, November 25 – NO CLASS – Thanksgiving break**

**Week 15, December 2**

On the Agenda: Review of semester + Review/critique Projects  
Assignment: Final exam will be personalized for each student with a range of dates available.

**DEPARTMENT POLICIES****PORTFOLIO REQUIREMENT:**

All Department of Journalism undergraduate students are required to develop and maintain an active portfolio of their work. Students are to begin the portfolio in JOUR 2121 and contribute to it during every skills course thereafter. The portfolio should contain samples of the student's work from courses and/or professional experience and should develop as the student builds skills. Portfolios will undergo a final review while students are enrolled in the capstone course for their concentrations.

**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 <http://iam.memphis.edu> 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 to be used during class or to complete class assignments. Others do not allow them. Your instructor will set the policy for her/her specific class.

**ATTENDANCE:**

Class attendance is mandatory in the Department of Journalism. You may be assigned a failing grade for the semester for nonattendance, or habitual late arrival. Students are permitted three total unexcused absences without penalty. After three absences, the student's final grade will be deducted one letter grade for each absence. After seven unexcused absences, the student will fail the course. Absences for illness and other catastrophic emergencies, such as a death in the family, must be documented (e.g. doctor's note or obituary) to be excused from the total absence count. Students with excessive unexcused absences are encouraged to withdraw from the course prior to the drop deadline.

**DEADLINES:**

All deadlines are firm. This is journalism and mass communications. Assignments turned in late will NOT be graded. Late work is not accepted unless prior arrangements have been made with the instructor. Students are NOT permitted to make up assignments, quizzes, tests, etc. that occurred during an unexcused absence. Students who will miss class and/or a deadline because of an excused absence are expected to notify the instructor immediately upon knowing the absence

will occur; exceptions will be made for reasonable circumstances. Students who are absent during the final exam are not permitted to make up the exam and will earn a grade of 0, which might result in failure of the course.

### **ACADEMIC INTEGRITY:**

In addition to university-wide policies stated in the Code of Student Rights and Responsibilities, the Department of Journalism considers making up quotes from sources, turning in substantially the same assignment for credit in two different courses, a student receiving any assistance from others for work assigned to be done on his/her own, and violations of copyright law as acts of academic dishonesty punishable to the degree determined appropriate by the course instructor and department chair. Penalties might include grade reductions or dismissal of the student from the university.

“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)

### **Intellectual property and copyright guidelines**

1. Ideas cannot be copyrighted, but the way they are described can.
2. Anything set down in a tangible form, i.e., written, is by law copyrighted.
3. If, in a paraphrase, your work is “substantially similar” to a copyrighted work, you are guilty of copyright infringement.
4. A citation indicates where you got material. However, that portion you do not show as a direct quote must be “substantially original” to you. In other words, you can’t just paste in something from another’s work, put a citation at the bottom and call it your own. You need a full rewrite in your own words and syntax so the unquoted material is “substantially original” to you.

**Plagiarism: From UM Student Handbook:** The term “plagiarism” includes, but is not limited to, the use, by paraphrase or direct quotation, of the published or unpublished work of another person without full or clear acknowledgement. It also includes the unacknowledged use of materials prepared by another person or agency engaged in the selling of term papers or other academic materials.

### **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.

**DISABILITY:**

Any student who feels s/he may need an accommodation based on the impact of a disability should contact me privately to discuss your specific needs. Please contact the Office for Disability Services at 901-678-2880 in 110 Wilder Tower 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:**

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.

**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.