

News Writing
Allegheny College
ENG 207, Fall 2011

Day/Time: T/Th 11:00a.m.-12:15 p.m.
Classroom: Murray 120

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Office hours: Tuesdays from 9:30-10:30 a.m. and 1:30-2:30 p.m., Wednesdays from 11:30 a.m.-3:30 p.m.

“Were it left to me to decide whether we should have a government without newspapers, or newspapers without government, I should not hesitate a moment to prefer the latter.”
- Thomas Jefferson

Course Outline, Responsibilities and Policies

About this course. This is a beginning level journalism class with an emphasis on writing and gathering news in an objective manner. Work often simulates the intense life of the news reporter, writing under strict deadlines and with intense research requirements. This class also stresses fundamental writing skills, such as developing concise language and learning to edit and rewrite.

Course Objectives. This course will teach you how to write clear, concise and accurate stories as well as how to be a literate news consumer. Using a lecture and laboratory setting, News Writing will give you the tools necessary to read, report and write stories in a timely and efficient manner, while understanding the values of what makes something newsworthy. You will learn proper journalism style, ethical conduct and effective news consumption. We will address the following course objectives:

- Develop an awareness of current events and news literacy
- Understand the general organization of the contemporary journalism industry
- Identify news value and newsworthiness
- Evaluate a series of facts, identify the key elements and write a concise summary lede
- Write short news stories with accuracy, clarity and completeness
- Utilize AP Style
- Understand the basics of media law and media ethics

Course Materials. Most of the work we do in this course will revolve around discussion of breaking news and commentary about the news and therefore isn't available in textbook form. We will, however, be using “Inside Reporting: A Practical Guide to the Craft of Journalism” by Tim Harrower to augment the writing work we do in this course. You will also need the “Associated Press Stylebook and Briefing on Media Law” (2010 or 2011 editions are acceptable, as are the digital or mobile app editions). In addition to these traditional textbooks, you will also need to keep up with *The Campus* every week and *The New York Times* every day. All papers are available in the library or in dorm or building racks. You should bring your text or reading assignments to each class. All non-textbook readings will be delivered through Sakai and you can expect to see this material on your exams and quizzes. It is required to have a laptop in this course and to bring it to each class meeting. If you do not have or have access to one for class times, please approach the professor on the first day of class for a loaned netbook. If you fail to bring a laptop to a class meeting, you will not be able to participate in activities and will lose points on your final grade. You may find it helpful to have a reporter's notepad, a reliable pen and a voice recorder on hand during class and for your out-of-class reporting assignments.

Availability of the Professor. Due to the nature of my appointment at the College, I am usually shuttling between Murray, Vukovich, Odd fellows and the Campus Center on any given day, but I am usually somewhere on campus from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. on weekdays and am easily available with a prior appointment. To make an appointment with me, you may contact me using any of the information above, but the easiest way to reach me is via email. Office hours are open for drop-in. Please feel free to talk to me about any issues relating to the course and don't hesitate to ask for my assistance. I truly care about your learning and I hope that office hours aren't simply a time to talk about problems, but also a space to brainstorm or develop academic and professional interests.

Deadlines. Journalism is a deadline-oriented business. As a professional, if you miss a deadline, you should expect to clear out your desk sooner rather than later. As a student in this course, I will hold you to a similar standard. Meeting deadlines in this course is mandatory. If you don't turn in an assignment on time (that means not a minute after the deadline listed), you will NOT receive credit. Zero. Nada. Zilch. By meeting this course standard you will inevitably grow not only as a journalist, but also as a person.

Attendance and Lateness. Please come to class on time every scheduled class day. If there is a circumstance that may force you to miss class, please email or see me so we can discuss your alternatives. If you miss class for any reason, it is your responsibility to get notes from classmates. *Please do not contact the instructor for notes or lecture outlines unless you have exhausted all other options.* I will only allow late papers or makeup work in the case of extenuating circumstances, which can include death of a family member or a significant illness or injury that requires immediate bedrest, immobilization or treatment. All of these circumstances still require documentation for an excused absence. Sorry, headaches don't count. Students that plan to miss class due to a college-related activity or religious holiday should provide advance notice of the absence and you accept full responsibility for completing any work ahead of time.

Electronic Devices. While this is a technologically adapted course, texting during class isn't the best idea. You will quickly discover that cell phones and unapproved computer use in class are my biggest pet peeves. If I see you fiddling with your phone or on the web while we're having a class discussion or lecture, I will ask you to leave the classroom. Believe me, I can see you. You will find this course to be infinitely more rewarding if you are present both physically and mentally.

