

Syllabus

COM 110 (Tuesdays and Thursdays, 2:30 p.m. - 4:10 p.m.)

Editing and Design

Spring 2021

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Office hours: Mondays 1 p.m. - 4 p.m. or, preferably, [by appointment](#)

DESCRIPTION

Clear, logical writing is necessary to communicate effectively to an audience. This course focuses on background research, interviews, accuracy, attribution and styles of writing (print, broadcast, online, news releases). Grammar and language skills are refined, and Associated Press style is introduced.

GOAL

Teach accepted practices and skills used in writing for mass media.

By the end of this course, students will be able to

- gather information from multiple sources and critically evaluate the credibility of sources.
- incorporate truthful, accurate and fair information into written, aural or visual forms consistent with professional requirements.
- create content that reflects domestic and global diversity of sources, words and images and that avoids the use of stereotypes.
- demonstrate proficiency in content organization, grammar, spelling and mechanics, including the ability to use Associated Press style.
- compare and contrast writing for different audiences, different media

and across multimedia platforms.

- write with accuracy and clarity in forms appropriate to the topic, audience and medium.
- apply numerical concepts such as percentages and proportions.

REQUIRED TEXTS

The 55th Edition Associated Press Stylebook and Libel Manual. (The stylebook is also available as an [online subscription](#).) Bring this to class. If your stylebook is a year or two old, that should be fine.

The 3rd Edition of Tim Harrower's [Inside Reporting](#) is a mandatory read for this class, especially given the hybrid nature of this semester's instruction. The book is admittedly a little dated in some of its examples, but its foundational concepts are still spot-on, and the presentation is snappy and more dynamic than most textbooks.

ACCESSORIES

This class meets in a computer lab, but you may wish to bring a thumb drive to save any files you create.

Take notes during each of your interviews, and keep those notes in case there are questions regarding the accuracy of your quotes or information. Some students find it helpful to purchase separate notebooks for each of their assignments.

You might also consider purchasing a voice recorder or voice recorder app for your interviews.

REQUIRED READING

Keep well informed through exposure to a variety of news sources such as:

- [Elon News Network](#) and the [Times-News](#)

- A selection of major newspapers (As an Elon student, you have free digital access to the New York Times. To obtain an Academic Pass, register at [NYTimes.com/Passes](https://nytimes.com/passes). It's a simple registration process tied to your elon.edu address.)
- National Public Radio's Morning Edition and All Things Considered
- Nationally televised news broadcasts

CLASS FORMAT

Because of physical distancing requirements, we do not have the capacity to fit all of the section's students into our assigned classroom simultaneously. Therefore COM110 will be taught in a "hybrid classroom," with in-person time split among two cohorts and out-of-class time devoted to self-directed activities. Check the top of the Moodle course page to see which cohort you are assigned to.

In-class instruction will be simulcasted on Zoom for students who need to attend remotely. But a word of caution: Many in-class lectures will rely heavily on group discussions, which is challenging given the audio constraints of the classroom. Physical presence in class during your cohort time is strongly encouraged if you feel well.

QUIZZES

There are two quizzes every week. In class you will take a news quiz during the first five minutes of your cohort meeting time. Out of class you will take a Associated Press Style quiz; this quiz can be completed anytime before 4:10 p.m. on the day opposite of when your cohort meets, but it is a five-minute, timed quiz.

You are allowed to use your notes or other resources for these quizzes, but because of the five-minute timeframe there is unlikely to be time to look up every answer. It is strongly recommended that you study for quizzes as though notes were not allowed.

Quizzes cannot be made up for any reason. At five points apiece, missing a couple of quizzes is unlikely to have a significant impact on your final grade.

WRITING ASSIGNMENTS

Students will complete three major, publishable writing assignments: An in-depth personality profile, a news story covering an important speech, and an in-depth feature story into an academic research project at Elon University. Please do not wait until the last minute to start or complete these assignments. Assignments are always welcome to be turned in early.

All story assignments should be uploaded to Moodle as PDF files — typed and double-spaced. Please do not email assignments or bring printouts to class. Assignments should be free of misspellings, grammatical errors and typographical errors.

The writing assignments include both a draft and final version, in between which you will sign up to meet with the instructor for a story conference outside of class. Note that on the last writing assignment, the draft is actually worth more points than the final version of the story.

