

MCOM 2311: Writing for Mass Media
Tuesday/Thursday 11 a.m.-12:20 p.m.
Fall 2015

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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 skills and you'll master your future.

STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES: By the end of the this course, students 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 and editorial stories in the appropriate format when given sets of facts.
 - Produce web, advertising and public relations materials in an appropriate format when given sets of facts.
 - Identify the different formats used in the various media covered.
 - Demonstrate proficiency in writing including basic grammar and style and the use of the Associated Press.
- 2 Conduct research and evaluate information using methods appropriate to public relations/integrated communication or multimedia journalism professions. **(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 READINGS:

- Stovall, James Glen. (2015). *Writing for Mass Media (9th Ed.)*. New York: Pearson
- Christian, Darrell, [et.al](#) (2015). *2015 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 daily. Examine press releases and advertising campaigns. Look at YouTube, Facebook and other social media in the context of this class. Bring in clips, articles, observations, opinions and ideas to class for discussion.

Here are suggested sources:

Newspapers: *Tyler Morning Telegraph, 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, Atlantic Monthly, National Geographic*

Viewing: PBS News hour – online and on the air; CNN’s Anderson Cooper 360, Local television stations

Online: [Politico.com](http://politico.com), bbc.com, TexasTribune.org, <https://www.propublica.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

WHAT 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. Attendance and participation will be a part of your grade.

- 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.
- If you are 10 minutes late or leave early, you 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 before the start of each class, turned in on Blackboard.
- 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 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, tablet or other device use during class unless the assignment specifically calls for the use. No calls, no texts, no status update checks.
- No eating, unless there is enough for everybody. Beverages (non-alcoholic) are allowed.
- 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.
- My 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 your questions 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 1000 points possible.

- **Attendance and Participation (100):** You are expected to be at all classes, ready to discuss pertinent topics. Current events or topical quizzes may contribute to these points, too.

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** (150 points): These will be based on the AP Stylebook (50 points each).
- **Assignments** (550 points): There will be 11 writing assignments (50 points each).
- **Final Exam** (200 points): A comprehensive final that covers all readings and lectures.
- **Extra Credit:** You can earn up to 50 extra points by attending one Talon staff meeting (Monday nights at 5 p.m.) and completing an assignment for the *Patriot Talon*. These assignments are primarily writing assignments, but there is some flexibility in the assignment choice. Your story must meet the deadline and be published online or in print before the end of the semester for you to receive credit.

Grades are based on the overall points you to earn.

A: 900-1000 **B:** 800-899 **C:** 700-799 **D:** 600-699 **F:** 0- 599 **I:** Incomplete

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 grammar, spelling, punctuation or AP 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 (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>

COURSE OUTLINE, MEETING DATES, TOPICS: *(subject to change at instructor's discretion)*

W	DAY	TOPIC	READINGS	DUE	CLASSWORK
1	T 8/25 Th 8/27	Introduction to class, syllabus, etc. Understanding Style	AP Stylebook, Chapter 3	#1 55-words	
2	T 9/1 Th 9/3	TBD Writing for Media	Chapter 1,2 Chapter 4	AP TEST #1	
3	T 9/8 Th 9/10	Reporting Basics	Chapter 5, 6	#2 Observation	

4	T 9/15 Th 9/17	Journalism I – Intro to Journalism and The Basic News Story	Chapter 9	AP TEST #2	Explain Scavenger Hunt
5	T 9/22 Th 9/24	No class Journalism II – Broadcast Journalism		Work on Scavenger Hunt Scavenger Hunt	
6	T 9/29 Th 10/1	Journalism III – Visual Journalism Guest lecturer: Mark Allen		#3 Basic News Story #4 Broadcast Story	
7	T 10/6 Th 10/8	Reporting with Audio and Video	Chapter 8	#5 Feature Story	
8	T 10/13 Th 10/15	Guest lecturer: Samuel King Writing for Web & Social Media	Chapter 10	#6 Photojournalism	
9	T 10/20 Th 10/22	Guest lecturer: Dr. Rauf Arif Advertising I	Chapter 11	#7 Writing for the Web	
10	T 10/27 Th 10/29	Advertising II Guest lecturer: John Moore		#8 Deadlines	
11	T 11/03 Th 11/05	First Amendment, Libel Public Relations I	Chapter 12	AP TEST #3 #9 Ad spot	Explain Crisis PR assignment
12	T 11/10 Th 11/12	Public Relations II		#10 Press Release	
13	T 11/17 Th 11/19	Crisis PR Presentations			
14	Nov. 24- 26	NO CLASS - Thanksgiving			
15	T 12/1	Crisis PR Presentations			Crisis PR presentations

	Th 12/3	What have we learned? Review			
16	Dec. 8-11	FINAL EXAM WEEK - DAY/TIME TBA			