Introduction to News Writing

COMM 1610-004 | Spring 2023 | Canvas + 2-3:20 p.m. Tuesdays, LNCO 2120 (Reading Room)

Professor: Glen Feighery

Contact: Canvas message (preferred) or glen.feighery@utah.edu

Overview

Required Materials and Resources

► *The Associated Press Stylebook.* Buy it at the U Bookstore, on Amazon, or directly from the Associated Press. *Acceptable paperback versions:* 2022-2024 edition (ISBN 978-1541601659) or 2020-2022 edition (ISBN 978-1541647572). *Digital version available at:* https://store.stylebooks.com/apstylebookonline.html or http://www.apstylebook.com/

► **Microsoft Word.** This is the required format for stories so I can provide feedback.

► **Somewhere to save your work.** Reliable cloud storage, memory card, laptop, etc. You *must save and revise* articles for your Portfolio at the end of the semester.

Recommended

► A Google Docs account. This is for feedback and editing of your major writing assignments. (You'll need this by late February. I will provide details.)

How This Course Works

► **Sunday nights:** You'll have a **Comment and Contribution (C+C)** due **on Canvas by 11:59 p.m.**

► **Tuesdays:** We'll have **class in LNCO 2120, 2-3:20 p.m.**

► **Tuesday nights:** You'll have an **article** *and/or* **quiz** due **on Canvas by 11:59 p.m.**

► **Work at your own pace on Canvas:** Readings, comments and other work are asynchronous to give you flexibility. You can do them *anytime before* they're due.

► *Deadlines are real.* Canvas will lock 1 minute after each deadline. This includes story submissions. *Note due dates and times.*

► The Syllabus, Modules and the Canvas calendar will remind you of assignment deadlines. (Also note: Later in the semester, we will not meet every single week; check the Calendar.) Questions? Let me know.

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**.

University Policies

► **Coronavirus information and university policies:**

• The university encourages people to take advantage of COVID-19 testing services. Voluntary asymptomatic testing is also available for members of the campus community.

• There are policies in case you test positive for COVID-19; at this website see "Steps to Take for COVID-19 Symptoms or Exposure". If you have been exposed or are experiencing symptoms, self-report and follow university guidelines for exposure.

• University leadership urges "all faculty, students, and staff to model the vaccination, masking, testing and self-reporting behaviors we want to see in our campus community." See current instructional guidelines.

► **Academic Integrity:** Because C+Cs and quizzes are online, I trust you to do your own work. University policies on plagiarism and honesty are here (see Section IV and Section V).

► **ADA:** The U seeks to provide equal access to its programs, services and activities. If you need accommodation, contact the Center for Disability and Access, Union Building Room 162; 801-581-5020; info@disability.utah.edu.

► **Content Accommodation:** This course—like journalism—might expose you to things you find discomforting. I will not make accommodations in course content, requirements, or expectations. (See "Instruction and Evaluation," Section III, Part Q, "Accommodations.")

► **Safety:** The U has safety tips and FAQs for wellness, crime prevention, and emergencies. Commuter Services offers Safe Ride. Campus police: 801-585-COPS (801-585-2677).

► **Respect:** The Office of Equal Opportunity and Affirmative Action is dedicated to providing a fair and equitable environment for all to pursue their academic and professional endeavors and to equally access University programs. Violence and harassment based on sex and gender (including orientation and identity/expression) is a civil-rights offense and is treated the same as those against race, national origin, color, religion, age, disabled status, veteran's status, or genetic information.

► **Semester calendar:** Check the Registrar's calendar for key dates.

Where Your Course Grade Comes From

Information Sheet . . . . 5 points
Comments and Contributions (C+Cs) (5 pts. x 9 weeks) . . . . 45 points
Tuesday class participation (5 pts. x 11 weeks) . . . . 55 points
Quizzes (20 pts. x 4 quizzes) . . . . 80 points
Grammar Quiz . . . . 24 points
Short Exercises (5 pts. x 3 exercises) . . . . 15 points
Stories (26 pts. x 4 stories) . . . . 104 points
        No. 1: News Leads | **No. 2:** Short Story
        No. 3: Individual Profile | **No. 4:** Opinion Column
Midterm Story . . . . 65 points
Final Story with assets . . . . 100 points
Portfolio with assets . . . . 77 points
Total: . . . . **570 possible points**

<u>Grading Scale</u>

When I calculate your course grade at the end of the semester, I will use these percentages:

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: INTRODUCTION & YOUR PROFESSIONAL PROFILE	
Before the first day of class	• **<u>Read:</u>** This syllabus; "How to Comment and Contribute." • **<u>Look at:</u>** Modules to see course structure. • **Form posted:** Information Sheet.
In class Tuesday, Jan. 10	• **Topics:** Syllabus, schedule and expectations. • **Discuss assignment:** Exercise 1. • **Complete: <u>Information Sheet.</u>**
<u>Due</u> by 11:59 p.m. Tuesday, Jan. 10	• **<u>Exercise 1:</u>** Write a short **Professional Profile** of yourself. (See Canvas assignment for rubric.)

