

Media Writing

JRSM 2121-501

Spring 2019

Monday/Wednesday 9:10-11:35 a.m.

Varnell-Jones 205

Tori Cliff

Office: VJ 206

Office Hours: TR 12:50-2:50 p.m. and by appointment

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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:

JRSM 1750

TEXTBOOKS:***Required***

- Tim Harrower, "Inside Reporting" 3rd ed. (McGraw Hill, 2010) ISBN 978-0-07-337891-6
- "The Associated Press Stylebook 2018" ISBN: 978-0-917360-67-1.

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

CLASSROOM FORMAT:

This is a writing course. Consequently, students write every week and receive regular feedback and coaching on their work. The class consists of both lecture and laboratory time to be determined by instructors.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

- Students complete writing assignments both inside and outside the classroom. During the semester, each student completes three stories written outside of class: an advance story with at least two interviews; (2) a campus event with at least three interviews; and (3) an event story with at least three interviews and a data source. Students also rewrite all outside stories. **Note: 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.**

- 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, professors grade story assignments 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 tutorials on ecourseware in the “Getting Started” link for this class.
- Media writing requires knowledge of Associated Press style. Therefore, students write all assignments for 2121 in correct AP style, and they complete quizzes on basic AP style during the semester. Instructors determine quiz schedules.
- Students also complete an AP Stylebook PowerPoint presentation during the semester. Instructors schedule deadlines.
- Students must stay informed about the news. They will, at a minimum, read The Jackson Sun, USA Today, and The New York Times every day in order to be prepared for weekly current events quizzes. Boxes around campus provide copies of the Sun and USA Today, and student digital subscriptions to the Times are extremely low-cost.
- Students in all sections of 2121 complete the same mid-term and final exams. The mid-term covers such skills as leads, attribution and quotes. The final includes short stories written in class, along with short answers on news fundamentals and AP style.
- Outside experts may evaluate a story component of the final exam as part of a department assessment of student achievement. This assessment does 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 students to think and write as professionals. Consequently, regular attendance is vital. **If you miss a class, you cannot make up the work regardless of the reason.** Please do not email the professor to ask what work was covered during your absence. Instead, check with a classmate or ecourseware for deadlines and assignments. Remember: Homework and the work you do in class is worth 50 percent (that’s half!) of your final course grade.

- **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 one additional class, your final grade drops a letter grade. If you miss two more classes, your grade drops again. So, if you miss six classes, your final grade drops two letters.
- Meeting deadlines is essential for media professionals, so story deadlines are firm. **Professors do not accept late stories, except for major medical emergencies with verification.** (A sinus infection is not a medical emergency.) Grammar, spelling, punctuation and AP style are crucial to your success in media writing. We work in these areas every week, so bring textbooks to class as required by professors
- Coming to class well prepared is equally important. This means reading the assigned chapters in the textbooks and staying informed about current events. JRSM 2121 is the linchpin for a professional program in journalism, so act accordingly.

TENTATIVE TIMETABLE

Week One: Course Introduction

Jan. 14 What is news?

Jan. 16 Accuracy, balance, news values and media lingo
Read chapter 2 plus pages 88-91 (Harrower)

Week Two: Media Writing Basics: News summary leads and the inverted pyramid

Jan. 21 MLK Day: No class.

Read chapters 3 and 4.

Specific pages to re-read are noted below.

Jan. 23 **Current events quiz. Expect a quiz every Wednesday.**

Read chapter 3, pages 36-43.

Week Three: Media Writing Basics: News summary leads, mini stories and AP style

Jan. 28 Bring AP Stylebook to class.

Jan. 30 Read chapter 3, pages 56-63 (Harrower)

SINGLE SOURCE STORY DUE

Week Four: Media Writing Basics: Quotes and attribution

Feb. 4 Read chapter 4, pages 82-85 (Harrower)

Feb. 6

Week Five: Media Writing Basics: More quotes, attribution and advance stories

Feb. 11 In-class advance story practice

Feb. 13 Take AP Quiz No. 1 (addresses)

ADVANCE STORY DUE

Week Six: Media Writing Basics: Story structure and nut graphs

Feb. 18 Read chapter 3, pages 48-51 (Harrower)

Feb. 20

Week Seven: Midterm Exam and Covering Events

Feb. 25 Read chapter 4, pages 70-81 (Harrower)

ADVANCE STORY REWRITE DUE

Take AP Quiz No. 2 (numbers)

Feb. 27 **MIDTERM EXAM**

Week Eight: Spring Break (March 4 - 10)

March 4

March 6

Week Nine: Media Writing Basics: Sources (people, expert and data) and interviewing

March 11

March 12

Norm Brewer Lecture:

Sports journalist Jemele Hill, 6 p.m. Rose Theatre

March 13 **EVENT STORY DUE** (Group)

Week 10: Interviewing

March 18 Read chapter 4, pages 68-69 (Harrower)

HUMANS OF JACKSON DUE

March 20 Take AP Quiz. No. 3 (money, time, dates)

Week 11: Clarity, conciseness, transitions

March 25 Read chapter 3, pages 52-63

March 27 **EVENT STORY REWRITE DUE**

Week 12: Catch Up Week

April 1 Film ("The Post" or "Spotlight")

April 3 Take AP Quiz No. 4 (titles and capitalization)

EVENT STORY DUE (Individual)

Week 13: Ethics and Law

April 8 Read chapter 7, pages 140-156

April 10

Week 14: Story Rewrites and Exam Review

April 15 **EVENT STORY REWRITE DUE**

April 17 Take AP Quiz No. 5 (mixed AP style)

Week 15: Final Exam

April 22 **FINAL EXAM**

April 24

April 25 Study Day

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
- Critically evaluate their own work and that of others for accuracy and fairness, clarity, appropriate style and grammatical correctness.
- 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

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.

MOBILE PHONES AND LAPTOPS:

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 the Department of 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.

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/mass 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 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:

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:

Students who 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.

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. 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.