

MCOM 3303.001 News Writing

Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays, 11:15 a.m.-12:10 p.m.

Room: CAS 106

Syllabus—Spring 2021

Professor: Dr. Terry L. Britt

Office Hours: Mondays 1-2 p.m., Thursdays 10 a.m.-noon, and by appointment (Note: Until further notice, ALL office hours meetings will be virtual via Zoom, due to the coronavirus pandemic).

Office: CAS 220

Phone: 903-565-5713

Email: tbritt@uttyler.edu (best option for contacting me)

Note: Syllabus is subject to change. Any changes will be posted under “Announcements” on the class Canvas site, by email through Canvas, and verbally announced in the next class meeting.

Important COVID-19 Information for Classrooms and Laboratories

Students are required to wear face masks covering their nose and mouth, and follow social distancing guidelines, at all times in public settings (including classrooms and laboratories), as specified by “Procedures for Fall 2020 Return to Normal Operations.” The UT Tyler community of Patriots views adoption of these practices consistent with its Honor Code and a sign of good citizenship and respectful care of fellow classmates, faculty, and staff. Students who are feeling ill or experiencing symptoms such as sneezing, coughing, or a higher than normal temperature will be excused from class and should stay at home and may join the class remotely. Students who have difficulty adhering to the COVID-19 safety policies for health reasons are also encouraged to join the class remotely. Students needing additional accommodations may contact the Office of Student Accessibility and Resources at University Center 3150, or call (903) 566-7079 or emailsaroffice@uttyler.edu.

Course Description: Introduction to fundamental journalistic writing skills for the print, digital and broadcast media, with an emphasis on interviewing, source development and research.

Prerequisites: MCOM 2307 and MCOM 2311.

I. Student Learning Outcomes:

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

A. Competency: Writing and Storytelling

1. Write correctly and clearly using the formats and compelling storytelling styles appropriate for the audiences and purposes for print/digital news and multimedia journalism.
2. Produce accurate news stories in the appropriate format when given sets of facts.
3. Demonstrate proficiency in writing including basic grammar and style and the use of the Associated Press.

B. Competency: Analysis and Systematic Inquiry

1. Research and Evaluation

- a. Conduct research and evaluate information by methods appropriate to print/digital or multimedia journalism professions.
- b. Evaluate newsworthiness of events, issues, and people, and develop reporting angles appropriate to the story.

c. Develop peer review skills in evaluating stories for content, organization, mechanics, and Associated Press style.

2. Legal and Ethical Principles

a. Demonstrate an understanding of and be able to apply the First Amendment and other legal principles for public relations/integrated communication and/or multimedia journalism a. Recognize what constitutes libel, appropriation, intrusion, false light, and publicity about private facts.

b. Demonstrate an understanding of professional ethical principles and issues for public relations/integrated communication and/or multimedia journalism. a. Demonstrate an understanding of ethical behavior in mass media industries.

C: Competency: Mediated Presentation

1. Apply theories in the use and presentation of images and information using tools and technologies appropriate for print/digital or multimedia journalism.

2. Produce engaging, informative, and accurate news stories and print/digital media story packages in appropriate format when given sets of facts.

3. Produce news-style, on-camera video interviews pertaining to a story and appropriate to a web-based or multimedia story presentation.

II. Required Reading:

1. The Missouri Group. News Reporting and Writing, 13th edition. Bedford/St. Martin's.

2. Associated Press Stylebook. New York: Associated Press. Also available online at www.apstylebook.com.

3. Select readings assigned in class over the course of this semester.

III. Recommended Media Consumption:

A. Immerse yourself in mass media to get the most out of this class. Read newspapers and magazines daily in print and online. Watch news programs regularly. Examine press releases and advertising campaigns. Look at YouTube, Facebook and other social media in the context of this class. Share clips and articles and ideas on Canvas for discussion.

Here are some suggested things to read:

1. Newspapers: The Tyler Daily Telegraph, Patriot Talon, Wall Street Journal, New York Times, Dallas Morning News, Fort-Worth Star-Telegram.

