

# Syllabus

**COM 1110 (Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays, 12:30 p.m. - 1:40 p.m.)**  
**Media Writing**  
**Spring 2022**

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Office hours: Mondays 1:45 p.m. - 2:30 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. (An always-up-to-date 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.

## 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

## QUIZZES

There will be a quiz almost every day at the beginning of class, alternating between AP Style quizzes and news quizzes. Each quiz opens at 12:30 p.m. and closes promptly at 12:35 p.m.

All quizzes must be taken in person while in class and may not be made up for any reason, including for quarantine or excused absences. At only five points apiece, missing a couple of quizzes is unlikely to have a significant impact on your final grade.

AP Style quizzes are open note / open book / open resource, but with only five minutes to complete the quiz it is still strongly recommended that you read through the chapters of the stylebook covered in each quiz. News quizzes are closed note / closed book / closed resource. Both style and news quizzes must be completed by yourself; do not communicate with others while the quizzes are open.

## WRITING ASSIGNMENTS

Students will complete four major, publishable writing assignments: An in-depth personality profile, a news story covering an important speech, a news story covering a governmental meeting 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. As we move through the semester, drafts steadily are worth more points while final versions become worth fewer points. If a student elects to not submit a final version of a story, the percentage grade earned in the draft will apply automatically to the final, as well.

## EXERCISES AND PROJECTS

Students will complete several mock exercises. They also can be turned in at any point prior to the deadline.

1. a natural sound audio file
2. a broadcast news script
3. a sample news release
4. coverage of a television script

An in-class "breaking news exercise" will also take place late in the semester. In addition, we will have guest speakers throughout the semester, and following each visit you will write a short news brief highlighting key takeaways from the discussion.

## 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 quizzes and guest speaker write-ups 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 (130 points)*

- AP Style quizzes (5 points x 13): 65 points
- News quizzes (5 points x 13): 65 points

### *Exercises and Projects (250 points)*

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

- Script coverage: 50 points
- Breaking news assignment: 50 points
- Natural sound audio file: 10 points
- Guest speaker write-ups (10 points x 4): 40 points

#### *Stories (400 points)*

- Personality profile draft: 20 points
- Personality profile final: 80 points
- Speech story draft: 40 points
- Speech story final: 60 points
- Meeting story draft: 60 points
- Meeting story final: 40 points
- Research story draft: 80 points
- Research story final: 20 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**

Communication will be critical as we continue to navigate classroom performance amid a pandemic. While there is no grade specifically tied to class attendance, daily quizzes must be taken in person and cannot be made up for any reason, including illness or quarantine.

There are no plans to allow for a "Zoom option" in this class, but depending on the subject material being covered that day, there might be options to record the lecture, or meet one-on-one afterward, or simply to grab notes from a classmate. Please contact the instructor as early as possible to make arrangements.

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.

#### *Healthy Elon 2021-2022*

Information regarding expectations for the 2021-2022 academic year, including the campus and classroom operations and policies for vaccines, masks, travel, and absences and illnesses, can be found on the [Healthy Elon 2021-2022](#) website.

## *Disabilities Resources*

Students with disabilities (physical, learning, psychological, chronic, or temporary medical conditions, etc.) who would like to request reasonable accommodations and services under the Americans with Disabilities Act must register with Disabilities Resources in the KLC/Belk Library, Suite 226. Students who are new to Disabilities Resources or who are requesting new accommodations should contact DR at (336) 278-6568 or at [disabilities@elon.edu](mailto:disabilities@elon.edu) to discuss the programs and services offered. Students who are already registered with Disabilities Resources and who would like to maintain their accommodations must renew previously granted accommodations by logging into the [Accommodate site](#) and making a semester request. Students are reminded to renew previously granted accommodations at the beginning of each semester. Reasonable accommodations can be requested at any time throughout the semester; however, they are not retroactive. Students are strongly encouraged to contact their professors to discuss the testing and academic accommodations that they anticipate needing for each class. For more information about Disabilities Resources, please visit the [DR website](#).

