

MCM 262 NEWS REPORTING Spring, 2008

(News writing, interviews, research and effects)

Tuesday - Thursday, 11 a.m. – 12:20 DAN Room 205

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Office Hours:
TuThur: 2:30 – 4; 5 – 6 pm.
Wednesday: 2:00 - 5 p.m.
Other times by appointment

REQUIRED MATERIALS:

Reference library: "Writing and Reporting News," by Carole Rich, 4th edition, A.P. Stylebook, small, pocket dictionary.

COURSE OBJECTIVES:

This class is an extension of Journalism 261, with emphasis on developing reporting skills and refining news judgment. This will include the nature of reporting assignments and how they are processed, and the preparation involved in conducting interviews.

The overall goal is to improve the skills necessary to produce readable articles for print media, skills also usable in radio-TV and public relations – as a reporter, interviewer and writer. Also:

To learn to gather, evaluate and process information for news stories.

To learn organization and self-discipline to meet deadlines.

To improve the ability to observe and describe.

METHODS:

The art of good writing can be reduced to one sentence: blending the meaning of the words with the rhythm of the sentence. There is no formula: writers write, and rewrite, strive for the perfect phrase and don't quit just because they fail.

This course will emphasize writing in class, on people and subjects not chosen in advance. Homework will relate to more in-depth stories. Pop quizzes will require you to be aware of current events. Lectures will stress style and technique, and often anecdotal in nature, an important part of the writing experience.

To be competitive in this course, you will need to read a daily newspaper and observe one or more network or cable newscasts most days of the week. We will attempt to schedule special speakers and field trips that will provide opportunities to observe and write real-time stories.

REQUIRED WORK:

All class, homework and quizzes will be critiqued and rated and form part of your grade. Class discussion will be important. A mid-term and final exam will count, but won't sink you. All of these together may account for half your grade.

The other half, or more, will be judged on the basis of your improvement, effort and contributions to class discussion and ideas. You can't take excessive credit for being born with a talent and talent can't be taught. Good habits can be developed, hard work encouraged, and solid fundamentals can be taught. If you have an unexcused absence, makeup work will be considered late and the grade lowered. Deadlines are important in the media, so we will observe them in class.

Do not obsess over grades early in class. You will be judged on how far you have come at the end of the semester. Those who need help with grammar or spelling problems can get help from the writing center. If you sense other problems in your basic skills, consult with me so we can seek solutions.

If you attend class you can't fail this course. If you are absent for a significant period of time, you must have a valid explanation to be allowed to make up the work. I will tolerate an occasional tardiness to class, given that the campus is a beehive of activity, traffic and pressure, but will expect you to do so with regret and an explanation, out of fairness to others.

GRADING:

Writing assignments:	25 percent
Class involvement	20 percent
Exams	25 percent
Improvement	30 percent (this actually encompasses much of your writing assignments and classroom participation. An "A" means you came into the course at a high level and sustained it, or that you were a C student who did B-quality work. A "B" reflects a good effort, steady if not dramatic improvement. A "C" means you showed up, were attentive and made modest improvement. A "D" means you did the minimum required, but attended every class and did not snore while you slept. An "F" means you were too frequently absent and gave too little an effort.

An expert will be brought in to lecture on plagiarism and explain the computer programs that recognize it. As Dr. Fullerton put it so well, "copying is not a technique, it is cheating, and will earn you a zero for an assignment and possibly an F for the course. It's not worth it."

LINKS TO THIS SYLLABUS WILL BE PROVIDED ON:

- Americans with Disabilities Act
- Religious Observance
- Classroom Rules of Conduct
- Q Drops