

# Business Writing/Reporting

JOUR 4170-001; 6710-001

Fall 2020

MW 2:20-3:45 p.m.

MJ 208 & 212 (Lab M, Lecture W on Zoom) (Zoom to begin semester)

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**Office Hours:** 9:30 a.m. to noon Tuesdays and noon to 2:30 p.m. Thursdays

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## COURSE REQUIREMENTS

### Catalog description

Introduction to business writing and reporting and to the opportunities and issues in this growing field. Focuses on covering companies, the people who work for them and the consumers of their goods and services along with issues of the economy, finance and the stock market.

### Prerequisites

JRSM 3120 or 3629 and JOUR 3526

### Textbooks, Software and Required Materials

Required:

- *Show Me the Money: Writing Business and Economic Stories for Mass Communication*, Chris Roush, 2010, Routledge Communication, second edition.
- One business related book that will be topical. It will be discussed first week of class.
- One business related film that will be topical. It will be discussed first week of class.
- *The Wall Street Journal*, Monday through Friday.

Should already have:

- *The Associated Press Style Manual*.
- *Media Writers Handbook*

### Classroom format

Class will be conducted through lecture and discussion and writing assignments done outside of class.

### Accessing the course website

1. Go to the University of Memphis eLearn home page: <http://elearn.memphis.edu>
2. Log in using your University of Memphis username and password.
3. In the Term Year course list available to you, click on the link for JOUR 4170/6170-001 to enter your course and read the instructions on the welcoming page

## Portfolio

All Department of Journalism and Strategic Media undergraduate students are required to develop and maintain an active online portfolio of their work. More information about the final review of portfolios is in the Assessment section later in the syllabus. You will need to incorporate work from this course in your online portfolio. We will take time in class for you to update your site.

## Grading

Writing assignments (7 at 20 points each)	140
Final exam	40
In-class exercises	70
Quizzes	100
Company presentation	40
Online site	40
Total	420

## GRADUATE GRADING:

Graduate students have an additional assignment along with the assignments for all other students. The assignment involves a report/analysis of a publicly traded company and its news coverage. The graduate student grade scale is:

Writing assignments (7 at 20 points each)	140
Final exam	40
In-class exercises	70
Quizzes	100
Company presentation	40
Online site	50
Company profile	50
Total	460

A	93 to 100 percent
A-	90 to 92 percent
B+	87 to 89 percent
B	84 to 86 percent
B-	80 to 83 percent
C+	77 to 79 percent
C	70 to 76 percent
D+	66 to 69 percent
D	60 to 65 percent
F	0 to 59 percent

## Assignments

### *Writing Assignments*

Students will complete six writing assignments. Some weeks the assignment is simple existing of just a few lines. Other weeks business stories will be due, and some weeks there will be a re-write of the business story due. In total, the students will complete three business stories – small

business story, personal finance story and executive interview. Each of the weekly writing assignments is worth 20 points. No late assignments will be accepted. All students will also do a presentation/analysis of the public company they choose.

**All** class writing assignments must be accompanied by one of the following multimedia components: Infographic, photograph, photo slideshow, video, audio or podcast.

### *In-class Exercises*

During class students will be given an assignment to complete one day per week. The assignment will include a short item to be written and submitted to the dropbox. Each assignment is worth 5 points. One of the early assignments will be to investigate and then choose three company stocks. The final assignment will be to determine how the stocks fared during the course. The student who makes the most money (or loses the least) gets a 5-point bonus. If a student is absent and misses an in-class exercise, there is not chance to make that up, but there will be a bonus exercise at the end of the semester.

### *Quizzes*

Students will be quizzed on readings for the week. The readings will come from the textbook, the business-related book, the business-related film, and the Wall Street Journal.

### *Online sites*

All students are required to have an online site and post their work onto the site. This is worth 50 points by the end of the semester.

## **COURSE SCHEDULE**

### *Week 1: Aug. 17, 19*

Course overview: The dynamic field of financial journalism; AP style  
Chapters 1, 2 – Why Business Reporting is Important; Building a Foundation

### *Week 2: Aug. 24, 26*

Public and private companies, what's the difference;  
Chapter 3 – The Economy and Business  
Assignment 1 – Story ideas due

### *Week 3: Aug. 31, Sept. 2*

Economic indicators and how to report on them.  
Chapter 4 – The Basics of Company Financial Reporting  
Assignment 2 – small business story due

