

Syllabus

MCOM 2311.060 Writing for Mass Media

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Semester: Spring 2021, online

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Note: Syllabus is subject to change. Any changes will be posted under Announcements on Canvas.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Catalog: Techniques of information gathering and writing for various audiences. Practice in interviewing, objective observation, document research including the Internet, and analysis skills. Emphasis is on integration of emerging media. Must be taken in first 9 hours in program.

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 public relations, integrated communication or multimedia journalism.
- Produce accurate news and editorial stories in appropriate format when given sets of facts.
- Demonstrate proficiency in writing including basic grammar and style and the use of the Associated Press.

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.
- Legal and Ethical Principles:
 - Demonstrate an understanding of and be able to apply the First Amendment and other legal principles for public relations, 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 for

public relations/integrated communication and/or multimedia journalism.

- Demonstrate an understanding of ethical behavior in mass media industries.

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.

REQUIRED READINGS

- 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. Share clips and

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.

THINGS TO KNOW ABOUT THIS CLASS

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 calling.

- 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 or you will get a grade of 0 for the assignment in question.

Completing Work on Time

All assignments will be posted in Canvas and each will have a deadline. You must meet the deadline in order to receive the point value assigned to it. Missing a deadline results in a 0. There will be graded discussions and assignments that require you to demonstrate mastery of skills or concepts presented. The PowerPoint, lectures, graded discussions and assignments will be posted each Monday and the deadline typically will be the next Monday.

Taking a course online requires discipline. Do not wait until the last minute to try and do the work. Some assignments will require a great deal of time.

You can access the PowerPoints, readings and other material at any time. This course does not use Zoom, requiring students to log in at a specific time.

Academic Honesty

Even though this is an online class, the University's academy honesty policies still 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>

HOW YOUR GRADE IS DETERMINED

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 three general categories: graded discussions, skill-building assignments and writing assignments.
- Your final grade is determined by the amount of points you have as a percentage to 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.

COURSE TOPICS

The course is divided into 16 units. Each unit represents about one week of the semester. Below is a break down of the semester by unit with assignments. AGAIN, this lineup is subject to change. Because of the pandemic and other factors, I sometimes make changes as a semester progresses. However, the changes will be minor.

- **Welcome to the Class**
 - Graded Discussion: Let's Get Stated
- **What is news?**
 - Assignment: Applying news value
 - Assignment: Is it fake?
 - Assignment: Distinguishing facts from opinion
 - Graded discussion: A nose for news
- **Cleaning the copy**
 - Assignment: Grammar, spelling and punctuation
 - Assignment: Choosing the right/write word
 - Assignment: Putting proofreading to good use
- **Keeping it clear**
 - Assignment: Did you misplace your modifier?
 - Assignment: Terminate your procrastination and commence this examination
 - Assignment: This is clear as mud -
 - Graded Discussion: The art of being simple
- **The art of being concise**
 - Assignment: Active or passive?
 - Assignment: Getting rid of the clutter
 - Assignment: Make it more concise
- **Telling the whole story**
 - Assignment: What is missing?
 - Assignment: All things included
 - Writing: Put writing skills to practice -
- **The "sins" of journalism**
 - Assignment: Don't write that
 - Assignment: Recognizing inappropriate wording
 - Assignment: What's the problem?
 - Graded discussion: The topic of media bias
- **AP Style**
 - Assignment: Using the AP Stylebook
 - Assignment: Recognizing the essentials
 - Assignment: Mastering the essentials
- **Gather information**
 - Writing: The journalist as an observer
 - Writing: Working with a news release
 - Assignment: Asking questions
 - Graded discussion: Learn from an expert interviewer

- **Their Voices**
 - Assignment: Quotes vs. paraphrasing
 - Assignment: Making decisions about quotes
 - Assignment: Guidance from the AP Stylebook
 - Graded discussion: What would you do?.
- **Putting it all together**
 - Writing Part I: Identifying sources
 - Writing Part II: Preparing questions
 - Writing Part III: Writing the story
- **Paths for writing a story**
 - Assignment: Building an inverted pyramid
 - Writing: Writing from info provided
 - Assignment: Human interest elements
- **The Digital world**
 - Assignment: Reporting in the digital age.
 - Assignment: Evaluating a news website
 - Assignment: Planning a news package.
 - Graded discussion: Attitudes about the internet as a news source - 15 pts.
- **Writing for broadcast**
 - Assignment: Is it for broadcast or print
 - Assignment: Evaluating a newscast
 - Writing: Writing a radio broadcast
- **Ethics**
 - Assignment: Case studies in ethics
 - What does the AP Stylebook say?
 - Graded Discussion: An ethical situation
- **Media Law**
 - Assignment: Applying media Law