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

Responsibilities of a note-taker include:

- Attending class regularly
- Having legible handwriting or re-writing/typing notes in an electronic format
- Uploading the notes for Disabilities Resources via Accommodate, the data management system. There will not be in-person drop-off for notes in an effort to reduce the number of people in and out of the DR office.

If I receive a request, I will contact you and provide your name to Disabilities Resources. Disabilities Resources will follow-up with you to provide all the necessary details.

## *Belk Library*

The librarians in Belk Library can help you find appropriate resources for your assignments. You can schedule an appointment to meet with a librarian: <https://elon.libcal.com/appointments/> or chat with a librarian on the library website: <https://www.elon.edu/library/>.

## *Writing Center*

Elon's [Writing Center](#) in the [Center for Writing Excellence](#) is staffed by trained peer-consultants who can help you with all of your writing projects (for any class or major and for any extracurricular, personal, or professional purposes), so take advantage of this excellent academic resource and include a visit to our Writing Center as part of your writing process.

<https://www.elon.edu/u/academics/writing-excellence/>

In one-to-one sessions of up to 45 minutes, Writing Center consultants will work with you on any kind of writing (such as research or analysis papers, PowerPoint or poster presentations, resumes, or job applications) at any stage of the writing process (such as understanding an assignment; brainstorming, drafting, revising, and editing; developing a research question or starting your research; or writing in-text citations and bibliographies/works cited).

We have two multimedia production studios so you can create and work with a consultant on your multimedia and visual texts (such as PowerPoint or Prezi presentations, videos, or websites). Visit our presentation practice room where you can easily record and critique yourself giving a presentation and get feedback from a consultant on your accompanying visuals.

Please consult the [Writing Center website](#) for hours of operations and locations.

If you have questions, please contact The Writing Center Director, Dr. Julia Bleakney, at [jbleakney@elon.edu](mailto:jbleakney@elon.edu) or X5642.

## *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).

<https://www.elon.edu/u/truitt-center/multifaith-religious-holidays/holiday-observance-policy/>

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).

#### *Policies on Dropping or Withdrawing from this Course*

Students may drop a course during the designated drop/add period through On-Track. A course that is dropped during the designated drop/add period will not appear on the student's transcript or grade report.

After the designated drop/add period, students may **withdraw from a course** without penalty before the course withdrawal deadline published in the **academic calendar**. Withdrawing from a course during this period will result in a mark of "W" that will appear on the student's academic transcript. Students may withdraw online via OnTrack. Students should refer to the **academic calendar** for important semester dates.

<https://www.elon.edu/u/academic-calendar/2021-2022/>

NOTE: Students should not assume that they will be officially withdrawn from a course based on failure to attend class or notifying a faculty member of their intent to withdraw. The student is responsible for following the official process of withdrawing from a class. Students who do not properly withdraw from a course will receive a grade of F.

Students may not withdraw from a course after the published withdrawal deadline. Any exception to this policy is the responsibility of the appropriate academic dean's office. When granted, withdrawal from a course after this time will result in a grade of "W" or "F" depending on the student's grade at the time of withdrawal.

For additional information on university course policies, students should consult the Academic Catalog.

#### *Supporting Fellow Students in Distress*

As members of the Elon community, we each share a personal responsibility to express concern for one another and to ensure that this classroom and the campus as a whole remains a healthy environment for learning. Occasionally, you may become worried or concerned about a fellow classmate's well-being. When this is the case, I would encourage you to share these concerns with me or to Elon's Student Care and Outreach program (<https://www.elon.edu/ShareYouCare>). Although you can report anonymously, it is preferred that you share your contact information so they can follow up with you personally.

Last modified: Monday, January 31, 2022, 9:57 AM



Syllabus



Schedule a meeting with me

## Monday, Jan. 31

Introduction to media writing. News values.

