

OXFORD COLLEGE of Emory University

COURSE OUTLINE

Journalism 201 – News Reporting and Writing

Dr. Lucas Carpenter
Spring 2010 Semester

Objective:

This course is an intensive writing workshop designed to teach the basic elements of news writing. You will learn specific skills, including reporting and interviewing from a diverse and multicultural perspective, hard news and feature writing as well as writing on deadline. You will critique each other and learn through the process of writing and rewriting. The course will also address news values and ethical and legal issues confronting today's journalists.

Required Texts:

Inside Reporting: A Practical Guide to the Craft of Journalism, Tim Harrower, 2nd Edition
The Associated Press Stylebook and Libel Manual, Norm Goldstein, Editor (2004)
Math Tools for Journalists, Kathleen Wickham (second edition)
subscription to The New York Times

Assignments:

Reading: For class discussions, reading assignments from the text must be completed by the date that they appear on the schedule. You are also required to read *The New York Times* each day to stay on top of current events. Special student subscriptions are available. Students will take turns critiquing content and technique of both newspapers at the beginning of each class. There will also be pop quizzes on current events.

Writing: Get ready to write and rewrite! Writing assignments will include an obituary, a story covering a meeting, a story covering a speech, and a final project profiling a faculty member or campus figure. We will also look at how the press covers the November elections and write at least one election story. Students will be assigned writing exercises in class and outside the classroom. Homework assignments must be submitted on the designated due date at the beginning of class. All written work must be typed, double-spaced with a one-inch margin on both sides and stapled in the upper left-hand corner. Please include your name, date and assignment heading in the upper left-hand corner as well. Deadlines are taken seriously in this course and late assignments will not be accepted except in the case of a documented personal or family emergency. It's your responsibility to make up the work missed when absent and hand in the next homework assignment on time.

Grading:

Your grade will consist of six parts and will reflect all course requirements and material covered. I reserve the right to raise your grade above the mathematical average if your work has steadily improved during the semester and conversely, may lower it, if in the unlikely event your writing has not improved.

1. Associated Press Style Test: 5 percent

You will take a series of three multiple-choice, open book tests on AP style. The tests are scheduled as follows:
January 22: A-L
January 27: L-Z

2. Basic Skills Test: 10 percent

This test covers spelling, grammar, style, statistics, and mathematical calculations. Students who fail to achieve a score of 70 percent on the test must retake it later in the semester. The two grades will be averaged. Students can also repeat the test in an effort to improve their grade. You will take the basic skills test on February 5. The make-up test will be April 19.

3. In-Class Work and Homework: 20 percent

Your work during class time will include pop quizzes on current events and reading assignments, deadline writing assignments, news critiques, and participation in class discussions. Each of you will lead a news critique during the course of the semester. You will also have homework assignments reinforcing topics discussed in class.

4. Midterm Exam: 5 percent

This in-class exam on March 17 will include an in-class writing exercise.

5. Final Deadline Writing Assignment: 10 percent

This in-class assignment on April 23 will involve writing a news story on deadline.

6. Writing Assignments: 50 percent

You will have four formal reporting and writing assignments. They include:

Obituary: 10 percent

MOS Story: 10 percent

Speech Story: 10 percent

Individual Profile: 20 percent

For the first three assignments (obituary, man-on-the-street survey story, speech story), you have the option to rewrite these assignments to improve your grade. The revision is due at the beginning of the next class and must include the original assignment. The new and the old grade will be averaged for a final grade. For the Individual Profile assignment, you will be required to submit a rough draft November 13 including the names, telephone numbers and e-mail addresses of all your sources. I will critique your work and you will rewrite and submit a final draft. You will lose an entire letter grade if you fail to complete and turn in a rough draft of at least 1000 words on April 9. I will critique your work and you will rewrite and submit a final draft for grading.

Attendance:

Attendance is mandatory, but students are allowed three unexcused absences each semester. Other absences for illness or personal emergencies need to be documented in writing. Unexcused absences after the allotted two will impact your final grade.

Tardiness:

Students need to be on time for class. Habitual tardiness will impact your final grade.

Accuracy:

Accuracy is the Holy Grail of journalism. A major factual error in any story or written assignment, such as the misspelling of a name or place, will result in a lowered grade. In the first instance, it will cost you a full grade. On subsequent assignments, you will automatically receive an F for that assignment. This is a department wide practice for all journalism courses. All of your writing will be judged for correctness in numbers and math, spelling, grammar, punctuation, word usage and AP style. Your grade will reflect your command of these basics.

Plagiarism:

Integrity and credibility are the two pillars of journalism. Any student presenting the work of someone else whether from another student, another publication or off the Internet will receive an F. The incident will also be reported to the director of the Journalism Program and the Oxford Honor Council. Please read the attached Journalism Program Plagiarism Statement carefully.

