

Writing for Mass Media

Course Logistics and Instructor Contact Information

Course Title: **Writing for Mass Media**
Course Number and Section: **MCOM 2311.002**
Scheduled Class Days and Times: **8 a.m. to 9:20 a.m. Tuesday and Thursday**

Instructor Name: **John "Danny" Mogle**
Office Location: **CAS 204A**
Phone Number: **903-617-8196**
Email: jmogle@uttyler.edu
Best way to contact: **Call**

Office Hours: **10 a.m. to 11 a.m. Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday and by appointment. (I welcome and encourage office visits.)**

Course Information

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course covers the techniques of information gathering and writing for various audiences. Students learn skills that include interviewing, objective observation, research, and analysis. Emphasis is on writing cleanly, clearly, and concisely and adapting messages to different platforms and audiences. For mass comm majors, this course must be taken as one of the first three courses.

STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

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

Competency: Writing and Storytelling

- Write correctly and clearly using the formats and compelling storytelling styles appropriate for the audiences and purposes for strategic communication, integrated communication or multimedia journalism.
- Produce accurate news stories in appropriate format when given sets of facts.
- Demonstrate proficiency in writing including basic grammar and style and the use of Associated Press style.

Competency: Analysis and Systematic Inquiry

- Research and Evaluation: Conduct research and evaluate information by methods appropriate to public relations/integrated communication or multimedia journalism professions.

Competency: Legal and Ethical Principles:

- Demonstrate an understanding of and be able to apply the First Amendment and other legal principles for strategic communication, integrated communication and multimedia journalism. Recognize what constitutes libel, appropriation, intrusion, false light, and publicity about private facts.
- Demonstrate an understanding of professional ethical principles and issues involved in journalism, advertising and public relations
- Demonstrate an understanding of ethical behavior in mass media industries including social media.

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.
- Produce web, advertising and public relations materials in appropriate format when given sets of facts.
- Identify the different formats used in the various media covered.

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

Competency: Media Literacy

- Demonstrate the ability to identify different types of media and the messages they are sending
- Demonstrate the ability to analyze, evaluate and create media in different forms
- Be able to critically understand the nature, techniques and impacts of media messages on one's on life and the lives of others

REQUIRED TEXTBOOK

- **Associated Press Stylebook.** New York: Associated Press. Also available online at www.apstylebook.org ([Links to an external site.](#)). No older than 2019 edition.
- Select readings assigned in class and posted in Canvas over the course of this semester.

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

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

Communication

If you have a question or a 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. Tell me your name, that you are a student and why you are contacting me.

- You can also send me an email.
- Check the Announcements tab of Canvas regularly.
- If there is any valid reason that you cannot turn in work on time (such as becoming extremely sick), you must contact me.

Completing Work on Time

All assignments will be posted in Canvas and each will have a deadline. You must meet the to receive the full point value assigned to it. Missing a deadline results in a deduction.

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.)

ASSIGNMENTS AND WEIGHTS/POINT VALUES

Each assignment has a posted value assigned to it in Canvas. Each assignment also includes an explanation of the purpose of the assignment as well as information on 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 - 6.5% of grade
- skill-building assignments - 47% of grade
- writing assignments - 33% of grade

- attendance (starts with 100; 3 pts. off for every unexcused absence) - 6% of grade
- Use of the Stylebook - 8% of grade

GRADING SCALE

Your final grade is determined by the points you have acquired as a percentage to the total points available. No grade is weighted more heavily than any other.

- 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 it is turned in late -- typically 50%. All assignments will have a due date that is posted. Work and exams can be made up when you contact me in advance, especially in cases of a illness and emergencies. All I ask is that you be honest with me.

