

COMMUNICATION 1130

WRITING FOR MASS MEDIA

FALL 2006, SECTION 1, 3 CREDITS

Instructor: Rhiannon Bent

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Office hours: MWF 1-2 p.m. and Thurs. 10:30-11:30 a.m. or by appointment

Texts: News Reporting and Writing (8th ed.) by the Missouri Group & the Associated Press Stylebook

***Students will also be expected to keep up on current events via a newspaper or TV/radio news.

Class Schedule: MWF 12-12:50 p.m., Eccles room 155, Aug. 22-Dec. 8

Final exam: Friday, Dec. 15, 12:30-2:30 p.m.

*Comm 1130 is a pre-requisite for Comm 1210: Campus Publications and a pre-requisite for Comm 3600: New Media Reporting. It is also a lower-division requirement for the CNM degree.

Course Description

This course is a survey of mass media reporting with a heavy emphasis on writing. Students will write a variety of media pieces in the areas of news writing for print and broadcast, specialized stories, public relations, and advertising. Students will also learn about interviewing, style, law, and ethics.

Course Objectives

Through classroom instruction and hands-on experience, students will:

- Build a knowledge base in all areas of mass media writing
- Understand how to communicate to mass audiences in writing
- Become more effective and efficient writers
- Gain a knowledge of written news style, including AP Style
- Brush up on basic grammar and spelling skills
- Develop interviewing skills
- Gain insight into the industry
- Understand media law and ethics

If you are a student with a physical or mental impairment and would like to request accommodations, please contact the Disability Resource Center (652-7516) in Room 201 of the Student Services Center. The Disability Resource Center will determine your eligibility for services based upon complete professional documentation. If you are deemed eligible, the Disability Resource Center will further evaluate the effectiveness of your accommodation requests and will authorize reasonable accommodations that are appropriate for your disability.

PLEASE TURN OFF AND PUT AWAY cell phones in class.

Cheating and Plagiarism: will not be tolerated. If there is evidence of cheating, you risk failing both the assignment and course. All assignments must be original work.

Attendance: If you are unable to attend class, you should notify me in advance and in the case of emergencies or illness, leave me voicemail or e-mail the day of the class missed. I will only allow students who contact me about absences to make up missed work. If you arrive to class the next day and have not called or e-mailed me, it is TOO LATE.

Assignments: must be typed and double-spaced in 12-point Times New Roman font. Assignments, which will usually be due Wednesdays, will be due at the beginning of class and are worth 50 points each. The beat assignment involves information gathering and interviews, so it is worth 100 points. Late assignments will not be accepted. E-mailed assignments will not be accepted without the instructor's permission. Quizzes, which will be on Mondays, may not be made up. If you know you will miss a Monday quiz, make accommodations beforehand. One quiz out of 10 will be dropped. There will be approximately 14 assignments throughout the semester and a comprehensive final exam. Saving all assignments, quizzes, and handouts will come in handy.

Grading

Accuracy: Nothing is more important than accuracy in media writing. Assignments should be free of major factual errors (misspelled names, incorrect addresses, inaccurate facts). Several grade deductions may be made for serious errors that aren't libelous. **Assignments containing three or more major factual errors will receive an F.** Also important are grammar and spelling. Never rely on Spell Check (it won't distinguish between your and you're, for example) to catch all your errors. Students should carefully proofread all assignments several times to eliminate errors. Assignments will be graded with the following letter grades and points:

A (50)/A- (46): The copy is exceptionally well-written, thorough and free of errors in style and grammar. The lead is clear and concise. The copy is well-organized and contains effective transitions, quotations and descriptions. The copy is ready for publication or broadcast.

B+ (44)/B (42)/B- (40): The copy is well-written, but may contain minor errors in style and grammar. The lead is solid and summarizes the copy. Most of the information is presented clearly with proper style. It requires minimal editing for publication or broadcast.

C+ (38)/ C (36)/ C- (35): The copy is poorly written and shows lack of organization. The copy may have a rambling, vague lead and a poorly-constructed and awkward body. There may be an excess of style and grammar errors. The copy requires a good deal of editing.

