

Communication 320-01 – News writing
Fall 2014 Syllabus

Professor: Dr. Selene G. Phillips

Class Time: Tuesday and Thursday 9:30 a.m. to 10:45 a.m.

Class Place: Strickler Hall 309

Professor office & hours: Strickler Hall 302, Tuesday 12:15 to 2:15 p.m. or by appointment

Professor office phone: 502-852-2976

E-mail: selene.phillips@louisville.edu

Communication department: Strickler Hall 310, 502-852-6976

Textbooks and Readings

Required reading:

“News Reporting and Writing,” The Missouri Group, Brian S. Brooks, George Kennedy, Daryl R. Moen, and Don Ranly, (tenth edition), Bedford/St. Martin’s

“America’s Best Newspaper Writing,” Roy Peter Clark and Christopher Scanlan, (second edition), Bedford/St. Martin’s

“The Associated Press Stylebook and Libel Manual,” (latest edition), The Associated Press
Bring AP book to each class.

Course Description

Students taking this course will study and practice writing and reporting techniques for routine news events. Students will become familiar with the elements of news, journalism, story organization and writing news leads. Much of the focus will be on hard news and feature stories. This course fits with the mission of the University of Louisville’s Department of Communication by assisting students in developing specific competencies related to writing and speaking to a specific audience. It will also prepare students for positions and careers in the field of communication. This course fulfills a requirement for a Bachelor of Science degree in Communication, and it serves as a 300-level elective for a Bachelor of Arts degree in Communication.

Course Goals

This course will provide students with an opportunity to understand established news values and the elements of writing for the media. Students will work on writing skills needed to prepare news stories and press releases. Students will expand upon and exercise their knowledge that may be used in a variety of mass communication professions. Specific goals are to:

- learn journalistic writing skills;
- practice news gathering, interviewing, and writing skills;
- exercise good news judgment;
- learn differences between writing for print, broadcast and online journalism;
- understand journalism rights, ethics, and responsibilities; and
- become a critical news media consumer.

The ultimate goal is to better equip students to think critically about news and to prepare them for a position or career in communication.

Course Policies

Attendance, Etiquette, Class Participation & Conduct

Attendance and class participation is crucial. Chronic tardiness will hurt your grade in terms of class participation and by missing quizzes given at the start of class. If you miss class, you are responsible for securing class notes from a classmate. I suggest you exchange information with at least two other students. Students with three unexcused absences may receive an F in the class. To have an excused absence, you must either talk to me before you miss a class or as soon as possible after missing class. The excuse should be those outlined under the “Tests” heading. Cell phones should be turned off. Do not texting during class.

To facilitate the learning process, the professor will act as an editor and publisher and the student as a reporter. This provides working knowledge about how news rooms operate. Students are responsible for all material in the texts. Quizzes may be given to assess preparation. Lively discussions help students learn more. Those who take initiative and ask questions will thrive. For the most part, this is not a lecture class where sitting silently and taking notes will serve you well. Speak up. Discussion is key. Critical thinking and creativity are valued.

Students are expected to maintain collegial behavior. Students may disagree with each other or the professor but must demonstrate professional behavior and respect the integrity of fellow classmates and the professor. Sexual harassment and discrimination is unacceptable and unlawful conduct that will not be tolerated in the educational environment. If activities or actions disturb your ability to learn, please bring it to my attention so I may assist in providing the best learning environment possible.

Office Hours

My office hours are Tuesdays from 12:15 until 2:15 p.m. or by appointment. You are welcome to arrange to speak to me over the phone.

Communication

Blackboard will be used to support the classroom experience throughout the semester. It is your responsibility to obtain a valid ULink account to access Blackboard. Grades appear on Blackboard as soon as work is graded. Check Blackboard to ensure that the proper grade was recorded. Students need to notify the professor as soon as possible if there are any discrepancies in the recorded grade. If there is an error or you are upset about a grade, please notify me within 24 hours after the grade has been assigned. If you wait until the end of the semester to discuss the problem, I am unable to assist you in the same manner than if we work on things immediately. Performance and grade information is considered confidential. Professors are discouraged from transmitting sensitive information through media in which the identity of the recipient cannot be verified, such as e-mail or telephone. Please be prepared, if requested, to provide identification.

