

Introduction to News Writing

COMM 1610-005 | Spring 2019 | Hybrid online + Tuesdays, 2-5 p.m. | LNCO 2840

Professor: Glen Feighery
Contact: glen.feighery@utah.edu or Canvas
Office hours: By appointment
Office: LNCO 2864 (in hallway behind classroom)

Overview

Materials

- **Required:** *The Associated Press Stylebook* (2015 or newer)
 ISBN: 978-0465062942 (2015 edition); 0465093043 (2017 edition)
 Other versions available at: <http://www.apstylebook.com/>
- **Required:** *The Elements of Style* (4th edition or illustrated edition—*not* an older one)
 ISBN: 020530902X (4th edition) or 9780143112723 (illustrated edition)
- **Required:** Reliable cloud storage, a memory card, or a USB drive for your work.
 You *must save and revise* your work for your Portfolio at the end of the semester.
- All other materials will be on Canvas or online.

Prerequisite:

Writing 2010 or equivalent. If you haven't passed WRTG 2010, don't take COMM 1610.

Course Goals:

By the end of this class, you should be able to:

1. **Gather** information, **verify** facts and **write** on deadline.
2. **Write well**, with correct grammar, style, mechanics and structure.
3. Write clear, compelling **leads** for news and feature stories.
4. Build on leads to write more **complex stories**.
5. Use a variety of **sources** to provide context, accuracy and balance.
6. **Tell stories**—use quotations and description to bring a narrative to life.
7. Write stories that engage with **public audiences**—that is, real people.

Your Responsibilities

- ▶ **Commit to be in class**, every week and *on time*.
- ▶ **Commit to online work**, every week and *on time*.
- ▶ **Commit to lots of writing**. This is an intensive class with many written assignments.
- ▶ **Be professional and respectful**. Civility is key to professionalism.
- ▶ **Keep food out of the classroom**. Finish lunch in the hall or atrium.

Accommodation:

- ▶ **ADA:** The University of Utah seeks to provide equal access to its programs, services, and activities for people with disabilities. If you need such accommodation in this class, please provide reasonable prior notice to the Center for Disability and Access, Union Building Room 162, 801-581-5020, <http://disability.utah.edu/>.
- ▶ **Content:** This course might expose you to things you find discomfoting. I will *not* make accommodations in course content, requirements, or expectations. <http://regulations.utah.edu/academics/6-100.php> (See Section III, Part Q)

Policies and Deadlines:

- ▶ **Attendance:** <http://regulations.utah.edu/academics/6-100.php> (See Section III, Part O)
- ▶ You must attend all Wednesday classes. You get **zero (0)** free days. *You earn points for attending and participating. You don't if you don't.*
 - **Note:** *If you are ill or have a genuine emergency, contact me within 24 hours.*
- ▶ **Academic integrity:** <http://www.regulations.utah.edu/academics/6-400.html> (See Section I, Part B2, and Section V, Part A and Part B, 1-2)
- ▶ **Grading, Registration, and Incompletes:** <https://catalog.utah.edu/#/policy/B12v3LX0G?bc=true&bcCurrent=Grading%20Policies&bcGroup=Grade%20Information&bcItemType=policies>
- ▶ **Semester calendar:** <https://registrar.utah.edu/academic-calendars/spring2019.php>

Grades

Where Your Course Grade Comes From

| | |
|---|----------------------------|
| Online Participation (5 pts. x 11 weeks) | 55 points |
| In-Class Attendance/Participation (5 pts. x 15 weeks) | 75 points |
| Quizzes (20 pts. x 6 quizzes) | 120 points |
| In-Class Stories (26 pts. x 5 stories) | 130 points |
| Midterm Story | 60 points |
| Final Story with assets | 88 points |
| Portfolio with assets | 72 points |
| Total: | 600 possible points |

Quizzes, Stories and Portfolio

- ▶ Unless I specify otherwise, you will submit these *on paper, not* Canvas.
- ▶ All stories must be your **original work** for this class, not repurposed material.
- ▶ Each graded assignment will have a **rubric**.
- ▶ Writing on **deadline** is a key part of this course. *So, I cannot accept late assignments.*
- ▶ Everything you submit should be **serious, professional work** for a public audience.

Required Grammar Quizzes

- ▶ To earn a grade in this course, you must pass 10 short online grammar quizzes.
- ▶ These quizzes will **not** affect your course grade.
- ▶ See “Grammar Test Instructions 2019” in Modules.