Sakai. Course materials and announcements will be distributed to you via Sakai. Check it (and/or your email) on a regular basis.

Participation and In-Class Conduct. Successful people, especially journalists, know how to ask questions – lots of questions. Those who refuse to be a part of the discussion will see that reflected in a lower final grade. Please note that there is a difference between quality of participation and quantity of participation. All discussions and interactions between class members during class time or team project situations should be respectful, professional and conducted with sensitivity. Any other type of behavior will not be tolerated.

Course Writing Guidelines. All assignments in this course will be turned in via Google docs. All assignments should conform to AP Style and be free of spelling, grammar or style mistakes. I do not accept late assignments. I do not accept any handwritten work in this course.

Accuracy and Integrity. Please refer to your Honor Code pledge and behave accordingly in this class. Plagiarism in any form -- including not properly attributing information or quotes -- will not be tolerated and will result in a failing grade. In an attempt to encourage accuracy and an attention to detail, any factual error, including misspelling of names of any kind, will result in an automatic half credit off on the assignment, exam or quiz.

Disabilities. Students with disabilities who believe they may need accommodations in this class are encouraged to contact Disability Services at (814) 332-2898. Disability Services is part of the Learning Commons and is located in Pelletier Library. Please do this as soon as possible to ensure that such accommodations are implemented in a timely fashion.

Course Grading

Grades: Your course grade is calculated out of 500 total points and will be decided as follows:

150 pts Reported stories

150 pts Two exams

50 pts Five quizzes

150 pts Participation

Reported stories: This will be the graded writing you do in the course. The grade is comprised of three journalistic articles (50 pts each). These will be stories of your choice, reported and written for *The Campus*. They may be assigned by an editor at the paper or you can pitch an idea. Writers meetings are at 9 p.m. on Monday nights at *The Campus*. Each story will be at least 600 words.

Exams: You will have two exams -- a midterm and a final -- in this class (75 pts each). These will be made up of multiple choice, true/false, short answer and long answer. You will have a full class period for each exam and you may always have your AP Stylebook open for any exam, quiz or activity.

Quizzes: You will have five pop quizzes (10 pts each) in this course that will cover the lecture from the day before, any reading due that day, and current events from the *The Campus* and *The New York Times*. To do well on these quizzes, you should keep up with the assigned course reading as outlined in the syllabus and anything posted to Sakai. These quizzes are given verbally. If you arrive late to class, please do not expect me to repeat quiz questions – it is your responsibility to be on time.

Participation: This grade is based on your class discussion, participation and your engagement with your in-class assignments, homework, professor and classmates. (150 pts) Please note that you cannot participate if you're not in class.

Grading scale.

A 100-93 *You should be writing for The New York Times.*

A- 92-90 *Outstanding work of publishable quality.*

B+ 89-87

B 86-83 *With some editing changes, your work could run somewhere.*

B- 82-80

C+ 79-77

C 76-73 *Your writing is average for college-level work.*

C- 72-70

D 69-60 *Fundamental issues with the work.*

F 59 or less *Lacks basic skills or wasn't submitted on deadline.*

Course Schedule *

DAY	TOPIC	DUE
9/1	Class introduction; Syllabus review; What is news?	
9/6	The story of journalism	Harrower Ch. 1
9/8	The story of journalism continued	
9/13	The newsroom	Harrower Ch. 2
9/15	The newsroom continued	
9/20	Newswriting basics	Harrower Ch. 3
9/22	Newswriting basics continued	

9/27	Reporting basics	Harrower Ch. 4
9/29	Reporting basics continued	Campus story #1 pitch
10/4	Covering the news	Harrower Ch. 5
10/6	Covering the news continued	
10/11	Law and ethics	Harrower Ch. 7
10/13	Law and ethics continued	Campus story #1 due
10/18	NO CLASS (Fall Break)	
10/20	Law and ethics continued	
10/25	Law and ethics continued	
10/27	Midterm exam	
11/1	Beyond breaking news	Harrower Ch. 6
11/3	Beyond breaking news continued	Campus story #2 pitch
11/8	Beyond breaking news continuedf	
11/10	Online reporting	Harrower Ch. 8
11/15	Online reporting continued	
11/17	Online reporting continued	Campus story #2 due
11/22	Online reporting continued	
11/24	NO CLASS (Thanksgiving break)	
11/29	Broadcast journalism	Harrower Ch. 9
12/1	Broadcast journalism continued	Campus story #3 pitch
12/6	Broadcast journalism continued	
12/8	Broadcast journalism continued	
12/13	Broadcast journalism continued	Campus story #3 due
12/19	Final exam 9-11 a.m.	

* This schedule may change over the course of the semester. All changes will be announced.