

MCOM 2311: Writing for Mass Media
Monday/Wednesday/Friday 10:10 a.m.-11:05 a.m. (HPR 252)
Syllabus—Spring 2015

Instructor: Rauf Arif

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appointment

Office Hours: Fridays 11:10 a.m.-2:10 p.m., or by

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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. Mine: Writing is key to any career in communications. Master these tools and you'll master your future.¹

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

1. Students will be able to 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.

¹ This syllabus is adopted from UT Tyler's instructor, Kevin Dilley's syllabus.

2. Students will be able to conduct research and evaluate information using methods appropriate to public relations/integrated communication or multimedia journalism professions.
3. Students will demonstrate an understanding of and be able to apply the First Amendment and other legal principles for public relations/integrated communication and/or multimedia journalism.
4. Students will demonstrate an understanding of professional ethical principles and issues for public relations/integrated communication and/or multimedia journalism.
5. Produce accurate news and editorial stories in appropriate format when given sets of facts.
6. Produce web, advertising and public relations materials in appropriate format when given sets of facts.
7. Identify the different formats used in the various media covered.
8. Demonstrate proficiency in writing including basic grammar and style and the use of the Associated Press.
9. Demonstrate an understanding of ethical behavior in mass media industries.
10. Recognize what constitutes libel, appropriation, intrusion, false light, and publicity about private facts.

REQUIRED READINGS:

- Stovall, James Glenn. (2015). *Writing for Mass Media (9th Ed.)*. New York: Pearson
- Christian, Darrell, et.al (2014). *2014 Associated Press Stylebook*. New York: Associated Press. Also available online at www.apstylebook.org.
- Select readings assigned in class 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 daily in print and online. Watch news programs regularly. Examine press releases and advertising campaigns. Look at YouTube, Facebook and other social media in the context of this class. Bring in clips and articles and ideas to class for discussion.

Here are some suggested things to read:

Newspapers: The Tyler Daily Telegraph, The Patriot Talon, Wall Street Journal, New York Times, Dallas Morning News, Fort-Worth Star-Telegram, Christian Science Monitor

Magazines: The Economist, Time, Atlantic Monthly, National Geographic

Viewing: PBS News hour – online and on the air; The Daily Show with Jon Stewart; CNN’s Anderson Cooper 360, Local television stations

Online: Politico.com, bbc.com, *TexasTribune.org*, *Probulica.org*,
Youtube.com, *Hulu.com*, *Poynter.org*

Listening: Local stations, NPR stations streamed

Resources: www.grammarly.com, newsroom101.net,

In addition to the above, the following books will make you better writers:

- Clark, Roy Peter. (2006) *Writing Tools, 50 Essential Strategies for Every Writer*.

- Strunk Jr., W., & White, E.B. (2000). *The Elements of Style (4th Ed.)*, New York: Longman.

- Shertzer, Margaret (1996). *The Elements of Grammar*, New York: Longman.

- Walsh, Bill (2004). *The Elephants of Style*, New York: Mc-Graw Hill

THINGS TO KNOW ABOUT MY CLASS:

Attendance: Attendance is mandatory. I treat our class like a business. We're partners and I expect you to show up as you expect me to show up. I don't need excuses when you can't make it. Just let me know. However, our attendance together is what makes this class work. So, if you have more than four (4)

absences, your final grade will drop by five percent. More than five (5) will result in your final grade being lowered by 10 percent. More than 10 absences may result in a 20-percent drop.

- Students who anticipate being absent due to religious observance or university-sponsored activities should inform the instructor by the second class meeting.
- You are responsible for turning in all assignments by deadline even though you may be absent. You are also responsible for lecture materials, announcements and assignments made during any absence.
- 10 minutes late or leaving early may be considered absent.
- No make-up tests will be allowed unless you must be absent the day of the exam and have notified the instructor at least three (3) days in advance. Any make-up test must be taken before the absence.
- Students late to class on test days may not be allowed to take the exam if students have already completed the exam and left the room.