D+ (33)/D (32)/D- (30): The copy shows very little organization or purpose. It contains many of the necessary facts, but they are ineffectively presented and a major re-writing effort is needed to make the copy cohesive and meaningful. The copy has too many style and grammar errors. It requires extensive editing and re-writing.

F (0): The copy is libelous, incomplete, confusing, or has major factual errors. Style and grammar errors may be found throughout. Correct writing is either missing or lost completely. It cannot be published or aired.

Half-grade deductions for grammar and style will be determined by some of the following:

- 3 style or spelling errors, 5 punctuation errors, attribution problems, lead problems, incorrect use of personal pronouns (I, your, our, etc.), verb tense problems

Grade scale:

94-100% A	76-79% C+	60-62% D- (0.4)
90-93% A-	73-75% C	59% and below F (0)
86-89% B+	70-72% C-	
83-85% B	66-69% D+	
80-82% B-	63-65% D	

To determine the final grade:

13 assignments @ 50 pts. each	(700)
1 assignment @ 100 pts.	(100)
9 quizzes @ 15 pts. each	(135)
Final exam @ 200 pts.	(200)
Total possible points = 1,135	

Weekly Schedule

(subject to change)

1. Aug. 23-25	Class introduction editing symbols, intro to AP Style ***Bring AP Stylebook to class****
2. Aug. 28-Sept. 1	Chapter 7—news elements, inverted pyramid, leads Chapter 19—broadcast Assignment 1: basic stories
3. Sept. 4—Labor Day, no school Sept. 6-8	Chapter 8—clean writing/grammar boot camp Assignment 2: basic stories
4. Sept. 11-15	QUIZ, grammar cont. Chapter 5—gathering information Chapter 3—interviewing Assignment 3: basic stories
5. Sept. 18-22	QUIZ, Chapter 4—quotes and attribution Assignment 4: quote story
6. Sept. 25-29	QUIZ, Chapter 9—beyond the pyramid, features Chapter 18—investigative reporting, specialized stories Assignment 5: investigative story
7. Oct. 2-6	QUIZ, Chapter 12—speeches and meetings Assignment 6: speech story
8. Oct. 9-11	QUIZ, Chapter 10—obituaries Assignment 7: obituary
Oct. 13—Semester break, no class	
9. Oct. 16-20	Chapter 13—public affairs, crime and courts Assignment 8: public affairs story

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| 10. Oct. 23-27 | QUIZ, Chapter 22, 23—law and ethics
Chapter 14—beats
Assignment: beat story
Assignment: second-chance story |
| 11. Oct. 30-Nov. 3 | QUIZ, Chapter 6—stats
Chapter 15—business and consumer
Chapter 17—social science
Assignment 9: stats story |
| 12. Nov. 6-10 | QUIZ, Broadcast review
Chapter 16—sports
Assignment 10: newscast |
| 13. Nov. 13-17 | QUIZ, Chapters 11, 21—public relations
Assignment 11/12: press release/PSA
<u>Beat story due: Friday, Nov. 17</u> |
| 14. Nov. 20
Nov. 22-24—Thanksgiving break, no school | Chapter 20—online media |
| 15. Nov. 27-Dec. 1 | Advertising
Assignment 13: advertisement |
| 16. Dec. 4-8 | QUIZ, Jobs and internships
Semester Review
Assignment: 2 nd second-chance story |
| Final: Friday, Dec. 15, 12:30-2:30 p.m. | |

***Written assignments will be due the Wednesday after the week assigned unless otherwise denoted.

Important Dates:

- Aug. 24: last day to add a class without instructor permission
- Sept. 4: no class/Labor Day
- Sept. 20: last day to add a class with instructor permission
- Sept. 27: last day to drop/audit a class
- Oct. 12-13: no class/Semester Break
- Nov. 14: Career Day
- Nov. 17: last day to withdraw from a class
- Nov. 22-24: no class/Thanksgiving Break

