Course Syllabus

MCM 205.090

Media Writing

Spring 2018

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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>Percentage</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lab exercises</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Midsemester exam</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final exam</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<td></td>
<td>100%</td>
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**Attendance Policy:**

1. No distinction is made between excused and unexcused absences. Any student who misses 25% of the class will have his/her grade lowered one letter; 35%, two letters; 45%, three letters, etc. In a participation class, such as 205, attendance is mandatory.

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.

Academic Integrity (AY 1): Academic integrity is a responsibility of all university faculty and students. Faculty members promote academic integrity in multiple ways including instruction on the components of academic honesty, as well as abiding by university policy on penalties for cheating and plagiarism.

Definition of Academic Dishonesty: Academic dishonesty includes both cheating and plagiarism. Cheating includes but is not limited to (1) using or attempting to use unauthorized materials to aid in achieving a better grade on a component of a class; (2) the falsification or invention of any...
information, including citations, on an assigned exercise; and/or (3) helping or attempting to help another in an act of cheating or plagiarism. Plagiarism is presenting the words or ideas of another person as if they were your own. Examples of plagiarism are (1) submitting an assignment as if it were one’s own work when, in fact, it is at least partly the work of another; (2) submitting a work that has been purchased or otherwise obtained from an Internet source or another source; and (3) incorporating the words or ideas of an author into one’s paper without giving the author due credit.

Please read the complete policy at [http://www.sfasu.edu/policies/academic_integrity.asp](http://www.sfasu.edu/policies/academic_integrity.asp)

**Withheld Grades Semester Policy (A-5):** Ordinarily, at the discretion of the instructor of record and with the approval of the academic chair/director, a grade of WH will be assigned only if the student cannot complete the course work because of unavoidable circumstances. Students must complete the work within one calendar year from the end of the semester in which they receive a WH, or the grade automatically becomes an F. If students register for the same course in future terms, the WH will automatically become an F and will be counted as a repeated course for the purpose of computing the grade point average.

**Students with Disabilities:** To obtain disability accommodations, alternate formats and/or auxiliary aids, students with disabilities must contact the Office of Disability Services (ODS), Human Services Building, and Room 325, 468-3004 / 468-1004 (TDD) as early as possible in the semester. Once verified, ODS will notify the course instructor and outline the accommodation and/or auxiliary aids to be provided. Failure to request services in a timely manner may delay your accommodations. For additional information, go to [http://www.sfasu.edu/disability_services/](http://www.sfasu.edu/disability_services/).

Very important: **Plagiarism** may be defined as “literary theft.” It is a type of cheating that includes copying another person’s wording without writing a citation and/or taking another person’s ideas without writing a citation. It can result in disciplinary action, an automatic F in this course, etc.
TENTATIVE ASSIGNMENTS

Weeks:

Jan. 16-18: Introduction. Discussion of syllabus. **Chapter 1:** "Journalism Today." Editing symbols.

**Lab:** Copyediting exercises.


Jan. 23-25: Grammar. (Please read and study **Chapter 3,** "Newswriting Style," and **Chapter 4,** "The Language of News.")

**Lab:** Grammar.


**Lab:** Writing newspaper leads plus usage.


Feb. 6-Feb. 8: Sentence structure.

**Lab:** Writing newspaper leads.


Feb. 13-Feb. 15: AP style. **Chapter 8:** "Alternative Leads."
Lab: AP style.

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Lab: Writing newspaper leads plus a complete story.

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Feb. 27: Catch-up.

March 1: Midsemester exam.

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March 6-March 8: Chapter 11: “Interviewing.”

Lab: Interviewing and writing a story based on said interview.

SPRING HOLIDAYS

March 20-22: Chapter 10: “Quotations and Attribution.” Exercises

Lab: Writing a complete story.

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March 27: Chapter 12: “Writing Broadcast News.” Be prepared to do orally in class Exercises 1 and 2, pp 266-267.

March 29: Easter holiday.

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April 3-5: “Writing Broadcast News.”
Lab: Writing broadcast copy.

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April 10-12: 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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April 17-19: Chapter 13: "Digital Media, Online, Mobile and Social Media." Chapter 5: "Libel, Privacy and Newsgathering Issues."

Lab: Writing a blog.

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April 24-26:

Chapter 6: "Ethics."

Lab: Writing newspaper/broadcast stories.

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May 1-May 3: Catch-up and review.
Department of Mass Communication

WRITING ENHANCED POLICY

Students in each of the courses below will, at a minimum:

1. Write at least 3000 words on projects and/or assignments throughout the semester.
2. Be required to revise and re-submit at least one assignment during the term.
3. Complete at least one out-of-class writing assignment.

Total writing assignments for the course will count for a minimum of 50% of the course grade.

Enrollment in the courses will be capped at 20 students to provide adequate instructor feedback to the student. Note: The cap may be increased by the department chair as necessary in consultation with the professor.

Courses:

- MCM 205 Media Writing
- MCM 305 Converged Reporting
- MCM 308 Advertising cases & Campaigns
- MCM 309 Feature Writing
- MCM 320 Sports Writing
- MCM 381 Public Relations Writing
- MCM 382 Public Relations Case Studies
- MCM 383 Public Relations Campaigns
- MCM 410 Student Publication Practicum
- MCM 413 Column & Editorial Writing
- MCM 421 Scriptwriting
- MCM 440 Backpack Journalism
- MCM 478 Advanced Advertising I
- MCM 479 Advanced Advertising
- MCM 490 Student Publications Workshop

Adopted December 2012 by the Department of Mass Communication faculty.