

Media Writing

JOUR 2121-004

Fall 2016

1:00-3:15, TR, MJ208

Dr. Roxane Coche

Office: MJ324

Office Hours: M, 10:30-12:00; T-TH, 3:30-4:30; W, 4-6:30; 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:

JOUR 1750

WHAT TO EXPECT:

Digital technology has transformed the media industry in the past decade. Today, media professionals rarely produce content for a single medium. Multimedia is becoming the norm and they must be able to write articles, produce slideshows, shoot videos, record audio stories, and use social media to cover events live. Yet, writing remains at the heart of ALL journalistic work. This course is a practical, hands-on course that teaches you to think and write as professionals.

REQUIRED MATERIALS:

- Tim Harrower, *Inside Reporting* 3rd ed. (McGraw Hill, 2010) ISBN 978-0-07-337891-6
- *The Associated Press Stylebook 2016* ISBN 978-0-917360-63-3

RECOMMENDED MATERIALS:

- 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 will write every week and receive regular feedback and coaching on their work. The class will consist of both lecture and laboratory time.

OBJECTIVES:

The objectives of this course are for students to be able to:

- Assess what is newsworthy
- Learn to write with accuracy and speed
- Develop sources
- Acquire writing mechanics and AP style
- Write headlines and captions
- Build a professional-looking online portfolios

RULES:

Late work

You're responsible for turning in all projects on the dates they're due. If you cannot make it to class that day, upload your project online and send me a link. In this day and age, there is no excuse. **No late work will be accepted**, regardless of the reason(s).

Attendance

Class attendance is mandatory in the Department of Journalism. 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.

To allow for illness and other unforeseeable misfortunes, you are permitted three absences in the semester. If you must miss class, it is your responsibility to get in touch with me and/or your peers to ask about course content and possible assignments. Any lateness of 10 minutes or less counts as half an absence. Any lateness of more than 10 minutes counts as an absence.

Everyone starts with a grade of 100/100. From the fourth absence on, I will deduct 10 points for each class you miss from your attendance grade (5 points if you're late less than 10 minutes).

You may be assigned a failing grade for the semester for nonattendance, or habitual late arrival.

Educational model

Based on the institutional educational model that states that students will have an active role in the learning process, it is expected from students to prepare for every class to the best of his/her ability. Every student is expected to actively participate in class and hand in assignments on time. This is a writing class so be prepared to write a lot throughout the semester.

Methodology: Class will be conducted based on readings and student participation. Multimedia exercises and projects will be assigned throughout the semester.

Here are a few rules to follow for this to be a successful course:

1. Respect

Respect your classmates' and my time. Class will start and end on time, so don't be late and don't pack up early. If you must walk in late or leave class early for some important commitment, please email or see me before the day that you will be doing so. (See attendance rules above.) Please also respect your classmates' views. Everyone is entitled to his/her own beliefs. Listen to your classmates' opinions before voicing your own. All in all be polite, professional and respectful when expressing yourself.

2. Be prepared

As the old adage goes, "by failing to prepare, you are preparing to fail," so come fully prepared for each session. Do the required readings and complete the assignments to the best of your abilities. This preparation will help you retain the materials and make class discussions richer.

3. Be engaged

My role is to efficiently guide the class through the different issues we will discuss, but it is your responsibility, as a class, to examine and analyze these issues. That is why you are expected to participate at every class.

GRADING:

Your grade will be determined according to the following criteria:

Story assignments	40%
Exercises & Quizzes	35%
Midterm	5%
Final Exam	10%
Online portfolio	10%

Story assignments

All assignments must be filed to the eCourseWare dropbox by the day and time they are due. Late assignments will NOT be accepted. All assignments must be written in third person in a structure that conforms to standard media writing guidelines.

All assignments should be uploaded in a word document, double-spaced with indented paragraphs, 12 point Times New Roman font. All documents must be identified with a date, a byline and a headline. **Any assignments that do not follow this format will not be graded and the writer will receive a grade of 0.**

Regarding grading, assignments will be graded on content, sources, writing, story structure, word count, grammar, punctuation and AP style. **One point may be deducted from story grades for every mistake in AP style, spelling, punctuation and grammar, so edit your work carefully.**

All stories will be graded out of 70 points, with an extra 30 points for rewrites, which are due one week after you receive the feedback. Rewrites that do not include the additional reporting discussed in editing notes of the original story will receive 0 point.