2. Magazines: The Economist, Time, Atlantic Monthly, National Geographic

3. Viewing: PBS News hour – online and on the air, Local television stations

4. Online: Politico.com, bbc.com, TexasTribune.org, Probulica.org, Youtube.com, Hulu.com, Poynter.org

5. Listening: Local stations, NPR stations streamed

6. Resources: www.grammarly.com, newsroom101.net,

7. In addition to the above, the following books will make you better writers:

8. Clark, Roy Peter. (2006) Writing Tools, 50 Essential Strategies for Every Writer.

9. Strunk Jr., W., & White, E.B. (2000). The Elements of Style (4th Ed.), New York: Longman.

10. Shertzer, Margaret (1996). The Elements of Grammar, New York: Longman.

11. Walsh, Bill (2004). The Elephants of Style, New York: Mc-Graw Hill

IV. Things to Know About My Class:

A. Attendance:

1. Attendance is mandatory, especially for an upper-division skills course such as this one. I will excuse an absence for one of only three reasons: a. An illness documented by a hospital, clinic, or physician; b. A death in the immediate family or first branch of relatives (aunts, uncles, first cousins) and documented by a copy of an obituary or funeral service program; c. A university-sponsored event/activity or a religious observance that would require the student to miss the class period (notification of which should be made at least three (3) days in advance of the expected absence). Three to four unexcused absences will result in an automatic half grade deduction (5 percent). Five or more unexcused absences will result in a full grade deduction. Students 10 or more minutes late or leaving early may be considered absent.
2. You are responsible for turning in all assignments by deadline even though you may be absent.
3. You are also responsible for lecture materials, announcements and assignments made during any absence.
4. No make-up tests will be allowed unless you must be absent the day of the exam and have notified the instructor at least three (3) days in advance, other than an illness or death in the family, in which case notification should be made as soon as possible. Any make-up test must be arranged with the instructor. Make-up tests and quizzes will be allowed for absences due to illness only with documentation from a clinic, hospital, or physician.
5. Students more than five minutes late to class on quiz/test days may not be allowed to take the quiz/test in class. Excessive tardiness may result in a course grade deduction.
6. Recording of Class Sessions: Class sessions may be recorded by the instructor for use by students enrolled in this course. Recordings that contain personally identifiable information or other information subject to FERPA shall not be shared with individuals not enrolled in this course unless appropriate consent is obtained from all relevant students. Class recordings are reserved only for the use of students enrolled in the course and only for educational purposes. Course recordings should not be shared outside of the course in any form without express permission.

B. Assignment Policy:

1. Unless otherwise specified, assignments are due at the announced time via Canvas. Late assignments will be penalized by one grade level per day late. (i.e. if it is one day late, you lose 10 percent off the top.). In-class deadline writing assignments will be deducted by 10 points if turned in between 1-10 minutes late and will not be accepted (score of zero) more than 10 minutes late.
2. Assignments must be typed and submitted using the format required for the assignment.
3. Assignments and due dates may change at the instructor's discretion with fair notice.
4. Students must complete all assignments in order to pass the course. This does not mean, however, that merely completing all assignments guarantees a passing grade.
5. All assignments must include student name, date, assignment name, course name and word count.

C. Classroom Courtesies:

1. No cellphone use during class. No calls, no texts, no status update checks. In an emergency, please exit the classroom to use your device.
2. **NO FOOD OR DRINK IS ALLOWED IN THE COMPUTER LAB AT ANY TIME. IF YOU MUST EAT, STAND IN THE DOORWAY.**
3. Laptop and tablet use is for note taking and class-related research. Other uses will be noted and these devices can be restricted in class.
4. Talk, debate, ask questions and challenge but stay on topic.

D. Access to Technology: I use Canvas to communicate, post assignments and readings, present feedback, and provide a space for you to communicate with your classmates. Check Canvas regularly.

E. Email Policy: On weekdays, you should expect my response in 24 hours. On weekends, I will do my best to answer your questions in 48 hours.

F. Academic Honesty:

1. Practice academic integrity and accept responsibility for your actions.
2. 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.
3. Anyone caught cheating will earn a "0" for that assignment and will be subject to academic and disciplinary action.
4. **PLAGIARISM WILL NOT BE TOLERATED.** This 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 information:
<http://www.uttyler.edu/judicialaffairs/scholasticdishonesty.php>

G. Grading

MCOM 3303 is intended to be a more intensive writing course with a greater emphasis on developing and producing original news journalism content, building on the media writing basics you learned in MCOM 2311. The course assignments address a greater scope and depth of news writing topics, including news events (24-hour story), news story interviewing (on-camera interview), people as news (profile story), and research/data-based news topics (community issue package). These assignments will require a greater amount of planning, research, time management, source-seeking, and story organization than those in the prerequisite course. You will be writing, at minimum, 2,000 words for all news writing assignments, plus interview questions for the on-camera interview assignment, and brief proposals for all outside writing/reporting assignments. All of the assignments noted above constitute a total of 60% of the course grade (regular reporting assignments plus the final).