Journalism 201 Course Calendar

Week 1: Introduction

January 13-15: Class orientation, review of syllabus, and plagiarism statement. Class introductions.

Week 2: The Basics: Format and AP Style and What is News?

January 18-22: Harrower, chap. 1-2; Wickham, chap.1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 8.

January 22: AP Style Test A-L

Week 3: Newswriting Style

January 25-29: Harrower, chap. 3.

January 27: AP Style Test L-Z

Week 4: Writing News Leads and Anatomy 201

February 1-5: Harrower, chap 3.

February 5: Basic Skills Test

Week 5: The Body of a News Story

February 8-12: Inverted Pyramid and Narrative Handouts.

Week 6: Writing Obituaries

February 15-19: Harrower, p. 96-98. Obituary assignment due February 26.

Week 7: Quotations and Attribution and Interviewing

February 22-26: Harrower, chap.4. MOS assignment due March 5. Obituary assignment due.

Week 8: Speeches and Meetings

March 1-5: Harrower, chap. 5. MOS assignment due. Individual Profile story guidelines announced. Rough draft due April 2.

----- March 8-12 SPRING BREAK -----

Week 9: Midterm Exam and Interviewing Workshop

March 15-19: Midterm Exam, March 17. Obituary rewrite due March 19. Interviewing workshop and in-class deadline writing assignment.

Journalism 201 Course Calendar (continued)

Week 10: Features

March 22-26: Harrower, chap. 6. Features continued. MOS rewrite due March 26.

Week 11: Broadcast Journalism and Online Reporting

March 29-April 2: Harrower, chap. 8-9. Speech assignment announced, due April 2. Individual Profile rough draft, minimum 1000 words, due April 9.

Week 12: Ethics and Diversity and Communications Law

April 5-9: Harrower, chap. 7. Speech assignment due April 2.

Week 13: Careers in Journalism and Ethics and Diversity

April 12-16: *The Elements of Journalism* handout. Team presentations on Ethics.

Week 14: Basic Skills Encore and Final Deadline Writing Assignment

April 19-23. Repeat Skills Test on April 19. General review for final deadline writing assignment. Individual Profile due April 16. Final deadline writing assignment in class on April 23.

April 26: Last class

JOURNALISM PROGRAM PLAGIARISM STATEMENT

Integrity and credibility are the journalist's most important assets. If you plagiarize, you have comprised the two most important tools a journalist has. Journalism demands originality in writing, sourcing of information that is not common knowledge, attribution of others' ideas and statements, and accurate representation of points of view. Plagiarism is professional theft. The Oxford College Plagiarism Statement says: "Any person who uses a writer's ideas or phraseology without giving due credit is guilty of plagiarism."

Plagiarism has ended many journalism careers. The journalist who plagiarizes others' work violates the very purpose of the profession and destroys his or her reputation. Any student found plagiarizing in a course or internship will be subject to investigation by the Honor Council. If the Honor Council determines that a student has plagiarized, the Council has the prerogative of assigning any of the following penalties:

- F on the assignment
- F on the course
- Suspension
- Dismissal
- Written notation on the student performance record

A journalistic article differs from a research paper. Information in a research paper is credited in footnotes or other kinds of documentation. The Oxford College Plagiarism Statement does not require documentation for information that is readily available through several sources and/or is considered common knowledge.

In journalism, source citations are included in the body of the story. The credit should include the name of the person or source, a person's affiliation, and any other information that provides necessary context. The journalist provides attribution for all direct and indirect quotes and paraphrased information and statements. Quotation marks are used even if only a word or phrase of a statement is used. Journalists attribute to specific individuals, organizations or sources and do not create composite sources.

Both direct quotations and paraphrases require attribution. A good paraphrase expresses the ideas found in the source (for which credit is always given) but not in the same words. It preserves the sense, but not the form, of the original. It does not retain the sentence patterns and merely substitute synonyms for the original words, or does it retain the original words and merely alter the sentence patterns. It is a genuine restatement. It is briefer than its sources. (Floyd D. Watkins and William B. Dillingham, *Practical English Handbook*, 9th ed. (Boston, 1992), pp. 357-358.)

The principles of attribution apply equally to all forms of newsgathering. Information acquired from other news sources, whether print, broadcast or the Internet, should be attributed. Use of graphics, images, and audio or video material from the Internet or other sources requires full credit.

Plagiarism is a breach of public trust.

The Journalism Program expects students will comply with the policy as outlined above. If you have questions regarding documentation, citation, or plagiarism, please contact your instructor or Sheila Tefft, Director of the Journalism Program.