COM225 Writing for Media

Mr. John "Johnny" Van Heest
Phone: (813) 652-2030 | jvanheest@ut.edu
Office Hours: By Appointment

1. COURSE INTRO

An introduction to the principles and practices of writing for major types of mass communication media, with an emphasis on content, engagement, organization, conciseness and clarity. Students learn various styles of writing for print media, social media, broadcast media, the Web, advertising and public relations. This course also discusses the ethical and legal implications of writing for the media.

A.   COURSE PREREQUISITES

B.   COURSE OBJECTIVES and OUTCOMES

The objective of this course is to provide students with the basics of public relations, journalistic reporting, writing and editing. Additionally, students will:

- Develop a comprehensive understanding of the theories and practice of language use
- Demonstrate advanced critical thinking skills, inclusive of information literacy across a range of print and electronic genres
- Learn to communicate to diverse audiences in a variety of contexts and genres
- Prepare students for a wide range of writing-related careers or graduate programs.
- Obtain the ability to use, analyze, and learn communication technologies.
- Develop exceptional textual, visual, and verbal communication abilities.

Learning Outcomes

Through successful completion of this course, students will:

1. Understand the various avenues of mass communications and how the written word is applied to each;

2. Understand conventions of mass media language use through the use of the AP Stylebook;

3. Create professional-grade, written content for a variety of purposes;

4. Understand the legal and social implications of mass communications and the written word;

5. Build confidence in personal writing styles and begin to develop a personal 'voice'

6. Develop a tool-kit of career ready skills in strategic development, project management, written communications, and teamwork

C. COURSE DESIGNATION: Writing Intensive (W)

D. REQUIRED COURSE MATERIALS

Course material provided in class.

HIGHLY Recommended: https://store.stylebooks.com/2020-ap-stylebook-print-edition.html

2. EVALUATION

E. GRADING SCALE

SCORE	GRADE	MEANING
95-100	A	Outstanding
90-94	A/B	Excellent
85-90	B	Very Good
80-84	B/C	Good
75-80	C	Average
70-74	C/D	Below Average
60-70	D	Passing
0-59	F	Failure

Table 1 Grading Scale

F. EVALUATION

ACTIVITY	WEIGHT
AP Test	10%
Biography	10%
Attendance/class tests	20%
Writing Packet	60%
TOTAL	100%

Table 2 Evaluation Activities

G. EVALUATION METHODS

Student success in this course will be determined through a combination of formative and summative assessment. Students will be evaluated on their ability to apply concepts through "smaller" assignments and group interactions throughout the course. As the course progresses, larger projects will provide students with a deeper opportunity to demonstrate their comprehension. Each assignment has a unique criterion for evaluation and will be included in the assignment sheet. Participation, discussion, and asking questions will also be considered in a student's evaluation.

3. CLASS POLICIES

H.   INSTRUCTOR CLASS POLICIES

The following guidelines will create a comfortable and productive learning environment throughout the semester.

I can expect you:

- To come to class on time;

- To be attentive and engaged in class;

- Take responsibility for your education;

- To refrain from using cell phones or having private conversations during class;

- To spend an adequate amount of time on the homework each week, making an effort to solve and understand each assignment;

- To engage with both the abstract and practical sides of the material;

- To seek help when appropriate;

- Respect your classmates, as they deserve your respect and support. Others may have ideas and opinions that differ from yours, or they may struggle to understand information as quickly as their peers. But they deserve the same level of respect from you as you wish to receive from them.

Participation in Class Discussion

Class participation is a very important part of the learning process in this course. Although not explicitly graded, you will be evaluated on the QUALITY of your contributions and insights. Quality comments possess one or more of the following properties:

- Offers a different and unique, but relevant, perspective;

- Contributes to moving the discussion and analysis forward;

- Builds on other comments;

Concerns and Communicating with the Instructor

I have an open door/communications policy: Concerns, questions, or complaints about separate assignments should be discussed with the instructor. We can make arrangements to speak in-person or over Zoom.