Regular Reporting Assignments (25% of course grade)

You will be required to complete the following reporting assignments at various points throughout the semester:

1. Profile story – This is a 500-750-word story spotlighting a newsworthy person – the subject can be anyone from a university administrator or faculty member (Department of Communication faculty are not eligible) to a local city official or small business owner. The big requirement is that the person has to be one who will provide you as the reporter with an engaging, timely story. A minimum of two interviewed sources (including the subject) is required, but three or more interviewed sources will likely lead to a better story and a higher grade as a result. A story proposal is required for instructor approval. This assignment will also include a peer review session in which you will read and critique the first draft of a fellow student's story, checking for AP Style and grammar as well as content and organization (participation in the peer review and submission of a first draft will count as a quiz grade).
2. 24-hour story – For those of you who had me as an instructor for MCOM 2311 in Fall 2019, the 24-hour story assignment returns with a fresh opportunity to cover a local event. For those new to this assignment: You will select an upcoming event on the UT Tyler campus or one off-campus event and submit a story proposal. If approved, you will cover that event – typically, a public meeting, press conference, or speech – and you will contact me by email immediately after the event has concluded. That is when your deadline clock begins; you have exactly 24 hours to turn in a 500-750-word story with at least two interviewed sources.

This story is to be written as a “hard news” story, highlighting the decisions and their impact in the case of a public meeting, and the topics, statements, and reactions in the cases of a press conference or speech. If you previously completed a 24-hour story last semester in MCOM 2311, you must choose a different type of event for this assignment in MCOM 3303.

3. On-camera interview – Being able to effectively report news through a variety of media is now quintessential to a successful media career, so one of your reporting assignments will have you record a short video interview as part of a news story or as the news story. You are to use your smartphone or tablet to record the video for this assignment. Also, you may interview the same subject as in your profile story assignment (or vice versa). **The edited version of your interview for submission should be between 2 1/2-3 minutes runtime and should be in MP4, MOV (QuickTime), or WMV file format.**

There are three parts to this assignment – a initial proposal for the video interview for instructor approval, submission of a set (at least five) of questions you intend to ask your interviewee, and the finished, edited video itself. The editing requirements are minimal; basically, sufficient lighting and audio levels, and the aforementioned runtime of between 2 1/2-3 minutes. Finally, I will group you in pairs for this assignment so that your partner can act as camera operator, allowing you to focus on the interview and not having to worry about how you are holding or setting up a smartphone or tablet; however, it is not required for you to employ your partner in the interview, allowing for cases where a schedule conflict would prevent that.

Final (35% of course grade)

The final for this course will be a community issue story package you will create and consisting of three components as follows:

1. Main story – This is a 750-1,000-word story focusing on a particular news issue within the UT Tyler, city of Tyler, or Smith County communities. **It must have at least three (3) interviewed sources, along with any relevant documented sources.** You will submit a proposal for instructor approval, which will include a list of possible interview subjects and other sources as well as a short (about a paragraph) summary of your story issue and the angle you intend to take with it. This assignment will also include a peer review session in which you will read and critique the first draft of a fellow student’s story, checking for AP Style and grammar as well as content and organization (participation in the peer review and submission of a first draft will count as a quiz grade).
2. Sidebar – This is a 250-400-word companion story to the main story, highlighting a particular aspect, person, or example connected to the community issue in the main story. It must have at least two interviewed sources; however, one of the two (or more) sources can also be one of the sources in your main story. You want this story to be built around an example or illustration of the community issue in your main story, or perhaps highlight an interesting or unusual aspect of the issue.
3. Infographic – Because your main story will necessarily need to be on an issue for which you can find statistical data, records, or demographic information, you will create an infographic to go with your main story. The format will be up to you – it can be a bar chart, line chart, pie chart, map, timeline, or “interesting facts” graphic – but it is vital that you choose a format that best illustrates the information. Infographics must be properly labeled, accurate in depiction, and cite the source of the data or information.

