WRITING FOR MASS MEDIA

MCOM 2311

3:30 to 4:50 p.m. Tuesdays and Thursdays in CAS 257

- Instructor: **John "Danny" Mogle**
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  Best way to contact: **Call/text**

- **Office Hours: 10 to 11 a.m. Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday or by appointment.** I welcome and encourage office visits.) I will meet with you any time I can.

DEPARTMENT SYLLABI

Use this link to access the syllabi for all Department of Communication courses

https://www.uttyler.edu/communication/syllabi/Links to an external site.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course teaches techniques used in gathering and writing (creating) information used in news, strategic communication, social media and broadcast. Students learn and apply interviewing techniques, observation, research, analysis, ethical considerations, grammar, AP style and storytelling. Emphasis is on writing cleanly, clearly and concisely and adapting messages to different platforms and audiences.

STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

a. Competency: Writing and Storytelling

- Write news and messages correctly, clearly and concisely appropriate for strategic communication and multimedia journalism.

- Produce accurate stories in an appropriate format when given a set of facts.

- Produce accurate stories in an appropriate format when having to use sources and conduct research.

- Demonstrate proficiency in writing, including use of Associated Press style.

b. Competency: Analysis and Systematic Inquiry

- Gather and present information appropriate to strategic communication and multimedia journalism.

- Analyze information to determine whether it meets the criteria of news and professional standards of attribution and sourcing.

- Analyze information to determine the best techniques and formats to tell the story to reach a target audience.

- Analyze information to determine whether its primary purpose is to inform, persuade or sell.

c. Competency: Legal and Ethical Principles

- Demonstrate ability to apply legal principles pertaining to strategic communication and multimedia journalism.

- Recognize what constitutes libel, plagiarism, fabrication and other legal issues involving media.

- Demonstrate an understanding of ethical issues involved in journalism, strategic communication and social media.

- Apply ethical behavior to practices involved in gathering and writing information for mass media.

d. Competency: Mediated Presentation

- Apply theories in the presentation of messages and images and use of technologies appropriate for public relations/integrated communication or multimedia journalism.

- Write copy appropriate for news and strategic communication in appropriate formats -- including print, digital and broadcast -- when given sets of facts.

- Write copy for news and strategic communication when having to originate ideas, do research and interview sources.

- Identify and distinguish different formats used in presenting information.

e. Competency: Critical Evaluation

- Use skills involving news value, fairness, clarity, sourcing, verification and attribution to better evaluate the accuracy of information presented as news

- Evaluate print, broadcast and public relations material for accuracy, transparency of sourcing, fairness and other professional standards.

- Evaluate news, broadcast and public relations material for inclusion of opinion and persuasion.

- Demonstrate the ability to evaluate impacts of media messages on individuals and society.

f. Competency: Media Literacy

- Demonstrate the ability to identify different platforms used in mass media.

- Demonstrate the ability to adapt messages to different platforms taking into account audience usage and preferences.

- Demonstrate the ability to recognize the strengths and weaknesses of different platforms.

g. Competency: Grammar, Spelling, Punctuation

- Demonstrate the ability to use words correctly.

- Demonstrate the ability to use proper grammar.

- Demonstrate the ability to construct sentences that are easily understood.

- Demonstrate the ability to edit and proofread messages for mass communication.

h. Competency: Media Ecology

- Demonstrate the ability to shape messaging taking into account the influences of print, video and presentation in how the story will be perceived.

- Demonstrate the ability to adjust the messaging based on the likely setting it will be received

- Demonstrate the ability to adjust the messaging based on how it will be used.

- Demonstrate the ability to edit and proofread messages for mass communication.

REQUIRED TEXTBOOK

- **Associated Press Stylebook**. New York: Associated Press. Also available online at apstylebook.org(Links to an external site.)Links to an external site. .

- Readings and videos assigned in class and posted in Canvas. Material posted in Canvas function as a textbook.

RECOMMENDED MEDIA CONSUMPTION

Immerse yourself in mass media to get the most out of this class. Read newspapers and magazines in print and online. Watch news programs and listen to NPR. Examine press releases and advertising campaigns. Look at YouTube, Facebook and other social media in the context of this class.

