

CLASS SYLLABUS

MCM 132.01: INTRODUCTION TO MEDIA WRITING SUMMER 2008

CLASS MEETINGS: M-F 12 – 2 p.m., Room 205, Dan Rather Building

Patsy K. Ziegler, M.A.

Office: Rm. 208, DR Bldg.

Mass Communications Lecturer

Office Hrs: 7:30-8, 10-10:3, 11-12; 2-2:30

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or by appointment

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REQUIRED MATERIALS

Paul Adams, *Writing Right for Today's Mass Media, reprinted 2003*

CATALOGUE DESCRIPTION

Our program emphasis is on the preparation of ethical and technologically proficient communication professionals who are capable of making a positive impact on their environment and on society. Our graduates will acquire skills for today's media marketplace and also develop the broader, theoretical background for

- o Negotiating convergence in the communication fields;
- o Communicating with and servicing diverse populations;
- o Understanding the economic and political pressures on professional integrity; and
- o Intellectually assessing and interpreting unfolding events.

Prerequisite: *English 164* with at least a C.

CREDIT: 3

PURPOSE

This course serves as the foundation for the sequence of writing courses required of mass communication majors and minors, whether they are pursuing print, broadcast, online, or public relations. It will include a combination of lectures, drills, quizzes, laboratory work and exams.

Since this is almost entirely a writing lab, you will have the opportunity for individual attention if you need help. Do not hesitate to ask questions about material you do not fully understand.

Reading good writing is also important to developing strong writing skills. To do well in this class, read textbook assignments before coming to class. Also, try to read a daily newspaper or news online and watch/listen to radio and TV newscasts regularly. We will refer to what's happening in the news as part of our class and look for examples of the types of stories you are writing. Good writing, however, in the sense of using the for effective communications, is a valuable tool in almost any vocation. So this is **not** purely a Mass Communication course. You **MUST** organize your time to handle the workload and not fall behind.

ATTENDANCE

You are expected to attend class regularly and to keep up with assignments. **You will be responsible for any assignments made during class in your presence or absence.** You are expected to be **on time** for class, to be prepared, to meet deadlines, and to participate in class discussions.

Class attendance is expected and will be noted. After three (3) [hour-long] absences, you will be referred to First Alert or the Advising Center and 5 points may be deducted for each additional [hour-long] absence—unless there is a documented family or personal emergency. **Remember:** You are responsible for dropping if you stop attending class.

You are responsible for making up missed work as soon as you return to class, if you have a valid excuse. You will receive a **0** daily grade for class work or a daily grade done in class when you're absent. Homework grades will convert to **0** if not turned in by the next class after an absence.

GRADES

All class work and homework will be critiqued and form part of your final grade. Deadlines are critical in the media; therefore, we shall observe them in this class.

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| Grades are weighted as follows: Daily attendance and participation | 10% |
| Class exercises/daily quizzes | 20% |
| Homework | 20% |
| Exams or major projects | 30% |
| Final Exam | 20% |

Grades are assigned on the following scale: 9.8=A+; 9.4=A; 9.1=A-; 8.8=B+; 8.4=B; 8.1=B-; 7.8=C+; 7.4=C; 7.1=C-; 6.8=D+; 6.4=D; 6.1=D-; 5.0=F; 0=0. An A level means nearly professional quality; a B is very good, but with some problems; C is adequate quality; D is barely acceptable.

There will be no eating, drinking, or using electronic equipment (unless it is part of the lesson for the day). If your cell phone goes off during class OR you're caught texting, you will receive a 0 for that day's class.

Classroom Policies

ACADEMIC HONESTY

Ethical behavior is the cornerstone of responsible journalism. Honesty is expected—and demanded—of all students.

The University expects all students to engage in all academic pursuits in a manner that is above reproach. Students are expected to maintain complete honesty and integrity in the academic experiences both in and out of the classroom. Any student found guilty of dishonesty in any phase of academic work will be subject to disciplinary action. Furthermore, the University and its official representatives may initiate disciplinary proceedings against a student accused of any form of academic dishonesty including, but not limited to, cheating on an examination or other academic work that is to be submitted, plagiarism, collusion and the abuse of resource materials.

This means students may not copy verbatim (word-for-word) or in part any material from our textbooks, or other written resources (other students' work; library, internet, magazine or other news sources), or written or broadcast materials created by SHSU or any other academic institution.

Students found guilty of dishonest behavior in this class will be asked to leave the class and will be given the grade of "F" for the entire course.

PROPER CLASSROOM DEMEANOR OR CONDUCT

According to the Student Handbook, "Students will refrain from behavior in the classroom that intentionally or unintentionally disrupts the learning process and, thus, impedes the mission of the university. Please turn off or mute your cellular phone and/or pager before class begins. Students are prohibited from eating in class, using tobacco products, making offensive remarks, reading newspapers, sleeping, talking among themselves at inappropriate times, wearing inappropriate clothing, or engaging in any other form of distraction. Inappropriate behavior in the classroom shall result in, minimally, a directive to leave class, or being reported to the Dean of Students for disciplinary action in accordance with university policy."

FREEDOM OF SPEECH

The students' right to speak on the topics of their choice will be upheld in the class. Choice of topic, values and beliefs will not be judged. Audience members are expected to respect the views of their classmates.

STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

It is the policy of Sam Houston State University that no otherwise qualified disabled individual shall, solely by reason of his/her disability, be excluded from the participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discriminations under any academic, Student Life program or activity. Students with disabilities may request academic assistance when needed from a Committee for Continuing Academic Assistance for Disabled Students by visiting the director of the Counseling Center, located in the annex of the Lee Drain building across the sidewalk from Farrington Building, or call 936-294-1702. Accommodations for disabled students are decided based upon documentation and need on a case-by-case basis by the Counseling Center.