E-mail

The best way to get in touch with me is e-mail. I will do my best to respond as soon as possible, but I do not always look at e-mail on weekends. If you have a problem, you need to plan ahead. E-mail correspondence must be written in a professional and formal manner. Students must type “Com 320” in the subject heading of the e-mail message and sign their full name to all e-mail correspondence if they want to receive a response. E-mails are sent to students via Blackboard to your University-provided e-mail account.

Accommodations and Special Needs

Students with special needs or with disabilities needing reasonable modifications to satisfy course criteria should communicate those needs with the professor as soon as possible to identify and plan accommodations. Students need to supply documentation from the Disability Resource Center or another resource that will assist in planning accommodations. Students may be asked to contact the Disability Resource Center to determine academic and testing accommodations at 852-6938. Students with personal or family problems are encouraged to seek counseling, at no charge, at the UofL Personal Counseling Center at 852-6585.

Deadlines

Meeting deadlines in journalism is critical. You are required to turn in assignments on the day and time they are due. Turning in a paper a few minutes late is unacceptable. In a newsroom, being late is an expensive error and can cost one his or her job. In the unfortunate case of an emergency, it is the students' responsibility to notify the professor as soon as reasonably possible to make other arrangements.

Assignments must be completed and turned in on time. There will be no make-up work. Major writing assignments (Obituary story, review, local story and feature story) are only accepted late with a valid University excuse; however, for each day the paper is late, 10 percent will be deducted from your grade. If a paper is a few minutes late, this is counted as the first late day and will result in a 10 percent deduction.

Assignments

Poor writing will seriously hurt your grade. Students are encouraged to use the Writing Center before submitting their papers. The Virtual Writing Center is located at: <http://louisville.edu/writingcenter/virtual-writing-center.html>

I am willing to pre-review portions of a student's paper to assist them with their writing; however, students must provide the draft within a frame work that allows me ample time to check the work. I cannot look at a dozen papers the day before the paper is due. Please keep this in mind if you want me to assist you with your paper.

Much of your instruction from me will come from the time I spend individually assisting you with your stories and editing your papers. In some ways, you may consider this a class focused on improving your individual writing abilities; however, please do not hesitate to ask fellow students to also look over your work.

Turning in a previously published story is unacceptable. Written work must be submitted in a professionally typed Associated Press format, double-spaced with 1.5 inch margins using 12 point Times font and black ink. Continually backup your work. To earn full credit, identify papers in the upper left hand corner as below. This is the only single spaced section.

Jane Doe (Your Name)
Com 320, Dr. Phillips
Obituary (Name of Assignment)
October 9, 2014 (Date)

Papers must be submitted to SafeAssign and will submit drafts to look for problems.

Reporting assignments require students to act as a reporter and gather facts for a story. Students must identify themselves when conducting interviews. Tell interviewees that you are a journalism student and that your work may be published. The primary focus will be writing for print media. Broadcast news writing will also be covered.

Do not count on the fact that you think you can catch up at the end of the semester or talk the professor into allowing you to do an extra paper or assignment. If at any time you feel that you are behind or do not understand something, notify me as soon as possible. It never works to wait until the last minute, just before an exam or at the end of the semester if you have been experiencing trouble. By that time, it is too late. If you are concerned about your grade, you should immediately take the time to talk with me.

Rubrics will be provided. The obituary, review and local stories are two pages long. The feature story is three to four pages long. Since this is a news story, perfection is expected even though news stories often have typos. That is one thing that makes news writing difficult.

Tests

If a student has a legitimate University excuse for missing an exam, a multiple page essay exam *and* a cumulative exam may be given. Students with a legitimate emergency must provide valid documentation BEFORE you are allowed to make up an exam. If there is a medical emergency, please contact me as soon as possible so arrangements may be made. You must have valid documentation before any extension will be considered. A legitimate emergency is the death of an immediate family member or a student's own personal medical emergency. You will be asked to produce valid documentation or you will not be able to make up the exam. In the case of an emergency, it is the student's responsibility to notify the professor as soon as possible. For example, if you are extremely ill, you need to ask a friend, relative or care giver to call or e-mail the professor and/or the communication department. It is unacceptable to notify the professor a few days after the emergency has occurred.

