

**University of Texas at Tyler**  
**Department of Communication**  
**MCOM 4325**  
**Multimedia Writing and Storytelling**  
**MW 3-5 p.m., CAS Room 102 (inside studio)**  
**Fall 2020 Syllabus**

Instructor: Dr. Terry L. Britt

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Fall 2020 Office Hours: Tu 12:30-2:30 p.m., W 11 a.m.-noon, or by appointment

**SPECIAL NOTE: This syllabus has been constructed on the premise that we will be able to complete the course as scheduled in a hybrid format; that is, a rotating basis of approximately half the enrolled students attending in person and the other half attending virtually via Zoom. The syllabus and all assignment requirements within it are subject to change, particularly if public health conditions necessitate converting the course to online-only at some point during the semester.**

### **Course Overview**

Multimedia Writing/Storytelling teaches basic skills to create multimedia journalism projects. Multimedia stories will incorporate text, images, audio, video and data visualizations. You will apply standards of journalistic reporting and writing to your work throughout the semester. Whether you plan to work at a newspaper, television station, radio station, production studio or PR/advertising agency, you need to be able to produce content for multiple platforms in multiple ways. Multimedia Writing and Storytelling provides you those skills. This course has a specific emphasis on writing for broadcast and the web.

**Prerequisites:** MCOM 3303 or MCOM 3395.

**Student Learning Objectives** – Upon completion of the course, you will be able to:

#### **Competency: Writing/Storytelling:**

- Write correctly and clearly using formats and styles appropriate for public relations/integrated communication or multimedia journalism for the audiences and purposes required.
- Demonstrate an understanding of digital medium requirements through written assignments, including research, scripts and projects.
- Demonstrate the ability to develop news stories for different media.

**Competency: Analysis and Systematic Inquiry:**

- Conduct research and evaluate information by methods appropriate to public relations/integrated communication or multimedia journalism professions. o Analyze writing practices, strategies and procedures for multiple forms of news production.
- Demonstrate an understanding of and ability to apply the First Amendment and other legal principles for public relations/integrated communication and/or multimedia journalism.
- Show an understanding of professional ethical principles and issues for public relations/integrated communication and/or multimedia journalism.
- Demonstrate an understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of telling journalistic stories with different media and apply those skills to analyzing and developing your own content.

**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 mediated journalism.
- Demonstrate an understanding of and proficiency with the skills needed to make practical producing decisions.
- Demonstrate skills using multiple software and hardware for creating multimedia stories.

**Competency: Argument:**

- Construct a persuasive message, adapted to the audience, purpose and context of the situation.

**REQUIRED TEXTS:**

- 2020 *Associated Press Stylebook*. New York: Associated Press, or digital access to the Associated Press Stylebook Online.
- Tomkins, AI (2017). *Aim for the Heart: Write, Shoot, Report and Produce for TV and Multimedia* (Third Edition). Thousand Oaks, California: CQ Press. ISBN-13: 978-1506315256
- Articles and tip sheets to be assigned.

**Equipment** used in this class is available for checkout (make sure you're aware of the equipment checkout policy at UT Tyler).

**REQUIRED MEDIA CONSUMPTION:**

To understand and complete assignments, you **MUST** watch and listen to news programs, promotional campaigns and podcasts. Immerse yourself in mass media.

Suggested sources:

**Newspapers:** *The New York Times* (free digital access available), *The Dallas Morning News*, *Houston Chronicle*, *The Washington Post*

**Magazines:** *The New Yorker*, *Texas Monthly*, *Atlantic Monthly*

**Viewing:** 60 Minutes, CBS Sunday Morning News

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

**Listening:** NPR (100.1) or streaming at NPR.org

#### **WHAT TO KNOW:**

**Attendance: All classes are mandatory.** Since we only meet twice a week, each discussion and activity build toward the next. Attendance and participation are a part of your grade.