Out of respect for my time and yours, please do not use text messaging heavily with the instructor to convey significant concerns about the material; I will be happy to schedule an appointment. I generally will not be available via text after 9 p.m.

I. EXCUSED ABSENCE POLICY (University)

Note that instructors are required to excuse student absences for the events listed in this University attendance policy. Students may be required to produce documentation as evidence for an excused absence.

4. UNIVERSITY POLICIES: REQUIRED

J. SYLLABUS SUBJECT TO CHANGE

This syllabus is informational in nature and is not an express or implied contract. It is subject to change due to unforeseen circumstances, as a result of any circumstance outside the University's control, or as other needs arise. If, in the University's sole discretion, public health conditions or any other matter affecting the health, safety, upkeep or wellbeing of our campus community or operations requires the University to make any syllabus or course changes or move to remote teaching, alternative assignments may be provided so that the learning objectives for the course, as determined by the University, can still be met. The University does not guarantee that this syllabus will not change, nor does it guarantee specific in-person, on-campus classes, activities, opportunities, or services or any other particular format, timing, or location of education, classes, activities, or services.

K. Exposure to or Diagnosis of COVID-19

- ***What to do if you have an exposure or diagnosis of COVID-19***

If you have been diagnosed with COVID off-campus, please confidentially report this to UT's local contact tracers Rapid-Trace, so they can confidentially notify anyone else who may have been exposed, provide you resources, work with you on isolation/quarantine guidelines, and arrange notification to your professors as needed. Students can contact Rapid-Trace at (813) 699-3551, or selfreport@rapid-trace.com. Rapid-Trace can be reached daily from 7 a.m.-9 p.m., with after-hours voicemail.

If you are diagnosed with COVID at the Dickey Health and Wellness Center - Rapid-Trace will contact you.

- ***Types of Close Contact that will be traced:***

There are three types of contact that Rapid Trace contact tracers will look for when a case has been identified:
- Physical contact – touching without protection
- Close contact – within 6 ft. for 15 minutes or more
- Proximate contact – More than 6 feet-but in the same room for an extended period (an hour or more). However, if students, faculty and staff were wearing masks and are 6ft or more apart then they would NOT be considered close contacts, regardless of class time or time in a room together.

Please remember that these are general guidelines, and it is important to always follow UT's Spartan Shield directives for health and safety.

If you feel you have been exposed to COVID and have not been contacted by Rapid Trace, please confidentially report the exposure to get assistance and guidance.

L. TITLE IX & REPORTING SEXUAL MISCONDUCT

Sexual misconduct, including, but not limited to: acts of sexual harassment, nonconsensual sexual intercourse, nonconsensual sexual contact, dating violence, domestic violence, stalking, gender-based harassment or sexual exploitation are prohibited by Title IX, the Student Code of Conduct and other University policies.

The University strives to maintain a safe and nondiscriminatory campus community, and to do so, it is important for the Spartan community to report any safety concerns, such as acts of sexual misconduct. If you experience or witness any of these University prohibited actions, the University encourages reporting these matters, so that the University is able to take prompt action to stop, prevent and remedy the effects of the harassment. University resources and grievance procedure information will be provided to individuals who may seek services or redress.

There are many options to making a Title IX/Sexual Misconduct report. You may report this information through the University's online Title IX Report form.[1] The information will be forwarded and reviewed by the Title IX Coordinator or a Title IX Deputy Coordinator, who will contact you to provide further information on University grievance procedure options and resources that are available.

You may also make a direct report by contacting the University's Title IX Coordinator:

> Kelsey San Antonio, Title IX Coordinator
>
> Southard Family Building Suite #266
>
> (KSanAntonio@ut.edu) (813)-257-3748

CALL 211 to Contact a Special Victim's Facility with Free Travel to a Trained Response Team, including Counselors, Medical Examination (optional), Emergency Response, and Police Coordination: The Crisis Center of Tampa Bay. Or contact The Tampa Police Department (813) 231-6130 to report.