The following are not considered emergencies and are not good reasons to turn in an assignment late or take an examination late: going on a family vacation or cruise, attending a family get-together, being on hand for a friend or relative's birth, a doctor or dentist appointment, moving a friend, breaking-up with a girlfriend or boyfriend and hearing bad news. These are all significant events, but your decision to attend them instead of completing a class assignment will have consequences.

Plagiarism and Academic Misconduct

Students must turn in their own original assignments and stories. Cheating or plagiarism, the representation of someone else's work as one's own, is justification for failure in the course and a report to the Dean of Students Office according to University regulations. It is unacceptable to submit work to fulfill the requirements of this course if you already submitted it or are planning to submit it to fulfill the requirements of another class. Plagiarism is a serious affront to the educational system and will not be tolerated. Any proven plagiarism or other academic misconduct will result in failure of this course and will be reported to the committee on student discipline for further action, including notice in the permanent record, dismissal or expulsion. I will seek the maximum punishment available according to University regulations. Be aware that a letter concerning the plagiarism incident will be placed in the student's file. Two such letters means expulsion from the University.

Plagiarism means:

- copying someone else's work and claiming it as your own, including but not limited to, work that is accessed in person, from computer files, or from the Internet;
- paraphrasing someone else's work and claiming it as your own;
- collaborating excessively with another person and claiming the work solely as your own; and

cheating on tests.

Cheating in this course includes making up sources or interviews and copying someone else's work. For more information on plagiarism and other forms of academic misconduct, please refer to the Undergraduate Catalog. It is the students' responsibility to understand these policies and the ramifications of any actions. Students are advised to become familiar with academic dishonesty in the Code of Student Rights and Responsibilities that can be found at the Campus Life web site. Academic dishonesty is in Section Five.

Measuring Tools for Objectives

The measuring tool will be how students apply what they have learned to their writing assignments and exams. Grades are based on the items below.

Student grade record		
_____ Review = 10%	Due: Thurs., Sept. 25, 2014	worth 10 points
_____ Obituary Story = 10%	Due: Thurs., Oct. 9, 2014	worth 10 points
_____ Exam 1 = 20%	Due: Thurs., Oct. 21, 2014	worth 20 points
_____ Local Story = 10%	Due: Thurs., Nov. 6, 2014	worth 10 points
_____ Feature Story = 20%	Due: Thurs., Nov. 20, 2014	worth 20 points
_____ Exam 2 = 20%	Due: Tues., Dec. 2, 2014	worth 20 points
_____ Attendance/Participation = 10%	All Semester	worth 10 points

Grading

Assignments will be graded on the basis of their content, organization, accuracy and style. Final grades will be earned as follows.

A = Outstanding – 90.0 to 100% or more of the total possible course points. Outstanding means that the student's performance was nearly perfect

B = Superior – 80.0 to 89.9% of the total possible course points. Superior means that the student's performance was above the average or mediocre level

C = Adequate – 70.0 to 79.9% of the total possible course points. Adequate means that the student's performance was average or mediocre

D = Marginally meets minimum standards – 60.0 to 69.9% of the total possible course points. Marginally means that the student's performance was below expectations

F = Unacceptable - less than 59.9% of the total possible course points. Unacceptable means that the student's performance did not meet even the minimal expectations

Students earning a score short of this scale are not "given" extra points. For example, if a student earns a score of 89.9, the student's grade is a B. No pluses or minuses are assigned.

Syllabus

The professor may adjust the syllabus when necessary to enhance the learning process.

Intellectual Property

Course notes and other original course material, electronic or otherwise, created by faculty are considered intellectual property owned by the faculty member. Consequently, if a student sells this material without the faculty member's permission, the student has improperly and illegally infringed on the faculty member's property rights.