EXERCISES

Students will complete several mock exercises. These exercises are designed to be completed during the cohort's out-of-class period, but they can be turned in at any point prior to their deadline.

1. a broadcast news script
2. a sample news release
3. coverage of a television script

DEADLINES

Deadlines are clearly labeled on each assignment page in Moodle. Late assignments immediately lose 10 percent and will continue to lose an

additional 10 percent each additional day they are late. Please remember that all assignments other than news quizzes can be turned in early. If it helps to give yourself deadlines earlier than those listed, you are strongly encouraged to do so.

ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING

Assignment procedures, deadlines and details for all projects and quizzes can be found on the individual assignment pages in Moodle.

Quizzes (105 points)

- AP Style quizzes (5 points x 12): 60 points
- News quizzes (5 points x 9): 45 points

Projects (150 points)

- Broadcast news script: 50 points
- News release: 50 points
- Script coverage: 50 points

Stories (300 points)

- Personality profile draft: 25 points
- Personality profile final: 75 points
- Speech story draft: 50 points
- Speech story final: 50 points
- Research story draft: 75 points
- Research story final: 25 points

To determine your final grade, the following grading scale is used:

A: 93.0 percent

A-: 90.0 percent

B+: 87.0 percent

B: 83.0 percent
B-: 80.0 percent
C+: 77.0 percent
C: 73.0 percent
C-: 70.0 percent
D+: 67.0 percent
D: 63.0 percent
D-: 60.0 percent
F: below 60 percent

ATTENDANCE POLICY

Because of the course's hybrid nature, students who are unwell should feel empowered to stay home and engage remotely. If you need to miss a class and are unable to attend remotely, I do appreciate a quick email — no doctor's note is necessary — simply so I know you are OK and still engaged with the course material.

Please note that missing class for illness or other reasons does not change deadlines for projects or quizzes. You are strongly encouraged to work ahead on projects to help compensate for any unforeseen circumstances.

REQUIRED STATEMENTS

The following statements are required for inclusion — either by the university, school or department —on all course syllabuses.

Honor Code

Elon's honor pledge calls for a commitment to Elon's shared values of Honesty, Integrity, Responsibility, and Respect. To be clear about what constitutes violations of these values; students should be familiar with code of conduct policies described in the student handbook.

Students with questions about the specific interpretation of these values and

violations as they relate to this course should contact this instructor immediately. Violations in academic-related areas will be documented in an incident report which will be maintained in the Office of Student Conduct, and may result in a lowering of the course grade and/or failure of the course with an Honor Code F.

Violations specifically covered by academic honor code policies include: plagiarism, cheating, lying, stealing, and the facilitation of another's dishonesty. Multiple violations may result in a student's suspension from the university.

Academic Honesty

The School of Communications takes plagiarism seriously, just as businesses and other media organizations and scholars do.

All forms of dishonesty mentioned above may result in an F in a course and expulsion from the university. Although all of these are clear violations of the university Honor Code, plagiarism is a special concern for communications professionals and scholars.

What is plagiarism? It is using someone else's work such as passages, photographs, music, video, graphics and other images, and claiming it as your own. It can be copying work that has appeared in a journal, a magazine, a newspaper or online – anywhere, really – and presenting it as your own. Cutting and pasting passages from the web into your work, for example, is plagiarism unless you credit the source of the material or images. Take this as your guiding principle: If you quote someone else's words or appropriate their image, attribute the source.

In brief, you may not adopt or reproduce the ideas, words or statements of another person without acknowledgment or attribution. In many cases, such work is copyrighted. Acknowledgment is required when borrowing facts, statistics, images or illustrative material, unless that information is common

knowledge or in the public domain. (Example: China is the most populous nation on Earth. Or: Jupiter is the largest planet in our solar system.)

If you quote someone else's words or use information or material acquired or created by someone else, then you must attribute the source. Definitions and examples of Elon Honor Code violations above may be found [online](#).

Disabilities Resources

If you are a student with a documented disability who will require accommodations in this course, [please register with Disabilities Resources](#). You may reach out to Disabilities Resources for assistance in developing a plan to address your academic needs.

Disability Resources is located in the Koenigsberger Learning Center (Belk Library 226; 336-278-6568). For more information about Disabilities Resources, please [visit its website](#).

