

Reporting

Journalism 3120-003

Spring 2014

Tuesdays and Thursdays (3:55 – 5:20 p.m.)

Meeman Journalism Building 212

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COURSE REQUIREMENTS

CATALOGUE/COURSE DESCRIPTION:

3120 teaches reporters how to gather news using basic journalistic tools and techniques. Writing assignments will take place inside and outside the classroom.

PREREQUISITE:

Media Writing, Journalism 2121

REQUIRED MATERIALS:

- *The Associated Press Stylebook and Briefing on Media Law*, (New York: Basic Books, 2012). Students should have this from Media Writing. No need to buy an updated version.
- Tim Harrower, *Inside Reporting* 3rd ed. (McGraw Hill, 2010) ISBN 978-0-07-337891-6 (This is the same text used in 2121, so you should have a copy.)
- A smart phone and access to a laptop or a desktop computer. Students cannot rely on using university computer labs. Journalists today need to be in constant contact with the Internet and social media, so make sure you have the devices to make that happen.
- A camera or smart phone that allows students to take digital photographs.

RECOMMENDED MATERIALS:

- Kessler, Lauren and McDonald Duncan *When Words Collide: A Media Writer's Guide to Grammar and Style* (Thomson-Wadsworth, 2001). Students may have this from Media Writing. No need to buy an updated version.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

- Assignments will be completed both in and outside the classroom, so attendance and participation are vital. Class time is also valuable for discussions about news and upcoming assignments, so please be on time. Students who arrive more than 15 minutes late will be counted as absent. It is your responsibility to sign the attendance sheet if you arrive late to class.
- Here's how attendance works: I'm not interested in hearing excuses. You get **three free passes** during the semester. After you cash in the passes, missed classes are reflected in your final grade. For example, if you miss two additional classes, your final grade drops a letter grade. If you miss two more, your grade drops again.

- Be sure to join our class Facebook page, because if you miss a class, it is your responsibility to find out from a classmate what is due. Do not count on me to answer messages or emails about missed work. If you are unsure about deadlines, check the ecourseware dropbox dates.
- There are no exams in reporting, but quizzes may be given on current events, assigned readings and classroom discussions. You cannot make up quizzes, but there will be an opportunity for one substitute assignment by the end of the semester.
- You must stay informed about the news and about newsmakers. It is impossible to be a good reporter unless you are informed about local, national and international news.
- All assignments must be filed to the ecourseware drop box by midnight (11:59 p.m.) on the day they are due. **Late assignments will NOT be accepted.** It is extremely important that you recognize the importance of deadlines in news and learn to file assignments on time.
- All assignments must be written in third person in a structure that conforms to standard media writing guidelines. Assignments will be graded on content, story structure, word count, grammar, punctuation and AP style. **One point will be deducted from story grades for every mistake in AP style, spelling, punctuation and grammar, so edit your work carefully.**
- Additionally, all assignments must conform to these specifications: All stories must be double-spaced with indented paragraphs and filed in a word document that is identified with a date, a byline and a headline. **If assignments don't meet these specifications, they will not be graded and you will receive a zero.**
- And finally, all rewrites MUST be accompanied by the original edited story. **Rewrites turned in without original stories will not be graded.**

Reporting 3120 continues the skills learned in media writing with increased emphasis on developing sources and writing with more complex content. At the start of the semester, you will select a beat related to the University of Memphis and the university district. The beat will direct the stories you write.

Overall, your beat will focus on covering events, breaking news and trend stories. But in media today, reporters need to work in different ways on multiple platforms, so you will also learn how to integrate reporting with headline writing, photography and social media.

And finally, the attached course outline is a tentative (and incomplete) schedule of the work required for this class. A flexible syllabus is necessary so our class can respond to news events as they occur in real time. Deadlines for assignments will change, so please check assignment due dates regularly.