Quizzes (10% of course grade)

For most weeks in the semester on Fridays, we will have one short quiz covering assigned readings from the textbook, major points we’ve discussed in class and a few AP Style or grammar questions, particularly anything I see as problematic from submitted assignments.

For the profile story and community issue main story, there will be a peer review session that requires both your attendance in class on the designated days and the submission of a first draft of the

respective stories. For this, you will receive a quiz grade based on the following criteria on your first draft:

At least 400 words written and two interviews completed: 100

At least 300 words written and one interview completed: 75

At least 200 words written and no interviews completed: 50

Anything less than 200 words written: 0

I will drop the lowest quiz grade.

In-class deadline assignments (15% of course grade) There will be occasional in-class deadline writing assignments (at least five) with information provided to you. The goal is to construct a well-written, informative, and engaging news story and file it via Canvas before the deadline of 10 a.m. (the end of our class period). I will discuss the expectations and parameters of each in-class deadline writing assignment in the class meeting prior to the day of the assignment, which should give everyone ample opportunity to ask questions in advance.

AP Exam and Grammar Exam (15% of course grade combined)

On two of the class days this semester, the entire class time will be devoted to special exams, one covering AP Style and the other covering general grammar issues. At this point in your degree program, it is imperative that you be able to demonstrate mastery of AP Style and correct grammar in written media content. The AP Style exam will be open book (bring your AP Stylebook or connect to AP Stylebook Online); the grammar exam, however, will be closed to assistance online or from books or notes.

Although I am not requiring a minimum score for either exam, any score below 75 on the grammar exam will result in a referral to the UT Tyler Writing Center. **If you complete at least two hours of work at the Writing Center with one of its tutors, I will allow you to retake the grammar exam at an agreed time and place for a chance at replacing the score on your first attempt.**

Extra Credit: Patriot Media Story:

You will attend one Patriot Media staff meeting and complete one written news, sports or feature assignment for the Patriot Media in print or online. You will either pitch a story to the Patriot editor, or you will take a story at his/her discretion. You will meet all deadlines as directed by the editor. Turn in the published story for extra credit. Points to be determined by instructor and added to the Writing Assignments category.

Extra Credit: Research participation:

This offer is pending the availability of an open research study conducted by me or another professor in the Department of Communication. You will need to provide proof of participation (typically, a sign-in sheet and/or informed consent document). Points awarded will be determined by the instructor, but you can probably expect it to be points added to either the final exam or the writing assignment category, since those are the largest weighted categories in the course grade.

Course Grade Scale

A: 90-100

B: 80-89

C: 70-79

D: 60-69

F: 59 and lower

Course grades will be calculated to the first decimal point and rounded up or down according to rounding standard (.4 or below rounded down; .5 or above rounded up). A letter grade of C or better is

required in all Department of Communication courses for Communication majors and minors to count the course credit toward a degree program at the University of Texas at Tyler.

Standard grading rubric for written assignments

Fairly evaluating news writing consists of both objective and subjective components, the latter involving an evaluation of the story's content, organization, reader engagement level and overall presentation. Written comments will be provided on each writing assignment to communicate the level at which these elements were sufficiently present. For the objective components, which refer to AP style, punctuation, grammatical correctness, and accuracy, the following standard rubric will be in place:

AP style and punctuation errors – deduction of 2 points each.

Grammar errors, misspelled words, sentence fragments/incomplete sentences – deduction of 5 points each.

Factual errors – deduction of 15 points each.

Proper name misspellings (people or places) – deduction of 25 points each.

I reserve the right to adjust the overall score based on subjective components as stated above. In other words, if your story has quite a number of style or punctuation mistakes, but is very thorough in content, organization and other elements, you may receive a higher score than would be indicated by the above rubric. Likewise, a relatively error-free story does not necessarily guarantee a high score if the content, organization and other elements are lacking.

A rubric for the on-camera interview assignment will be posted to Canvas at a later date, but at least three weeks before the assignment due date.