If you decide to discuss an incident with your course professor, it is important to note that they are considered a Responsible Employee, and are obligated to report the information you share to the University's Title IX Coordinator.[2]

If you are not ready to disclose or report this information to the University, you may disclose the information to a confidential party, such as a Victim Advocate, or a Counselor or Health Clinician at the Student Health and Wellness Center, to discuss any further options and resources available before making a decision to report.
- The Victim's Advocacy Hotline: (victimadvocacy@ut.edu) (813) 257-3900.
- Health and Counseling Center (healthcenter@ut.edu) (813) 253-6250
- Dickey Health & Wellness Center (wellness@ut.edu) (813) 257-1877

For more information, see The University of Tampa's Title IX webpage[3] and the Student Code of Conduct[4] webpage.

---

[1] https://ut-advocate.symplicity.com/titleix_report/index.php/pid419524?

[2] There is an exception to this required reporting for preventative education programs and public awareness events or forums. For more information about exempt events, please contact the Title IX Office.

[3] https://www.ut.edu/about-ut/university-services/human-resources/title-ix-

[4] https://www.ut.edu/campus-life/student-services/office-of-student-conduct/student-code-of-conduct

M. ADA STATEMENT

Students with disabilities: If you require accommodations because of a disability, please call (813) 257-5757 or e-mail disability.services@ut.edu for information on registering with Student Disability Services. You can also submit your request for accommodations and supporting documentation via an Accommodation Request[5]. Please feel free to discuss this with me in private for more information.

If you encounter disability-related barriers accessing the online content for this course, please contact Sharon Austin, Academic Technology Accessibility Specialist, at saustin@ut.edu. If the initial access to the content cannot be resolved, the university will provide individuals with disabilities access to, and use of, information and data by an alternative means that meets the identified needs.

N. CAMPUS CLOSURE STATEMENT

Course interruption due to adverse conditions: In case of any adverse condition or situation which could interrupt the schedule of classes, each student is asked to access UT Homepage[6] for information about the status of the campus and class meetings. In addition, please refer to UT Blackboard[7] for announcements and other important information. You are responsible for accessing this information.

O. ACADEMIC INTEGRITY STATEMENT

The University of Tampa is committed to the development of each student to become a productive and responsible citizen who embraces the values of honesty, trust, fairness, respect, and responsibility. Upholding academic integrity and promoting an ethical standard that does not condone academic misconduct is an important demonstration of these values and underpins how we live and learn in a community of inquiry. Students are expected to act ethically in the pursuit of their education and to avoid behaviors that run counter to participation in and demonstration of their learning. The Academic Integrity Policy[8] lists several common types of violations related to cheating, unauthorized collaboration or assistance, plagiarism, and more. While the policy lists common violations and examples, it is not an exhaustive list and instructors may identify other types of conduct that impacts their ability to evaluate what has been learned substantively enough to constitute a violation of this policy. An instructor may impose a wide range of sanctions for academic integrity violations from completing a more difficult replacement assignment to an F in the course. Particularly severe violations or multiple violations throughout a student's academic career may result in suspension or expulsion from the University.

P. FACE COVERINGS/MASKS

All face coverings, whether disposable or reusable, must
- be made with at least two layers of breathable material;
- fully cover the nose and mouth and secure under the chin;

---

[5] https://ut-accommodate.symplicity.com/public_accommodation/

[6] http://ut.edu

[7] https://utampa.okta.com

[8] http://ut.smartcatalogiq.com/en/current/catalog/Academic-Policies-and-Procedures/Academic-Integrity-Policy

- fit snugly but comfortably against the side of the face; and

- be secured with ties or ear loops, allowing one to remain hands-free.