GRADING:

Story and project assignments: 65 percent

Quizzes and in-class work: 25 percent

Final in-depth story: 10 percent

TENTATIVE TIMETABLE FOR REPORTING

Week One: Course Introduction

Jan. 16: Review syllabus

Week Two: Reviewing the basics: writing, reporting and AP style

Jan. 21:

Jan. 23:

Week Three: Developing beats and sources

Jan. 28:

Jan. 30: **Professional portfolio due**

Week Four: Covering events

Feb. 4:

Feb. 6:

Week Five: Embracing social media

Feb. 11:

Feb. 13:

Week Six: Writing headlines

Feb. 18:

Feb. 20:

Week Seven: Taking photos and writing captions

Feb. 25:

Feb. 27:

Week Eight: Covering lectures

March 4:

March 5: Norm Brewer First Amendment Lecture with Geneva Overholser: 5:30 p.m.

Attendance is mandatory.

March 6: No class.

Week Nine: Spring Break (March 10-16)

March 11: No class.

March 13: No class.

Week 10: Planning a story package

March 18:

March 20:

Week 11: In-depth reporting

March 25:

March 27:

Week 12:

April 1:

April 3: **Interactive story due**

Week 13: Editing

April 8:

April 10:

Week 14: Learning from the New York Times

April 15: **Interactive story rewrite (plus final graphic package) due**

April 17:

Week 15: Catch-up week

April 22:

April 24:

Week 16: Final Projects

April 29:

ASSESSMENT

PROFESSIONAL VALUES AND COMPETENCIES FOR REPORTING:

- Understand and apply the principles and laws of freedom of speech and press, including the right to dissent, to monitor and criticize power and to assemble and petition for redress and grievances.
- 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.
- 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, 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.

HOW PROFESSIONAL VALUES AND COMPETENCIES WILL BE MET:

Cognitive Objectives To Be Mastered (Ability To Explain, Analyze, Understand, And Think Critically):

- Students will become better informed about local and world events.
- Students will improve grammar, punctuation, word usage and AP style knowledge.
- Students will learn to identify and develop multi-sourced, issue stories.
- Students will become more confident interviewers and more skilled at identifying experts for stories.
- Students will learn to background stories through various forms of research.
- Students will improve their writing skills.
- Students will learn to balance views in a story and to achieve fairness and accuracy.
- Students will learn to use multi-platform reporting tools to gather news, including video, digital photography, social media and blogs.
- Students will learn to monitor developments and cover a beat.

Performance Standards To Be Met (Demonstrable Skills, Abilities, Techniques, Applied Competencies):

- Occasional quiz on textbook content, required readings and/or current events.
- Students will learn to develop multi-source stories through the writing of individual stories.
- Students will identify and interview experts appropriate for each story.
- Students must learn to gain background through research background interviews and Internet searches.
- Students will critique the writings of other students and will critique all stories weekly with suggestions for improving.
- Students will turn in phone numbers or email addresses of all sources used for accuracy checks by the instructor.
- Students complete assignments that require them to utilize multiple media, including video etc.
- Students will be responsible for monitoring events and issues on their beat and for developing stories on the beat.
- Course will culminate in final project involving students publishing content online on a news blog.

HOW ASSESSMENT OF STUDENT LEARNING WILL BE MET FOR REPORTING:

- Students will be urged to interview sources to fulfill the watchdog role as part of covering a beat.
- Students will learn about databases they can use for statistics for stories and will complete an assignment using these databases to find specific facts and information.
- Students will post stories along with photographs and graphics online.
- Students will learn about the importance of verification, attribution and accuracy in all completed projects.
- Students will come up with their own story ideas to cover a beat.
- Students will complete numerous written assignments that will be published. They will be asked to learn the basics of audience analysis and online metrics.
- Students will complete numerous assignments requiring writing. They will submit drafts and make changes based on instructor feedback. They will present final projects to the class.
- Students will produce blogs covering a beat and utilizing video cameras, digital cameras, online blog sites, social media and other technologies vital to today's journalism.

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;
- evaluate critically 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.

CELL PHONES:

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 must 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)

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.