

MCOM 2311: Writing for Mass Media - Fall 2016
Tuesday/Thursday 11 a.m.-12:20 p.m.

Instructor: Lorri Allen

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

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, you 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.
 - Identify the different formats used in the various media covered.
 - Demonstrate proficiency in writing including 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 TEXTBOOKS:

- Stovall, James Glen. (2015). *Writing for Mass Media (9th Ed.)*. New York: Pearson
- Christian, Darrell, et.al (2016). *2016 Associated Press Stylebook*. New York: Associated Press. Also available online at www.apstylebook.org.

- Select readings will also be 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.

Here are suggested sources:

Newspapers: *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, 60 Minutes

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

Listening: NPR

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: McGraw Hill

WHAT TO KNOW ABOUT THIS 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. Attendance and participation will be a part of your grade. There are 28 class periods, so if you skip a class, take 3.5 points off of this total. If you seldom participate or are looking at an electronic device when you’re not supposed to, you will lose your points for the day, too.

- Students who anticipate being absent due to religious observance or university-sponsored activities should inform the instructor by the second class meeting.
- If you are sick, you must have a doctor's note to receive an excused absence. Work is NOT an excuse; school comes first.
- If a close family member dies, show me the obituary or funeral program to

receive an excused absence. Close relatives are *your* siblings, parents, child or grandparents.

- You are 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.
- Students late to class on test/quiz days may not be allowed to take the exam if students have already completed the test or quiz.

Assignment Policy:

- Unless otherwise specified, assignments are due at the start of class.
- 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.
- No late assignments are accepted.

Classroom Courtesies:

- No cellphone, tablet, laptop or other device use during class unless the assignment specifically calls for the use. No calls, no texts, no status update checks.

The first time you are using a device when you're not supposed to be, I will take it for the rest of the class period. The second time, you must pay \$5 to get it back, the third \$10 and so on. The money will be donated to the Communication Club or other worthy cause.

- No eating is allowed unless you bring enough for everyone. Water in a bottle or container with a top is allowed.
- Talk, debate, ask questions and challenge but stay on topic.

Access to Technology:

- I use Blackboard to communicate any last-minute changes and to post reading selections. 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.

A Tobacco-Free University:

No forms of tobacco are permitted on UT Tyler property. This applies to all members of the University community, including students, faculty, staff, University affiliates, contractors and visitors.

There are several cessation programs available to students who need to quit smoking, including counseling, quit lines and group support. For more information, please visit www.uttyler.edu/tobacco-free.

GRADING: There are 1,005 points possible.

- **Attendance and Participation** (100): You are expected to be at all classes, ready to discuss pertinent topics. Any class you don't make, subtract 3.5 points from this grade. 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.
- **Current Events Quizzes** (140): You will have one of these each Thursday at the beginning of class. Each quiz will be worth 10 points.
- **3 AP Quizzes** (150 points): These will be based on the AP Stylebook (50 points each).
- **Assignments** (500 points): There will be 10 writing assignments (50 points each). There will be another assignment – the Scavenger Hunt – worth 15 points.
- **Final Exam** (100 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*. Your story must meet the deadline and be published online or in print before the end of the semester for you to receive credit.

I will announce other ways to earn extra credit throughout the semester.

Grades are based on the overall points you earn.

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

Grading rubrics: Most assignments will have a 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.
- **Facts are important.** Your grade for each assignment will be reduced depending on how many errors of fact you have. 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>