

COMM 1130: Writing for Mass Media (3 Credits)

Course Syllabus Spring 2017

Instructor: Heather Stone
Email: heather.stone@uvu.edu or through the Canvas email system.
Classroom: CB 313
Meeting Times: Mondays and Wednesdays from 2:30-3:45 p.m.

Welcome. I assume you are here because you want to work as a journalist or some other type of communicator. Or maybe you just needed the elective credit and wanted to become familiar with this specialized form of writing. Either way, you can benefit from this class. It might even be fun.

OFFICE HOURS

I am available to meet with you by appointment in-person, or via telephone, Skype, or Canvas chat room. I am reasonably quick to answer email during the hours most people would be awake. I recommend telephone or in-person conferences for longer or complicated questions, while email and chat often suffice for simple questions. I won't answer Canvas chat unless I am online.

COURSE OVERVIEW & OBJECTIVES

This is a writing class, so we will write. Lots. Both in class and on your own. We will also study the fundamentals of reporting. In this class, you will do the following:

- Interview people to gather “what, why, who, how, when, where, and so what” information.
- Write “inverted pyramid” style news articles.
- Craft powerful headlines.
- Practice writing for various media outlets, including print, broadcast, and web.
- Master the basic grammar rules that matter to journalists.
- Use AP style conventions to make decisions about vocabulary and format in your writing.

Doesn't that sound like more fun than a math class? I thought so, too. Despite the grammar.

COURSE MATERIALS

Please get your hands on two textbooks for this course:

James G. Stovall, *Writing for the Mass Media*, 9th ed. (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson, 2015).

The Associated Press Stylebook, 51st ed. (New York, NY: The Associated Press, 2016). You can buy online or print for this class. **Note: If you're buying new, get the 2016 edition. If you already have a copy, it must be at least 2014.** You'll use this in your other journalism classes.

Other materials will be provided to you in Canvas or during class.

ASSIGNMENTS

More detail about the assignments will be provided in class and on Canvas.

CATEGORY	DESCRIPTION	PERCENTAGE
Exercises	Short interviewing and writing activities done in-class or at home.	30%
Five Stories	Stories of 250 words or less on five assigned topics.	30%
Pop Quizzes	Unannounced quizzes on grammar, AP style, and journalistic conventions. You can drop the quiz with the lowest score.	10%
Grammar Test	You can retake this twice if needed.	10%
Web Post— Final Project	Revise and publish one of your five stories on our class newswriting website.	20%
	TOTAL	100%

Submit assignments through Canvas. Do not send them via email or hand them to me in class unless specifically instructed to do so. I suggest you read all your work out loud before you submit it.

REVISIONS: If you do poorly on an assignment, you can rewrite it once. Rewrites should be significant, not just minor corrections of the original submission. I will never grade the rewrite lower than the original. Rewrites must be labeled as such and have the originals attached.

GRADING

Grades for all assignments will be posted to your private grading record in Canvas. Students will receive a letter grade according to the following scale:

GRADES	PERCENTAGE	DEFINITION
A	94-100	Excellent performance, superior achievement
A-	90-93	
B+	87-89	Good performance, substantial achievement
B+	84-86	
B-	80-83	
C+	77-79	Standard performance and achievement
C+	74-76	
C-	70-73	
D+	67-69	Substandard performance, marginal achievement
D	64-66	
D-	60-63	
E	0-59	Unsatisfactory performance and achievement

MY POLICIES

Late Work: It's journalism, folks. The deadline is everything in a newsroom. You do your best in the time frame available. Then you hand in whatever you've written, and it gets printed for 50,000 people to see. This class runs like that, minus the 50,000 critical readers. Turn in your work on time. If you submit late but within seven days of the due date, it will be an immediate half off. If you submit after seven days, you won't receive any credit for the assignment.

Punctuality: Please come to class and be on time. We often do quizzes or writing exercises at the beginning; if you miss them, you can't make them up.

Laptops, Tablets, Cell Phones: You can use your devices in our classroom to do things related to our class. If you do other things on your devices during class time or if your usage seems disrespectful to me or others, I may require you to put the devices away. If, as a group, you show a consistent inability to manage your technology use, I may tighten the policy and ban devices. However, I believe handheld technology is part of our daily lives, and as a journalist, you'll be constantly connected. But if you make a habit of checking your texts or your Instagram account in the middle of an interview, you will quickly gain a reputation as inconsiderate and unprofessional. During this class, practice the same tech rules you will follow in your career, and you should be fine. You are **not required** to bring a laptop computer or other device.

Professionalism: Journalists interview all types of people and write about a wide variety of topics. Represent yourself and the profession well by being respectful and polite to everybody, even those you disagree with. Despite what you may have heard in the news recently, racism, sexism, and vulgarity have no place in the media. And they certainly have no place in this class.

Plagiarism: Do not copy the work of others. Do not submit writing purchased or found on the Internet. Do not cite the work of others without correct notation. Plagiarists automatically fail. Ask me if you don't know how to attribute something.

Accommodation: If you need an accommodation because you are differently abled, please contact me at the beginning of the semester to discuss how I can best support you. You can also contact the Accessibility Services Department (room BU-145).

SCHEDULE

I may modify this schedule if needed. Any changes will be discussed in class or posted on Canvas.

Week 1 Syllabus Analysis, Writing Principles (Read Chapter 1)

Week 2 Writing Tools (Read Chapter 2, **no class 1/16**)

Week 3 Writing Tools (Read Chapter 2, **First Story Due**)

Week 4 Style (Read Chapter 3)

Week 5 Style (Read Chapter 3)

Week 6 Overviews (Read Chapter 4, **Second Story Due**)

Week 7 More Tools: Most Common Errors (Read Chapter 5, **no class 2/20**)

Week 8 Reporting (**Third Story Due**)

Week 9 Reporting (Read Chapter 6)

Week 10 Photography, Visual Reporting (Read Chapter 9)

Week 11 Spring Break—no class 3/20 and 3/22

Week 12 Writing for the Internet (Read Chapter 7, **Fourth Story Due**)

Week 12 Writing for Broadcast (Read Chapter 8)

Week 13 Strategic Writing (Read Chapters 10 and 11)

Week 14 Law, Ethics (Read Chapter 12, **Fifth Story Due**)

Week 15 Bringing It All Together (**Draft of Final Project Due**)

Week 16 Review, Work on Final Project

Last day of class is April 26. We do not meet during the final exam period. **Your final project is due online Wednesday, May 3 before midnight.**

January 16, February 20, and March 20-25 are official school holidays. No assignments will be due on those days. However, Canvas will remain accessible. Please assume I am not available on school holidays.