

WRITING FOR MASS MEDIA

MCOM 2311, Spring 2022

11 a.m. to 12:20 p.m. Tuesday and Thursday, CAS 106

Instructor: **John "Danny" Mogle**

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Best way to contact: **Call**

Office Hours: **9:30 a.m. to 10:30 a.m. Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday and by appointment.** (I welcome and encourage office visits.)

COURSE DESCRIPTION

The course covers techniques used in gathering and writing news and public relations material on multiple media platforms. Students learn interviewing techniques, objective observation, how to conduct research, how to analyze news platforms and content, ethical considerations, grammar and storytelling techniques. Emphasis is on writing cleanly, clearly and concisely and adapting messages to different platforms and audiences.

STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

Competency: Writing and Storytelling

By the end of this course, students will be able to:

- Write correctly, clearly and concisely using storytelling styles appropriate for strategic communication, integrated communication or multimedia journalism.
- Produce accurate stories in an appropriate format when given a set of facts.
- Produce accurate stories in an appropriate format when having to develop sources and conduct research.
- Demonstrate proficiency in writing including use of Associated Press style.

Competency: Analysis and Systematic Inquiry

- Conduct research using methods appropriate to public relations/integrated communication or multimedia journalism professions.
- Analyze information to determine whether it meets the criteria of news.
- Analyze information to determine the best techniques and formats to tell the story to reach a target audience.

Competency: Legal and Ethical Principles

- Demonstrate ability to apply legal principles pertaining to strategic communication, integrated communication and multimedia journalism.
- Recognize what constitutes libel, plagiarism, fabrication and other legal issues involving media.
- Demonstrate an understanding of ethical issues involved in journalism, strategic communication and social media.

- Apply ethical behavior to practices involved in gathering and writing information for multimedia journalism.

Competency: Mediated Presentation

- Apply theories in the use and presentation of images and information-using tools and technologies appropriate for public relations/integrated communication or multimedia journalism.
- Write material for news and public relations materials in appropriate formats -- print, digital and broadcast -- when given sets of facts.
- Write material for news and public relations materials in appropriate formats -- print, digital and broadcast -- when having to originate ideas, do research, interview sources and write a story.
- Identify and distinguish different formats used in presenting information.

Competency: Critical Evaluation

- Use skills involving news value, fairness, clarity, sourcing, verification and attribution to better evaluate the potential accuracy of information presented as news
- Evaluate print, broadcast and public relations material for accuracy, transparency of sourcing and professional standards.
- Evaluate news content, public relations content and social media for inclusion of opinion and persuasion.

Competency: Media Literacy

- Demonstrate the ability to identify different types of media and messages media puts out to the public.
- Demonstrate the ability to analyze, evaluate and create media in different forms.
- Demonstrate the ability to identify and evaluate techniques and impacts of media messages on individuals and society.

Competency: Grammar, Spelling, Punctuation

- Demonstrate the ability to use words correctly.
- Demonstrate the ability to use proper grammar, spelling and punctuation.
- Demonstrate the ability to produce writing that is clear, error free, complete and concise.
- Apply techniques used to edit and proofread forms of multi-media journalism.

REQUIRED TEXTBOOK

- **Associated Press Stylebook.** New York: Associated Press. Also available online at apstylebook.org(Links to an external site.) (Links to an external site.). No older than 2019 edition.
- Select readings assigned in class and posted in Canvas.

RECOMMENDED MEDIA CONSUMPTION

Immerse yourself in mass media to get the most out of this class. Read newspapers and magazines in print and online. Watch news programs and listen to NPR. Examine press releases and advertising campaigns. Look at YouTube, Facebook and other social media in the context of this class.

Other recommendations:

- Clark, Roy Peter. (2006) Writing Tools, 50 Essential Strategies for Every Writer.
- Strunk Jr., W., & White, E.B. The Elements of Style (4th Ed.), New York: Longman.

SPECIAL COURSE NOTES

Basic Requirements

The course requires that you have access to a reliable computer and internet connection. You will also need the Associated Press Stylebook.

Communication

If you have a question, concern, or just want to talk about something related to class, call or send me a text at **903-617-8196**. I will get back to you as soon as possible.

- You can also send me an email.
- Check the Announcements tab of Canvas.
- If there is any valid reason that you cannot turn in work on time, contact me.

Completing Work on Time

Assignments are posted in Canvas and each has a deadline. Missing a deadline results in a deduction. Those who miss an assignment without an excused absence may not get the opportunity to make up the assignment.

Academic Honesty

The University's academy honesty policies apply. You, and only you, must do the work that you submit. Academic misconduct includes, but is not limited to, cheating, unattributed use of others' work (including test and paper "banks"), disruption of class, and discourtesy to, or harassment of, other students or your instructor. Anyone caught cheating will earn a "0" for that assignment and will be subject to academic and disciplinary action.