It is possible that a student in this class will require a note taker. I need someone to volunteer to perform this very important service in the event of a request. Please let me if you are interested/willing to be a note taker if the need arises.

Responsibilities of a note taker include:

- Attending class regularly.
- Having legible handwriting or re-writing/typing notes in an electronic format.
- Dropping by Koenigsberger Learning Center (2nd floor Belk Library, Office 226) on a regular basis or by uploading the notes to Disabilities Resources via the Accommodate data management system.

If you are willing to help by being a notetaker, please let me know. If I receive a request, I will let you know and provide your name to Disabilities Resources. Disabilities Resources will follow up with you to provide all the

necessary details.

Religious Holidays Policies

In supporting religious diversity, Elon has a policy and procedures for students who wish to observe religious holidays that are in conflict with the academic calendar, allowing students an excused absence. Students who wish to observe a holiday during the semester must complete the online [Religious Observance Notification Form](#) (RONF).

This policy does not apply during the final examination period. Students are required to make prior arrangements with the instructor for completion of any work missed during the absence. Once the completed RONF is received, the Truitt Center will send an e-mail to the instructor and the student that a RONF has been submitted. Students may contact the Truitt Center staff with any questions (336-278-7729).

Last modified: Friday, February 5, 2021, 1:40 PM

Feb. 9 / Feb. 11

Introduction to media writing. News values.

Feb. 16 / Feb. 18

Reporting overview. News writing and lede writing.

In-class activities

 [News Quiz 1](#)

Out-of-class activities

 [AP Style A-D](#)

 [Reading: Harrower, Chapters 3-4](#)

Feb. 23 / Feb. 25

No in-class meeting this week. Feature and profile writing.

Out-of-class activities

 [AP Style E-G](#)

 [Reading: Harrower, Chapter 6](#)

 [Reading: Courageous — The Maggie Nichols story, from the Oklahoma Daily](#)

March 2 / March 4

Speeches, meetings and news conferences. Law and ethics.

In-class activities

 [News Quiz 2](#)

Out-of-class activities

 [Reading: Harrower, Chapter 7](#)

 [AP Style H-K](#)

March 9 / March 11

Copyright law and fair use. Libel law.

Due today

 [Personality Profile Draft](#)

In-class activities

 [News Quiz 3](#)

Out-of-class activities

 [AP Style L-Q](#)

 [Video: Libel law](#)

March 16 / March 18

No in-class meeting this week. Personality profile story conferences.

Out-of-class activities

 [AP Style P-R](#)

 [Sign up for story conference](#)

March 23 / March 25

Inclusivity in coverage. Strategic communications and public relations writing.

Due today

 [Personality Profile Final](#)

In-class activities

 [News Quiz 4](#)

Out-of-class activities

 [AP Style S-T](#)

 [Reading: Harrower, Chapter 10](#)

March 30 / April 1

Broadcast writing.

Due today



[News Release Exercise](#)

In-class activities



[News Quiz 5](#)

Out-of-class activities



[Reading: Harrower, Chapter 9](#)



[AP Style U-Z](#)

April 6 / April 8

Script coverage. Story conferences.

Due today



[Speech Story Draft](#)

In-class activities



[News Quiz 6](#)

Out-of-class activities



[AP Style Punctuation](#)



[Sign up for story conference](#)

April 13 / April 15

Thinking visually. Broadcast writing, continued.

Due today



[Speech Story Final](#)

In-class activities



[News Quiz 7](#)

Out-of-class activities



[AP Style Sports](#)



[Broadcast Writing Exercise](#)

April 20 / April 22

Ethical case studies. Script coverage, continued.

In-class activities



[News Quiz 8](#)

Out-of-class activities



[AP Style Religion](#)



[Script Coverage Exercise](#)

April 27 / April 29

No in-class meeting this week. Writing for the web.

Due today



[Research Story Draft](#)

Out-of-class activities



[Reading: Harrower, Chapter 8](#)



[AP Style Food](#)

May 4 / May 6

On writing well. Story conferences.

In-class activities



[News Quiz 9](#)

Out-of-class activities



[AP Style Fashion](#)



[Sign up for story conference](#)

May 11

Careers in media.

Monday, May 17

Due today

 [Research Story Final](#)