

## **Media Writing**

JOUR 2121-001

Spring 2017

Tuesday and Thursday 1-3:15 p.m.

Meeman Journalism Building Room 206

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## **COURSE REQUIREMENTS**

### **CATALOG DESCRIPTION:**

Basic instruction in journalistic forms and AP style; information gathering and composition of news stories; media literacy. One lecture hour, four laboratory hours per week.

### **PREREQUISITE:**

JOUR 1750

### **TEXTBOOKS:**

#### ***Required***

- Tim Harrower, *Inside Reporting* 3rd ed. (McGraw Hill, 2010) ISBN 978-0-07-337891-6
- *The Associated Press Stylebook 2016* ISBN 978-0-917360-63-3

#### ***Recommended***

- Lauren Kessler and Duncan McDonald, *When Words Collide: A Media Writer's Guide to Grammar and Style* (Thomson and Wadsworth, 2004) ISBN 0-534-56206-X

### **CLASSROOM FORMAT:**

This is a writing course. Consequently, students will write every week and receive regular feedback and coaching on their work. The class will consist of both lecture and laboratory time to be determined by instructors.

### **COURSE REQUIREMENTS:**

- Writing assignments will be completed both inside and outside the classroom. During the semester, each student will complete three writing assignments written outside of class: (1) an advance story with at least two interviews; (2) a campus event with at least three interviews; and (3) a citywide event or lecture story with expert interviews and a data source. All outside stories also will be rewritten. **Rewrites that do not include the additional reporting discussed in story editing notes will receive lower grades than the original stories.**
- Assignments must have a story slug, date and byline and be filed in a word document that is double spaced with indented paragraphs in 11 pt. Verdana type.

Do not put extra space between paragraphs. **If assignments do not follow this format, they will not be graded.**

- Media writing requires knowledge of Associated Press style. Therefore, all writing assignments for 2121 will be written in correct AP style, and all students will complete quizzes on basic AP style during the semester. Quiz schedules will be determined by instructors.
- Students will complete online portfolios using wordpress.com to showcase their work, to begin building a professional online presence and to facilitate future work and internship placement. The portfolios will include clips, design work, resumes and social media contacts.
- Students must stay informed about the news. They will, at a minimum, read The Daily Helmsman and The Commercial Appeal every day in order to be prepared for weekly current events quizzes. Free newspapers are located in boxes across campus.
- Students will complete a mid-term and a final exam. The mid-term will cover such things as leads, attribution and quotes. The final will include short stories written in class, along with AP style.
- All 2121 students also will take a writing diagnostic test at the beginning and the end of the semester. The initial test scores will not impact course grades, but will be used as part of a department assessment of student achievement. The re-test will count as a quiz grade.

#### **GRADING:**

- Lab assignments, homework, news quizzes and AP style quizzes): 50 percent (Story assignments will be weighted more heavily than quizzes and homework.)
- Three outside story assignments: 30 percent
- Online portfolio: 5 percent
- Mid-term exam: 5 percent
- Final exam: 10 percent

#### **OTHER ISSUES:**

- Media writing is a practical, hands-on course that teaches you to think and write as professionals. Consequently, regular attendance is vital. **When you miss a lab you cannot make up the work regardless of the reason.** Please do not email the instructor to ask what work was covered during your absence. Instead, check with a classmate. Remember: The work you do in class is worth 50 percent (that's half!) of your course grade.
- Meeting deadlines is essential for media professionals, so story deadlines are firm. **Late stories will not be accepted, except for medical emergencies with verification.** (A sinus infection is not a medical emergency.) Grammar, spelling, punctuation and AP style are crucial to your success in media writing. We will work in these areas every week, so please bring your textbooks to class as required by instructors.
- Coming to class well prepared is equally important. This means reading the assigned chapters in the textbooks and staying informed about current events. JOUR 2121 is the linchpin for a professional program in journalism, so act accordingly.