RELIGIOUS HOLIDAYS

University policy states that a student who is absent from class for the observance of a religious holy day must take the examination or complete any assignment scheduled for that day within a reasonable time after the absence. The student, not later than the 15th calendar day after the first day of the semester, or the 7th calendar day after the first day of a summer session, must notify the instructor of each scheduled class that he/she would be absent for a religious holy day (Faculty Handbook, 1.02-2).

VISITORS IN THE CLASSROOM

Unannounced visitors to class must present a current, official SHSU identification card to be permitted in the classroom. They must not present a disruption to the class by their attendance. If the visitor is not a registered student, it is at the instructor's discretion whether or not the visitor will be allowed to remain in the classroom.

BE AWARE OF THE DROP POLICY

A Q-drop is a drop made after the last date for tuition refunds (the 12th class day for fall/spring; the 4th class day for summer sessions), but before the date for which a drop would result in the grade of "F" as published in the Academic Calendar.

Students will be allowed no more than five (5) Q-drops during their academic career at Sam Houston State University. Classes that are dropped prior to the Q-Drop date will not count toward the limit. Students who have used their limit of (5) Q-Drops will need to petition their respective dean to drop a class. If the dean refuses permission to drop a class, a student will be required to remain in the class.

This limit took effect at the start of the fall 2004 semester. Any drops accumulated prior to the fall of 2004 will not be included in the five Q-Drop limit, nor will Q-Drops from other universities.

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THE SAM HOUSTON WRITING CENTER

The writing center provides services to undergraduate and graduate students, faculty, staff and the community. It is open Monday-Thursday from 8 a.m. to 7 p.m., Friday from 8 a.m. to 3 p.m., and Sunday from 2 until 7 p.m. It is located in Room 111 in the Farrington Building.

Next door to the Writing Center is a Reading Center, available to all. If you find yourself having trouble understanding assignments, visit the Reading Center. Down the hall there is a Math Lab, if you need help with an assignment.

Mass Communications 132.01 Summer 2, 2008

Room 205, Dan Rather Bldg, 12 Noon – 1:50 p.m.

- Tuesday, July 8 Course Introduction: Text, syllabus, how to make an A. IN CLASS: Write your autobiography. HOMEWORK: Read Chapters 1, 2, 3.
- Wednesday, July 9 Discussion, Exercises: The Writer, Mass Media, Audiences
HOMEWORK: Read Chap. 4. Apply news values to five (5) news articles.
- Thursday, July 10 WEEKLY QUIZ, Chs. 1-4.
HOMEWORK: Ch. 6. Write direct news leads 6A-6G, Pp. 36-37.
- Friday, July 11 Review direct lead homework; complete leads 6H-6N in class.
HOMEWORK: Study *Appendix C*, Pp. 427-432; complete Exercises C1 and C2.
- Monday, July 14 Appendixes A and B. Discussion of direct leads and print media style.
HOMEWORK: C3, C4 and A1.
- Tuesday, July 15 Study Chaps. 5, *Story Organization*, and 8. Story Body; be prepared for a daily quiz over both. IN CLASS: Write a complete story. Write another complete story for HOMEWORK.
- Wednesday, July 16 Study Chaps. 9, 10 and 11.
- Thursday, July 17 Chapters 12 and 13. REVIEW.
- Friday, July 18 WEEKLY QUIZ, Chapters 5, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13.
- Monday, July 21 What segments in the first part of the course do you need more practice on? HOMEWORK: Chs. 7 and 14. Go over new terminology carefully. Collect five (5) different types of delayed leads, mark type, tape or paste down, mark with your name and assignment for turn-in.
- Tuesday, July 22 Write delayed leads in class. HOMEWORK: Read Ch. 17. Be prepared for a daily quiz over the differences between news stories and feature stories.
- Wednesday, July 23 Prepare questions to ask guest interviewee in class. HOMEWORK: Watch part of a news or entertainment interview on TV or the Web.
- Thursday, July 24 Conduct guest press conference. Afterward, critique your effectiveness: 1. How many of your questions did you get to ask? 2. If your main Qs had been asked, how many could you rewrite and get

additional information? 3. How many new Qs did you come up with, based on other reporters' Qs? 4. Was this a hard assignment? What made it so? What could have helped make it less so?

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| Friday, July 25 | NO CLASS |
| Monday, July 28 | Writing for the WWW: handouts. |
| Tuesday, July 29 | Writing for radio. Study Ch. 20 for new terminology, different characteristics between radio/TV writing vs. newspaper/magazine writing. HOMEWORK: Write a 3-minute radio script. |
| Wednesday, July 30 | Writing/producing for TV: Divide into 3-4-person teams—each person's report to include at least one soundbite. |
| Thursday, July 31 | Complete radio OR TV news shows. WEEKLY QUIZ: Broadcast vs. print media. HOMEWORK: Study Ch. 22, Public Relations. |
| Friday, Aug. 1 | NO CLASS |
| Monday, Aug. 4 | Differences between P.R. (Ch. 22) and other print news fields (newspapers, magazines, World Wide Web)? Similarities? |
| Tuesday, Aug. 5 | Law of the press (Ch. 23). |
| Wednesday, Aug. 6 | Journalism ethics. REVIEW |
| Thursday, Aug. 7 | FINAL EXAMINATION |