WEEK 2: NEWS WRITING BASICS & LEADS	
<u>Due</u> by 11:59 p.m. Sunday, Jan. 15 **Week 2 C+C**	• **<u>Read:</u>** Oxford, Ch. 3, "Newswriting Style"; Lloyd, Ch. 4, "Writing Simply"; Media Writing Ch. 3. • **<u>Comment:</u>** On all three readings. • **<u>Contribute:</u>** An example of a *bad* lead paragraph in a news story. Copy and paste the text and source *or* provide the URL.
In class Tuesday, Jan. 17	• **Topics/Handouts:** News writing basics and notes about grammar; the P-Sheet and Story Rubric. • **Discuss assignment:** Exercise 2.
<u>Due</u> by 11:59 p.m. Tuesday, Jan. 17	• **<u>Exercise 2:</u> Practice News Leads.** (See Canvas assignment.)

WEEK 3: NEWS WRITING BASICS & LEADS	
<u>Due</u> by 11:59 p.m. Sunday, Jan. 22 **Week 3 C+C**	• **<u>Read:</u>** Kershner, Ch. 14, "How to Write a Strong Lead"; Oxford, Ch. 7, "Basic News Leads." • **<u>Comment:</u>** On both readings. Describe *at least one specific thing* that is clearer for you. Describe *at least one other thing* that you're unsure about. • **<u>Contribute:</u>** An example of a *good* lead paragraph in a news story. Copy and paste the text and source *or* provide the URL.

In class Tuesday, Jan. 24	• **Topics:** Review of Exercise 2 (Practice News Leads); tips for Story 1 and Quiz 1. • **Discuss assignment:** Quiz 1. • **Discuss assignment:** Story 1.
Before you take Quiz 1	• **Read for Quiz 1:** The P-Sheet; AP Stylebook/Punctuation Guide (entries for apostrophe, comma, dash, semicolon); *Elements of Style*, Ch. I, "Elementary Rules of Usage" (Posted in Modules).
Due by 11:59 p.m. Tuesday, Jan. 24	• **Quiz 1:** Punctuation. • **Story 1:** News leads (upload to Canvas).
WEEK 4: PREPARING TO WRITE A SHORT STORY	
Due by 11:59 p.m. Sunday, Jan. 29 **Week 4 C+C**	• **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 *one specific grammatical thing* that is clearer for you. Then, describe *at least one other grammatical thing* that you're unsure about. • **Contribute:** A *specific* example of a well-organized news story. (Copy and paste text *or* provide the URL.) Write 1-2 sentences explaining *exactly how/why* it's well-organized.
In class Tuesday, Jan. 31	• **Topics:** Review of Quiz 1; Review of Story 1. What did you learn? • **Discuss assignment:** Quiz 2.
Before you take Quiz 2	• **Read for Quiz 2:** AP Stylebook entries listed in AP_Style_to_Really_Know.pdf.
Due by 11:59 p.m. Tuesday, Jan. 31	• **Quiz 2:** AP Style to Really Know.
WEEK 5: WRITING A SHORT STORY	
Due by 11:59 p.m. Sunday, Feb. 5 **Week 5 C+C**	• **No Reading:** See "Contribute" below. • **Contribute:** A *specific* example of a compelling short news story. (Copy and paste text or provide the URL.) Write 2-3 sentences explaining *exactly what aspects* of this story make it compelling.
In class Tuesday, Feb. 7	• **Topics:** Review of Quiz 2. What did you learn? Tips for Story 2. • **Assignment posted:** Story 2.

Due by 11:59 p.m. Tuesday, Feb. 7	• **Story 2:** Short story from handout materials (upload to Canvas).

WEEK 6: REPORTING & INTERVIEWING; MIDTERM STORY PROPOSAL	
Due by 11:59 p.m. Sunday, Feb. 12 **Week 6 C+C**	• **Read:** "Interviewing Tips"; Lloyd, Ch. 7, "Using Quotations Well." • **Comment:** On both readings. • **Contribute:** A *specific* example of a story with good quotes. What makes them good?
In class Tuesday, Feb. 14	• **Topics:** Review of Story 2; discussion of Interview Tips; information on Midterm Story. • **Assignment posted:** Midterm Story. • **Discuss assignment:** Quiz 3. • **Discuss assignment:** Exercise 3.
Before you take Quiz 3	• **Read for Quiz 3:** *Elements of Style*, Ch. IV, "Words and Expressions Commonly Misused" (Posted in Modules).
Due by 11:59 p.m. Tuesday, Feb. 14	• **Quiz 3:** Misused words and expressions. • **Exercise 3: Propose Midterm Story Sources** (and get feedback on sources and interview questions).