Grading Scale

| | | | | |
|----------|----------|----------|----------|--------|
| 100-94 A | 89-87 B+ | 79-77 C+ | 69-67 D+ | 59-0 E |
| 93-90 A- | 86-84 B | 76-74 C | 66-64 D | |
| | 83-80 B- | 73-70 C- | 63-60 D- | |

| WEEK 1: WHY LEARN NEWS WRITING? | |
|---|--|
| In class Tuesday, Jan. 8 | Syllabus, schedule, expectations. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exercise: Interview your neighbor and write a profile (ungraded). |
| After class | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Carefully read: This syllabus; “How to Comment and Contribute”; “Grammar Test Instructions 2019. • Optional: Update your Canvas profile with a recent photo (for my reference only). |
| WEEK 2: NEWS WRITING BASICS & LEADS | |
| Anytime before <u>2</u> p.m. Monday, Jan. 14 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read: Oxford, Ch. 3, “Newswriting Style”; Lloyd, Ch. 4, “Writing Simply”; Brooks, Ch. 14, “Writing News That’s Fit for Print” (partial). • Comment: On all three readings. • Contribute: An example of a <i>bad</i> lead paragraph in a news story. Copy and paste the text and source <i>or</i> provide the URL. |
| In class Tuesday, Jan. 15 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss news writing basics. • Consider examples of bad leads. • Preview grammar. • Handouts: The P-Sheet; Rubric for In-Class Stories. • Exercise: Practice writing news leads (ungraded). |
| WEEK 3: NEWS WRITING BASICS & LEADS | |
| Anytime before <u>2</u> p.m. Monday, Jan. 21 Yes, it’s Martin Luther King Jr. Day. Do this <u>anytime</u> before <u>2</u> p.m. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read: Kershner, Ch. 14, “How to Write a Strong Lead”; Oxford, Ch. 7, “Basic News Leads.” • Comment: On both readings. Describe <i>at least one specific thing</i> that is clearer for you. Describe <i>at least one other thing</i> that you’re unsure about. • Contribute: An example of a <i>good</i> lead paragraph in a news story. Copy and paste the text and source <i>or</i> provide the URL. |

| | |
|--|---|
| Before class Tuesday, Jan. 22 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read for Quiz 1: The P-Sheet; AP Stylebook/Punctuation Guide (entries for apostrophe, comma, dash, semicolon); <i>Elements of Style</i>, Ch. I, “Elementary Rules of Usage.” |
| In class Tuesday, Jan. 22 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quiz 1: Punctuation. • Discuss examples of good leads. • Review practice news leads. • Exercise: Write news leads (graded). |
| WEEK 4: WRITING A SHORT STORY | |
| Anytime before 2 p.m. Monday, Jan. 28 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read: Kershner, Ch. 13, “How to Write a News Story in 15 Steps”; Kershner, Ch. 15, How to Structure a News Story”; Oxford, Ch. 4, “The Language of News.” • Comment: On all three readings. For Oxford, Ch. 4, Describe <i>at least one specific grammatical thing</i> that is clearer for you. Then, describe <i>at least one other grammatical thing</i> that you’re still unsure about. • Contribute: A <i>specific</i> example of a well-organized news story. (Copy and paste text <i>or</i> provide the URL.) Write 2-3 sentences explaining <i>exactly how/why</i> it’s well-organized. |
| In class Tuesday, Jan. 29 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review Quiz 1. • Review graded news leads. • Preview writing a short story (from news releases or other sources). |
| WEEK 5: WRITING A SHORT STORY | |
| Anytime before 2 p.m. Monday, Feb. 4 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No Reading: See “Contribute” below. • Contribute: A <i>specific</i> example of a compelling short news story. (Copy and paste text or provide the URL.) Write 2-3 sentences explaining <i>exactly what aspects</i> of this story make it compelling. |
| Before class Tuesday, Feb. 5 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read for Quiz 2: AP Stylebook entries listed in AP_Style_to_Really_Know.pdf. |
| In class Tuesday, Feb. 5 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quiz 2: AP Style to Really Know. • Discuss examples of compelling news stories. • Exercise: Write a short story (graded). |

