

Writing for Mass Media

MCOM 2311 | Fall 2021

Monday-Wednesday-Friday ~ 9:05 –10 a.m.

CAS 106

OFFICE hours: Mondays and Wednesdays, 1-3 p.m. and by appointment at your convenience. Any meeting can be held in person, by Zoom, phone or FaceTime, your preference!

Professor Lorri Allen

Email: LorriAllen@UTTyler.edu

Office: 903-566-6120

FAC 2012

Twitter: @LorriAllenTV

COURSE DESCRIPTION: Learn techniques of information gathering and writing for various audiences.

Practice in interviewing, objective observation, research and meeting deadlines will help in any career. Writing is key to successfully express your work in communications. Master these skills and you'll master your future.

Benefits of taking this course: You will improve your **critical thinking, communication, writing** and **deadline** skills.

In accordance with **Bloom's Taxonomy**, assignments and grading will increase in difficulty as the semester goes along.

COVID-19 Policy:

Students are expected to wear face masks covering their nose and mouth in public settings (including classrooms and labs). The UT Tyler Patriot community views these practices consistent with its Honor Code and a sign of good citizenship as well as showing respect to classmates, faculty and staff.

Students who are feeling ill or experiencing symptoms such as sneezing, coughing, digestive issues (e.g. nausea, diarrhea), or a higher than normal temperature should stay at home and are encouraged to use the [UT Tyler COVID-19 Information and Procedures](#) website to review protocols, check symptoms and report possible exposure. Students needing additional accommodations may contact the Office of Student Accessibility and Resources at University Center 3150, call (903) 566-7079 or email saroffice@uttyler.edu.

GRADES

- **Class attendance and participation** (100 points):

Attend all classes. Get all 100 points *if you also come to class prepared, participate in both online and classroom discussions and remain engaged* in your education.

- **Quizzes** (10 at 10 points for 100 total):

Designed to encourage you to learn AP Style and stay up with current events. Expect questions about your reading assignments, too.

- **Four writing exercises** (100 points each for a total of 400):

The assignments develop multimedia journalism skills and prep you for upper level classes: news story, news release, ad spot, crisis PR.

- **Prep and practice** (115 points):

This collection of easier assignments help you develop skills for your assignments worth more points. Hint: Don't blow these off because the point total seems small. Every point counts toward your grade, and completing these assignments will help you learn.

- **Social/Online** (55 points):

These two assignments could help you get an internship or a job!

- **Reflection questions** (Three at 10 points each for 30 total):

Recent research on learning indicates you can retain more of the lesson if you reflect on how it's helpful or how it contributes to a bigger goal.

- **Mid-Term** (100 points):

The test checks your comprehension and application of assignments.

- **Final** (100 points):

The final tests your application of skills learned throughout the semester.

****Note: Each assignment will have a detailed rubric explaining what's required. The rubric will also show you how the assignment relates to your student learning outcomes for the course.**

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

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

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

Notice I use multiple assessment strategies so you can earn points in several ways—it helps those who suffer from test anxiety, and I get a more accurate measure of how much you have learned.

Grading rubrics: Even though each assignment has a rubric to guide you, the following apply to all assignments:

- **Clean copy.** Your grade for each assignment will be reduced depending on how many grammar, spelling, punctuation or AP errors you have.
- **Facts are 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.

Assignment policy

1. Please use Microsoft Word to complete your writing projects.
2. Writing assignments must include your name, date, assignment name, course name and word count on the upper left of page 1. In fact, copy and paste this example into your document if it will help you!

Trinity Morrow

Sept. 3, 2021

Story Pitches, MCOM 2311

Word Count: 320

1. You must turn in all assignments by deadline. *No late assignments accepted.* However, talk to me at least 36 hours ahead of time if you're having challenges. I may extend your deadline.
2. Assignments **must be turned in the way the rubric states.** *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.*

Truth, Honesty, Originality are important in any coursework.

But they are hallmarks of Journalism and Public Relations. So, committing the following “sins” are especially egregious.

- ***Plagiarism or fabrication in any form will not be tolerated.*** Students caught plagiarizing or fabricating 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 Emily Scheinfeld, Ph.D., 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 fabricated or committed plagiarism will not be taken into consideration.
- ***Appeal to ignorance:*** Your claim to ignorance about this policy is not a valid justification to plagiarize.

All work submitted must be original; students may not submit graded work from another course.

Forms of academic dishonesty include: Collusion— lending your work to another person to submit as his or her own; Fabrication— deliberately creating false information, and Plagiarism— the presentation of another person's work as your own.

The University requires all members of its community to follow copyright and fair use requirements. You are individually and solely responsible for violations of copyright and fair use laws. The University will neither protect nor defend nor assume any responsibility for student violations of fair use laws. Violations of copyright laws could subject you to *federal and state civil penalties and criminal liability, as well as disciplinary action.*

Academic Dishonesty is never tolerated by the University or the Department of Communication.

