

**WELCOME TO JOURNALISM 201
NEWS REPORTING AND WRITING
JRNL_OX 201 02J**

Instructor: Sheila Tefft
Oxford Office: Humanities 207
Telephone: 770-784-4724
Hours: Thursday 11 a.m.-2 p.m., 4:30-6 p.m.
Emory Office: Callaway Center, S414
Telephone: 404-727-6133
Fax: 404-727-4276
Hours: Tuesday 1-5 p.m.
Wednesday 1-5 p.m.
Also by appointment
Email: stefft@emory.edu

Course Text and Materials

Reporting for the Media, Fred Fedler, et al. (seventh edition)
The Associated Press Stylebook and Libel Manual (2000)
When Words Collide: A Media Writer's Guide to Grammar and Style (second edition)
Math Tools for Journalists, Kathleen Wickham (2003)
Subscription to *The Atlanta Journal-Constitution* or *The New York Times*. If you do not subscribe to *The New York Times*, please read it online each day.

About News Reporting and Writing JRNL201

This course will introduce you to the basics of news judgment, writing, and reporting. The emphases will be on clear writing, solid research and reporting, and the accurate and honest presentation of facts. You will be expected to broaden your knowledge of current events, master Associated Press style, demonstrate knowledge of grammar, spelling, and numbers, and acquire an understanding of professional standards and practices. This course is the foundation for all other courses in the Emory Journalism Program. The skills you learn in JRNL201 are those needed for all other areas of journalism.

Our class will function as a newsroom. You will practice writing news stories in class under deadline pressure. For the final exam, you will be expected to write a deadline story from a set of facts. You also will receive out-of-class reporting assignments. In this work, we will focus on the writing process--producing powerful and original journalism through stages of writing, critique and revision. You will attend events and conduct interviews for your stories. You will write, learn from the critiques of your writing, and then rewrite your work. I will meet with you to discuss your writing on a regular basis. News is a fast-changing business. The syllabus and assignments will evolve to adapt to news developments and to meet your needs as apprentice news reporters and writers.

Good journalists are well-informed and critical readers and viewers of the news. I expect you to read *The Atlanta Journal-Constitution* and *The New York Times* daily. Periodically, you will have pop quizzes on news events. You also will learn through analyzing published stories and should be ready to discuss the content and technique used in articles. Each of you will be assigned to lead a classroom discussion of the news on the day's front pages.

This course, then, is an opportunity to learn together. I expect you to strive for professional standards and performance. I also hope you have fun. I have heard more than one journalist say of the varied and changing nature of the work, "It beats having a job." By the end of the semester, I hope you will feel the same way.

Course Requirements and Grading

This course emphasizes reporting, writing, and rewriting, both inside and outside the classroom. As writer Robert Cornier points out, "The beautiful part of writing is that you don't have to get it right the first time, unlike, say, a brain surgeon. You can always do it better, find the exact word, the apt phrase, the leaping simile."

1. Associated Press Style Tests, 5 percent

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

September 4: A-F

September 11: G-O

September 18: P-Z

2. Basic Skills Test, 10 percent.

The 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 grades. You will take the Basic Skills Test on September 25. The make-up test will be scheduled at the end of the semester.

3. In-Class Work, 25 percent

Your work during class time will include scheduled and pop quizzes on current events and readings, free writing, deadline writing assignments, news critiques, and participation in class discussions. Each of you will lead a news critique during the course of the semester.

4. Final Exam, 10 percent

This in-class exam on the last day of class will involve writing a news story on deadline from a set of facts.

5. Writing Assignments, 50 percent
You will have five reporting and writing assignments. They include:
Obituary, 10 percent
Covering a meeting, 10 percent
Covering a speech, 10 percent
Individual profile, 20 percent

For each assignment, you will be required to submit a rough draft and names and telephone numbers and email addresses of sources. I will then critique your work and meet with you to discuss it. In some instances, we also will do peer editing. You will then rewrite and submit a final draft, along with your rough draft, for grading. You will lose an entire letter grade if you fail to complete and turn in a rough draft.

I will evaluate your reporting and writing based on the following criteria:

1. Does the story have a focus, a single theme or idea that holds it together?
2. Does your lead reflect the theme and importance of the story clearly and creatively?
3. Is the story well-organized? Does it lead the reader logically through the story?
4. Is the story well-written? Does every word count?
5. Does each paragraph contain a single idea?
6. Have you tailored the story to its intended audience?
7. Have you included all appropriate sources for balance and fairness? Have you supplemented human sources with documents for completeness and context?
8. Is your information accurate? Is it complete?
9. Have you triple-checked the spelling of all proper names?
10. Have you corrected style, spelling, grammar and punctuation errors?

Your Responsibilities

I place great emphasis upon these responsibilities:

1. Honor Code
See the Journalism Program Plagiarism Statement.

2. Attendance and Punctuality
Attending every class and arriving on time is imperative. Everyone's input is important to a rich and beneficial classroom experience.

I will take attendance at the beginning of each class and expect everyone to be present. Late arrivals are very disruptive and disrespectful to your classmates and me.

I consider more than one unexcused absence excessive and will reduce your grade in proportion to the number above this limit. In-class participation represents a significant portion of your grade. It is important for you to attend every class meeting.

If you know in advance that you will need to miss a class, please notify me before that class meeting. I will allow makeup assignments only for extenuating circumstances such as illness or a death in the immediate family. You will be required to document your absences. Documented means something like a physician's note or a towing bill, not a phone call to me after class.

2. Deadlines

Assignments are due in class, during the class period on the stipulated deadline. Late papers, without a valid excuse, will not be accepted. Papers cannot be submitted by fax or email, unless I specify otherwise.

3. Accuracy

A major factual error on a paper, such as the misspelling of a name, will result in a lowered grade. The first time, a paper will be reduced one full grade. If a major factual error occurs on a subsequent assignment, the student will receive an F on the paper.

4. Copy Preparation

Prepare your stories as if they are being submitted to a publication. Type or use a word processor. Double-space stories, and leave one-inch margins. In the upper left-hand corner, type your name, the copy deadline and a "slug" or story name that indicates content. Please use 12-point type.

6. Copies of your work.

Keep copies of your work on paper and computer diskette to protect against loss. Do not store your work on the computers in the classroom. The computers will be cleared regularly, and you risk losing your work.

Course Blackboard Site

This is a summary of course policies. The entire syllabus will be available on a course Blackboard site at classes@emory.edu

