

Newswriting

MCOM 3303, Spring 2025

11 a.m. to 12:20 p.m. Tuesdays and Thursdays, CAS 102

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Office Hours: 10 a.m. to 11 a.m. Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday or by appointment. I welcome and encourage office visits and will meet you any time I am available.

The best way to contact me is by phone or text. Contact me if you need me.

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.](https://www.uttyler.edu/communication/syllabi/Links%20to%20an%20external%20site)

DESCRIPTION

In this course, students analyze, identify, write, shoot, edit, produce and package accurate information presented as news. To solve the real-world problems/challenges of doing this, students must use critical thinking, analysis/systematic inquiry and mastery of literacy with emphasis on storytelling skills. They will apply knowledge of mediated presentation, ethics and professional journalistic standards to

- **Define problems**, students consider news value, deadlines, available resources and strengths of broadcast and digital platforms as part of the process of deciding which stories meet the criteria of news.
- **Identify strategies/evaluate solutions**, students identify the best ways and on which platforms to report the story.
- **Propose solutions**, students submit a pitch/story treatment in which they evaluate the news worthiness of the story; articulate the purpose and goals of the story; and identify sources and information that will be used.
- **Implement solutions**, students do whatever is required -- contacting sources, interviewing, writing, shooting, editing -- to tell a complete story by deadline.
- **Evaluate outcomes**, instructor and students offer feedback about stories and tasks as part of the learning process.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

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

Competency: Writing/Storytelling

- Develop news stories for different media and platforms.
- Use formats and styles appropriate for integrated communication or multimedia journalism for the audiences and purposes required.
- Analyze writing practices, strategies and procedures for news production.
- Demonstrate an understanding of news production requirements through written assignments, including research, scripts and projects.

Competency: Analysis and Systematic Inquiry

- Conduct research and evaluate information by methods appropriate to integrated communication or multimedia journalism.
- Analyze writing and broadcast strategies and procedures for multiple forms of news production.
- Apply the First Amendment and other legal principles to integrated communication and multimedia journalism.
- Apply professional ethical principles and issues integrated communication and multimedia journalism.
- Demonstrate an understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of reporting news on different media platforms.
- Analyzing and develop the content of news stories.

Competency: Mediated Presentation

- Apply theories in the use and presentation of images and information using tools and technologies appropriate for integrated communication or mediated journalism.
- Demonstrate an understanding and proficiency of skills needed to make practical news gathering and producing decisions.
- Demonstrate skills using appropriate software and hardware for creating multimedia stories.

Competency: Media Literacy

- Demonstrate the ability to identify different types of media and messages media put out to the public.
- Demonstrate the ability to analyze, evaluate and create media in different forms.
- Demonstrate the ability to identify and evaluate techniques and impacts of media messages on individuals and society.

Competency: Grammar, Spelling, Punctuation

- Demonstrate the ability to use words correctly and proper grammar.

- Demonstrate the ability to produce messages that are clear, error free, complete and concise.
- Apply techniques used to edit and proofread forms of multi-media journalism.

RECOMMENDED TEXTBOOK

- **Associated Press Stylebook.** New York: Associated Press. Also available online at apstylebook.org.
- Select readings assigned in class and posted in Canvas over the course of this semester.

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 and a podcast. 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.
- Watch local and national newscasts. Many broadcasts are now on YouTube.
- Listen to NPR and other radio news outlets.
- Listen to a podcast.

WHAT TO KNOW ABOUT THIS CLASS

Basic Requirements

- This class uses equipment found in CAS 102. You must follow requirements involved in checking equipment out and in and the use of equipment in the lab that cannot be checked out. A schedule is posted showing when CAS 102 is used as a classroom and when it is available to students.
- Some assignments require you to leave campus. You must have reliable transportation.
- You will need a reliable computer with a good internet connection. Other types of equipment are in CAS 102.
- You will need a SanDisk memory card. 32GB will be large enough.

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. Tell me your name, which of my classes you take and why you are contacting me.

- You can also send me an email through Canvas or Outlook.
- Check the Announcements tab of Canvas regularly.
- If there is any reason that you cannot turn in work on time (such as becoming sick), you must contact me.

Attendance

- Attendance: All classes are mandatory. Attendance and participation are a part of your grade.
- Students who anticipate being absent due to university-sponsored activities should inform me at least one week before the absence.
- The University of Texas at Tyler recognizes many things that constitute an excused absence. For a list of these policies [click here. \(Links to an external site.\) \(Links to an external site.\)](#)
- Work is NOT an excused absence. Missing class to fulfill requirements in other classes is not an excused absence.
- If you are sick, do not come to class. Let me know what is going on. All I ask that you are honest with me.