### *Week 4: Sept. 7, 9*

The SEC and what it is all about.  
Chapter 5 – Writing Company News

### *Week 5: Sept. 14, 16*

Balance Sheet and Income Statement  
Chapter 6 – Mergers and Acquisitions

Assignment 3 – Re-write small business story due

*Week 6: Sept. 21, 23*

Earnings stories and financial ratios

Chapter 7 – Wall Street and IPOs

*Week 7: Sept. 28, 30*

Bankruptcy and relevance to economic health

Chapter 8 – The Executive Suite

Assignment 4 – personal finance story due

*Week 8: Oct. 5, 7*

Company profiles

Chapter 9 – Private and Small Companies

*Week 9: Oct. 12, 14*

Business strategy: From idea to reality

Chapter 10 – Nonprofit Organizations

Assignment 5 – re-write personal finance story due

*Week 10: Oct. 19, 21*

Business Journalism and Ethics

Chapter 11 – Business in the Courthouse

*Week 11: Oct. 26, 28*

Business Strategy: From idea to reality/IPOs

Chapter 12 – Bankruptcy Court

Assignment 6 – executive interview due

*Week 12: Nov. 2, 4*

Properties and real estate

Chapter 13 – Writing About Real Estate

*Week 13: Nov. 9, 11*

Real estate and retailing

Chapter 14 – State and Federal Regulatory Agencies

Assignment 7 – Re-write executive interview due

*Week 14: Nov. 16, 18*

Consumers and personal finance

Chapter 15 – Finding Information on the Internet

Company presentations due

*Week 15: Nov. 23*

Final exam

## ASSESSMENT AND OUTCOMES

### Five Pillars in JOUR 4170/6170

- *Critical Thinking:* Students will discuss how to find, evaluate and use news sources.
- *Media Literacy:* Students in the class will read two business related books, read business news stories and watch one business-related film.
- *Multimedia:* Students will create a multimedia element, including slideshow, video, podcast, graphic chart, map or data visualization to accompany their final projects.
- *Professionalism:* Students will discuss issues related to the ethics of reporting and conflicts of interest.
- *Writing:* Students will complete several writing projects during the course related to business coverage. The course culminates in a final in-depth reporting story that includes multiple sources and documents.

### Professional Values and Competencies in JOUR 4170/6170

- 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 current tools and technologies appropriate for the communications professions in which they work, and to understand the digital world.

### 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 through discussion, story idea brainstorming sessions and assignments.
- Use in-person and online sources to research companies, businesses and individuals.
- Complete several writing assignments that contain news about companies, businesses and people.
- Discuss and evaluate student writing in class.
- Use basic spreadsheets and databases to seek information about companies, businesses and people.

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

- Write one news article about a local company or business.
- Write one analysis of a publicly traded company.
- Write one feature story about some person involved in a local small business or large corporation.
- Write one feature story focusing on personal finances.
- Read business articles and news analysis about issues going on in business and finance.

## How assessment of student learning will be met

### *Awareness*

- Recognize the importance of knowing about business and finance.
- Recognize the people who work for companies and the consumers of their goods and services along with issues of the economy, finance and the stock market.

### *Understanding*

- Understand the basics about stocks, bonds, financial statements and economic indicators.
- Appreciate the value of the free market and its role in business and finance.
- Recognize the qualities of what is newsworthy.
- Learn how experts in the field do their work.
- Find out what opportunities exist in the field of business reporting.

### *Application*

- Read and analyze business stories from some of the top business publications in the country.
- Write news stories and business analyses in proper news style.
- Find and organize data and numbers for a news story about a company or business.
- Keep abreast of news in the business world.

## JOURNALISM AND STRATEGIC MEDIA 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. Undergraduate students are to begin the portfolio in JRSM 3900 and graduate students are to begin in JRSM 7002. Students are to contribute to it in every skills course thereafter. The portfolio should contain samples of the student's work from courses and/or professional experiences and should develop as the student builds skills. Portfolios will undergo a final, external review while students are enrolled in their capstone courses.

Students may use any type of web hosting for their portfolios, but it must have an independent and professional URL. Students may use any content management system, but students are encouraged to use WordPress, Wix or SquareSpace. Students are encouraged to consider purchasing a URL and hosting if they plan to use the portfolio for a long term, but they 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 lives, via a common email service, such as Gmail.

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 writing 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**

Students must have their UofM email accounts activated. Students using another provider, such as Google, are required to have all UofM email forwarded to that account. Students should go to the <http://iam.memphis.edu> website to implement forwarding of UofM email. Students are required to check their email daily. They are responsible for complying with any email sent to by professors or others in the University.

### **Electronic devices**

Some classes require a tablet, laptop or a smartphone. Others do not. Instructors will set the policy for their specific classes.

### **Attendance**

Class attendance is mandatory in Journalism and Strategic Media. Students may be assigned a failing grade for the semester for nonattendance or habitual late arrival. No late work will be accepted without prior arrangements with the class professor. Students may not be permitted to make up any missing work unless it is for an absence because of 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). Journalism and Strategic Media is a professional program, and students are expected to understand and comply with deadlines. Students who have some problem making it to class on time should make arrangements to correct the problem or consider taking another class. Students should consider this class as a "job" in the educational process and be on time just as they would elsewhere.