Quizzes

You will have a quiz every week about AP-style, grammar, course material and the news (pay particular attention to local media, the NYT World News and CNN World News). There will be no make-up on quizzes. There are 12 quizzes, worth 10 points each. Your two lowest grades will be dropped.

Online Portfolio

At the end of the semester you will have developed a professional website that includes your updated resume, any other pertinent skills, and, most importantly, your resume reel. This resume tape will contain three stories of your choosing (at least one of your two packages).

Exams

The midterm is October 13 during class. Both midterm and final exams will have some multiple choice and short-answer questions, but will mainly consist of writing exercises.

Diagnostic test

All 2121 students also will take a writing diagnostic test at the beginning and the end of the semester. The initial test scores will not impact course grades, but will be used as part of a department assessment of student achievement. The re-test will count as a quiz grade.

TENTATIVE TIMETABLE

Tuesday, August 23

On the agenda: No class.

Assignments: Read syllabus (there will be a short quiz on Thursday). Read chapter 1.

Thursday, August 25

On the Agenda: Course introduction. What is news and what are news values?

Assignments: Read chapter 2 + Check online readings

Tuesday, August 30

On the Agenda: Tools to find news

Assignments: Read pages 68-73 (in chapter 4) + Check online readings

Thursday, September 1

On the Agenda: Quiz + ABC of journalism. Fairness and Balance + **Take Writing Diagnostic Test**

Assignments: Read chapter 3 + Check online readings

Tuesday, September 6

On the Agenda: Newswriting basics + Writing your first news summary lead

Assignments: Read chapter 3 + Check online readings

Thursday, September 8

On the Agenda: Quiz + The various types of leads + in-class exercises

Assignments: Attend Global Learning Fair on Sept. 9. Get information about studying away or abroad (required) + HW1

Tuesday, September 13

On the Agenda: Discussing fair + story pitches + **HW1: Lead and Nut Graf due at the beginning of class today**

Assignments: Read chapter 4 + Check online readings

Thursday, September 15

On the Agenda: Quiz + Covering the news, part I + Writing exercises

Assignments: Read pages 94-97 (in chapter 5) + Check online readings + Story 1 pitch

Tuesday, September 20

On the Agenda: Covering the news, part II + Writing exercises + **Story 1 pitches due at the beginning of class today**

Assignments: Read pages 98-105 (in chapter 5) + Check online readings

Thursday, September 22

On the Agenda: Quiz + Covering the news, part III + Writing exercises related to Chapter 5

Assignments: Read pages 106-113 (in chapter 5) + Check online readings

Tuesday, September 27

On the Agenda: Working on story 1

Assignments: Check online readings + Story 1

Thursday, September 29

On the Agenda: Quiz + Talking about Story 2 ideas + **Story 1 due at the end of class today**

Assignments: Check online readings

Tuesday, October 4

On the Agenda: Feature stories

Assignments: Prepare oral and written pitch for story 2

Thursday, October 6

On the Agenda: Quiz + **Story 2 pitch presentations. Written document due at the beginning of class today.**

Assignments: Read pages 116-123 (in chapter 6) + Check online readings

Tuesday, October 11 – NO CLASS (Fall break)

Thursday, October 13

On the Agenda: Quiz + Feature story exercise + Midterm questions

Assignments: Complete your feature story + Check online readings

Tuesday, October 18

On the Agenda: **Midterm**

Thursday, October 20

On the Agenda: Story 2 field day

Assignments: Check online readings + Story 2

Tuesday, October 25

On the Agenda: Writing a profile

Assignments: Read pages 124-125 (in chapter 6) + **Story 2 due at the beginning of class**

Thursday, October 27

On the Agenda: Quiz + Talking about story 3 ideas + Working on HW2

Assignments: Check online readings + Write a short paragraph to tell me about your story 3 idea + **HW2 due tomorrow by noon.**