- Students who anticipate being absent due to university-sponsored activities should inform me by the second class meeting.
- Work is NOT considered an excused absence. It is your responsibility to arrange work hours to accommodate class hours.
- You are responsible for turning in all assignments by deadline. You are also responsible for lecture materials, announcements and assignments made during any absence.
- Please be in class (virtually or in-person) no later than 10 minutes past the start of the class; anyone arriving later than that may be considered absent. Do not ask to leave class early.
- Quizzes for the class will be administered online and therefore must be completed by each due date – please arrange time to sign in to Canvas and complete the assigned quiz by the due date. Make-up quizzes will not be offered except in an unanticipated lengthy illness or a death in the family.
- To qualify for an excused sick absence, you must provide a doctor's note.
- You may be excused for a death in the family if the person who died is your parent, grandparent, sibling, spouse or child. Please provide a copy of the obituary or service program to the instructor.

#### **Assignment Policy:**

- Unless otherwise specified, assignments are due **before** the start of class.
- Assignments and due dates may change – in your favor – with fair notice.
- You must complete all assignments to pass the course. This does not mean, however, that merely completing all assignments guarantees a passing grade.
- Rubrics for the project-based assignments will be distributed via Canvas. Please read each one carefully; if you have questions, the time to ask is before you begin work on the project, not after you are well into production or on the day of the assignment deadline.

#### **Classroom Courtesies:**

- No cellphone, tablet or other device use during class unless the assignment specifically calls for the use. Violation of this policy may result in loss of the device until after class.
- No eating or drinking is allowed in any of the MCOM labs. If you must finish a beverage or food, do so before entering the lab area, classroom, or studio.
- When in classroom discussion, be respectful of your colleagues. Debating and challenging of points are welcome, but personal attacks, verbal bullying, and slurs are not only unwelcome but also subject to disciplinary action.

#### **Course Content, Announcements and Communication**

- I use Canvas to communicate, post assignments and readings, present feedback and provide a space for you to communicate with your classmates.

- Email response policy: In most cases, if you contact me by email on a weekday before 10 p.m. you can expect a response the same day (usually within two hours). Emails after 10 p.m. Sunday through Thursday will usually be answered the following morning. On weekends (Fridays 10 p.m.-Sundays 10 p.m.), I will try to answer emails as soon as possible, but you should not expect a reply before the following Monday morning.

### **Academic Honesty**

- You are responsible for your own work or your portion of work if within a group. Be honest, forthright, and accept responsibility.
- 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 zero 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.

### **Assignments and course grade weights**

**Attendance and Participation (10%):** You are expected to prepare for and be at all classes. Attendance for each class session throughout the semester will score 100 points; for each class missed, expect a deduction of four (4) points.

**News and course content quizzes (10%):** You will have 10 quizzes (via Canvas), due by 5 p.m. each Friday starting Sept. 4 and continuing through Nov. 6. These quizzes will contain a mix of questions on current news events and concepts from the textbook and in-class discussion each week.

### **(Rubrics TBA for each of the following assignments)**

**Video skills projects (20%):** These will consist of two packages of a voice-over, interview, sound-on-tape and standup. Both packages will be assigned; one will focus on a news story, the other will focus on a public relations/promotional matter. In today's media job market, it's essential you have some experience and familiarity with both sides of the news journalism/advertising and PR fence (and potentially something to include in a work portfolio).

**Broadcast package (Midterm project) (25%):** As a course midterm, you will produce a video report (60-90s TRT), audio story (3-4m TRT) and scripts for both. The topic and emphasis (news story, product/service advertisement, or public relations content) are up to you, but need instructor approval before proceeding. You may secure the services of others as on-screen or on-air talent (talent agreement forms required), but the recording work, editing, and reporting work or narration must be you solely.

**Capstone project** (Course final) (35%): The course final will be a multimedia capstone project on a pre-approved (deadline for proposals on Sept. 25) subject as a news story package, in-depth advertisement package, or public relations content package. Again, you may recruit talent, if applicable (talent agreement forms required), but the writing and production work must be solely your own. The project will include building a webpage (through a free, basic account on Wix) to house your content and must include the following:

- A main story of 1,000-1,500 words
- One main photograph and one secondary photograph
- An infographic directly pertaining to the chosen subject.
- A video (3-5m TRT) on the subject or spotlighting a main aspect of the subject.
- Three social media entries of your choice, housed on official class accounts that will be set up.
- ONE of the following – either a supplemental photo gallery of 7-10 images OR an audio story or promotional between 3-5 minutes TRT.

