

MCOM 2311.002: Writing for Mass Media – Fall 2020
Tuesdays and Thursdays 11 a.m.-12:20 p.m. ~ Meets in CAS 106

Instructor: Lorri Allen

Office: FAC 2012

Email: LorriAllen@uttyler.edu

Office Hours: 2:30-4:30 p.m. Tuesdays (in person)
4-5 p.m. (on Zoom) M/W and by appointment

Phone: (903) 566-6120

Twitter: @LorriAllenTV, @SoundbiteCoach

COURSE DESCRIPTION: Techniques of information gathering and writing for various audiences. Practice in interviewing, objective observation, research and meeting deadlines.

Writing is key to any career in communications. Master these skills and you'll master your future.

STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

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

- 1 Write correctly and clearly using the formats and compelling storytelling styles appropriate for the audiences and purposes of public relations/integrated communication or multimedia journalism. (Competency: Writing/Storytelling)
 - Produce accurate news stories in the appropriate format when given sets of facts.
 - Produce web, advertising and public relations materials in an appropriate format.
 - Identify the different formats used in the various media covered.
 - Demonstrate proficiency in writing including grammar, spelling, punctuation and the use of the Associated Press Stylebook.
- 2 Conduct research and evaluate information using methods appropriate to public relations/integrated communication or multimedia journalism. (Competency: Analysis and Systematic Inquiry)
- 3 Demonstrate an understanding of and be able to apply First Amendment and other legal principles for public relations/integrated communication and/or multimedia journalism. (Competency: Analysis and Systematic Inquiry)
- 4 Demonstrate an understanding of professional ethical principles and issues for public relations/integrated communication and/or multimedia journalism. (Competency: Analysis and Systematic Inquiry)

REQUIRED TEXTBOOKS

- Harrower, Tim. (2012). *Inside Reporting (Third Ed.)*.
- Froke, Paula, et.al (2019). *2020-2022 The Associated Press Stylebook, 55th Edition*. New York: Associated Press. Also available online at www.apstylebook.com

Select readings will also be assigned and posted on Canvas.

REQUIRED MEDIA CONSUMPTION

Immerse yourself in mass media to get the most out of this class. Read newspapers and magazines daily in print and online. Watch and listen to news programs daily. Subscribe to a local and national news app. Examine commercials and advertising campaigns.

Suggested sources:

Newspapers: Patriot Talon, The Wall Street Journal, The New York Times, The Dallas Morning News, The Washington Post

Magazines: The Economist, Time, The New Yorker, Texas Monthly (free @TexasMonthly.com)

Viewing: PBS News hour – online and on the air; CNN’s Anderson Cooper 360, 60 Minutes, CBS Sunday Morning

Online: Politico.com, bbc.com, TexasTribune.org, <https://www.propublica.org>

Listening: NPR NPR.org

WHAT TO KNOW ABOUT THIS CLASS

Important Covid-19 Information

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 views adoption of these practices consistent with its [Honor Code](#) and a sign of good citizenship.

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 email saroffice@uttyler.edu.

Recording of Class Sessions

Class sessions may be recorded for your use in this course. Recordings that contain personally identifiable information or other information subject to FERPA will 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.

Attendance: Attendance is taken and required. Students who anticipate being absent due to religious observance or university-sponsored activities should inform me by the second week of classes.

- If you're sick, show me your doctor's note to receive an excused absence. Work is NOT an excuse; school comes first.
- If a close family member dies, bring the obituary or funeral program to receive an excused absence. Close relatives are defined as *your* siblings, parents, child or grandparents.
- You are responsible for lecture materials, announcements and assignments made during any absence. But don't be absent.
- If you are 10 minutes late or leave early, you may be considered absent.
- No make-up tests will be allowed. I also don't allow students to take quizzes or exams early.
- Students late to class on test/quiz days will not be allowed to take the exam if others have already completed the test or quiz.

