

Journalism 360: Specialized Writing
Credit: 3 Hours
Summer 2008

Meeting room: Rather Bldg. 205; M-F 10-11:50 a.m.

Instructor: Mike Blackman, Warner Chair Visiting Professor

Phone: 936-294-1335; 817-228-1614 (cell); 817-926-4238 (weekends)

Office: Rather 122; **e-mail:** mlb011@shsu.edu

Office hours: M-Th: 1-5 p.m. Mornings by appointment

Required materials

Strunk and White: The Elements of Style

Course Objectives

To learn how to write personality profiles that are publishable.

Methods

In this course, we will consume ourselves with good writing. You will be exposed to the various styles of writing and learn about how to make words do precisely what you want them to do: create a mood, describe a scene, paint a picture; in other words, give the reader the full richness of a story. At the same time, you will learn how a little description and detail can go a long way – often too long -- and can in fact overwhelm a reader. You will learn to write long stories and short stories, stories in between and stories with beginnings, middles and ends. We will stick close to the basics of profile writing – from how you report (research) a subject to how you string the words together in an effective writing style appropriate to the subject.

I will be passing out copies of stories and handouts about writing/storytelling frequently I expect you to read them and be prepared to discuss them in class. A crucial element in this course is for you to be on good terms with Strunk and White's The Elements of Style. As I've said, we will use Strunk and White to help us use the language correctly; we'll have three quizzes during the course, as well as segment on the final to test your grammatical proficiency.

Required Work

This class includes lectures, quizzes, lab work, exams and vigorous discussion periods in which I expect all to participate. You will be writing stories weekly.

Grading

Writing assignments: 40 percent; **Quizzes/exercises/class participation:** 20 percent; **Mid-term exam:** 15 percent; **Final exam:** 25 percent.

Worth remembering

Don't miss class, don't be late. If you regularly miss classes you'll never catch up, and you're not likely to make a good grade. Be respectful of your classmates – don't be a distraction in class (turn off cell phones, computers, ipods, etc.). Pay attention, work hard and you should do well. Don't be afraid to ask questions or take a chance. Don't take shortcuts, ever, when it comes to fairness, accuracy and ethics in reporting and writing your stories. You don't want to risk losing your credibility and good name, for instance, by plagiarizing another's work. (It could also lead to your failing the course). And remember: We're all in this together, and we're all still learning. The good thing about writing: you can improve every day, for the rest of your career. Good luck. --MB

SHSU Student Syllabus Guidelines

You may find online a more detailed description of the following policies. These guidelines will also provide you with a link to the specific university policy or procedure:

<http://www.shsu.edu/syllabus/>

Academic Dishonesty: Students are expected to maintain honesty and integrity in the academic experiences both in and out of the classroom. *See Student Syllabus Guidelines.*

Classroom Rules of Conduct: Students are expected to assist in maintaining a classroom environment that is conducive to learning. Students are to treat faculty and students with respect. Students are to turn off all cell phones while in the classroom. Under no circumstances are cell phones or any electronic devices to be used or seen during times of examination. Students may tape record lectures provided they do not disturb other students in the process.

Student Absences on Religious Holy Days: Students are allowed to miss class and other required activities, including examinations, for the observance of a religious holy day, including travel for that purpose. Students remain responsible for all work. *See Student Syllabus Guidelines.*

Students with Disabilities Policy: It is the policy of Sam Houston State University that individuals otherwise qualified shall not be excluded, solely by reason of their disability, from participation in any academic program of the university. Further, they shall not be denied the benefits of these programs nor shall they be subjected to discrimination. Students with disabilities that might affect their academic performance should visit with the Office of Services for Students with Disabilities located in the Counseling Center. *See Student Syllabus Guidelines.*

Visitors in the Classroom: Only registered students may attend class. Exceptions can be made on a case-by-case basis by the professor. In all cases, visitors must not present a disruption to the class by their attendance. Students wishing to audit a class must apply to do so through the Registrar's Office.

