

# Writing for Strategic Media

JRSM 7422-S50/001

Spring 2025

W 5:30 – 8:30 p.m. via Teams

## Kim Marks Malone, APR, Fellow PRSA

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**Office Hours:** Monday, 1- 4 p.m.; Tuesday, 11 a.m. – 2 p.m.; Wednesday, 1 – 4 p.m.;

Other hours by appointment

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## Catalog Description

Writing for all aspects of public relations and advertising, with a specific focus on writing for audio/visual and social media platforms, including translating one message across multiple technologies and platforms. Focus will be on writing in an active, engaging voice that aligns with the organization's mission and profile.

## Prerequisites

Graduate status

## Textbooks, Software and Required Materials

- Handley, A. (2022). *Everybody writes: Your guide to creating ridiculously good content*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Hoboken, NJ: Wiley  
ISBN 978-1-118-90555-5

Additional course readings will be available on Canvas.

## Recommended

- The Associated Press Stylebook 2024 (or earlier). New York: Basic Books

\*You can also access The AP Stylebook as an online publication or through an app. Get details about these options online at [apstylebook.com](https://apstylebook.com)

## Synchronous Class Format (S50)

- Teams is a web-based video conferencing platform. The link for the Teams meeting is posted on Canvas, as well as the class calendar invite.
- This is a graduate seminar with lectures and class discussions. Each week, we will discuss a new topic. I and/or designated classmates will be responsible for presenting the class with ideas for debate from the readings or examples from the field and critically analyzing the week's concepts. Failure to attend class or actively participate – even if all your assignments are turned in on time and done acceptably – will significantly affect your final grade. Be sure you have read the material BEFORE class and come prepared to

- discuss it.
- You need to have video turned on during class. Let me know if this is going to be an issue for you.
  - You must have Microsoft Word software. I must be able to open your work to grade it. Work submitted in a software package not noted as acceptable in this syllabus (Microsoft Word) may result in point deductions being assessed to your work.

### Accessing the course website

1. Go to the University of Memphis Canvas login page:  
<https://memphis.instructure.com>
2. Log in using your University of Memphis username and password.
3. On the Dashboard, click on the course card for Spring 2025 Writing for Strategic Media.

## COURSE ASSIGNMENTS & EXPECTATIONS

### Use of generative artificial intelligence (AI) (i.e., ChatGPT)

Certain assignments in this course may require you to use ChatGPT for specific purposes and follow specific instructions. For those assignments, you may utilize ChatGPT as directed. For all other assignments, you are not allowed to submit any work that is created, in whole or in part, by ChatGPT or any other AI tool. Assignment submissions may be checked using AI detection software. Unauthorized use of AI tools, such as ChatGPT, may result in a failing grade or a request to resubmit the assignment.

This is a general guideline for ongoing assignments. More details will be provided in class and on Canvas. All work should be turned in as a Word document via Canvas by the deadline specified in the assignment.

**Discussant, 15%.** You will each take the lead on a discussion for class one week. Some weeks, there will be two discussants. You will sign up for your week in advance. **Each discussant will write a two-page essay discussing the week's readings and (1) post it to the discussion board and (2) submit a presentation (or link to a presentation) NLT 11:59 p.m. on SUNDAY BEFORE the scheduled class.** You each must read the discussant's essay(s) and the week's readings. During the class session, the discussant(s) will lead the seminar for their topic(s).

For weeks with two discussants, you will divide the readings. Each of you will each an essay on the readings you will cover and each of you will submit a presentation (link to a presentation) for that week.

**Weekly "blog" discussion posts, 20%.** Each of you will respond to the weekly readings as a 300-word blog post. The idea is not to regurgitate the readings but to analyze them by providing insights and comments demonstrating knowledge and deep thinking about theories, methods, and concepts in the week's assigned readings. You may make connections to readings from other weeks and/or connections to something you have read about or learned in popular media or another course. The intent is for you to interact with the material in such a way as to be prepared to discuss it in class and to write out your thoughts on the ideas presented. This assignment also aims to help you develop your writing voice throughout the semester. The blog format allows maximum flexibility in finding creative, engaging, and fun ways to synthesize the readings and

develop killer content. These blog posts will be **due on SUNDAY BEFORE that week's class.**

***Note: The first discussion post will be your introductory post. It is due on Tuesday, Jan. 21.***

You will receive a prompt each week after Week 1 to guide your writing direction. Keep your discussion post handy during class to help you recall your ideas and connections throughout the discussion.

You will NOT be required to submit a discussion post the week you are the discussion leader. Your presentation/questions will take the place of the discussion post grade.

Discussion posts will be graded on (1) content – post addresses all questions asked and is appropriate in length to stimulate further discussion (300 - 400 words), clearly relates to the main topic, and includes several supporting details and/or examples; (2) contribution – post is thoughtful, analytical and original; (3) connection – you make connections between course content, readings, and personal reflection, current events, etc.; (4) mechanics – post is well-structured, logical, free of grammatical and spelling errors.

**HubSpot Academy Business Blogging Course.** You must complete the free Business Blogging Course through HubSpot Academy as part of this class. You can sign up for the free course here > <https://academy.hubspot.com/courses/blogging-training>

The course consists of five lessons and three quizzes and should take approximately three hours to complete. You must upload a screenshot of your completion certificate to earn credit.

You should complete this course and upload a screenshot of your completion certificate NLT 11:59 p.m. on Sunday, March 9.

**Cleaning Your Copy: Grammar, Style and More.** This free, self-directed course from Poynter will help you understand the basics of grammar, spelling, punctuation, and AP style. It will also help you improve your skills to create clean, error-free copy throughout the semester (and beyond). You should set aside approximately four hours to complete this online module. You can access the free course here > <https://www.poynter.org/courses/cleaning-your-copy/>

You should complete this course and upload a screenshot of your completion certificate by 11:59 p.m. on Sunday, Feb. 23.