Plagiarism or fabrication of material: Plagiarism and/or fabrication of information or interview material will not be tolerated. Students caught plagiarizing or fabricating material will fail the assignment, may fail this class and will be subject to academic and disciplinary action. Go here for more information:

<http://www.uttyler.edu/judicialaffairs/scholasticdishonesty.php>

Class Schedule (subject to change)

Week 1

Jan. 11 – Resetting from winter/holiday break; icebreaker activity

Jan. 13 – Overview of writing assignments and other syllabus notes

Jan. 15 – NRW Chapter 1; discussion on the nature of news content

Week 2

Jan. 18 – No class; Martin Luther King, Jr. Holiday

Jan. 20 – NRW Chapter 3 – Interviewing; in-class writing guidelines

Jan. 22 – Quiz; In-class deadline writing #1

Week 3

Jan. 25 – **24-hour story proposals due via email**; guidelines for 24-hour story

Jan. 27 – NRW Chapter 14; covering press conferences and speeches

Jan. 29 – Quiz; Chapter 14 continued – public meetings as news; in-class exercise on finding news items in meeting agendas

Week 4

Feb. 1 – NRW Chapter 4; advanced techniques for quotes and attributions

Feb. 3 – NRW Chapter 5; finding and verifying information

Feb. 5 – Quiz; Discussion on NRW 4 and 5 continued; in-class exercise

Week 5

Feb. 8 – NRW Chapter 8; Mastering the inverted pyramid; in-class writing guidelines

Feb. 10 – In-class deadline writing assignment #2

Feb. 12 – Quiz; On-camera interview rubric and guidelines; tips on preparing for a video interview.

Week 6

Feb. 15 – NRW Chapter 9; Creating engagement with your audience

Feb. 17 – **AP Style Exam**

Feb. 19 – Quiz; On-camera interview proposals due; in-class exercise

Week 7

Feb. 22 – NRW Chapter 10; other types of story leads and when to use them

Feb. 24 – Chapter 10 discussion continued; in-class writing guidelines

Feb. 26 – Quiz; in-class deadline writing #3; **last day for 24-hour story completion**

Week 8

March 1 – NRW Chapter 11; Writing for Digital Media

March 2 – Profile story proposals due; Chapter 11 discussion continued; profile story guidelines

March 5 – **On-camera interview files due by 5 p.m. via Canvas**; Quiz; in-class exercise

Week 9

March 8-12 – Spring break; no classes

Week 10

March 15 – **Community issue package proposals due**; NRW Chapter 13; Beat reporting and developing sources

March 17 – **Grammar Exam**

March 19 - Chapter 13 discussion continued; in-class exercise

Week 11

March 22 – **First draft of profile story due**; Profile story peer review workshop

March 24 – NRW Chapter 15; other types of news stories; in-class writing guidelines

March 26 – Quiz; In-class deadline writing #4

Week 12

March 29 – **Profile story due by 5 p.m. via Canvas**; NRW Chapter 6 – using news releases to help build stories

April 31 – Chapter 6 discussion continued

April 2 – Quiz; in-class exercise on finding sources and information in news releases

Week 13

April 5 – **Community issue main story first draft due; Community issue story peer review workshop**

April 7 – NRW Chapter 16; writing business and consumer news; in-class writing guidelines

April 9 – Quiz; In-class deadline writing #5

Week 14

April 12 – NRW Chapter 17; Writing investigative and data-driven stories

April 14 – Chapter 17 continued; in-class exercise

April 16 – NRW Chapter 19 and Chapter 20; Media law and ethics refresher

Week 15

Note: I will be available to schedule one-on-one conference times (30 minutes) throughout this week for students who would like to submit new drafts of the community issue story and sidebar.

April 19 – Work day for community issue stories (I'll be available in the classroom for questions and guidance on the stories)

April 21 – NRW Chapter 2; course wrap-up; where do we go from here in news reporting?

April 23 – Infographics due by start of class; Work day for community issue stories (I'll be available in the classroom for questions and guidance on the stories)

Week 16 (Finals week)

Community issue package main story and sidebar due by 11:59 p.m. Wednesday, April 28, via Canvas.