WEEK 7: QUIZ; WORK ON MIDTERM STORY	
No Comments or Contributions this week.	
In class Tuesday, Feb. 21	• **Topics:** Review Quiz 3. What did you learn? • **Discuss assignment:** Quiz 4. • **Check in on Midterm Story:** How are you doing with interviews?
Before you take Quiz 4	• **Read for Quiz 4:** AP Stylebook entries listed in More_Useful_AP_Style.pdf.
Due by 11:59 p.m. Tuesday, Feb. 21	• **Quiz 4:** More Useful AP style.

WEEK 8: MIDTERM STORY DUE	
No Comments or Contributions or mandatory class this week.	• **Work on Midterm Story:** *Consult with me* on Google Docs or in our classroom (*optional*).
Due by 11:59 p.m. Tuesday, Feb. 28	• **Midterm Story.** Upload to Canvas (see assignment instructions).

WEEK 9: SPRING BREAK	

WEEK 10: PROFILES & OBITUARIES	
Due by 11:59 p.m. Sunday, March 12 Week 10 C+C	• **Read:** Rich, Ch. 17, "Profiles and Obituaries." • **Comment:** On the reading. **(No Contribution this week.)**
In class Tuesday, March 14	• **Topics:** Review of Quiz 4 and Midterm Story. What did you learn? Tips for writing an individual profile. • **Assignment posted:** Individual Profile.
To prepare for next week ...	• **Work on your Individual Profile:** Identify a person to interview and follow up with me with questions.

WEEK 11: INDIVIDUAL PROFILE	
Due by 11:59 p.m. Sunday, March 19 Week 11 C+C	• **Read:** Profiles of Floyd Mori and Maya Lebar. • **Briefly comment:** On both readings. **(No Contribution this week.)**
No class this week.	• **Work on your Individual Profile:** *Consult with me* on Google Docs or in our classroom (*optional*).
Due by 11:59 p.m. Tuesday, March 21	• **Individual Profile.** Upload to Canvas (see assignment instructions).

WEEK 12: OPINION WRITING	
Due by 11:59 p.m. Sunday, March 26 Week 12 C+C	• **Read:** Opinion columns by Kayla Lien and Sasha Poma. • **Briefly comment:** On the readings. **(No Contribution this week.)**
In class Tuesday, March 28	• **Topics:** Review Individual Profiles; discuss how opinion writing is journalism but distinct from news writing; share tips for columns; and brainstorm topics. • **Assignment posted:** Opinion Column.
To prepare for next week ...	• **Work on Opinion Column:** Choose a topic and consult with me as needed.

WEEK 13: OPINION COLUMN DUE	
No Comments or Contributions or class this week.	• **Work on Opinion Column:** *Consult with me* on Google Docs or in our classroom (*optional*).

Due by 11:59 p.m. Tuesday, April 4	• Opinion Column. Upload to Canvas (see assignment instructions).

WEEK 14: GRAMMAR QUIZ DUE; BEGIN FINAL STORY & PORTFOLIO	
Due by 11:59 p.m. Sunday, April 9	• Grammar Quiz. (You may take this quiz twice.)
In class Tuesday, April 11	• Topics: Review of Opinion Columns. What did you learn? Tips for Final Story and Portfolio. • Assignment posted: Final Story. • Assignment posted: Portfolio.
To prepare for April 26	• Begin work on Final Story: Identify a topic and follow up with me if you have questions.

WEEK 15: FINAL STORY PROPOSAL; WORK ON FINAL STORY & PORTFOLIO	
Due by 11:59 p.m. Sunday, April 16 Week 15 C+C	• No Reading: See "Contribute" below. • Contribute: Formally propose a topic for your Final Story. *Be specific* about an event you will cover (when? where?) and the actual people you will interview (who? how?). ***Plan now so you can finish by April 26.***
In class Tuesday, April 18	• Check in on your Portfolio: How are you doing on your story revisions, resume and professional profile? • Check in on your Final Story: How are you doing on interviews and story drafts? Review of requirements, including story assets.

WEEK 16: FINAL STORY & PORTFOLIO DUE	
No Comments or Contributions or class this week.	• Work on Final Story & Portfolio: Last chance to *consult with me* on Google Docs or in our classroom (optional, but *highly* encouraged).
Due by 11:59 p.m. Tuesday, April 25	• Final Story • Portfolio Upload to Canvas (see assignment instructions).