**Communication 320 – News writing
Fall 2014 Class Schedule**

Week 1

Tuesday, August 26, 2014, First day of Com 320 class; Introductions, Syllabus Review, Plagiarism

Reading due: Chapter 1-The Nature of News

Thursday, August 28, 2014, Syllabus Questions

Reading due: Ch. 4-Interviewing, AP Stylebook 1 - 21

Clark: pp. 318 – 320 Plagiarism: The Unoriginal Sin

Week 2

TU, Sept. 2, No formal class, Work on classmate interview

Reading due: Ch. 2-The Changing Media Landscape

TH, Sept. 4, No formal class, Work on classmate interview

Reading due: Ch. 3-The Emerging Media, AP Stylebook 21-42

Week 3

TU, Sept. 9, **Quiz on Syllabus**

Reading due: Ch. 5-Handling Quotations & Attributions

Clark Ch. 6-Opinion & Persuasion

TH, Sept. 11, Reading due: Ch. 6-Gathering & Verifying Information, AP Stylebook 42-63

Week 4

TU, Sept. 16, Reading due: Ch. 7-Finding the News in News Releases

TH, Sept. 18, No Class. Use this opportunity to meet with your classmates and edit each other's review

Reading due: Ch. 8-Reporting with Numbers, AP Stylebook 63-84

Week 5

TU, Sept. 23, Guest: Susan Lindsey, Savvy Communications

Due: Review draft

Reading due: Ch. 9-Inverted Pyramid, Clark Ch. 3-Obituaries and Funerals

TH, Sept. 25, **Due: Review (10 points, 10%)**

Reading due: Ch. 10-Writing to Be Read, AP Stylebook 84-105

Week 6

TU, September 30, Reading Due: Ch. 11-Alternatives to the Inverted Pyramid

TH, Oct. 2, Due: Obituary draft

Reading due: Ch. 12-Writing for the Web, AP Stylebook 105-126

Week 7

TU, Oct. 7, No class, October break

TH, Oct. 9, **DUE: Obituary Story (10 points, 10%)**

Reading due: Ch. 13-Writing for Radio & Television, AP Stylebook 126-147

Week 8

Oct. 13, 7 p.m. A Fragile Trust, Floyd Theater. Serial plagiarist Jayson Blair story. Discussion follows.

TU, Oct. 14, Reading due: Ch. 14-Covering a Beat

TH, Oct. 16, Last day to withdraw. Guest: Cathy Fyock, Your Possibility Partner

Reading due: Ch. 15-Speeches, News Conferences & Meetings, AP Stylebook 147-168

Week 9

TU, Oct. 21, EXAM 1, over Chapters 1 – 10 and AP Stylebook (20 points, 20%)

Reading due: Ch. 16-Other Types of Local Stories

TH, Oct. 23, Last day to withdraw

Reading due: Ch. 17-Business & Consumer News, AP Stylebook 168-189

Week 10

TU, Oct. 28, Reading due: Ch. 18-Social Science Reporting

Clark: Ch. 2-Local Reporting & Beats

TH, Oct. 30, Reading due: Ch. 19-Investigative Reporting, AP Stylebook 189-210

Week 11

TU, November 4, Due: Local Story draft

Guest: Callie Minor with Total Quality Logistics

Reading due: Ch. 20-Working in Public Relations

TH, Nov. 6, Due: Local Story (20 points, 20%)

Reading due: Ch. 21-Media Law, AP Stylebook 210-231

Week 12

TU, Nov. 11, Reading: Clark: Ch. 7-The Profile and Feature Story

TH, Nov. 13, Reading due: Ch. 22-Ethics, Reading due: AP Stylebook 231-252

Week 13

TU, Nov. 18, Due: Feature Story draft

TH, Nov. 20, Due: Feature Story (20 points, 20%)

Reading due: AP Stylebook 252-273

Week 14

TU, Nov. 25, Reading due: AP Stylebook 273-301

TH, Nov. 27, No class, Thanksgiving

Week 15

TU, December 2, Exam 2, over Chapters 11 – 22 and AP Stylebook (20 points, 20%)

TH, Dec. 4, Last Com 320 Class

Week 16

Mon. Dec. 8, Last day of classes

Tues. Dec. 11, Reading Day

Dec. 10-16, Final Exams