Assignment Policy:

- Unless otherwise specified, assignments are due at the start of each class, printed and stapled. Late assignments will be penalized by one grade level per day late. (i.e. if it is one day late, you lose 10 percent off the top.)
- Assignments must be typed using the format required for the assignment.
- Assignments and due dates may change at the instructor's discretion with fair notice.
- Students must complete all assignments in order to pass the course. This does not mean, however, that merely completing all assignments guarantees a passing grade.
- All assignments must include student name, date, assignment name, course name and word count.

Classroom Courtesies:

- No cellphone use during class. No calls, no texts, no status update checks. In an emergency, please exit the classroom to use your device.
- No eating, unless there is enough for everybody. Beverages (non-alcoholic) are allowed.
- Laptop and tablet use is for note taking and class-related research. Other uses will be noted and these devices can be restricted in class.
- Talk, debate, ask questions and challenge but stay on topic.

Access to Technology:

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

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.

- Go here for more: <http://www.uttyler.edu/judicialaffairs/scholasticdishonesty.php>

GRADING: Here's what you'll be graded on: There are 800 points possible.

- **Attendance (100):**

You are expected to be at all classes. You get 100 points for that. Any class you don't make, subtract three (3) points. You are still subject to University Policies regarding attendance. Excessive absences will not be tolerated in this class or university. Please understand and adhere to the UT-Tyler attendance policy.

- **3 AP Quizzes (100 points):** These will be based on the AP Stylebook.

- **Assignments (400 points):** There will be eight basic writing assignments (50 pts. each).

- **Final Exam (200 points):** A comprehensive final that covers all readings and lectures.

- **Extra Credit: Talon Story (50 points):** You will attend one Talon staff meeting and complete one written news, sports or feature assignment for the *Patriot Talon* in print or online. You will either pitch a story to the Talon editor, or you will take a story at their discretion. You will meet all deadlines as directed by the editor. Turn in the published story for extra credit. Points to be determined by instructor.

Grades are based on the overall points available for you to earn.

A: 720-800+ **B:** 640-719 **C:** 560-639 **D:** 480-559 **F:** 0- 479 **I:** Incomplete

(very rare)

Grading rubrics: Most assignments will have a basic rubric to help guide you in completing the assignment. However, the following apply to all assignments:

- **Clean copy is important.** Your grade for each assignment will be reduced depending on how many errors you have: 3-6 errors (grade drops by 10 percent); 7-10 (grade drops by 20 percent); 11 or more (grade drops by 30 percent).
- **Facts are important.** Your grade for each assignment will be reduced depending on how many errors of fact you have: One error (grade drops by 20 percent); 2-3 errors (grade drops by 30 percent); Three or more errors results in a zero for the assignment.
- **Names are important.** If you misspell a name once in this class, the most you can get is a 'C'. Two or more name misspellings will result in failure of the class.
- **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>

THINGS TO KNOW ABOUT YOUR UNIVERSITY:

WRITING CENTER: Take advantage of writing help. The UT 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: BUS 202. 903-565-5995.

UNIVERSITY POLICIES:

- **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://www2.uttyler.edu/wellness/rightsresponsibilities.php>
- **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 (ADM 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 that students need to be aware of. 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 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 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.
- **Disability Services:** In accordance with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and the ADA Amendments Act (ADAAA)

the University offers accommodations to students with learning, physical and/or psychiatric disabilities. If you have a disability, including non-visible disabilities such as chronic diseases, learning disabilities, head injury, PTSD or ADHD, or you have a history of modifications or accommodations in a previous educational environment you are encouraged to contact the Student Accessibility and Resources office and schedule an interview with the Accessibility Case Manager/ADA Coordinator, Cynthia Lowery Staples. If you are unsure if the above criteria apply to you, but have questions or concerns please contact the SAR office. For more information or to set up an appointment please visit the SAR office located in the University Center, Room 3150 or call 903.566.7079. You may also send an email to cstaples@uttyler.edu

- **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.