V. University Policies

A. UT Tyler Honor Code:

Every member of the UT Tyler community joins together to embrace: Honor and integrity that will not allow me to lie, cheat, or steal, nor to accept the actions of those who do. Students Rights and Responsibilities To know and understand the policies that affect your rights and responsibilities as a student at UT Tyler, please follow this link: <http://www.uttyler.edu/wellness/rightsresponsibilities.php>

B. Campus Carry: 1. We respect the right and privacy of students 21 and over who are duly licensed to carry concealed weapons in this class. License holders are expected to behave responsibly and keep a handgun secure and concealed. More information is available at <http://www.uttyler.edu/about/campus-carry/index.php>

C. UT Tyler a Tobacco-Free University: 1. All forms of tobacco will not be permitted on the UT Tyler main campus, branch campuses, and any property owned by UT Tyler. This applies to all members of the University community, including students, faculty, staff, University affiliates, contractors, and visitors. Forms of tobacco not permitted include cigarettes, cigars, pipes, water pipes (hookah), bidis, kreteks, electronic cigarettes, smokeless tobacco, snuff, chewing tobacco, and all other tobacco products. There are several cessation programs available to students looking to quit smoking, including counseling, quit lines, and group support. For more information on cessation programs please visit www.uttyler.edu/tobacco-free.

D. Academic Honesty Policy: Students will adhere to the highest standards of academic honesty. Anyone caught cheating will earn a “0” for that assignment and will be subject to academic and disciplinary action. Plagiarism (the use of written and oral words or ideas of another person, including another student, without the expressed acknowledgment of the speaker’s or writer’s indebtedness to that person) will not be tolerated. This includes the use of papers or other materials previously submitted to instructors in other classes, as well as video and audio recordings. Students caught plagiarizing will fail this class and be subject to academic and disciplinary action.

E. Student Standards of Academic Conduct

1. Disciplinary proceedings may be initiated against any student who engages in scholastic dishonesty, including, but not limited to, cheating, plagiarism, collusion, the submission for credit of any work or materials that are attributable in whole or in part to another person, taking an examination for another person, any act designed to give unfair advantage to a student or the attempt to commit such acts.

a) “Cheating” includes, but is not limited to:

- (1) copying from another student’s test paper;
- (2) using, during a test, materials not authorized by the person giving the test;
- (3) failure to comply with instructions given by the person administering the test;
- (4) possession during a test of materials which are not authorized by the person giving the test, such as class notes or specifically designed “cribnotes.” The presence of textbooks constitutes a violation if they have been specifically prohibited by the person administering the test;
- (5) using, buying, stealing, transporting, or soliciting in whole or part the contents of an unadministered test, test key, homework solution, or computer program;
- (6) collaborating with or seeking aid from another student during a test or other assignment without authority;
- (7) discussing the contents of an examination with another student who will take the examination;
- (8) divulging the contents of an examination, for the purpose of preserving questions for use by another, when the instructors have designated that the examination is not to be removed from the examination room or not to be returned or to be kept by the student;
- (9) substituting for another person, or permitting another person to substitute for oneself to take a course, a test, or any course-related assignment;

- (10) paying or offering money or other valuable thing to, or coercing another person to obtain an unadministered test, test key, homework solution, or computer program or information about an unadministered test, test key, home solution or computer program;
- (11) falsifying research data, laboratory reports, and/or other academic work offered for credit;
- (12) taking, keeping, misplacing, or damaging the property of The University of Texas at Tyler, or of another, if the student knows or reasonably should know that an unfair academic advantage would be gained by such conduct; and
- (13) misrepresenting facts, including providing false grades or resumes, for the purpose of obtaining an academic or financial benefit or injuring another student academically or financially.

b) "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.

c) "Collusion" includes, but is not limited to, the unauthorized collaboration with another person in preparing academic assignments offered for credit or collaboration with another person to commit a violation of any section of the rules on scholastic dishonesty.

d) All written work that is submitted will be subject to review by plagiarism software.

F. The UT Tyler Writing Center provides professional writing tutoring for all students in all disciplines. If you wish to use the Writing Center, you should plan for a minimum of two hour-long tutorials per assignment: the first to provide an initial consultation and drafting plan, and the second to follow up. Be prepared to take an active role in your learning, as you will be asked to discuss your work during your tutorial. While Writing Center tutors are happy to provide constructive criticism and teach effective writing techniques, under no circumstances will they fix, repair, or operate on your paper. Location: CAS 202. Appointments: 903-565-5995.

