Course Syllabus

MCM 205.090

Media Writing

Fall 2017

Name: Dr. Gary H. Mayer
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Office: Boynton 205
Department: Mass Communication
Office Hours: 10-10:50 a.m. Monday, Wednesday and Friday, 1:30-2:30 p.m. Monday-Friday; 8:30-9:15 Tuesday and Thursday; and by appointment
Class meeting time and place: 9:30-10:45 a.m. Tuesday and Thursday in Boynton 209

Course Description: Fundamental principles of writing news across platforms of print, broadcast and online. Writing Enhanced. Incidental fee required.

Prerequisite: Though the SFA catalog lists no prerequisites, six semester hours of freshman English (writing classes) are strongly recommended.

Program Learning Outcomes (PLOs):

1. Demonstrate the ability to write effectively across a variety of platforms appropriate to the discipline.
2. Gather, organize and analyze discipline-appropriate research and communicate information about it.
3. Understand the role of media in society.
4. Comprehend legal and ethical principles relating to media.
5. Demonstrate the application of media technology, terminology and techniques.

Journalism Concentration PLOs:
1. Demonstrate appropriate writing and editing skills across diverse multimedia platforms.
2. Gather, analyze, organize and synthesize information on contemporary topics to develop a news story.
3. Demonstrate the application of contemporary technology, terminology and techniques in the news gathering process.
4. Understand effective visual language and how to apply it to convey messages and enhance the communication process.

Student Learning Outcomes:

1. Demonstrate journalistic writing skills across print, broadcast and online platforms.
2. Understand and utilize research and investigative techniques for news stories across multiple platforms.
3. Demonstrate the ability to utilize contemporary newsgathering and writing technology.
4. Demonstrate how to create and present a story simultaneously in print, broadcast and online platforms.

Texts and Materials:

3. Instructor-prepared exercises. These are handed out.

Course Requirements: Requirements include weekly lab exercises, a mid-semester exam and a final exam.

Considerations:

1. The **mid-semester** and the **final** will cover material discussed in class along with assigned chapters in *Writing & Reporting for the Media*. Both exams may have two parts: theory (questions taken from the assigned chapters and lectures) and application (grammar, AP style, usage, etc.). The chapters are basically your responsibility.
2. Policies regarding lab work:
a. All assigned work will be completed during lab. You may not finish at home.
b. Please plan to stay the entire lab period. Treat each lab as you would a test. Portions of some labs may be devoted to lecture.
c. In doing lab assignments, you may use notes, books, returned exercises, etc. Please do not talk with one another. If you have a question, ask your professor.
d. At the end of the semester, your two lowest lab grades will be dropped (not included in the lab portion of the grade). Therefore, there will be absolutely no makeups.
e. Please do not ask to begin a lab early.

3. Your midsemester exam will have a number in the upper left-hand corner. Test grades will be posted by exam numbers of the bulletin board outside my office (Boynton 205) in descending order. In other words, the highest grade will appear at the top, the lowest at the bottom. Any student who wishes to look at his/her exam may do so in my office. Final-exam grades will not be posted.

4. I do not email grades or give them out on the telephone.

Course Calendar: attached.

Grading Policy:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Weight</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lab exercises</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Midsemester exam</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final exam</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>=100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Attendance Policy:

1. Each student is allowed two unexcused absences. Following, for each unexcused absence, 2 points will be deducted from the final course average. For most absences to be excused, they must be documented.

2. Three tardies count as one absence. (Please see me the period you are late if you believe your tardy should be excused.) If you come in 15 minutes or later after the class has begun, you are absent. But I reserve the right to lock the door 5 minutes after class has begun.
Additional Considerations:

1. Early tests (midsemester, final) will not be given.
2. If you are absent, it is your responsibility to find out what you missed. If an exercise or exercises were handed out, please drop by my office to pick up the work.
3. Students are expected to conduct themselves as ladies and gentlemen. Such behavior as whispering, talking, reading, studying material for another class, etc., will not be tolerated. The above are grounds for dismissal. Students also are expected to remain in their seats throughout the period unless there is a dire emergency, which should be explained at the end of the period. Leaving the classroom, returning and not explaining why will result in an absence for that period.
4. Texting (text messaging) during class is crude, rude and socially unacceptable. Anyone caught doing this will be asked to leave and possibly will be dropped from the class. The same holds true for sending and checking emails.
5. Course feedback (returned lab exercises and posted midsemester-exam grades) is provided throughout the semester.
6. Cell phones—or anything that looks like a phone, for that matter—should be clearly placed out of sight, especially during tests. If a student is caught with a cell phone on his/her desk, she/he will be asked to leave the classroom. If this should occur during a test, he/she will receive a zero on the test. Please turn off all cell phones.
7. Makeup exams are given only to students who have acceptable excuses. (“Acceptable” is defined by the instructor.) Types of questions to expect on makeups include items to define and identify, short-answer questions and essays.
8. Children are not welcome in either class or lab, though pets are. Unfortunately, there’s a university policy against pets. Seriously, we are not running a day care center. Anyone who brings a child or children will be asked to leave.
TENTATIVE ASSIGNMENTS


Lab: Copyediting exercises.
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Sept. 5-7: Grammar. (Please read and study Chapter 3, “Newswriting Style,” and Chapter 4, “The Language of News.”)

Lab: Grammar.
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Lab: Writing newspaper leads plus usage.
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Sept. 19-21: Sentence structure.

Lab: Writing newspaper leads.
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Lab: AP style.
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Lab: Writing newspaper leads plus a complete story.
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Oct. 10-12: Chapter 11: “Interviewing.”

Lab: Interviewing and writing a story based on said interview.
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Oct. 17: Catch-up.

Oct. 19: Midsemester exam.


Lab: Writing a complete story.
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Lab: Writing broadcast copy.
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Nov. 7-9: Chapter 20: “Journalism and Public Relations.” Be prepared to do in class orally Exercise 4, p. 437.

Lab: Writing a PR release.
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Nov. 14-16: Chapter 13: “Digital Media, Online, Mobile and Social Media.”

Chapter 5: “Libel, Privacy and Newsgathering Issues.”

THANKSGIVING HOLIDAYS!!!

Nov. 28-30: “Introduction to Media Law.”

Lab: Writing a blog.
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Dec. 5-7: Chapter 6: “Ethics.”

Lab: Writing newspaper/broadcast stories.