

Media Writing

JOUR 2121-005

Spring 2014

Tuesday, Thursday/ 5:30 p.m.-7:45 p.m. / Meeman 208

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COURSE REQUIREMENTS

CATALOGUE/COURSE DESCRIPTION:

Basic instruction in journalistic forms and style; use of computer in composition of news stories and in solution of news writing problems; laboratory writing exercises on computer; one lecture, four laboratory hours per week.

PREREQUISITE:

None

TEXTBOOKS:

Required

- Tim Harrower, *Inside Reporting* 3rd ed. (McGraw Hill, 2010) ISBN 978-0-07-337891-6 (Please keep this book if you plan to take reporting.)
- *The Associated Press Stylebook* (Perseus, 2012) ISBN 0-738-2074-03
- Joe Hayden, *The Little Grammar Book: First Aid for Writers* (Marion Street Press, 2012) ISBN: 978-1933338996

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
- William Strunk Jr. and E.B. White, *The Elements of Style*
- A dictionary

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 the instructor.

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) a news story based on a single interview; (2) a news story covering a meeting or an event; and (3) a feature story based on multiple interviews. When story rewrites are due, the original edited story must be turned in at the same time. **Rewrites will not be graded without the original story.**
- All assignments must have a story slug, date and byline and be filed in a word document that is double spaced with indented paragraphs. 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 five quizzes on basic AP style during the semester. Quiz schedules will be determined by instructors.
- Students will complete an online portfolio as a final project to showcase their work, to begin building a professional online presence and to facilitate future course 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. 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 information discussed during the latter part of the semester, short stories written in class, along with AP style.
- All 2121 students also must take a Writing Diagnostic Test at the beginning and near 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 be graded.

GRADING:

Grading for this class will be on a point system. Stories written in class, news quizzes, outside story assignments, the second diagnostic test, completion of an online portfolio and exams are each worth between 50 and 100 points. There will be plenty of opportunities for you to build up points. But if you miss more than a couple of news quizzes and writing assignments, it will adversely impact your grade significantly.

GRADING

- A: 900 points and above
- B: 800-899 points
- C: 700-799 points
- D: 600-699 points
- F: 599 points and below

OTHER ISSUES:

Media writing is a practical, hands-on course that teaches you to think critically and write as professionals. Consequently, regular attendance is vital. **In other words, if you don't attend class, it is virtually impossible to get a good grade in this class. 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 or the class Facebook page. 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. In other words, story deadlines are firm. Late stories will not be accepted, except for medical emergencies with written 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.

Coming to class well prepared is equally important. This means reading the assigned chapters in the textbook and staying informed about current events. The lectures almost always refer to events going on in the news at the moment. If you don't read the daily newspaper, you won't know what's going on, you will be unable to participate in the discussion and you won't do well on the current events quizzes. Active participation in class discussion is a good way to earn extra credit. JOUR 2121 is the linchpin for a professional program; please act accordingly.

TENTATIVE CLASS SCHEDULE:

Thurs., 1/16: Introductions. Expectations for the semester. Review of syllabus.
Introductory writing assignment

Week 1: Course Introduction

Tues., 1/21: What is news? The story of journalism, changing media landscape Read Chapters 1 and 2

Thurs., 2/23: How newsrooms work in 2014, How a story comes together, who's who in a newsroom.

Week 2: Newswriting basics, AP Style

Tues., 1/28: AP Style, Accuracy, the Five W's Read Chapter 3

Thurs., 1/30: AP style; Writing Diagnostic test; Writing basic news leads Read Chapter 3

Week 3: Newswriting basics continued

Tues., 2/4: Refining leads, making them better

Read Chapter 3

Thurs., 2/6: AP style; Writing alternative leads Read Chapter 3

Week 4: More newswriting basics

Tues., 2/11: After the lead, the inverted pyramid

Thurs., 2/13: AP style; Writing the complete story Read Chapter 3

Week 5: Fundamentals of Reporting

Tue., 2/18: Quotes and attribution Read Chapter 4

Thu., 2/20: The nut graph and transitions Read Chapter 4

Week 6: More Reporting Basics

Tues., 2/25: Thinking, reporting critically; developing a style, plugging holes, making the story better Read Chapter 4

Thurs., 2/27: Where stories come from Read Chapter 4

FIRST OUTSIDE STORY DUE

Week 7: Even More Reporting Basics

Tues., 3/4: Finding and using sources, doing research Read Chapter 4

Thurs., 3/6: Mid-term exam **REWRITE OF OUTSIDE STORY DUE**

March 10-14: Spring Break

Week 8: Speeches and Meetings

Tues., 3/18: The fine art of a fine speech story
Thurs., 3/20: Covering meetings effectively Read Chapter 5

Week 9: Public Affairs Reporting

Tues., 3/25: Government reporting Read Chapter 5
Thurs., 3/27: Covering politics, courts, crime Read Chapter 5

Week 10: Features

Tues., 4/1: How to find feature stories Read Chapter 6
Thurs., 4/3: Narrative writing Read Chapter 6
SECOND OUTSIDE STORY DUE

Week 11: Online Reporting

Tues., 4/8: Writing on a tight deadline Read Chapter 8
Thurs., 4/10: Investigative, online journalism Read Chapter 8
REWRITE OF SECOND OUTSIDE

STORY

Week 12: Creating Online Portfolios

Tues., 4/15 Setting up your online portfolio
Thurs., 4/17: The importance of obituary writing Read Chapter 5

Week 13: Law, Ethics and Libel

Tues., 4/22: Understanding Libel, Ethical Decision Making Read Chapter 7

Thurs., 4/24: Retake writing diagnostic test

THIRD OUTSIDE STORY DUE

Week 14: Wrap-up

Tues., 4/29: What We've learned; Review for the Final
REWRITE OF THIRD OUTSIDE
STORY DUE

Thurs., 5/1: Study Day

Week 15: Final Exam To Be Announced

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:

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 field experiences
- Be familiar with libel and journalism ethics through classroom discussion and assignments
- Understand the difference between fact and opinion
- Learn the value of original content

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 story.
Write a feature story.
- Utilize the AP Stylebook in applying basic news writing style rules to lab and outside assignments.
- Demonstrate an ability to write on deadline.
- Score 80 percent or above on a Writing Proficiency Exam
- 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 lead writing;
- develop information-gathering skills and apply them to assignments;
- 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

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.

CELLPHONES:

You must turn them off during 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. 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.

"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.

DISABILITY:

Any student who feels s/he may need an accommodation based on the impact of a disability should contact the Office for Disability Services at (901) 678-2880 in 110 Wilder Tower Hall to coordinate reasonable accommodations for students with documented disabilities.