G. Disability/Accessibility Services:

1. In accordance with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and the ADA Amendments Act (ADAAA) the University of Texas at Tyler offers accommodations to students with learning, physical and/or psychological disabilities. If you have a disability, including a non-visible diagnosis such as a learning disorder, chronic illness, TBI, PTSD, ADHD, or you have a history of modifications or accommodations in a previous educational environment, you are encouraged to visit <https://hood.accessiblelearning.com/UTTyler> and fill out the New Student application.

2. The Student Accessibility and Resources (SAR) office will contact you when your application has been submitted and an appointment with Cynthia Lowery, Assistant Director of Student Services/ADA Coordinator. For more information, including filling out an application for services, please visit the SAR webpage at <http://www.uttyler.edu/disabilityservices>, the SAR office located in the University Center, #3150 or call 903.566.7079.

H. Grade Replacement/Forgiveness and Census Date Policies:

1. Students repeating a course for grade forgiveness (grade replacement) must file a Grade Replacement Contract with the Enrollment Services Center (STE 230) on or before the Census Date of the semester in which the course will be repeated (For Spring 2021, the Census Date is Jan. 25, 2021). Grade Replacement Contracts are available in the Enrollment Services Center or at <http://www.uttyler.edu/registrar>. Each semester's Census Date can be found on the Contract itself, on the Academic Calendar, or in the information pamphlets published each semester by the Office of the Registrar.

2. Failure to file a Grade Replacement Contract will result in both the original and repeated grade being used to calculate your overall grade point average. Undergraduates are eligible to exercise grade replacement for only three course repeats during their career at UT Tyler; graduates are eligible for two grade replacements. Full policy details are printed on each Grade Replacement Contract.

3. The **Census Date (Jan. 25, 2021)** is the deadline for many forms and enrollment actions of which students need to be aware. These include:

- a) Submitting Grade Replacement Contracts, Transient Forms, requests to withhold directory information, approvals for taking courses as Audit, Pass/Fail or Credit/No Credit.
- b) Receiving 100% refunds for partial withdrawals. (There is no refund for these after the Census Date)
- c) Schedule adjustments (section changes, adding a new class, dropping without a “W” grade)
- d) Being reinstated or re-enrolled in classes after being dropped for non-payment
- e) Completing the process for tuition exemptions or waivers through Financial Aid

I. State-Mandated Course Drop Policy:

1. Texas law prohibits a student who began college for the first time in Fall 2007 or thereafter from dropping more than six courses during their entire undergraduate career. This includes courses dropped at another 2-year or 4-year Texas public college or university. For purposes of this rule, a dropped course is any course that is dropped after the census date (See Academic Calendar for the specific date).
2. Exceptions to the 6-drop rule may be found in the catalog. Petitions for exemptions must be submitted to the Enrollment Services Center and must be accompanied by documentation of the extenuating circumstance. Please contact the Enrollment Services Center if you have any questions.

J. Student Absence due to Religious Observance: Students who anticipate being absent from class due to a religious observance are requested to inform the instructor of such absences by the second class meeting of the semester.

K. Student Absence for University-Sponsored Events and Activities: If you intend to be absent for a university-sponsored event or activity, you (or the event sponsor) must notify the instructor at least two weeks prior to the date of the planned absence. At that time, the instructor will set a date and time when make-up assignments will be completed.

L. Social Security and FERPA Statement: It is the policy of The University of Texas at Tyler to protect the confidential nature of social security numbers. The University has changed its computer programming so that all students have an identification number. The electronic transmission of grades (e.g., via e-mail) risks violation of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act; grades will not be transmitted electronically.

M. Emergency Exits and Evacuation: Everyone is required to exit the building when a fire alarm goes off. Follow your instructor’s directions regarding the appropriate exit. If you require assistance during an evacuation, inform your instructor in the first week of class. Do not re-enter the building unless given permission by University Police, Fire department, or Fire Prevention Services.

N. UT Tyler Resources for Students:

1. UT Tyler Writing Center (903.565.5995), writingcenter@uttyler.edu
2. UT Tyler Tutoring Center (903.565.5964), tutoring@uttyler.edu
3. The Mathematics Learning Center, RBN 4021, this is the open access computer lab for math students, with tutors on duty to assist students who are enrolled in early-career courses.
4. UT Tyler Counseling Center (903.566.7254)