Plagiarism

Plagiarism includes but is not limited to, the appropriation, buying, receiving as a gift, or obtaining by any means another's work and the submission of it as one's own academic work offered for credit. Students caught plagiarizing will fail the assignment, may fail this class and will be subject to academic and disciplinary action. Go here for more:

<http://www.uttyler.edu/judicialaffairs/scholasticdishonesty.php> (Links to an external site.) (Links to an external site.)

ASSIGNMENTS AND WEIGHTS/POINT VALUES

Each assignment has a posted value and information on the purpose of the assignment and how the grade is determined. If there is confusion on how to carry out the assignment, call or text me at **903-617-8196** BEFORE you do the assignment.

The assignments fall into five general categories:

- graded discussions - 4% of grade
- skill-building assignments - 35% of grade
- writing assignments - 45% of grade
- attendance (starts with 100; 5 pts. off for every unexcused absence) - 4.5% of grade
- Use of the Stylebook - 11.5% of grade

GRADING SCALE

Your final grade is determined by the points you have acquired as a percentage of the total points available.

- A: 90-100%
- B: 80-89%
- C: 70-79% D: 60-69%
- F: 59% and below

Check Canvas frequently for the status of your grade. You will not be given an opportunity to do extra work to improve your grade.

LATE WORK AND MAKEUP EXAMS

There will be a deduction for work that is turned in late -- typically 50%, but sometimes 100%. All assignments will have a posted due date. Work can be made up in cases of illness and emergencies. All I ask is that you be honest.

ATTENDANCE POLICY

You will receive a 5-pt. deduction for each time you miss class.

The University of Texas at Tyler recognizes many things that constitute an excused absence. For a complete list of these policies [click here. \(Links to an external site.\)](#) [\(Links to an external site.\)](#)

GRADED COURSE REQUIREMENTS INFORMATION

- The capstone project requires students to interview sources and write a story that meets professional standards of journalism/public relations. The student is evaluated on the ability to produce a compelling lead; use quotes correctly; organize material in an orderly way; and to write cleanly, clearly, and concisely. It is worth 200 points.
- Other writing assignments -- worth 25 to 200 pts. -- require students to write news based on either information provided or obtained on their own.
- Stylebook assignments -- worth 15 to 40 points -- require students to apply AP style and use the stylebook for guidance topics such as social media, working with sources and ethical behavior.
- Graded discussions -- worth 15 to 25 points -- require students to complete tasks, share their thoughts and comment on other student's posts
- Assignments -- worth 10 to 50 points -- require students to demonstrate mastery of skills being taught.

More detailed information on each assignment will be provided in class.

CALENDAR

Census Date: The census date for the semester is **January 24**. This is the final date for many enrollment-related actions, including adding new courses, changing sections, or dropping courses without incurring grades of "W" or "Q". Census is also the second drop for non-payment date each academic session. See the Office of the Registrar website for additional details.

Final exam: There is no final exam given in this course.

Week by Week: Here is the week-by-week rundown of what will be covered. Sometimes circumstances require scheduling changes. Any changes will be posted in Canvas.

Each unit includes PowerPoint presentation and supplemental readings/videos that are posted in Canvas. Due dates for all assignments are included as part of the assignment. Units typically cover two class periods but that is not always the case.

(Week of Jan. 10)

UNIT I: WHAT'S NEWS

Competencies: Analysis and Systematic Inquiry; Media Literacy; Mediated Presentation

- Assignment: Applying news value - 30 pts.
- Assignment: Is this fake? - 30 pts.
- Assignment: Distinguishing facts from opinion - 20 pts.
- Graded discussion -- A nose for news - 25 pts.

Deadline to submit work for Unit I is 11 a.m. Jan. 18, unless otherwise indicated.

(Week of Jan. 17)

UNIT II: NEWS WRITING BASICS

Competencies: Grammar, Spelling, Punctuation; Analysis and Systematic Inquiry; Media Literacy; Mediated Presentation; Writing and Storytelling

- Assignment: Building an inverted pyramid - 20 pts.
- Assignment: Examples of different story formats - 30 ps.
- Assignment: Stay out of your story - 20 pts.
- Assignment: Identifying attribution - 20 pts. pts.

Deadline to submit work for Unit II is 11 a.m. Jan. 25, unless otherwise indicated.

(Week of Jan. 24)

UNIT III: AP STYLE

Competencies: Grammar, Spelling, Punctuation; Critical Evaluation; Writing and Storytelling

- Stylebook: Using the AP Stylebook - 50 pts.
- Stylebook: Recognizing the essentials - 40 pts.
- Stylebook: Mastering the essentials - 30 pts.
- Writing: Putting AP style to use - 25 pts.

Deadline to submit work for Unit III is 11 a.m. Feb. 1, unless otherwise indicated.

(Week of Jan. 31)

UNIT IV: CLEANING THE COPY

Competency: Writing and Storytelling; Critical Evaluation; and Grammar, Spelling, Punctuation

- Assignment: Putting proofreading skills to good use - 30
- Assignment: Grammar, punctuation, spelling - 50 pts.
- Assignment: Using the right/write word - 30 pts.
- Stylebook: Proofreading for AP style - 40 pts.

