

# Copywriting

STRM 3211-001

Spring 2025

Tuesday & Thursday 9:40am – 11:05am, MJ202

## Prof. Joel Nichols

Office: 312 Meeman Journalism Building

Office Hours: Tues & Thur 11am – 2:30pm or By Appointment

Email: [joel.nichols@memphis.edu](mailto:joel.nichols@memphis.edu)

## COURSE REQUIREMENTS

### Catalog description

A detailed look at copywriting as a career path. We will learn the different types of copywriters and the roles they play in marketing. The course will have a strong focus on the practice of copywriting — how to write for customers across different types of media, how to format a copy document, how to write engaging content, and how to prepare a portfolio for a professional career.

### Prerequisites

None

### Textbooks, Software and Required Materials

The Copywriter's Toolkit: The Complete Guide to Strategic Advertising Copy | ISBN: 9781405199537

### Classroom format

This class will be presented in the lecture and workshop format. Class lectures will cover different aspects of copywriting. Each week, students will be expected to have writing assignments prepared to share and critique with the class in a workshop format. At the end of the semester, students will be expected to create copy for an integrated campaign across multiple media.

### Accessing the course website

1. Go to the University of Memphis online learning home page: <http://memphis.instructure.com>
2. Log in using your University of Memphis username and password.
3. Select STRM-3211-001 Ad Copywriting Spring Term 2025

### Course Requirements

Read the required textbook prior to class, come to class on time and stay the whole time, participate in discussions, ask questions, do your assignments, and provide constructive feedback during workshop time.

### Grading

Assignment categories and points or percentage weights.

A+ = 96.5-100%; A = 92.5-96.4%; A- = 89.5-92.4%

B+ = 86.5-89.4%; B = 82.5-86.4%; B- = 79.5-82.4%  
C+ = 76.5-79.4%; C = 72.5-76.4%; C- = 69.5-72.4%  
D+ = 66.5-69.4%; D = 59.5-66.4%  
F = 0-59.4%

A combination of weekly assignments, class participation, two tests, and your final project will be used to evaluate your progress in the course. Your required class attendance has an impact on your grade, so be in class and on time. Grades are on the plus/minus system.

Extra Credit may be made available throughout the semester.

## Assignments

- This is a writing course. We will explore different styles of copywriting, but close attention to grammar and spelling is a requirement. If a style calls for incorrect grammar, you must be able to defend it.
- Your name should be at the top of the first page. You don't need a cover sheet.
- Assignments will vary in length based on the media focused on. Some may be as short as a few sentences while others will require more extensive time.
- All assignments MUST be uploaded to the course website before 5:30 p.m. on the day of class when they are due. Late work will receive an immediate 50% drop in score—assignment completion is necessary for the workshop portion of the course.
- Bring a printout of your assignment to class so you can reference it for discussion.

## COURSE SCHEDULE

*Week 1, The PERSUASIVE Word: Strategy ABCs: audience, benefits and creative briefs*

Readings: Chapters 1-2

*Week 2, The STRATEGIC Word: Strategy categories*

Readings: Chapter 2

*Week 3, The CHOSEN Word: Writing techniques*

Readings: Chapter 3

*Week 4, The STICKY Word: Headline and slogan techniques*

Readings: Chapter 4

*Week 5, The WRITTEN Word: Print*

Readings: Chapter 5

*Week 6, The SPOKEN Word: Radio*

Readings: Chapter 6

*Week 7, The ANIMATED Word: Television*

Readings: Chapter 7

*Week 8, SPRING BREAK / No Class*

*Week 9, The DELIVERED AND ABRIDGED Word: Direct mail, mobile, and small-space writing /  
THE AMBIENT AND MOVING WORD: out-of-home and transit*

Readings: Chapters 8 & 9

*Week 10, The ONLINE COMMUNAL Word: Digital dialogue, virtual community, blogging*

The ONLINE Word: Websites

Readings: Chapters 10 & 11

*Week 11, The BUZZ Word: Interactive engagement, social media, viral marketing*

Readings: Chapter 12

*Week 12, The MULTIMEDIA Word: Integrated campaigns*

Readings: Chapter 13

*Week 13, The GLOBAL Word: Multicultural and international campaigns*

Readings: Chapter 14

*Week 14, WORK ON FINAL PROJECT*

*Week 15, April 23, PRESENT FINAL PROJECT*

## **ASSESSMENT AND OUTCOMES**

### **Professional Values and Competencies in STRM 3211**

- Apply the principles and laws of freedom of speech and press, both in a global context and in the United States.
- Demonstrate an understanding of the multicultural history and role of professionals and institutions in shaping communications.
- Demonstrate culturally proficient communication that empowers those traditionally disenfranchised in society, especially as grounded in race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation and ability, domestically and globally, across communication and media contexts.
- Present images and information effectively and creatively, using appropriate tools and technologies.
- Write correctly and clearly in forms and styles appropriate for the communications professions, audiences and purposes they serve.
- Demonstrate an understanding of professional ethical principles and work ethically in pursuit of truth, accuracy, fairness and diversity.
- 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.

## How professional values and competencies will be met

*Cognitive objectives to be mastered (ability to explain, analyze, understand, think critically)*

- Describe the function of a copywriter in an advertising agency.
- Understand the skills and qualification needed to become a copy writer.
- Demonstrate how to write advertisements that grab attention and accomplish goals.

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

- Evaluate current advertisements, “reverse engineer” the message strategy and determine the effectiveness of creative message.
- Analyze the audience needs of identified companies and create messaging strategies to reach those audiences.
- Develop copy for TV commercials, print ads, billboards, and online/social media executions.

## How assessment of student learning will be met

*Awareness*

- Recognize what a copywriter needs to know about messaging and graphic design.
- Understand the value and application of creative briefs in the advertising industry.

*Understanding*

- Understand how to apply a strategic message across multiple types of media.

*Application*

- Creating initial concepts, develop final copy and present prepared copy for mid-year and final projects.

## JOURNALISM AND STRATEGIC MEDIA POLICIES

### Portfolio requirement

As an undergraduate student in the Department of Journalism and Strategic Media, you are required to 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 type of web hosting for your portfolio, but it must have an independent and professional URL. You may use any content management system, but you are encouraged to use WordPress, Wix, or Squarespace. It is also encouraged to purchase a URL if you plan to 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 wish to include a blog, video reels, photograph galleries, presentations, design PDFs, audio files or writing pieces as examples of professional work. The 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 have your UofM email account activated. If you are using another provider, such as Google, you are required to have all UofM emails forwarded 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 a smartphone. Others do not. Instructors will set the policy for their specific classes.

## AI/Chat GPT

The use of artificial intelligence software, such as Chat GPT, is prohibited in some courses and required in others in Journalism & Strategic Media. Please refer to 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. If you need more information about the University 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 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 and to evaluate 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 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.

### 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, students are expected to 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 prior to 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 rules of grammar and punctuation. You are responsible for learning these rules and checking your work for errors.

### Disability and accommodations

If you need an 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. Some of these forms 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 participate in 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 an understanding of a variety of perspectives, which are 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 at all times.

### **Weather policy**

Always check with local media, 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 may be able to assist in connecting you with campus or community support.