Student Learning Outcomes

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

- 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 PR materials in an appropriate format.
 - Identify different formats used in the various media covered.
 - Demonstrate proficiency in grammar, spelling, punctuation and the use of the Associated Press Stylebook.
- Conduct research and evaluate information using methods appropriate to public relations/integrated communication or multimedia journalism. (Competency: Analysis and Systematic Inquiry)
 - 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)
 - Demonstrate an understanding of professional ethical principles and issues for public relations/integrated communication and/or multimedia journalism. (Competency: Analysis and Systematic Inquiry)

Another way to look at the semester's goals:

<i>Learning outcomes</i>	<i>Assignments</i>	<i>Marketable Skills</i>
Storytelling, writing	News story, release	Interviewing, writing
Analysis	Finding stories, sources	Research
Systematic Inquiry, writing	Quizzes, scavenger hunt, social/online	Following directions, photography, digital
Analysis, storytelling	Ad spot, crisis PR	Persuasion
Writing	Reflections, pitches	Meeting deadlines

Required reading

- Harrower, Tim. (2012). *Inside Reporting (Third Ed.)*.
- *2020-2022 Associated Press Stylebook*. New York: Associated Press.
- Handouts, articles provided on Canvas.

Also:

Immerse yourself in mass media, from news and podcasts to commercials and ads. Notice word usage, storytelling, objectivity.

Get your news from a variety of sources to ensure a nonbiased perspective. Suggestions:

Viewing: *PBS NewsHour*, CNN, *60 Minutes*, CBS Morning News

Listening: NPR Morning Edition, All Things Considered. Hear NPR locally on 99.7 FM or download the NPR app and stream KVUT.

Tips to succeed in this course:

#1 – Come prepared. You've read, watched or listened to the assigned content so you can use class time to discuss, ask questions or work.

#2 – Attend class. We move fast and missing even one class means you may miss crucial instruction.

Plus, attendance and participation are part of your grade.

I offer flexibility for real-world emergencies such as COVID-19 and take appeals on a case-by-case basis. But in nearly every situation:

- No make-up tests or quizzes will be created.
- Students late to class on test/quiz days will not be allowed to take the exam if others have already completed the exam and/or left the room.
- **Work does not qualify as an excused absence.**
- If you're sick, provide a doctor's note to earn an excused absence.
- If a close family member dies, send the obituary or funeral program for an excused absence. "Close" = *your* siblings, parents, child or grandparents.
- Unexcused absences count off, as does lack of engagement. Rude, disrespectful or disruptive actions may result in more points subtracted— at the professor's discretion. You're still subject to University policies. Please follow the UT Tyler attendance policy.

#3 – Understand the assignment policy:

You're responsible for turning in all assignments by deadline. You're responsible for following instructions on how to submit assignments. You're also responsible for lecture materials, announcements and assignments made during any absence. *But don't be absent.*

- Assignment due dates may change at the instructor's discretion *with fair notice and always to your benefit.*
- You must complete all assignments to pass the course. This does not mean, however, that merely completing all assignments

guarantees a passing grade.

- **NO LATE ASSIGNMENTS** are accepted. So, it's better to turn in unfinished work and get some points rather than none.

#4 – Practice classroom courtesies:

- No eating or drinking in the lab.
- Treat your classmates and me with respect and kindness.
- Please don't use your phone, tablet or other device *during lectures* unless I specifically call for it. No calls, no texts, no status update checks, etc.

Don't insult my intelligence by thinking I don't see you checking your phone. In other words, like most journalists, I have terrific observation skills. Plus, since you're paying to learn and get a degree, maximize every valuable moment of this experience. If I do see you using your devices when it's not appropriate, I'll say nothing to embarrass you, but I'll note it on your participation grade.

#5 – Stay in touch:

- I use Canvas and email to communicate. Check Canvas regularly.
- Email policy: on weekdays, I'll do my best to answer you in 24 hours. On weekends, give me 48 hours.
- Text my personal cell if you have an emergency: 214-878-8610.

#6 – Realize Academic Honesty is the most important trait you can protect. Careers – and grades – are lost when people cheat.

- 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 me.
- Anyone caught cheating will earn a "0" for that assignment and be subject to academic and disciplinary action.

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)

University of Texas at Tyler Policies

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.**

Educating students to take their place in the world is 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.

Students Rights and Responsibilities

Rights and responsibilities: <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 class. License holders are expected to behave responsibly and keep a handgun secure and concealed.

More info: <http://www.uttyler.edu/about/campus-carry/index.php>

Tobacco-Free

All forms of tobacco are banned on all campuses and any UT Tyler property. 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, 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% refunds for partial withdrawals. (No refund 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

CENSUS DATE is Sept. 3

Last day to withdraw is Nov. 1

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 that is 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 must be accompanied by documentation of the extenuating circumstance. Please contact the Enrollment Services Center if you have questions.

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 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 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 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 University property 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 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.