

BUSINESS NEWS REPORTING 2018 SPRING

Syllabus

COM 378 (TT 10:30 a.m. - 12:10 p.m.)

Business News Reporting

Spring 2018

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Office hours: Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays, 12:30 - 2 p.m., or, preferably, by appointment

DESCRIPTION

The news media need to report and write stories about business and the economy in compelling and understandable ways. This course identifies the need for business coverage and provides opportunities for students to pursue important stories in the community and region. Students will learn how to access the two main sources of information -- documents and people -- and discuss when and how to use data to build or enhance a story.

GOAL

Teach accepted practices and skills used in reporting on business-related issues.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

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.
- demonstrate proficiency in content organization, grammar, spelling and mechanics, including the ability to use Associated Press style.
- write with accuracy and clarity in forms appropriate to the topic, audience and medium.
- apply numerical concepts such as percentages and proportions.

TEXTS

- *Required: Show Me the Money, Third Edition, by Chris Roush*
- *Recommended: The 2017 Associated Press Stylebook and Libel Manual (The stylebook is also available as an [app or online subscription](#).)*

Reading assignments are listed in the calendar on Moodle. Please ensure assigned chapters are read before the beginning of the prescribed date's class.

REQUIRED READING

Keep well informed through exposure to a variety of news sources including, but not limited to:

- Major newspaper business sections such as the New York Times or Wall Street Journal. 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.)

- **Marketplace** from American Public Media.
- Nationally televised news broadcasts such as Bloomberg, CNBC or Fox Business News.
- You can also track individual companies' filing and stock performance at **Yahoo Finance** or **Marketwatch**.

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 downloading a voice recorder app for your interviews. **HandyRecorder** from Zoom is a good option.

QUIZZES

There will be a closed-book quiz every day during the first five minutes of class. Tuesdays will be quizzes from book readings and Thursdays will be news quizzes. Quizzes must be taken in class and cannot be made up; they are worth only five points apiece, so missing one or two is unlikely to dramatically affect your grade.

NEWS FEED

On Moodle's business headline feed, and on my **Slack channel**, I post links to stories I think are especially worth your attention. Each Tuesday, time permitting, we will have a discussion about those stories. I will facilitate the conversation, but it's up to you to have questions or points to talk about.

WRITING ASSIGNMENTS

Students will complete three major writing assignments: An in-depth small business profile, a mock lawsuit story, and a mock earnings report. Please do not wait until the last minute to start or complete these assignments. Writing 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.

STOCK PERFORMANCE ANALYSIS

Each week you are responsible for a short review of a particular stock's performance. The analysis should be short and to-the-point, but it should also demonstrate your ability to understand market influences on individual equities.

FINAL EXAM

There is a comprehensive final exam in this class. The final exam must be taken in class Monday, May 14, from 8-11 a.m.

DEADLINES

Deadlines are considered as important as in a newsroom. Late assignments will receive 0 percent.

Please remember that all writing assignments can be turned in early. If it helps to give yourself deadlines earlier than those listed, you are strongly encouraged to do so.

GRADING

Assignments will be evaluated on factors that include quality of the lede, completeness, structure and organization, writing style, accuracy, spelling, grammar and adherence to AP style rules. Misspelled names and major errors in fact will result in significant reductions in the assignment's grade, so double-check everything.

Quizzes (110 points)

- Book quizzes: 55 points
- News quizzes: 55 points

Stock Performance Reviews (100 points)

Writing Assignments (430 points)

- Small Business Profile Pitch 20 points
- Small Business Profile Pitch Assessment - 10 points
- Small Business Profile Source Update - 10 points
- Small Business Profile Draft - 75 points
- Small Business Profile Final - 100 points
- Lawsuit Story Draft - 30 points
- Lawsuit Story Assessment - 10 points
- Lawsuit Story Final - 50 points
- Earnings Report - 75 points

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

A: 93 percent

A-: 90 percent

B+: 87 percent

B: 83 percent

B-: 80 percent

C+: 77 percent

C: 73 percent

C-: 70 percent

D+: 67 percent

D: 63 percent

D-: 60 percent

F: below 60 percent

REQUIRED STATEMENTS

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

Attendance Policy

Students in the Department of Communications are expected to attend all classes. Just as professionals go to work each day, we expect students in a professional school to come to class on time and be prepared to work.