| WEEK 6: REPORTING, INTERVIEWING, & VERIFYING | |
|---|--|
| <i>Anytime before 2 p.m. Monday, Feb. 11</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read: “Interviewing Tips”; Lloyd, Ch. 7, “Using Quotations Well.” • Comment: On both readings. • Contribute: A <i>specific</i> example of a bad interview. (Copy and paste text or provide a URL. Try YouTube.) Exactly <i>why</i> is this interview bad? |
| <i>Before class Tuesday, Feb. 12</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read for Quiz 3: <i>Elements of Style</i>, Ch. IV, “Words and Expressions Commonly Misused.” |
| In class Tuesday, Feb. 12 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review Quiz 2. • Quiz 3: Misused words and expressions. • Review short story from a news release. • Discuss bad interview examples. • Discuss “Interviewing Tips.” • Assignment Given: Midterm Story on scooters <i>or</i> campus construction (due March 5). • Exercise: Generate reference materials, human sources, and interview questions for Midterm Story. |
| WEEK 7: SPEECHES AND MEETINGS | |
| <i>Anytime before 2 p.m. Monday, Feb. 18</i> Yes, it’s Presidents Day. Do this <u>anytime</u> before 2 p.m. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read: Rich, Ch. 18, “Speeches, News Conferences and Meetings.” • Comment: On the reading. How useful are the tips on p. 349 and the checklist on p. 351? (No Contribution this week.) |
| In class Tuesday, Feb. 19 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review Quiz 3. • Discuss writing about speeches and meetings. • Exercise: Write a short story from a speech (graded). |
| WEEK 8: THE STORY | |
| <i>Anytime before 2 p.m. Monday, Feb. 25</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read: Rich, Ch. 10, “Storytelling and Feature Techniques”; Hallman, “Narrative Writing: A Simple Philosophy to Approaching Stories.” <i>(Content advisory: Rich refers to violent crime.)</i> • Comment: On both readings. • Contribute: An example of good writing. (It can be from anything.) <i>Why</i> is this good? |

| | |
|--|---|
| <i>Before class Tuesday, Feb. 26</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read for Quiz 4: AP Stylebook entries listed in More_Useful_AP_Style.pdf. |
| In class Tuesday, Feb. 26 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quiz 4: More Useful AP style. • Review speech stories. • Workshop time for Midterm Story reporting and writing. |
| WEEK 9: COMPLETE MIDTERM STORY | |
| <u>No Monday Readings, Comments, or Contributions—Work on your Midterm Story.</u> | |
| In class Tuesday, March 5 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Midterm Story due <i>in class, on paper</i>, by 5 p.m. (graded). |
| WEEK 10 (MARCH 11 AND 12): SPRING BREAK | |
| WEEK 11: PROFILES & OBITUARIES | |
| <i>Anytime before 2 p.m. Monday, March 18</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read: Rich, Ch. 17, “Profiles and Obituaries.” • Comment: On the reading. • <u>(No Contribution this week.)</u> |
| <i>Before class Tuesday, March 19</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read for Quiz 5: AP Stylebook (entries for capitalization, Facebook, Google, holidays and holy days, Instagram, Tweet, Twitter); Brooks, Ch. 3, “Subjects and Objects” (partial). |
| In class Tuesday, March 19 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quiz 5: Proper use of proper names. • Review Midterm Stories. • Alumni Profile: Select your subject <i>and</i> confirm before leaving class (ungraded but required). |
| WEEK 12: FINISH ALUMNI PROFILE | |
| <i>Anytime before 2 p.m. Monday, March 25</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read: Profiles of John Warnock and Amy Van Prooyen. • Comment: On both readings. • <u>(No Contribution this week.)</u> |
| In class Tuesday, March 26 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review Quiz 5. • Assignments Given: Final Story and Portfolio. • Alumni Profile due in class, on paper, by 5 p.m. (graded). |

| WEEK 13: OPINION WRITING | |
|--|---|
| <i>Anytime before 2 p.m. Monday, April 1</i> <i>No fooling ...</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read: Opinion columns, TBD. • Comment: On the readings. (No Contribution this week.) |
| Before class Tuesday, April 2 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read for Quiz 6: AP Stylebook/Briefing on Media Law. Skip to heading “Legal Principles of Publication” and read through “The five things a successful libel plaintiff must prove.” Then, skip to “Invasion of privacy” and read through the end section, “Limitations on copyright.” |
| In class Tuesday, April 2 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quiz 6: Libel, privacy, copyright—and—earlier AP quiz entries. (Cumulative AP quiz.) • Review survey stories. • Opinion Column: Consider a topic and do basic research ... <i>then</i> ... confirm your topic before leaving class (ungraded but required). » Today is the deadline for passing the required grammar quizzes. « |
| WEEK 14: COMPLETE OPINION COLUMN | |
| <u>No Monday Readings, Comments, or Contributions—Complete your Opinion Column.</u> | |
| In class Tuesday, April 9 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review Quiz 6. • Exercise: Finish and submit your opinion column (graded). |
| WEEK 15: FINAL STORY PROPOSAL | |
| <i>Anytime before 2 p.m. Monday, April 15</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No Reading: See “Contribute” below. • Contribute: Propose a topic for your Final Story. (We’ll build on this in class.) |
| In class Tuesday, April 16 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review opinion columns. • Discuss Final Story topics and reporting. • Workshop time for Final Story. |
| WEEK 16: LAST WEEK OF CLASS | |
| <u>No Monday work on Canvas—Complete your Final Story and Portfolio.</u> | |
| In class Tuesday, April 23 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workshop time for Final Story and Portfolio. • Final Story and Portfolio due in class, on paper, by 5 p.m. (graded). |