### **Grading**

Weekly blog discussion posts	25%
Discussant	30%
Assignments	45%

A = 90% – 100%

B = 80% – 89.9%

C = 70% – 79.9%

D = 60% – 69.9%

F = Below 60%

## Other issues

**Contacting me.** The best and quickest way to contact me is via email ([ksmarks@memphis.edu](mailto:ksmarks@memphis.edu)). I will respond to your email within 24 – 48 hours. You can also visit my office hours or schedule an in-person or Teams meeting with me. If you have a problem, do not let it snowball. Contact me ASAP.

## JOURNALISM AND STRATEGIC MEDIA POLICIES

### Portfolio requirement

As an undergraduate student in the Department of Journalism and Strategic Media, you must develop and maintain an active portfolio of your work. Portfolios begin in JRSM 3900/3905. The portfolio should contain samples of coursework and/or professional experiences and should develop as you build skills. Portfolios will undergo a final external review while you are enrolled in your capstone course.

You may use any web hosting for your portfolio, but it must have an independent and professional URL. You may use any content management system but are encouraged to use WordPress, Wix, or SquareSpace. You are also encouraged to purchase a URL if you use the portfolio long-term. You must keep the portfolio active for six months following graduation from the University of Memphis.

You should have a professional email address you plan to use throughout your professional life 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
- Professional social media links (minimum LinkedIn)

You may include a blog, video reels, photograph galleries, presentations, design PDFs, audio files, or writing pieces as examples of professional work. Professional work should ultimately be tailored to the career you seek after graduation. Your portfolio should show a unique blend of work.

### Email

You must activate your UofM email account. If you use another provider, such as Google, you must forward all UofM emails to that account. Go to the [account management website](#) for information about implementing email forwarding. You are required to check your email daily.

### Electronic devices

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

## AI/Chat GPT

In Journalism & Strategic Media, artificial intelligence software, such as Chat GPT, is prohibited in some courses and required in others. Please refer to the specific guidelines for this course in the course-specific part of the syllabus.

## Attendance

Class attendance is mandatory in Journalism & Strategic Media. You may be assigned a failing grade for the semester for nonattendance or habitual tardiness.

## Course repetition

Majors and minors who fail to earn the minimum passing grade (C-) in a class required by your program of study in Journalism & Strategic Media after three attempts will be dropped from the program.

You 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. Substantially reworking the original submission or working with the same general idea may be permissible upon discussion and with written approval from the professor of the current course.

## Academic integrity

The University of Memphis expects all students to behave honestly and follow the policies stated in the Student Code of Rights and Responsibilities. For more information about the University's policy on academic integrity, visit the [Office of Student Accountability's website](#).

In addition to university-wide policies, the Department of Journalism & Strategic Media considers making up quotes from sources, turning in substantially the same assignment for credit in two different courses, or receiving any assistance from others for work assigned to be done on your own as acts of cheating and 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, you are expected to comply with copyright and intellectual property laws. You 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 your ideas' originality and evaluating the proper use and assignment of sources. All creative work may be checked for policy adherence by the professor. The only exception to this policy is your online portfolio and its attendant pieces (for example, the résumé and logo). By taking this course, you agree that all assignments may undergo this review process. The assignment may be a source document in Turnitin.com's restricted access database. It is solely to detect plagiarism in such documents. Assignments not submitted according to the instructor's procedures may be penalized or not accepted.

### Online SETEs

You are encouraged to complete the SETEs evaluation of this course. If completed, once the instructor has posted final grades, you can immediately see that grade. To access evaluation forms, log in to MyMemphis; click the “Student Pages” dropdown menu and select “My Resources” and find the SETE evaluation forms; 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 seriously and use them to improve courses and instructional quality. Your feedback is essential and is appreciated.

### Deadlines

All deadlines are firm. Because Journalism & Strategic Media is a professional program, you must understand and comply with deadlines. 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 before the due date.

You may be permitted to make up missing work if it is for an absence because of illness or other catastrophic emergency, such as a death in the family that can be documented.

### AP Style and grammar

All written work in this class must follow the AP Stylebook and accepted grammar and punctuation rules. You are responsible for learning these rules and checking your work for errors.

### Disability and accommodations

If you need accommodation based on the impact of a disability, contact Disability Resources for Students at 901-678-2880 in 110 Wilder Tower Hall to coordinate reasonable accommodations.

### Diversity and inclusivity

The Department of Journalism & Strategic Media values diversity in all its forms. These include ability, age, appearance, ethnicity, gender identity, immigration status, language, nationality, race, religion/spirituality, sex, sexuality, socio-economic status, and other personal identities and experiences. As such, students are expected to contribute to fostering an inclusive environment that respects the differences of others.

Students are expected to approach their work through a diverse lens. Creating messages that resonate with diverse audiences requires understanding various perspectives carried out through multiple platforms, such as digital and traditional media outlets.

The department seeks to foster healthy and positive classroom discussions and experiences. As such, faculty and students are expected to remain respectful and professional.

### Weather policy

Always check with local media and the University of Memphis website regarding inclement weather.

## Student support

If you are experiencing personal or academic challenges including, but not limited to, food or housing issues, family needs, or other stressors, visit the Student Outreach & Support page to learn about resources that can help:

<https://www.memphis.edu/deanofstudents/crisis/index.php> or contact the Dean of Students Office at 901-678-2187, or in person in Suite 359 in the University Center for assistance. You may also talk with course instructors about the challenges you are experiencing. Instructors can assist in connecting you with campus or community support.