**Media Writing**

**JRSM 2121-M50**

**Summer 2024**

**Professor TK King**

Office: Online

Office Hours: By appointment via Zoom

Email: tsking@memphis.edu

**COURSE REQUIREMENTS**

**Catalog description**

Basic instruction in journalistic forms and AP style; information gathering and composition of news stories; media literacy.

**Prerequisites**

JRSM 1750

**Textbooks**

**Required**

* Tim Harrower, *Inside Reporting*, 3rd ed. (McGraw Hill, 2010) ISBN 978-0-07- 337891-6
* The Associated Press Stylebook 2019 (or newer)
* The Commercial Appeal is available through the University of Memphis McWherter Library.  [Access link here](https://umwiki.memphis.edu/display/KayC/Library%2BDatabase%2BPasswords).

**Classroom format**

Media writing is a reporting and 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.

**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. Click on the link for JRSM 2121-M50 to enter your course and read the instructions on the welcoming page.

**Note: Please do not use the internal Canvas email system on the course web page**. Use your regular University of Memphis email to correspond with me at tsking@memphis.edu.

**Course expectations**

During the Summer semester, each student will complete two writing assignments: an ***advance story*** with at least *two interviews* and an ***event story*** on or off-campus with at *least three interviews and a data source.*

Assignments must have a story slug (a two- or three-word title), date and byline and be filed in a Word document that is **double-spaced** with indented paragraphs in 11 pt. type and in a professional font (Verdana, Arial, Times New Roman, etc.).

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 this software, as well as how to navigate course materials on Canvas. You can find tutorials in the “Getting Started” link for this class.

Media writing also requires knowledge of the Associated Press style. Therefore, students write all assignments for 2121 in AP style and complete quizzes on basic AP style during the semester.

Finally, students must stay informed about the news. They will, at a minimum, read The Commercial Appeal or the Daily Memphian,to stay informed on current events for discussions and quizzes. Students also may be required to follow other news outlets online.

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 exam includes short stories written from interviews and fact sheets, along with short answers on news fundamentals and AP style.

**Grading**

Written lab assignments, 40%

Homework, news quizzes and AP style quizzes, 20%

Two outside story assignments, 20%

Final exam, 20%

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%

**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.

**COURSE SCHEDULE**

This is a basic schedule for topics and major assignments over the course of the semester. All changes will be announced in class announcements in Canvas.

**Week 1, May 28 -June 2: Course introduction: What is News?**

Media Writing Basics: What is news? Accuracy, balance, news values and media lingo. Read chapter 2 plus pages 88-91 (Harrower).

**Week 2, June 3-9: Media Writing Basics: News summary leads and the inverted pyramid.**

Read chapters 3 and 4. (Harrower) Specific pages to re-read are noted below. Mini stories and AP style. Read chapter 3, pages 56-63 (Harrower).

**Week 3, June 10-16: Media Writing Basics: Quotes, Attribution, and Single Source Stories**

Read chapter 4, pages 82-85 (Harrower)

Assignments: Take AP Quiz No. 1 (Addresses). Single source story.

**Week 4, June 17-23: More quotes, attribution, and advance stories.**

Anatomy of an Advance story practice.

Practice paraphrasing quotes.

**Week 5, June 24- June 30: Story structure and nut graphs.**

Read chapter 3, pages 48-51 (Harrower)

Assignments: Advance story practice.

Take AP Quiz No. 2 (Numbers).

**Week 6, July 1-7: Covering events; University Break July 3-4.**

Advance stories due.

**Week 7, July 9-15: Sources (expert and data).**

Reporting Basics

Take AP Quiz No. 3 (Money, time, and dates).

**Week 8, July 16-22: Interviewing**

Assignments: Interviews and Event Story Analysis

Take AP Quiz No. 4 (Titles and capitalization).

Assignments: Event story is due.

**Week 9, July 23-29: Writing with accuracy, clarity, and conciseness.**

Read chapter 3, pages 52-63.

Transition and Word Choice

Assignments: Event story due.

Take AP Quiz No. 5 (Mixed AP Style).

**Week 10, July 30-August 5:  Final exam review**

Assignments:  Final Exam

**ASSESSMENT AND OUTCOMES**

**Professional values and competencies for JRSM 2121**

* 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, and 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**

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 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 activate your UofM email account. If you are using another provider, such as Google, you must forward all UofM emails to that account. Go to the [account management website](http://iam.memphis.edu/) 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](https://www.memphis.edu/osa/).

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 missed assignments if the absence was due to illness or a catastrophic emergency, such as a documented death in the family.

**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, 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.

**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.