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 they have been specifically prohibited by the person administering the test

- 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 exam
- 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
- 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 offered for credit.
- 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.
- Written work that is submitted may be subject to review by plagiarism software.

IMPORTANT COVID-19 INFORMATION FOR CLASSROOM 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 \(Links to an external site.\)](#). The UT Tyler community of Patriots views adoption of these practices consistent with its [Honor Code \(Links to an external site.\)](#) 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 email saroffice@uttyler.edu.

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.

DISABILITY/ACCESSIBILITY SERVICES

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.

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.

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 (STE 230) 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% 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 nonpayment
- Completing the process for tuition exemptions or waivers through Financial Aid

STATE-MANDATE 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 that is dropped after the census date (See Academic Calendar for the specific 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 must be accompanied by documentation of the extenuating circumstance. Please contact the Enrollment Services Center if you have any questions.

STUDENT ABSENCE POLICIES

- **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.
- **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.

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.

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 RESOURCES FOR SUCCESS

Writing Center ([Links to an external site.](#)): The Writing Center provides all undergraduate and graduate students a place to work on their writing projects and skills. There are tutoring options as well as workshops available to support you in your academic writing.

Math Learning Center ([Links to an external site.](#)): The Math Learning Center provides drop-in tutoring for lower-level math courses throughout the week. The MLC also has computer workstations for your use.

PASS Tutoring Center ([Links to an external site.](#)): The PASS Tutoring Center supports a variety of courses. Due to COVID-19, we are asking that you schedule an appointment for your face-to-face tutoring support. Tutoring is also available through Zoom tutoring sessions. Check the website to see the courses supported for the Fall 2020 term.

Supplemental Instruction (SI) ([Links to an external site.](#)): SI is a series of weekly peer-assisted study sessions in courses identified by previous students as difficult. Due to COVID-19, SI sessions will be conducted face-to-face and via Zoom this fall. Check the website to see the support courses for the Fall 2020 term.

Upswing (24/7 Online Tutoring): ([Links to an external site.](#)) Upswing is a free, confidential, and convenient way to receive help in nearly all of UT Tyler's undergraduate courses.

Robert R. Muntz Library Staff ([Links to an external site.](#)): UT Tyler has an incredible staff of librarians ready to assist you. [Discipline/major library liaisons](#) ([Links to an external site.](#)) are available to support you and you can also schedule appointments for research consultations. In addition, the Robert R. Muntz library's Head of University Archives and Special Collections can assist you with scholarly communications, primary sources, and archive materials.

Canvas 101 ([Links to an external site.](#)): This Canvas course provides you with a wealth of information – including how to navigate in Canvas, use ProctorU (and even take a practice test), tips for being a successful online and hybrid learner, how to use Zoom, and more!

Digital Support Toolkits: Digital Support Toolkits are supplemental materials generated by faculty to help you be successful in targeted courses typically taken by our freshman and sophomore population. Students registered in Digital Support Toolkits supported courses will find these in their Canvas dashboard. You don't have to register – just take advantage of this great resource.

UT Tyler Testing Center ([Links to an external site.](#)): The Testing Center provides securing testing opportunities to meet the needs of students and the community in an environment conducive to student and academic success.

Student Accessibility and Resource (SAR) Office ([Links to an external site.](#)): The SAR Office works to provide students equal access to all educational, social, and co-curriculum programs through the coordination of services and reasonable accommodations, consultation, and advocacy.

Student Counseling Center ([Links to an external site.](#)): The Student Counseling Center supports students in developing balance, resiliency, and overall well-being both academically and personally. They have in person and virtual counseling options. In

addition, the Student Counseling Center offers [TAO \(Links to an external site.\)](#), a self-help, completely private online library of behavioral health resources. Sign in to the TAO website using your UT Tyler credentials.