Based on guidance from health authorities, the following are *not* acceptable face coverings: neck gaiters, open-chin triangle bandanas, and face coverings containing valves, mesh material, or holes of any kind. Unless a face shield is coupled with a face mask, it is *not* considered an acceptable masking practice on campus.

Failure to wear a mask will mean that one cannot enter a building nor attend class. Refusal to wear a mask within the classroom is considered disruptive behavior and will be handled through the classroom disruption policy. Refusal to wear a mask in other settings will be handled through Student Conduct or Human Resources if faculty or staff.

It is important to note that UT policy may vary from City and County Executive Orders. You may want to refer to local government websites as you travel the City and the County.

City of Tampa[9]

Hillsborough County[10]

Q. CLASS DISRUPTION STATEMENT

Disruption policy: Every student has the right to a comfortable learning environment where the open and honest exchange of ideas may freely occur. Each student is expected to do his or her part to ensure that the classroom (and anywhere else the class may meet) remains conducive to learning. This includes respectful and courteous treatment of all in the classroom. According to the terms of the University of Tampa Disruption Policy, the professor will take immediate action when inappropriate behavior occurs. Details of the policy may be found at Disruption of the Academic Process[11].

R. STUDENT CODE OF CONDUCT AND COVID-19

All students whether living on or off campus are responsible for their own behavior and their personal safety. In the current COVID-19 pandemic, it is imperative that students understand their responsibility to support not only their own health and safety, but also how their personal actions contribute to the safety and welfare of others, including those within and outside the UT community. Non-compliance with the Spartan Shield Health and Safety Plan has been incorporated into the Student Code of Conduct [12] to promote accountability.

---

[9] https://www.tampagov.net/emergency-management/covid-19/face-covering

[10]
https://www.hillsboroughcounty.org/en/residents/public-safety/emergency-management/stay-safe/face-coverings-and-masks

[11]
http://ut.smartcatalogiq.com/en/current/catalog/Academic-Policies-and-Procedures/Disruption-of-the-Academic-Process

[12] https://www.ut.edu/campus-life/student-services/office-of-student-conduct/student-code-of-conduct

Prohibited conduct includes, but is not limited to, violating isolation and/or quarantine restrictions, not maintaining appropriate physical/social distancing or not following the required use of approved facial coverings in public campus spaces indoors, and outdoors when physical/social distancing is not possible. Behavior that violates city, county and/or state executive orders specifically related to the public health emergency in the state of Florida due to the spread of COVID-19, is also prohibited. Engaging in any behaviors that violate the Spartan Shield Health and Safety Plan may result in disciplinary action ranging from a disciplinary reprimand through expulsion from the University.

As a community, we abide by the Spartan Code and express care for ourselves and each other by sharing the obligation of compliance and holding each other accountable to the health and safety measures outlined by the University's Spartan Shield Health and Safety Plan. Violations of University policy should be reported by contacting Campus Safety at (813) 257-7777 or by submitting a student conduct incident report[13].

5. UNIVERSITY POLICIES

S. ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Cheating, plagiarism, copying and any other behavior that is contrary to University standards of behavior will not be tolerated.

Students caught violating any aspect of the University of Tampa's Academic Integrity Policy will be penalized in all cases. Penalty ranges from "0" on an assignment to "F" for the course without regard to a student's accumulated points. Students may also face expulsion. It is the student's responsibility to become familiar with the policies of the university regarding academic integrity and to avoid violating such policies. Policy information is found at Academic Integrity Policy[14].

T. CLASS DISRUPTION STATEMENT

Disruption policy: Every student has the right to a comfortable learning environment where the open and honest exchange of ideas may freely occur. Each student is expected to do his or her part to ensure that the classroom (and anywhere else the class may meet) remains conducive to learning. This includes respectful and courteous treatment of all in the classroom. According to the terms of the University of Tampa Disruption Policy, the professor will take immediate action when inappropriate behavior occurs. Details of the policy may be found at Disruption of the Academic Process[15].