### **Course repetition**

Majors and minors who fail to earn the minimum passing grade ("C-") in a class required by their program of study in Journalism and Strategic Media more than three times will be dropped from the program.

Students may not use or submit work from a previous course, even if it is the same course being repeated, to fulfill requirements for assignments in another course. If students wish to substantially rework the original submission, or to work with the same general idea, that may be permissible upon discussion with and written approval from the professor of the current course. All written work will be checked for policy adherence via TurnItIn.com. All creative work will be checked for policy adherence by the professor, and judged against previous submissions. The only exception to this policy is the student's online portfolio and its attendant pieces (for example, the résumé and logo).

### **Academic integrity**

In addition to University-wide policies stated in the Code of Student Rights and Responsibilities, the Department of Journalism and Strategic Media considers making up quotes from sources, turning in substantially the same assignment for credit in two different courses or students receiving any assistance from others for work assigned to be done on their own, as acts of cheating punishable to the degree determined appropriate by the course instructor and department chair. Punishment may include grade reductions or seeking dismissal of the student from the University.

Further, as this is a journalism and strategic media 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 rating originality of your ideas. Also to evaluate proper use and assignment of sources. As part of this process, you may require to submit electronic as well as hard copies of your work. Other instructions to follow may also be given. By taking this course, you agree that all assignments may undergo this review process. The assignment may be included as a source document in Turnitin.com's restricted access database. It is solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism in such documents. Assignments not submitted according to the instructor's procedures may be penalized or may not be accepted at all. (*Office of Legal Counsel, October 11, 2018*)

### **Online SETEs**

Students are urged to complete the SETEs evaluation of this course. Once the instructor has posted grades, student can immediately see that grade, provided they have completed a the SETE for that class. To access evaluation forms, students should log in to MyMemphis using their UUIDs and email passwords; click on the gray "Student" tab; complete an evaluation for each course listed and hit the "Submit" button at the bottom of the form. Completing the SETE will only take a few minutes. Faculty take the evaluations very seriously and use them to improve courses and instructional quality. Student feedback is essential and is appreciated.

### **Deadlines**

All deadlines are firm. This is journalism and strategic media. Students needing an extension on an assignment must receive approval from the 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 must follow the AP Stylebook and accepted rules of grammar and punctuation. Students are responsible for learning these rules and checking their work for errors.

### **Disability and accommodations**

Students who need an accommodation based on the impact of a disability should contact the Office for Disability Resources for Students at 901-678-2880 in 110 Wilder Tower Hall to coordinate reasonable accommodations for students with documented disabilities.

### **Diversity and inclusivity**

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. Media 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.

### **Student support**

Students who are experiencing personal or academic challenges including, but not limited to food or housing issues, family needs, or other stressors, should visit the Office of Student Accountability, Outreach & Support page to learn about resources that can help: <https://www.memphis.edu/saos/sos/crisis-resources.php>. Any student who faces personal challenges including, but not limited to securing their food or housing and believes this may affect their performance in the course is urged to contact the Office of Student Accountability, Outreach & Support (901-678-2187) located in the University Center, Suite 359 for assistance. Students may also talk with course instructors about the challenges they are experiencing. Instructors may be able to assist in connecting with campus or community support.

### **COVID-19 protocols for this course**

#### **COVID-19 Health and Safety Policy - Masks and Social Distancing**

All students, faculty and staff will wear masks in all public spaces, including our classroom (lab) per the COVID-19 policy. The first time a student enters a classroom without wearing a face covering, the student will be asked to leave the class until they return a covering. Further violations will be referred to the Office of Student Accountability. Students who repeatedly or flagrantly violate these community expectations may be referred for discipline under the Student Code and, if appropriate, immediately removed from campus by the Dean of Students.

#### **Student Health**

Students who are experiencing symptoms such as sneezing, coughing or a higher than normal temperature should inform me by email so they can be excused from class and should stay home. Students should contact their health care provider or the Student Health Center at <https://www.memphis.edu/health/>.

Students who have a positive COVID-19 test should contact the Dean of Students at [deanofstudents@memphis.edu](mailto:deanofstudents@memphis.edu).

#### **Student Accommodations**

If and when we return to class, students seeking to remain remote for health or other serious reasons should discuss their options with me. Students with accessibility issues or with other learning accommodation needs due to a disability should contact Disability Resources for Students (DRS) to submit an official request for course accommodations. Contact DRS at 901.678.2880 or at [drs@memphis.edu](mailto:drs@memphis.edu). (<https://www.memphis.edu/drs/index.php>)

#### **Student Resources**

Students who need additional resources can contact the Dean of Students Office at <https://www.memphis.edu/deanofstudents/crisis/index.php>.