## TENTATIVE TIMETABLE

- Week One: Course Introduction*  
Jan. 16 - What is news and what are news values?  
Jan. 22 How news and media come together  
**Read Chapter 2 plus pages 88-91 (Harrower)**
- Week Two: Media Writing Basics: Accuracy, Fairness and Balance*  
Jan. 23 - **Take Writing Diagnostic Test**  
Jan. 29 Five W's and inverted pyramid  
**Current events quiz. Expect a quiz every Wednesday.**  
**Read Chapter 3, pages 35-47 (Harrower)**
- Week Three: Media Writing Basics: News summary leads*  
Jan. 30 - **Read chapters 3 and 4. Specific pages to re-read are noted below.**  
Feb. 5:
- Week Four: Media Writing Basics: AP style, quotes and attribution*  
Feb. 6 - **Read chapter 3, pages 56-63 (Harrower)**  
Feb. 12 **Read chapter 4, pages 82-85 (Harrower)**  
**Bring AP Stylebooks to class.**
- Week Five: Media Writing Basics: Story structure and nut graphs*  
Feb. 13 - **Read chapter 3, pages 48-52 (Harrower)**  
Feb. 19 **SINGLE SOURCE INTERVIEW DUE**
- Week Six: Sources, interviewing and story ideas*  
Feb. 20 - **AP Quiz No. 1/ Read chapter 4, pages 68-81 (Harrower)**  
Feb. 26: **ADVANCE STORY DUE**
- Week Seven: Media Basics review*  
Feb. 27 -  
March 5: **MID-TERM EXAM**  
**ADVANCE STORY REWRITE DUE/**
- Week Eight: Spring Break (March 6-12)*  
March 6 - No class.  
March 12: No class.
- Week Nine: Rewriting and editing*  
March 13 - **EVENT STORY DUE / Read chapter 3, page 52-28**  
March 19: **AP Quiz No. 2**
- Week 10: Developing story ideas and curiosity*  
March 20 – **Read Chapter 6, pages 116-125 (Harrower)**  
March 26: **EVENT REWRITE DUE**
- Week 11: Creating Online Portfolios*  
March 27 -  
April 2: **AP Quiz No. 3**

- Week 12: *Final stories*  
 April 3 - **EVENT/LECTURE STORY DUE**  
 April 9: **AP Quiz No. 4**
- Week 13: *Catch up Week*  
 April 10 -  
 April 16: **EVENT/LECTURE REWRITE DUE**
- Week 14: *Final Exam Review*  
 April 17 - **Retake Writing Proficiency Test**  
 April 23: Review for final/ **AP Quiz No. 5**
- Week 15: *Portfolios and final exam*  
 April 25: **Final Exam**  
 May 1: **ONLINE PORTFOLIOS DUE. Email me a link to your portfolio.**

### **FIVE PILLARS OF JOUR 2121**

- *Professionalism*: Students learn the professional skills and expectations of today's media environment by focusing on the basics: ethics, interviewing sources, writing news stories, and editing stories for accuracy and fairness. Students also have opportunities to publish stories in the campus newspaper.
- *Writing*: As the first writing course in the journalism curriculum, 2121 teaches students basic newswriting techniques. Coursework emphasizes grammar, sentence structure, AP style, leads, story organization, quotes, and attribution. Along with classroom and homework assignments, students write three outside stories: an advance story, an event or lecture story, and a news feature.
- *Multimedia*: Students learn how to use and distinguish social media as a professional tool with in-class assignments and a class Facebook page. Additionally, students build an online portfolio to showcase their professional skills, work experience, and writing samples.
- *Critical Thinking*: Students integrate the skills necessary to meet deadlines and to write accurate and professional news stories. Along with grammar and writing techniques, students learn to work independently, to develop story ideas, to interview sources, to organize information from multiple sources.
- *Media Literacy*: Students stay informed about news, newsmakers, and the business of media companies through classroom discussions, assignments, and weekly current events quizzes. Students also learn the basics of how news is written, packaged, and produced.