Other recommendations:

- Clark, Roy Peter. (2006) Writing Tools, 50 Essential Strategies for Every Writer.

- Strunk Jr., W., & White, E.B. The Elements of Style (4th Ed.), New York: Longman.

COURSE NOTES

Basic Requirements

The course requires that you have access to a reliable computer and internet connection. You may have to go off campus to gather information for some writing assignments. You will need the Associated Press Stylebook.

Communication

If you have a question, concern or just want to talk about something related to class, call or send me a text at **903-617-8196**. I will get back to you as soon as possible.

- You can also send me an email.

- Check the Announcements tab of Canvas.

- If there is any valid reason that you cannot turn in work on time, contact me.

Completing Work on Time

Assignments are posted in Canvas and each has a deadline. Missing a deadline results in a deduction. Those who miss an assignment without an excused absence may not get the opportunity to make up the assignment.

Rights of Pregnant and Parenting Students

As required by SB 412, SB 459, and SB 459/HB 1361, passed by the 88th Legislature in 2023, pregnant and parenting students are afforded different supports and rights. Part of the support afforded pregnant students includes excused absences. Faculty members who are informed by a student that they need this support should make a referral to the Parenting Student Liaison. Students must work with the Parenting Student Liaison to receive these supports and rights. Students should contact the Parenting Student Liaison at parents@uttyler.edu and complete the Pregnant and Parenting Self-Reporting Form.

Academic Honesty

The University's academy honesty policies apply. You, and only you, must do the work that you submit. Academic misconduct includes, but is not limited to, cheating, unattributed use of others' work (including test and paper "banks"), disruption of class, and discourtesy to, or harassment of, other students or your instructor. Anyone caught cheating will earn a "0" for that assignment and will be subject to academic and disciplinary action.

Plagiarism

Plagiarism includes but is not limited to, the appropriation, buying, receiving as a gift, or obtaining by any means another's work and the submission of it as one's own academic work offered for credit. Students caught plagiarizing will fail the assignment, may fail this class and will be subject to academic and disciplinary action. Go here for more:

UT Tyler's Statement on AI

UT Tyler is committed to exploring and using artificial intelligence (AI) tools as appropriate for the discipline and task undertaken. We encourage discussing AI tools' ethical, societal, philosophical, and disciplinary implications. All uses of AI should be acknowledged as this aligns with our commitment to honor and integrity, as noted in UT Tyler's Honor Code. Faculty and students must not use protected information, data, or copyrighted materials when using any AI tool. Additionally, users should be aware that AI tools rely on predictive models to generate content that may appear correct but is sometimes shown to be incomplete, inaccurate, taken without attribution from other sources, and/or biased. Consequently, an AI tool should not be considered a substitute for traditional approaches to research. You are ultimately responsible for the quality and content of the information you submit. Misusing AI tools that violate the guidelines specified for this course is considered a breach of academic integrity. The student will be subject to disciplinary actions as outlined in UT Tyler's Academic Integrity Policy. Refer to the About This Course section of the UT Tyler Syllabus Module for specific information on appropriate use of AI in your course(s).

GRADED COURSE REQUIREMENTS INFORMATION

- **Creating assignments (41% of total grade)** require students to write news based on either information provided or obtained on their own. Some writing assignments include photography and video elements.

- **Capstone project (15.5% of grade)** requires the student to write a news story, submit supporting photographs and submit a supporting video.

- **Graded discussions (10.5% of grade)** require students to share their thoughts on mass comm issues and comment on other posts.

- **Assignments (26% of grade)** require students to demonstrate mastery of skills being presented in class and readings/videos.

- **Attendance (6% of grade)** requires students to come to class. Everyone starts with 100 and receive a 5-point deduction for unexcused absences.

There is no midterm test or final. Students demonstrate knowledge by doing assignments, writing stories and discussing issues.

More detailed information on each assignment will be provided in class.

Each assignment has a posted value and information on the purpose of the assignment and how the grade is determined. If there is confusion on how to carry out the assignment, call or text me at **903-617-8196** BEFORE you do the assignment.