A student who misses more than 20 percent of scheduled classes in a term (more than eight absences for classes meeting three times a week) automatically receives an F because the student has missed too much content and participation to pass a course in a professional school.

Teachers will lower the final grade in a class for each absence beyond the equivalent of one week of class (three absences for classes meeting three times a week).

Exceptions exist for individual class absences for observance of a recognized religious holiday and for absences for participating in sanctioned university activities. Students participating in such events must follow policy as stated in the student handbook.

Honor Code

Elon's honor pledge calls for a commitment to Elon's shared values of honesty, integrity, respect and responsibility. 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](#).

Disability Services

If you are a student with a documented disability who will require accommodations in this course, please register with Disabilities Services in the Duke Building, Room 108 (336-278-6500), for assistance in developing a plan to address your academic needs. For more information about Disabilities Services, please [visit its website](#).

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](#) within the first two weeks of the semester.



Syllabus

Tuesday, Jan. 30

Syllabus review. Business reporting issues.

Thursday, Feb. 1

Public vs. private companies.



Read Chapter 2 of Show Me the Money



Tuesday, Feb. 6

Beat reporting.



Chapter 2 Quiz



Stock "purchase" (extra credit assignment)



50 largest public companies in North Carolina



Read Chapter 3 of Show Me the Money



Thursday, Feb. 8

Internet databases.



News Quiz 2/8



Tuesday, Feb. 13

The Securities and Exchange Commission.



Chapter 3 Quiz





Week 1 stock performance review



Read Chapter 6 of Show Me the Money



Thursday, Feb. 15

Income statements.



Read Chapter 5 of Show Me the Money



News Quiz 2/15



Tuesday, Feb. 20

Balance sheets.



Week 2 stock performance review



Small Business Profile - Pitch



Chapter 6 Quiz



Thursday, Feb. 22

Covering conference calls.



News Quiz 2/22



Tuesday, Feb. 27

8-K filings.



Week 3 stock performance review



Chapter 5 Quiz



Thursday, March 1

Company structures.



Read Chapter 9 of Show Me the Money





News Quiz 3/1



Tuesday, March 6

Executive compensation.



Chapter 9 Quiz



Week 4 stock performance review



Small Business Profile Source Update



Thursday, March 8

Initial public offerings and Form S-1.



News Quiz 3/8



Tuesday, March 13

Mergers and acquisitions and Form S-4.



Week 5 stock performance review



Chapter 7 Quiz



Read Chapter 7 of Show Me the Money



Earnings Report



Thursday, March 15

Media conglomerates.



News Quiz 3/15



Tuesday, March 20

No class today. Spring break.

Thursday, March 22

No class today. Spring break.

Tuesday, March 27

Covering lawsuits.



Chapter 12 Quiz



Read Chapter 12 of Show Me the Money



Thursday, March 29

Bankruptcy court.



Small Business Profile - Draft



News Quiz 3/29



Tuesday, April 3

State and federal regulation.



Week 6 stock performance review



Chapter 14 Quiz



Read Chapter 14 of Show Me the Money



Thursday, April 5

Guest speaker Hope Nelson of the **Motley Fool**.

Tuesday, April 10

Economic indicators.



Week 7 stock performance review



Chapter 4 Quiz





Read Chapter 4 of Show Me the Money



Lawsuit Story - Draft



Thursday, April 12

The business of higher education. Guest speaker **Bob Shea**, Elon's associate vice president for business, finance and technology.



Read Chapter 13 of Show Me the Money



News Quiz 4/12



Tuesday, April 17

The stock market.



Chapter 13 Quiz



Week 8 stock performance review



Read Chapter 8 of Show Me the Money



Lawsuit Story - Final



Thursday, April 19

The bond market.



News Quiz 4/19



Tuesday, April 24

No class today. Spring Undergraduate Research Forum.

Thursday, April 26

Mutual funds and hedge funds.



News Quiz 4/26



Small Business Profile - Final



Tuesday, May 1

Nonprofits, foundations and Form 990.



Chapter 8 Quiz



Week 9 stock performance review



Read Chapter 11 of Show Me the Money



Thursday, May 3

Consumer and personal finance.



News Quiz 5/3



Read Chapter 15 of Show Me the Money



Tuesday, May 8

Business journalism ethics.



Week 10 stock performance review



Monday, May 14

Final exam 8 a.m. - 11 a.m.



Final Exam