ATTENDANCE POLICY

You are expected to come to class each time the class meets. Your future or current employer expects you to come to work each time you are scheduled. You will receive a 3-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. \(Links to an external site.\)](#)

GRADED COURSE REQUIREMENTS INFORMATION

- The capstone project involves writing a news or feature story. It is worth 200 pts. It requires students interview at least three sources and write a story demonstrating the ability to draw interest into the story through a compelling lead; to use quotes correctly; organize material in an orderly way and to write cleanly, clearly, and concisely.
- Other writing assignments -- which range from 50 to 100 pts. -- require students to write news stories based on information provided to them.
- Stylebook assignments -- which are worth 15 to 50 points -- require students to turn to the Associated Press Stylebook for guidance on how to write in AP Style and how to deal with topics such as social media and ethical behavior.
- Graded discussions -- which are worth 30 to 15 points -- require students to complete tasks or share their thoughts on topics and comment on other student's posts
- Assignments -- which range from 50 to 20 points -- require students to demonstrate mastery of the skill being taught by performing tasks that require use of the skill.

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

CALENDAR

Census Date: The census date for the Fall 2021 semester is **Sept. 3**. 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 for this course.

Week by Week: Here is the week-by-week rundown of what will be covered. Sometimes circumstances require changes. Any changes will be minor and announced through Announcements.

WHAT'S NEWS (Aug. 24 and 26)

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.

CLEANING THE COPY (Aug. 31 and Sept. 2)

Competencies: Writing and Storytelling, Critical Evaluation

- Assignment: Putting proofreading skills to good use - 30
- Assignment: Grammar, punctuation, spelling - 50 pts.
- Assignment: Using the right/write word - 30 pts.

THE ART OF BEING CONCISE (Sept. 7 and 9)

Competencies: Writing and Storytelling, Critical Evaluation

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

CLEAR AND COMPLETE (Sept. 14 and 16)

Competencies: Writing and Storytelling, Critical Evaluation,

- 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.

SINS OF JOURNALISM (Sept. 21 and 23)

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.

AP STYLE (Sept. 28 and 30)

Competencies: Critical Evaluation, Writing and Storytelling

- Assignment: Using the AP Stylebook - 50 pts.
- Assignment: Recognizing the essentials - 40 pts.
- Assignment: Mastering the essentials - 30 pts.

GATHERING INFORMATION (Oct. 5 and 7)

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

- Writing: The journalist as an observer -- 40 pts.
- Writing: Working with a news release -- 40 pts.
- Assignment: Asking questions -- 25 pts.
- Graded discussion: Learn from an expert interviewer -- 25 pts.
- From the Stylebook: Working with sources - 25 pts.

THEIR VOICES (Oct. 12 and 15)

Competencies: Writing and Storytelling, Legal and Ethical Principles, Analysis and Systematic Inquiry

- From the Stylebook - Quotes: 30 pts.
- Assignment - Making decisions about quotes - 30 pts.
- Writing: Covering a news conference when everything is a quote - 50 pts.
- Graded discussion: What would you do? 15 pts.

PATHS FOR WRITING STORIES (Oct. 19 and 21)

Competencies: Writing and Storytelling, Media Literacy, Mediated Presentation

- Assignment: Building the inverted pyramid - 25 pts.
- Writing: 4 different types of stories -- 100 pts.

PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER (Oct. 26 and 29)

Competencies: Writing and Storytelling, Analysis and Systematic Inquiry, Media Literacy, Mediated Presentation

- Assignment: Planning your story - 25 pts.
- Writing: Writing your story - 200 pts.

THE DIGITAL WORLD (Nov. 2 and 4)

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

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

STRATEGIC COMMUNICATON (Nov. 9 and 11)

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

- Writing: Getting the message out: The News Release - 50 pts.
- Assignment: Getting the message out: A Facebook post - 10 pts.
- Assignment: Components of a strategic plan - 10 pts.
- Assignment: Event planning: 10 pts.

WRITING FOR BROADCAST (Nov. 16 and 18)

Competencies Writing and Storytelling, Analysis and Systematic Inquiry. Media Literacy, Mediated Presentation

- Writing: Writing a radio broadcast - 75 pts.
- Assignment: Is it for print or broadcast - 20

THANKSGIVING HOLIDAY (Nov. 23 and 25)

ETHICS (Nov. 30 and Dec. 2)

Competencies: Legal and Ethical Principles, Analysis and Systematic Inquiry.

- Assignment: Case studies in ethics - 100 pts.
- From the Stylebook: Guidance on ethics - 20 pts.
- Graded discussion: An ethical situation - 30 pts.