Deadline to submit work for Unit IV is 11 a.m. Feb. 8, unless otherwise indicated.

(Week of Feb. 7)

UNIT V: THE ART OF BEING CONCISE

Competencies: Writing and Storytelling; Critical Evaluation; and Grammar, Spelling, Punctuation

- Assignment: Active or passive? - 20 pts.
- Assignment: Getting rid of the clutter - 20 pts.
- Assignment: Make it more concise - 50 pts.

Deadline to submit work for Unit V is 11 a.m. Feb. 15, unless otherwise indicated.

(Week of Feb. 14)

UNIT VI: CLEAR AND COMPLETE

Competencies: Writing and Storytelling; Critical Evaluation; Grammar, Spelling, Punctuation

- Assignment: Did you misplace your modifier? - 20 pts.
- Assignment: Terminate your procrastination and commence this examination - 20 pt.
- Assignment: This is clear as mud - 25 pts.
- Assignment: What is missing? - 20 pts.

Deadline to submit work for Unit VI is 11 a.m. Feb. 15, unless otherwise indicated.

(Week of Feb. 21)

UNIT VII: SINS OF JOURNALISM

Competencies: Legal and Ethical Principles, Critical Evaluation

- Assignment: Recognizing inappropriate wording - 30 pts.
- Assignment: Don't write that - 10 pts.
- Assignment: What's the problem? - 30 pts.
- Graded discussion: The topic of media bias - 15 pts.

Deadline to submit work for Unit VII is 11 a.m. March 1, unless otherwise indicated.

(Week of Feb. 28)

UNIT VIII: GATHERING INFORMATION

Competencies: Writing and Storytelling; Legal and Ethical Principles; Critical Evaluation; Grammar, Spelling, Punctuation

- Writing: The journalist as an observer -- 40 pts.
- Assignment: Working with a news release -- 40 pts.
- Assignment: Asking questions -- 25 pts.
- Graded Discussion: Learn from an expert interviewer -- 25 pts.
- Stylebook: Guidance on working with sources - 25 pts.

Deadline to submit work for Unit VIII is 11 a.m. Feb. 15, unless otherwise indicated.

SPRING BREAK - Week of March 7

(Weeks of March 14 and 21)

UNIT IX: WORKING WITH QUOTES

Competencies: Writing and Storytelling; Legal and Ethical Principles; Analysis and Systematic Inquiry; Grammar, Spelling, Punctuation

- Stylebook - Guidance on using quotes: 30 pts.
- Assignment - Making decisions about quotes - 30 pts.
- Writing: A news story based on interview - 200 pts.
- Graded discussion: What would you do? - 15 pts.

Deadline to submit work for Unit IX is 11 a.m. March 29, unless otherwise indicated.

Also

- Writing: A story based on an assigned topic - 200 pts.

Deadline to submit writing assignment is 11 a.m. March 31, unless otherwise indicated.

(Week of March 28)

UNIT X: THE DIGITAL WORLD

Competencies: Writing and Storytelling, Analysis and Systematic Inquiry; Media Literacy; Legal and Ethical Principles; Mediated Presentation; Grammar, Spelling, Punctuation

- Assignment: Reporting in the digital era - 20 pts.
- Assignment: Planning a digital package - 15 pts,
- Stylebook: Social media guidelines - 15 pts.

Deadline to submit work for Unit X is 11 a.m. April 5, unless otherwise indicated.

(Weeks of April 4-11)

UNIT XI: STRATEGIC COMMUNICATON

Competencies: Writing and Storytelling, Analysis and Systematic Inquiry, Media Literacy, Legal and Ethical Principles, Mediated Presentation, Critical Evaluation

- Writing: Getting the message out: The News Release - 200 pts.
- Assignment: Getting the message out: A Facebook post - 10 pts.
- Assignment: Components of a strategic plan - 10 pts.
- Assignment: Event planning - 10 pts.

Deadline to submit work for Unit XI is 11 a.m. April 19, unless otherwise indicated.

(Week of April 18)

UNIT XII: WRITING FOR BROADCAST

Competencies: Writing and Storytelling; Analysis and Systematic Inquiry; Media Literacy, Mediated Presentation; Critical Evaluation; Grammar, Spelling, Punctuation

- Writing: Writing a radio broadcast - 75 pts.
- Assignment: Is it for print or broadcast - 30

Deadline to submit work for Unit XII is 11 a.m. April 26, unless otherwise indicated.

(Week of April 25)

UNIT XIII: ETHICS

Competencies: Analysis and Systematic Inquiry; Legal and Ethical Principles; Critical Evaluation

- Stylebook: Guidance on ethical behavior - 75 pts.
- Assignment: Case studies in ethics - 100 pts.
- Graded Discussion: An unethical situation - 20 pts.

Deadline to submit work for Unit XIII is 11 a.m. April 28, unless otherwise indicated.