U. GENERAL DISCLAIMER

Note: The professor reserves the right to make changes to this syllabus as necessary.

---

[13] https://ut-advocate.symplicity.com/public_report/index.php/pid148678?

[14] http://ut.smartcatalogiq.com/en/current/catalog/Academic-Policies-and-Procedures/Academic-Integrity-Policy

[15] http://ut.smartcatalogiq.com/en/current/catalog/Academic-Policies-and-Procedures/Disruption-of-the-Academic-Process

6. DEPARTMENT POLICIES

Communication Department policies for students:

If you use the computer lab, you are expected to adhere to the lab rules and procedures posted to Blackboard and to exercise courtesy and professionalism at all times. If you check out cage equipment, you are bound by cage policies.

Full Course Schedule continued on Next Page

CLASS SCHEDULE

WEEK	DATE	TOPICS
1 **Introductions** **What is Media Writing?** **Grammar Review** **Storytelling**	W	**In-Class Activities Today:** ● Introduction to Course/Assignments/Instructor ● What IS Media Writing ● Grammar Review ● Telling a story **Review for next Class** ● https://www.learnupon.com/blog/what-is-information-processing-theory/ ● https://www.grammarly.com/blog/whats-the-difference-between-copy-editing-and-proofreading/ **Assignment:** Biography
2 **Processing Information** **Writing Processes** **AP Style** **Copyediting and proofreading**	M	**Assignment Due:** Biography **Class Discussions** ● Analyzing, Synthesizing and Simplifying Information ● AP Style ● The Writing Process ● Mind mapping and outlining ● APOS ● Analyzing, Synthesizing and Simplifying Information ● Being Critical Readers ● Editing and Proofreading
	W	**AP Style Test (on Blackboard)** **Review for next class** ● Watching and reading the news in real time ● https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/subject_specific_writing/journalism_and_journalistic_writing/index.html ● https://www.factcheck.org/2016/11/how-to-spot-fake-news/
3 **Newsmaking** **Writing for Journalism**	M	**Class Discussions** ● What makes the news? ● How to conduct and interview ● Understanding the news, print and digital media

	W	**Review for next class**
		
		    ● https://prowly.com/magazine/how-to-write-press-release-guide/
		    ● https://blog.hubspot.com/marketing/press-release-template-ht
		
		Preview of Media Writing Project is made available at this date.

4
 	
Writing for PR
 	
Crisis Communication
 	
Persuasion
	M	**Class Discussion**
		
		    ● The Press Release, The Media Alert, The Press Kit, Pitches, Newswires
		    ● White Papers, Backgrounders
		    ● Crisis Planning and Messaging
		
		Assignment
		
		    ● **Start Media Writing Packet**

	W	**Media Writing Packet Work** **Review for next class** ● https://ducttapemarketing.com/how-to-write-a-small-ad/

5
 	
Writing for Marketing
 	
Branding
 	
Advertising
 	
Outdoor Media
	M	**In-class quiz from readings**
		
		Class Discussions
		
		    ● Branding strategy
		    ● Basic principles of marketing and advertising
		    ● Copy for ads and outdoor media
		    ● Billboards, Bus stations, metro stops

	W	**Media Writing Packet Work; special session for any remaining questions**
		
		Review before class
		
		    ● https://sproutsocial.com/insights/writing-for-social/
		    ● https://blog.hootsuite.com/writing-for-social-media/
		    ● https://www.ap.org/about/news-values-and-principles/downloads/ap-news-values-and-principles.pdf

6
 	
Media for Digital
 	
Media Law
	M	**In-class quiz from readings**
		
		Class Discussions
		    ● Writing Posts,Blogs, Tweets
		    ● Writing for SEO

	W	**Media Writing Packet DUE by EOD Thursday**
		
		    ● The First Amendment
		    ● Libel, Slander

Table 4 Course Schedule