## Wednesday, Feb. 2

Introduction to Associated Press style.

## Friday, Feb. 4

Introduction to reporting.

## Monday, Feb. 7

Journalistic writing.



AP Style A-D

## Wednesday, Feb. 9

Feature and profile writing.



News Quiz 1



Reading: How much money is a 16-year-old home photo worth? A lot

Mark as done



Reading: How much money do we have? (see previous page for details)

Mark as done



Optional reading: Courageous — The Maggie Nichols story

Mark as done

## Friday, Feb. 11

Lede writing.



AP Style E-G

## Monday, Feb. 14

Obituary writing.



News Quiz 2

## Wednesday, Feb. 16

Identifying sources.



AP Style H-K

## Friday, Feb. 18

Covering speeches.



Personality Profile Draft



News Quiz 3

## Monday, Feb. 21

No class today. Story conferences.



Sign up for story conference for Feb. 21-23

Mark as done

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## Wednesday, Feb. 23

Guest speaker **Emmanuel Morgan**, New York Times.



Guest Speaker Write-up

## Friday, Feb. 25

Meetings and news conferences.



AP Style L-O

## Monday, Feb. 28

Strategic communications and public relations writing.



News Quiz 4



Personality Profile Final

## Wednesday, March 2

Writing advertising copy.



AP Style P-R

## Friday, March 4

Guest speaker **Peter Velz**, U.S. Department of State



Guest Speaker Write-up



News Release Exercise



# Monday, March 7

Data visualization.



News Quiz 6



Speech Story Draft

# Wednesday, March 9

Thinking visually.



AP Style S-T

# Friday, March 11

No class today. Story conferences.



Sign up for story conference for March 9-11

Mark as done

# Monday, March 14

No class today. Spring Break.

# Wednesday, March 16

No class today. Spring Break.

# Friday, March 18

No class today. Spring Break.

## Monday, March 21

Diversifying sources and understanding fault lines.



News Quiz 7

## Wednesday, March 23

Introduction to ethics. Mid-semester evaluations.



AP Style U-Z



Speech Story Final

## Friday, March 25

Ethical case studies.



News Quiz 8

## Monday, March 28

Broadcast writing and audio packages.



AP Style Sports

## Wednesday, March 30

Broadcast video packages.



News Quiz 9



Natural Sound Assignment

## Friday, April 1

## Friday, April 1

Broadcast writing, continued.



Meeting Story Draft

## Monday, April 4

No class today. Story conferences.



Sign up for story conference for April 4-6

Mark as done

## Wednesday, April 6

Libel, privacy and advertising law.



AP Style Religion



Broadcast Writing Exercise

## Friday, April 8

Copyright law.



News Quiz 10

## Monday, April 11

Script coverage.



AP Style Punctuation



Meeting Story Final

## Wednesday, April 13

Script coverage, continued.

Script coverage, continued.



## Friday, April 15

Guest speaker Oliver Smith, School of Communications Internship Ambassador



Guest Speaker Write-up

## Monday, April 18

No class today. Easter holiday.

## Wednesday, April 20

Writing for the web.



News Quiz 11



Script Coverage Exercise

## Friday, April 22

Covering breaking news.



Breaking News Assignment

## Monday, April 25

Understanding media analytics.



AP Style

## Wednesday, April 27

Data cleansing with Excel.



News Quiz 12

## Friday, April 29

Open records and freedom of information laws.



AP Style

## Monday, May 2

Data-driven reporting.



News Quiz 13



Research Story Draft

## Wednesday, May 4

On writing well.



AP Style

## Friday, May 6

No class today. Story conferences.



Sign up for story conference for May 4-6

Mark as done

## Monday, May 9

Careers in media.

# Tuesday, May 17

No class today. The final version of your Research Story is due by 11 a.m.



Research Story Final

