

# Media Writing/Editing

JRSM 7000-001 and M50

Fall 2020

Class meeting: Mondays, 5:30-8:30, on the World Wide Web via Zoom and when able in Meeman 202

## Thomas J. Hrach

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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

Information gathering, writing and editing skills necessary for any field within journalism and mass communication through lectures, discussions and exercises that meld theory to technique; both laboratory writing and field assignments.

### Prerequisites

None

### Textbooks, Software and Required Materials

The Associated Press Stylebook (any edition will suffice but the later the better)

George T. Arnold, The Media Writer's Handbook (any edition will suffice but the 5<sup>th</sup> edition is best).

### Classroom format

Lecture, discussion and writing during class and through outside writing, as well as quizzes on AP Style and current events.

### 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 JRSM 7000 001 to enter your course and read the instructions on the welcoming page

### Course Requirements

Students will be evaluated on these criteria:

- Weekly writing assignments. Each student will complete a weekly writing assignment, some of which will be news articles. The articles should be newsworthy, well written and in the proper style. They should be placed in the course Web site's dropbox. Assignments will be reduced one letter grade for each class period it is late.

Writing Assignments

- 1 – A news story about yourself. Due Aug. 24
- 2 – Story ideas. Due Aug. 31
- 3 – General news story. Due Sept. 7.
- 4 – Re-write of general news story. Due Sept. 14.
- 6 – Q-A interview. Due Sept. 21.
- 7 – Re-write Q-A interview. Due Sept. 28
- 7 – Event coverage story. Due Oct. 5.
- 8 – Re-write the event story. Due Oct. 12.
- 9 – Online news story. Due Nov. Oct. 19.
- 10 – Re-write online news story. Due Oct. 26.
- 11 – Feature story. Due Nov. 2.
12. Re-write feature story. Due Nov. 9
13. – Final writing assignment. Due Nov. 16
- 14 – Re-write final writing assignment. Due. Nov. 23

- AP Style-grammar quizzes. Students will take weekly quizzes on sections of the AP Stylebook. Students will know in advance what sections of the AP Style book will be covered. There will also be some general grammar stuff from the Media Writer’s Handbook and some general basic factual stuff to be corrected as well. If a student misses class the day of a quiz, it cannot be made up. There will be a bonus quiz at the end of the semester.
- Final writing assignment. The course will culminate in a final news article that combines the skills learned throughout the semester. The length of this final assignment will be longer than the previous assignments, and the topic will also be approved in advance. Assignments are reduced one letter grade for each day it is late. It is due on Dec. 7.
- Research colloquium. Students will be required to attend either online or in person one of the three research colloquiums scheduled for the semester and complete a report on the topic. The colloquiums are at noon Aug. 28, Sept. 25 and Oct. 23. There will be extra credit for people who come more than once.
- Online portfolio sites. Students are required to have an online site that catalogs their work in the course and also includes a resume, about me page, social media and contact information. Assignments will be posted when completed, and the online sites must be completed by Dec. 7.
- In-class exercises: Every week students will complete an in-class exercise during the class hours.

In-class exercises:

1. AP Style
2. Plagiarism/fabrication
3. Interviewing
4. Headlines
5. Basic spreadsheet

6. Background check
7. Census reporter
8. Sort, filter data
9. Cutlines
10. Slide show
11. Google maps
12. Grammar review
13. Social media
14. Pulitzer Prize winner

## Grading

Weekly writing assignments (14 assignments at 20 points each)	280 points
AP Style Quizzes (8 quizzes at 20 points each)	160 points
Research colloquium	20 points
Online portfolio site	30 points
In-class exercises	75 points
Discussion	35 points
Total	600 points

### GRADING SCALE:

- A – 93 to 100 percent
- A- - 90 to 92 percent
- B+ - 87 to 89 percent
- B – 80 to 86 percent
- C+ - 77 to 79 percent
- C - 73 to 76 percent
- D+ - 77 to 79 percent
- D – 70 to 76 percent
- F – 0 to 69 percent

## Other issues

All students, both online and classroom, are to check your U of M email daily because the professor will sometimes communicate with you this way. Feel free to contact the professor by email any time day or night with questions or comments.

## COURSE SCHEDULE

### *Week 1: Aug. 17*

Introduction to writing news; news judgment and how to define newsworthiness.  
Discussion of AP Style

*Week 2: Aug. 24*

Writing news leads; quotes and attribution  
Discussion of plagiarism and fabrication

*Week 3: Aug. 31*

Advance stories  
Discussion on interviewing

*Week 4: Sept. 7*

No class this day due to Labor Day

*Week 5: Sept. 14*

How to cover events; interview techniques  
Discussion of headlines and how to write them.

*Week 6: Sept. 21*

Public affairs and government reporting; graded advance story returned  
Discussion of using a spreadsheet to report news

*Week 7: Sept. 28*

Covering events  
Discussion of doing a background check on a person

*Week 8: Oct. 5*

How to write feature stories  
Discussion on how to use Census reporter

*Week 9: Oct. 12*

Freelance writing methods; graded news story returned.  
Discussion on how to sort, filter data

*Week 10: Oct. 19*

Writing public relations news release and writing for broadcast  
Discussion on writing cultines

*Week 11: Oct. 26*

Your final story ideas must be brought to class for discussion and approval; graded feature story returned.  
Discussion doing a slide show

*Week 12: Nov. 2*

Libel, copyright laws, ethical issues; graded PR release or broadcast story returned  
Discussion on using Google maps

*Week 13: Nov. 9*

Discussion on using social media

*Week 14: Nov. 16*

Discussion on grammar review

*Week 15: Nov. 23*

Wrap-up and final thoughts.

Discussion on Pulitzer Prize winner

## 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**

Student 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>.