Assignment Policy:

- Unless otherwise specified, assignments are due at the start of class.
- Assignments must be typed using the format required for the assignment.
- Students must complete all assignments to pass the course. This does not mean, however, that completing all assignments guarantees a passing grade.
- Due dates may change at my discretion with fair notice, always in your favor.
- NO LATE PAPERS will be accepted--not even one minute late. So I urge you to submit papers well before the deadline.
- All assignments must include your name, date, assignment name, course name and word count on the upper left of page 1.
- According to Bloom's Taxonomy, assignments will increase in difficulty and the grading will become stricter through the semester. Plus, you're required to show both a mastery of understanding and skills.
- You must turn in all assignments by deadline. **And they must be turned in the way the rubric instructs you.** *If the assignment is not submitted correctly, it won't be accepted and earns a grade of zero.*

WHY?

Being a journalist requires good observation skills. Being a great employee in any field requires noticing details and following instructions. To reinforce these skills, assignments will differ, *so read each rubric carefully.*

Classroom Courtesies: [These apply whether you're in a classroom or online.]

- No cellphone, tablet, laptop, smart watch or other device during class unless the assignment specifically calls for the use. That means no calls, no texts, no status update checks—no exceptions, although you are allowed to ask me privately if you think you have a reason that may warrant an exception.
- No eating is allowed in the lab. Water in a bottle or container with a top is OK.

Access to Technology:

- I use Canvas to communicate any last-minute changes and to post reading selections.
- Email policy: on weekdays, I will do my best to answer your questions in 24 hours. On weekends, I will do my best to answer you in 48 hours.

Academic Honesty:

- Practice academic integrity and accept responsibility for your actions.
- 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 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.

GRADING: There are 1,000 points possible.

- **Attendance and Participation (100):** You are expected to be at all classes, ready to discuss assignments and mass media. Unexcused absences count off in this category, as does your lack of engagement. Rude, disrespectful or disruptive actions may result in more points subtracted—at the professor's decision. You're still subject to University policies regarding attendance. Excessive absences will not be tolerated. Please understand and adhere to the UT Tyler attendance policy.
- **Current Events and AP Style Quizzes (100):** To encourage you to learn Associated Press style and to keep current on mass media, you'll have a quiz due the first 10 Thursdays. I'll post it to Canvas, and you may use your AP Stylebook and any news resources you have. Each quiz will be worth 10 points.
- **Assignments (600 points):** Writing assignments will vary in length, gradually getting more challenging and adding social media and photography requirements.

- **Mid-term Exam** (100 points): An exam that covers lessons learned so far.
- **Final Exam** (100 points): An exam that covers lessons learned since the mid-term.

Grades are based on the overall **points** you earn.

A: 900-1,000 **B:** 800-899 **C:** 700-799 **D:** 600-699 **F:** 0-599 **I:** Incomplete

I'll grade as soon as I can; however, attendance/participation grades aren't determined until the end of the semester.

Grading rubrics: Assignments will have a rubric to guide you. However, the following apply to all assignments:

- **Clean copy is important.** Your grade for each assignment will be reduced depending on how many grammar, spelling, punctuation or AP errors you have.
- **Facts are even more important.** An error of fact results in a zero.
- **Names are just as important.** If you misspell a name (including mine), you will get a zero for the assignment.
- **Plagiarism will not be tolerated.** 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>

Thanks to Dr. Emily Scheinfeld for the following nuances:

- **Intent:** When reviewing a possible case of plagiarism, your intent will not be taken into consideration. In other words, an act of plagiarism is plagiarism.
- **Mistakes and accidents:** The possibility you mistakenly or accidentally committed plagiarism will not be taken into consideration.
- **Appeal to ignorance:** Your claim to ignorance about this policy is not ever a valid justification to plagiarize.
- **Collaboration:** Students are not permitted to collaborate on an essay, discussion post, quiz, test or any written assignment. Having someone proofread your work is OK, but can only entail matters of style, grammar, punctuation and spelling.

Electronics policy:

- No cellphone, tablet or other device use during class unless the assignment calls for the use. No calls, no texts, no social media.
- The first time you use a device when you're not supposed to be, I will take it for the rest of the class period. The second time, you pay \$5 to get it back, the third \$10 and so on. The money is donated to a scholarship fund. And you get a "0" for that day's participation grade.

This includes taking photos of visual aids without permission.

WHY am I so mean?

