

**Precision Language**

JOUR 1750-M50

Spring 2016

Instructor: Darrin M. Devault, M.A.

Office: Meeman Journalism Building, Room 332

Office Hours: By appointment

Office Phone: (901) 678-2405; Cell Phone: (901) 569-6353

Email: darrin.devault@memphis.edu

Twitter: @DarrinDevault

**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:**

- Arnold, G.T. (2013). *Media Writers Handbook 6th ed.* New York: McGraw Hill. ISBN: 978-0-07-351200-6
- *Associated Press Stylebook*. 2013 Edition. ISBN: 978-0-917360-57-2

**CLASSROOM FORMAT:**

This course teaches the basic skills of writing and grammar. It is delivered online in an asynchronous format.

**COURSE WEBSITE ADDRESS: (The course page will be available January 19, 2016, to May 8, 2016.)**

1. Go to the University of Memphis home page: <http://www.memphis.edu>
2. Click on the "MyMemphis" link at the bottom of the left column menu.
3. Log in using your University of Memphis username and password.
4. Click on the "eCampus Resources" tab.
5. In the center column of the page, click on the blue UofM eCourseware link
6. Down on that page, in the Spring 2016 course list available to you, click on the link for JOUR 1750 - M50 to enter your course and read the instructions on the welcoming page.

**COURSE REQUIREMENTS:**

1. Weekly exercises to be completed via eCourseware.
2. Several writing assignments
3. Three exams
4. Final exam

**GRADING:**

**A** = 900-1,000 points

**B** = 800-899 points

**C** = 700-799 points

**D** = 600-699 points

**F** = 599 and fewer points

| <b>Assignment</b>   | <b>% of Final Grade</b> |
|---------------------|-------------------------|
| Weekly exercises    | 25%                     |
| Writing assignments | 25%                     |
| Exams               | 30%                     |
| Final Exam          | 20%                     |

**OTHER ISSUES:**

This course is essential to your success in the Department of Journalism. 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: January 19-24**

Course Introduction.

25 Ways to Improve Your Writing Immediately.

Exercise #1

Assigned Reading: Arnold, Chapter 1

**Week 2: January 25-31**

Are These Distinctions Worth Making?

Library Research Skills.

Exercise #2

Assigned Reading: Arnold, Chapter 2

**Week 3: February 1-7**

Language Lapses.

Internet Research Skills.

Exercise #3

Assigned Reading: Arnold, Chapter 3

**Week 4: February 8-14**

It's Nobody's Guess.

The Trouble with "Only."

One Potato Two Potatoes.

Exercise #4

Assigned Reading: Arnold, Chapters 4-6

**Week 5: February 15-21**

Excising the Excessive.

"I Don't Sound Like a Vice President."

Interviewing.

Exercise #5

Assigned Reading: Arnold, Chapters 7-8

**Week 6: February 22-28**

Nouns. Pronouns. Agreement.

Exercise #6

Assigned Reading: Arnold, Chapters 9-11

Exam #1

**Week 7: February 29 – March 6**

Verbs and Verbals.

Subject-Verb Agreement.

Exercise #7

Assigned Reading: Arnold, Chapters 12-13

**Week 8: March 7-13**

**Spring Break**

**Week 9: March 14-20**

Adjectives. Adverbs. Comparison.

Exercise #8

Assigned Reading: Arnold, Chapters 14-16

**Week 10: March 21-27**

Prepositions. Conjunctions. Interjections.

Exercise #9

Assigned Reading: Arnold, Chapters 17-19

**Week 11: March 28 – April 3**

Sentences and Syntax.

Media Literacy.

Exercise #10

Assigned Reading: Arnold, Chapter 20

**Week 12: April 4-10**

Periods. Question Marks.

Exclamation Marks.

Assigned Reading: Arnold, Chapters 21-23

Exam #2

**Week 13: April 11-17**

Commas. Semicolons.

Colons. Dashes.

Exercise #11

Assigned Reading: Arnold, Chapter 24-26

**Week 14: April 18-24**

Parentheses and Brackets.

Slashes and Hyphens.

Apostrophes. Question Marks.

Sensitivity.

Exercise #12

Assigned Reading: Arnold, Chapters 27-31

**Week 15: April 25-27**

Exam #3

Review for Final Exam.

**Final Exam: April 29 – May 2****FIVE PILLARS FOR JOUR1750**

- *Professionalism*: Students learn the implications of accuracy in language. They explore styles and grammar used in professional media applications.
- *Writing*: JOUR 1750 addresses 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.
- *Media Literacy*: JOUR 1750 addresses media literacy by exposing students 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 JOUR1750:**

- Understand and apply the principles and laws of freedom of speech and press, for the country in which the institution that invites ACEJMC is located, as well as receive instruction in and understand the range of systems of freedom of expression around the world, including the right to dissent, to monitor and criticize power, and to assemble and petition for redress of grievances;
- Demonstrate an understanding of the history and role of professionals and institutions in shaping communications;
- 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.
- 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 FOR JOUR1750:**

*Awareness:*

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

*Understanding:*

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

*Application:*

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

**PROFESSIONAL VALUES AND COMPETENCIES FOR JOURNALISM PROGRAM:**

The Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communication requires that, irrespective of their particular specialization, all graduates should be aware of certain core values and competencies and be to

- Understand and apply the principles and laws of freedom of speech and press, for the country in which the institution that invites ACEJMC is located, as well as receive instruction in and understand the range of systems of freedom of expression around the world, including the right to dissent, to monitor and criticize power, and to assemble and petition for redress of grievances;
- Demonstrate an understanding of the history and role of professionals and institutions in shaping communications;
- 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.

- Understand concepts and apply theories in the use and presentation of images and information;
- 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;
- Apply basic numerical and statistical concepts;
- Apply tools and technologies appropriate for the communications professions in which they work.

#### **ASSESSMENT OF STUDENT LEARNING FOR JOURNALISM PROGRAM:**

The Council seeks to promote student learning and encourages experimentation and innovation. Assessment is a system of evaluation of student learning at the course or unit level (as opposed to grading at the individual level). Three criteria should guide assessment of student learning:

- *Awareness*: familiarity with specific information, including facts, concepts, theories, laws and regulations, processes and effects.
- *Understanding*: assimilation and comprehension of information, concepts, theories and ideas.
- *Application*: competence in relating and applying skills, information, concepts, theories and ideas to the accomplishment of tasks.

### **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 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.