Tuesday, November 1

On the Agenda: Quiz + Online portfolios

Assignments: Read pages 126-137 (in chapter 6)

Thursday, October 3

On the Agenda: Quiz + Online portfolios

Assignments: Read chapter 7 + Check online readings + Prepare oral and written pitch for story 3

Tuesday, November 8

On the Agenda: Quiz + **Story 3 pitch presentations. Written document due at the beginning of class today.**

Assignments: Read chapter 8 + Check online readings

Thursday, November 10

On the Agenda: Quiz + Writing for the web, part I

Assignments: Read chapter 8 + Check online readings + Story 3

Tuesday, November 15

On the Agenda: Quiz + Writing for the web, part II + **Story 3 due at the beginning of class**

Assignments: Read chapter 9 + Check online readings

Thursday, November 17

On the Agenda: Quiz + HW3

Assignments: Read chapter 10 + **HW3 due by noon tomorrow** + Check online readings

Tuesday, November 22

On the Agenda: Quiz + Catch-up day (online portfolios, story 3, etc.)

Assignments: Read chapter 10 + Check online readings

Thursday, November 24 – NO CLASS (Thanksgiving)

Tuesday, November 29

On the Agenda: **Story 4 (in class – no rewrites)** + Final exam distributed

Assignments: Check online readings

FIVE PILLARS OF JOUR 2121

- *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:* As the first writing course in the journalism curriculum, 2121 teaches students 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 JOUR 2121:

- Think critically, creatively and independently.
- Write correctly and clearly in forms and styles appropriate for the communications professions, audiences and purposes they serve.

HOW PROFESSIONAL VALUES AND COMPETENCIES WILL BE MET FOR JOUR 2121:

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.

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

- Write an entry-level news story utilizing at least three sources and direct quotations.
- Write a speech or event story.
- Write a news feature.
- Use the AP Stylebook in applying basic news writing style rules to lab and outside assignments. Pass AP quizzes.
- Demonstrate an ability to write on deadline.
- Write different types of newsworthy leads.
- Take weekly current events quizzes.

HOW ASSESSMENT OF STUDENT LEARNING WILL BE MET FOR JOUR 2121:

Basic media writing is designed to provide the beginning journalism major with the essential skills that are crucial to careers in journalism, public relations, and advertising. These are the abilities to gather and process information, and, above all, to write effectively. The goal is for each student to have acquired entry-level professional writing skills by the end of the semester.

Awareness:

- Learn how journalism works in today's media environment

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:

As the first training step toward a career, JOUR 2121 will require students to do the following:

- 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.

PROFESSIONAL VALUES AND COMPETENCIES FOR JOURNALISM PROGRAM:

The Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communication requires that, irrespective of their particular specialization, all graduates should be aware of certain core values and competencies and be to

- Understand and apply the principles and laws of freedom of speech and press, for the country in which the institution that invites ACEJMC is located, as well as receive instruction in and understand the range of systems of freedom of expression around the world, including the right to dissent, to monitor and criticize power, and to assemble and petition for redress of grievances;
- 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.
- Demonstrate an understanding of the diversity of peoples and cultures and of the significance and impact of mass communications in a global society.
- Understand concepts and apply theories in the use and presentation of images and information;
- Demonstrate an understanding of professional ethical principles and work ethically in pursuit of truth, accuracy, fairness and diversity;
- 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 basic numerical and statistical concepts;
- Apply tools and technologies appropriate for the communications professions in which they work.

ASSESSMENT OF STUDENT LEARNING FOR JOURNALISM PROGRAM:

The Council seeks to promote student learning and encourages experimentation and innovation. Assessment is a system of evaluation of student learning at the course or unit level (as opposed to grading at the individual level). Three criteria should guide assessment of student learning:

- *Awareness*: familiarity with specific information, including facts, concepts, theories, laws and regulations, processes and effects.
- *Understanding*: assimilation and comprehension of information, concepts, theories and ideas.
- *Application*: competence in relating and applying skills, information, concepts, theories and ideas to the accomplishment of tasks.

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. Students are to begin the portfolio in JOUR 2121 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/his 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 due to 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 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 me 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.