### **ASSESSMENT**

#### **PROFESSIONAL VALUES AND COMPETENCIES FOR JOUR 2121:**

- Think critically, creatively and independently.
- Write correctly and clearly in forms and styles appropriate for the communications professions, audiences and purposes they serve.

## **HOW PROFESSIONAL VALUES AND COMPETENCIES WILL BE MET FOR JOUR 2121:**

### **Cognitive objectives to be mastered (ability to explain, analyze, understand, think critically):**

- Recognize the characteristics of news and newsworthiness, demonstrated through current events quizzes, lecture, and workbook exercises.
- Acquire basic information-gathering techniques, including interviewing and research, through classroom exercises and story assignments.
- Be familiar with libel and journalism ethics through classroom discussion and assignments.
- Understand the difference between fact and opinion.

### **Performance standards to be met (demonstrable skills, abilities, techniques, applied competencies):**

- Write an entry-level news story utilizing at least three sources and direct quotations.
- Write a speech or event story.
- Write a news feature.
- Use the AP Stylebook in applying basic news writing style rules to lab and outside assignments. Pass AP quizzes.
- Demonstrate an ability to write on deadline.
- Write different types of newsworthy leads.
- Take weekly current events quizzes.

## **HOW ASSESSMENT OF STUDENT LEARNING WILL BE MET FOR JOUR 2121:**

Basic media writing is designed to provide the beginning journalism major with the essential skills that are crucial to careers in journalism, public relations, and advertising. These are the abilities to gather and process information, and, above all, to write effectively. The goal is for each student to have acquired entry-level professional writing skills by the end of the semester.

### *Awareness:*

- Learn how journalism works in today's media environment

### *Understanding:*

- Understand the difference between fact and opinion;
- Appreciate the value of original journalism, of intellectual integrity;
- Recognize the qualities of newsworthiness;
- Learn the basics of news gathering;
- Study the principles of effective story telling

*Application:*

As the first training step toward a career, JOUR 2121 will require students to do the following:

- Read and analyze news stories in order to learn what constitutes news;
- Practice correct grammar, punctuation and word usage;
- Learn AP news writing style;
- Practice writing leads, nut graphs, and indirect and direct quotes;
- Develop information-gathering skills and apply them to assignments;
- Organize information into a news story;
- Keep abreast of local, national, and international news.

**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 students in the Department of Journalism and Strategic Media 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 from every course thereafter. The portfolio should contain samples of the student's work from his/her courses and/or professional experience and should develop as the student builds skills. Portfolios will undergo a final, external review while students are enrolled in the capstone course for their majors.

Students may use any type of web hosting for their portfolios, but it must have an independent and professional URL. The department requires students to use WordPress to build their portfolio sites. Students are encouraged to consider purchasing a URL and hosting if they plan to use the portfolio for a long term, but 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 life, via a common email service, such as Gmail or Yahoo.

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 Storify 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:**

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 the <http://iam.memphis.edu> website 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. Others do not. Your instructor will set the policy for her/her specific class.

**ATTENDANCE:**

Class attendance is mandatory in the Department of Journalism and Strategic Media. You may be assigned a failing grade for the semester for nonattendance, or habitual late arrival. No late work will be accepted without prior arrangements, which are acceptable to your professor. Students may not be permitted to make up any missing work unless it is for an absence due to 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). 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.

**CHEATING:**

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, or a student receiving any assistance from others for work assigned to be done on his/her own, as acts of cheating punishable to the degree determined appropriate by the course instructor and department chair. That may include grade reductions or seeking dismissal of the student from the university.

Further, as this is a journalism/mass communication 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:**

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.

**DEADLINES:**

Remember there's a reason "DEAD" makes up half the word "deadline." All deadlines are firm. This is journalism and strategic media. If you get into trouble, talk to your 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 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.

**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 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. Mass communications 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.