### **Course grade table**

A: 90-100%

B: 80-89%

C: 70-79%

D: 60-69%

F: 59% and below

For the purpose of course grades, I round up at a decimal of .5 and above. All students majoring within the Department of Communication must pass with a grade of C or better to receive credit for department courses.

### **Course schedule (subject to change)**

#### Week 1

8/24 – Course orientation

8/26 – Thinking in the language of multimedia (Dr. Britt); discussion of video skills projects

#### Week 2

8/31 & 9/2 – Discussion of readings: Tompkins, Ch. 1-3

9/4 – Quiz 1 due, 5 p.m. on Canvas; Pitch for Video Skills Project 1 due, 5 p.m. on Canvas.

#### Week 3

9/7 – No class meeting; Labor Day holiday

9/9 – Discussion of readings; Tompkins, Ch. 4-6

9/11 - Quiz 2 due, 5 p.m. on Canvas; Pitch for Video Skills Project 2 due, 5 p.m. on Canvas.

#### Week 4

9/14 & 9/16 - Discussion of readings; Tompkins, Ch. 7-9

9/18 - Quiz 3 due, 5 p.m. on Canvas; Pitch for Broadcast Package due, 5 p.m. on Canvas.

#### Week 5

9/21 & 9/23 - Discussion of readings; Tompkins, Ch. 10-12

9/25 - Quiz 4 due, 5 p.m. on Canvas; Pitch for Final – Capstone Project due, 5 p.m. on Canvas.

#### Week 6

9/28 & 9/30 - Discussion of readings; Tompkins, Ch. 13-14

10/2 - Quiz 5 due, 5 p.m. on Canvas; Video Skills Project 1 due, 11:59 p.m. via Canvas

#### Week 7

10/5 & 10/7 - Discussion of readings; Tompkins, Ch. 15-17 (Ethics Issues)

10/9 - Quiz 6 due, 5 p.m. on Canvas; Video Skills Project 2 due, 11:59 p.m. via Canvas

#### Week 8

10/12 & 10/14 – Workshop sessions for Broadcast Package

10/16 - Quiz 7 due, 5 p.m. on Canvas

#### Week 9

10/19 & 10/21 – Workshop sessions for Broadcast Package

10/23 – Broadcast Package due, 11:59 p.m. via Canvas

#### Week 10

10/26 & 10/28 - Discussion of readings; Tompkins, Ch. 18-19

10/30 – Quiz 8 due, 5 p.m. on Canvas

#### Week 11

11/2 & 11/4 – Workshop sessions for Capstone Package

11/6 – Quiz 9 due, 5 p.m. on Canvas

#### Week 12

11/9 & 11/11 – Workshop sessions for Capstone Package

11/13 – Quiz 10 due, 5 p.m. on Canvas

#### Week 13

11/16 – Discussion of readings; Tompkins, Ch. 20

11/18 – Student updates on Capstone Package

#### Week 14

11/23-27 – Thanksgiving Break, no classes

Week 15

11/30 & 12/2 – Workshop sessions for Capstone Package

Week 16

12/9 – Capstone Package due, 5 p.m. via Canvas (Wix webpage link upload)

### **Additional Syllabus Information**

#### **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 email [saroffice@uttyler.edu](mailto: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.

#### **University Policies**

##### **A. UT Tyler Honor Code:**

1. 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, quitlines, and group support. For more information on cessation programs please visit [www.uttyler.edu/tobacco-free](http://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 “crib notes”. 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 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;
  - (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 U-T 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.utt Tyler.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 Fall, the **Census Date is September 9, 2019**.) Grade Replacement Contracts are available in the Enrollment Services Center or at <http://www.utt Tyler.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 (September 9, 2019)** 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:**

1. 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.

**B. Student Absence for University-Sponsored Events and Activities:**

1. 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.

**K. Social Security and FERPA Statement:**

1. 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.

**L. Emergency Exits and Evacuation:**

1. 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.

**M. UT Tyler Resources for Students:**

1. UT Tyler Writing Center (903.565.5995), [writingcenter@uttyler.edu](mailto:writingcenter@uttyler.edu)
2. UT Tyler Tutoring Center (903.565.5964), [tutoring@uttyler.edu](mailto: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)