

**Media Writing**  
JRSM 2121-M50  
Summer 2018

Dr. Robby Byrd  
Office: Meeman Journalism Building, Room 328  
Office Hours: By appointment only  
(901) 678-2404 (office)  
Email: [rdbyrd@memphis.edu](mailto:rdbyrd@memphis.edu)  
Twitter: @rdbyrd80

## **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 2017" ISBN 046 509 3043

#### ***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- 56206X

### **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: 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 at least three interviews and a data source. All outside stories also will be rewritten. **Rewrites must include the additional reporting discussed in story editing notes. If students do not complete additional reporting, they will receive lower grades than the original stories.**
- Online students who live in the Memphis area will be required to attend the MLK50 symposium on April 3 for an outside story assignment. Details to come.

- 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.**
- Additionally, story assignments will be graded in track changes, the editing component of Word, to encourage effective feedback and learning. All students are responsible for learning how to use track changes, as well as how to navigate course materials on ecourseware. You can find a tutorial in the “Getting Started” link for this class.
- 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 also will complete an AP Stylebook presentation during the semester.
- Students will update online portfolios built in JOUR 3900 to showcase their work and to facilitate internship placement. Portfolios will include stories, design work, resumes and social media contacts.
- Students must stay informed about the news. They will, at a minimum, read their local newspapers every day in order to be prepared for online discussions. Students also may be required to follow other news outlets online.
- Students in all sections of 2121 will complete the same mid-term and final exams. The mid-term will cover such things as leads, attribution and quotes. The final will include short stories written in class, along with short answers on news fundamentals and AP style.
- A story component of the final exam will be evaluated by outside experts as part of a department assessment of student achievement. This assessment will not impact final grades.

#### **GRADING:**

- Written lab assignments: 30 percent
- Homework, news quizzes and AP style quizzes: 20 percent
- Three outside story assignments: 25 percent
- Three outside story rewrites: 10 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.
- Meeting deadlines is essential for media professionals, so story deadlines are firm. **Late stories and assignments will not be accepted, except for medical emergencies with verification.**
- Preparing for class is equally important. This means keeping up with reading and assignments and staying informed about current events. JOUR 2121 is the linchpin for a professional program in journalism, so act accordingly.

## TENTATIVE TIMETABLE

- Week One: The Story of Journalism (June 4-10)*  
Course introduction  
Read chapter 1 (Harrower)
- Week Two: What is news? Accuracy, balance, news values, media lingo (June 11-17)*  
**Read chapter 2 plus pages 88-91 (Harrower)**
- Week Three: News summary leads and the inverted pyramid (June 18-24)*  
Read chapters 3 and 4 (Harrower)  
Specific pages to re-read each week are noted below.
- Week Four: AP style, quotes and attribution (June 25 - July 1)*  
Read chapter 3, pages 56-63 (Harrower)  
Read chapter 4, pages 82-85 (Harrower)  
**AP Style Quiz No. 1**  
**SINGLE SOURCE INTERVIEW DUE/**
- Week Five: Story structure and nut graphs (July 2-8)*  
**Read chapter 3, pages 48-52 (Harrower)**  
**ADVANCE STORY DUE**
- Week Six: Sources, interviewing and story ideas (July 9-15)*  
**AP Style Quiz No. 2**  
**Read chapter 4, pages 68-81 (Harrower)**  
**ADVANCE STORY REWRITE DUE**
- Week Seven: Media Basics review midterm exam (July 16-22)*  
**MID-TERM EXAM**  
**EVENT STORY DUE**  
**AP Quiz No. 3**
- Week Eight: Rewriting and editing (July 23-29)*  
**EVENT STORY REWRITE DUE**  
**Read chapter 3, page 52-28**  
**AP Style Quiz No. 4**
- Week Nine: Developing sources and interviewing (July 30-Aug. 5)*  
**Read Chapter 6, pages 116-125 (Harrower)**  
**EVENT/LECTURE STORY DUE**
- Week 10: Developing story ideas and covering lectures (*  
**AP Quiz No. 5**  
**EVENT/LECTURE REWRITE DUE**  
**Final Exam**  
**ONLINE PORTFOLIOS DUE**

### **FIVE PILLARS OF JRSM2121**

- *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*: Students learn 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 JRSM2121:**

- 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
- 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
- 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 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.
- Learn ramifications of news practices.
- Be knowledgeable about developments in the media industry.

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

- Write an entry-level news stories with multiple sources, including relevant data.
- Attribute sources correctly for both direct and indirect quotes.
- Write effective news summary leads and nut graphs.
- Demonstrate an ability to write on deadline.
- Practice basic five-shot sequence for photo packages.
- Write informative captions in two-sentence news format.
- Use social media for communicating and reporting.
- Use the AP Stylebook in applying basic news writing style rules to lab and outside assignments.
- Take AP style quizzes.
- Take weekly current events quizzes.

## **HOW ASSESSMENT OF STUDENT LEARNING WILL BE MET:**

*Awareness:*

- Learn how journalism works in today's media environment
- Discuss the difference between legitimate and fake news
- Recognize the role of the press in a democracy

*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:*

- 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

## **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. Undergraduate students are to begin the portfolio in JRSM 3900 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 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). 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 and Strategic Media 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 your instructor 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.