GRADING SCALE

Your final grade is determined by the points you have acquired as a percentage of the total points available.

- A: 90-100%

- B: 80-89%

- C: 70-79% D: 60-69%

- F: 59% and below

Check Canvas frequently for the status of your grade. You will not be given an opportunity to do extra work to improve your grade.

LATE WORK AND MAKEUP EXAMS

There will be a deduction for work that it is turned in late -- typically 50%, but sometimes 100%. All assignments will have a posted due date. Work can be made up in cases of illness and emergencies. All I ask is that you be honest.

ATTENDANCE POLICY

You will receive a 5-pt. deduction for each time you miss class that is unexcused.

The University of Texas at Tyler recognizes many things that constitute an excused absence. For a complete list of these policies click here. (Links to an external site.)Links to an external site.

CALENDAR

Census Date: The census date for the semester is Jan. 27. This is the final date for many enrollment-related actions, including adding new courses, changing sections, or dropping courses without incurring grades of "W" or "Q". Census is also the second drop for non-payment date each academic session. See the Office of the Registrar website for additional details.

Final exam: There is no final exam given in this course.

Week by Week: Here is the week-by-week rundown of what will be covered. Sometimes circumstances require scheduling changes. Any changes will be posted in Canvas.

Most units include a PowerPoint presentation and supplemental readings/videos in Canvas. Due dates for all assignments are included as part of the assignment. Some assignments are done in class and others are homework. Dates are subject to change.

Capstone

- Capstone pitch - due Feb. 1

- Capstone social media - due April 21

- Capstone presentation - due April 22

- Capstone project final - due April 25

I. News Value -Jan. 14, 16

- Is it Fake? - 30 pts. - skill building

- Applying News Value - 30 pts. -skill building

- A Nose for News - - 30 pts. - discussion board

II. Professional Standards - Jan. 21, 23

- Applying professional standards - 25 pts. -skill building

- Analyzing a News Story - 25 pts. - skill building

- Story Pitch - 20 pts. - Creating - due 1-25

- Write a Story - 100 pts. writing - due 2-8

III. Putting it Together - Jan. 28, 30

- The 5-paragraph news challenge - 25 pts. - creating - due 2-1

- The 5-paragraph feature challenge - 25 pts. - creating - due 2-1

IV. Digital Platforms - Feb. 4, 6

- Reporting on digital platforms - 25 pts. - assignment

- The multi-media story - 120 pts. - creating - due 2-15

- Multimedia self-evaluation - 15 pts. - assignment

V. Social Media - Feb. 11, 13

- Social Media and the Press - 20 pts. - discussion

- Becoming Engaged - 20 pts. - discussion

- Social Media video - 45 pts. - creating - due 3-1

VI. Questions and Quotes - Feb. 18, 20

- The Q&A Story - 50 pts. - creating - due 3-15

- Asking questions -25 pts. - assignment

- What would you do? - 20 pts. discussion

VII. Associated Press Style - Feb. 25, 27

- Using the AP Stylebook - 50 pts. - assignment

- Stylebook discoveries - 20 pts. - discussion

- Putting AP style to use - 30 pts. - creating - due 3-8

VIII. The art of being clear - March 4, 6

- Using the right/write word - 20 pts. - assignment

- This is clear as mud - 20 pts. - assignment

- What's missing? - 20 pts. - assignment

IX. Being Concise - March 11, 13

- Recognizing clutter - 40 pts. - assignment

- Clutter confessions - 20 pts. - discussion

- Make it more concise - 50 - assignment

Spring Break - March 18, 20

X. Localizing the Story - March 25-27

- Localizing a Story - 100 pts. - creating - due 4-5

XI: Strategic Communication - April 2,4

- Social Media Post - 20 pts. - creating - due 4-12

- Social Media Release - 80 pts. - creating - due 4-12

- Social Media Video - 40 pts. - creating - due 4-19

Capstone Work Week - April 8, 10

XII. Sins of Journalism - April 15, 17

- Media Bias - 20 pts. - discussion

- What's the Problem - 20 pts. - assignment

- Inappropriate wording - 20 pts. - assignment

Capstone Presentation Week -April 22, 24