As a graduate student in the 2010's, sitting behind and beside classmates on their laptops, I was distracted. Read this:

<https://www.chronicle.com/blogs/linguafranca/2014/08/25/why-im-asking-you-not-to-use-laptops/>

Studies show taking notes by hand helps you synthesize and prioritize. Other studies indicate having your computer on **EVEN TO TAKE NOTES** lowers your grade. Please read the articles on Canvas about this.

University of Texas at Tyler Policies

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.

Educating students to take their place in the world engenders a serious responsibility for any educational institution. The University recognizes that future decisions made by these citizens must be grounded in ethics as well as in academic knowledge if these decisions will protect and benefit society. For these reasons, UT Tyler takes a proactive stand and adopts an Honor code so students may be equipped with an ethical framework for their future.

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>

Campus Carry

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>

Tobacco-Free

All forms of tobacco are banned on 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. Cessation programs are available to students looking to quit smoking, including counseling, quitlines and group support. For more information on cessation programs, please visit www.uttyler.edu/tobacco-free.

Grade Replacement/Forgiveness and Census Date Policies

Students repeating a course for grade forgiveness (grade replacement) must file a Grade Replacement Contract with the Enrollment Services Center on or before the Census Date of the semester in which the course will be repeated. 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. 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.

The Census Date is the deadline for many forms and enrollment actions of which students need to be aware. These include:

- Submitting Grade Replacement Contracts, Transient Forms, requests to withhold directory information, approvals for taking courses as Audit, Pass/Fail or Credit/No Credit.
- Receiving 100 percent refunds for partial withdrawals. (There is no refund for these after the Census Date)

- Schedule adjustments (section changes, adding a new class, dropping without a “W” grade)
- Being reinstated or re-enrolled in classes after being dropped for non-payment
- Completing the process for tuition exemptions or waivers through Financial Aid

State-Mandated Course Drop Policy

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 dropped after the census date. Exceptions to the 6-drop rule may be found in the catalog. Petitions for exemptions must be submitted to the Enrollment Services Center and be accompanied by documentation of the extenuating circumstance. Please contact the Enrollment Services Center if you have questions.

CENSUS DATE is Sept. 4

Last day to withdraw is Nov. 2

Student Absence due to Religious Observance

Students who anticipate being absent from class due to a religious observance are asked to inform the instructor of such absences by the second class meeting of the semester.

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 2 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.

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 email) risks violation of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act; grades will not be transmitted electronically.

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.

Student Standards of Academic Conduct

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.

“**Cheating**” includes, but is not limited to:

- Copying from another student’s test paper;
- Using, during a test, materials not authorized by the person giving the test;
- Failure to comply with instructions given by the person administering the test;
- Possession during a test of materials, which are not authorized by the person giving the test, such as class, notes or specifically designed “crib notes;” The presence of textbooks constitutes a violation if the person administering the test has specifically prohibited them;
- Using, buying, stealing, transporting or soliciting in whole or part the contents of an unadministered test, test key, homework solution or computer program;
- Collaborating with or seeking aid from another student during a test or other assignment without authority;
- Discussing the contents of an examination with another student who will take the examination;
- Divulging the contents of an examination, for the purpose of preserving questions for use by another, when the instructors has 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;
- Substituting for another person, or permitting another person to substitute for oneself to take a course, a

test or any course-related assignment;

- 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;
- Falsifying research data, laboratory reports, and/or other academic work offered for credit;
- 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
- 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.

“**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.

“**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.

UT Tyler Resources for Students

- UT Tyler Writing Center (903.565.5995), writingcenter@uttyler.edu
- UT Tyler Tutoring Center (903.565.5964), tutoring@uttyler.edu
- UT Tyler Counseling Center (903.566.7254)

Disability/Accessibility Services: In accordance with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, Americans with Disabilities Act and the ADA Amendments Act, UT 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, visit <https://hood.accessiblelearning.com/UTTyler> and fill out the New Student application. The **Student Accessibility and Resources** office will contact you when your application has been submitted. For more information, please visit the SAR webpage at <http://www.uttyler.edu/disabilityservices>, the SAR office in UC 3150 or call 903.566.7079.