Special considerations

CAS 102 has some small workspaces in which more than one person sometimes has to occupy. If you are sick do not come to class.

Assignment policy

- You are responsible for turning in assignments by deadline. Those who do not turn an assignment in on deadline will receive a substantial deduction on the assignment. Each deadline will be clearly posted in Canvas.
- Each assignment comes with rubric and instructions on how the assignment will be graded.
- Those who miss an assignment because of an unexcused absence likely will not be allowed to make up the assignment.

Classroom Courtesies

- Do not use your cellphone, tablet or other device use during class unless the assignment specifically calls for the use. Violation of this policy may result in loss of the device until after class.
- No eating or drinking is allowed in any of the MCOM labs.
- When taking part in a classroom discussion, be respectful of others. Debating and challenging points of view are welcome, but personal attacks, verbal bullying, and slurs are not only unwelcome but also subject to disciplinary action.

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.

Go here for more: <http://www.uttyler.edu/judicialaffairs/scholasticdishonesty.php>[Links to an external site.](#)

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:

<http://www.utt Tyler.edu/judicialaffairs/scholasticdishonesty.php> (Links to an external site.) (Links to an external site.)

Use of AI

Artificial intelligence can be used as both a tool to help journalists and a way to avoid doing original work. As an acceptable tool, AI can, and should, be used to locate sources -- such as research, surveys, legislation and studies -- on the internet and to summarize complex data. AI also can be used to improve grammar and even make reporting comply with AP guidelines.

However, AI cannot be used to generate the wording of a story beyond a few explanatory sentences. The work presented must -- flaws and all -- be the work of the student. AI presented as the original writing and reporting of the student, falls under plagiarism considerations. Students who use AI excessive could face a grade reduction and school disciplinary action.

ASSIGNMENTS AND POINT VALUES

Each assignment has a posted value assigned to it in Canvas. Each assignment also includes an explanation of the purpose of the assignment as well as information on 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.

All work has an assigned point value. Many assignments come with rubrics. The highest point values are given to work requiring you to create radio news segments, television news segments and a short documentary

GRADING SCALE

Your final grade is determined by the points you have acquired as a percentage to 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. My goal is to always post grades within three days after an assignment is due.

LATE WORK AND MAKEUP EXAMS

There will be a deduction for work that it is turned in late -- typically 50%. All assignments will have a due date that is posted. Work and exams can be made up when you contact me in advance, especially in cases of a illness and emergencies.

ATTENDANCE POLICY

You are expected to come to class each time the class meets. You will receive a 5-pt. deduction for each time you miss class. There will be a 10-point deduction on the days designated as mandatory attendance.

GRADED COURSE REQUIREMENTS INFORMATION

1) Capstone

- proposal - 25 pts.
- update/draft - 75 pts. -
- final - 75 pts.
- social media video - 25 pts.

200 pts. -- 17% of total

2) Projects

These involve telling news stories using the written word, photography, audio recording, videography and social media. There are seven of these projects.

- 750 pts. - 66% of grade

3) Presentations/Discussion

These are presentations of work discussion of the challenges each presented. Some discussions are online but most are in class. There are seven presentation/discussion assignments.

- 200 pts. - 17% of grade.

CALENDAR

Census Date: The census date for the spring 2025 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 for this course.

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

This is a newswriting class. Circumstances -- such as breaking news -- could change when stories are due and may not be reflected at the first of the semester. New assignments could be added or changed based on circumstances. Changes in assignments will be shared through Canvas announcements, emails and in class.

This represents when topics are explored, and assignments made. It does not reflect when the assignment is due.

LOOK IN CANVAS for due dates of assignments.

Week of Jan. 14, 16: Being innovative with story forms

- Capstone discussion
- Course expectations
- Exploring innovation assignment - 25 pts.

Week of Jan 21, 23: Being innovative with AI

- Is AI Good for journalism assignment - 25 pts.
- Using AI to write a story - 140 pts.

Week of Jan. 28, 30: In-class student presentations

Week of Feb. 4, 6: The social media influence

- The social media news story - 100 pts.
- Social media story presentation/discussion - 25 pts.

Week of Feb. 11, 13: Multimedia skills

- The Multimedia Story -- 100 pts.
- Multimedia story presentation/discussion -- 25

Week of Feb. 18, 20: In-class presentations

Week of Feb. 25, 27: The story in photos

- Shooting the FRESH 15 photo essay -- 100 pts.
- Photo essay presentation/discussion -- 25 pts

Week of March 4, 6: The audio news story

- Analyzing audio news - 25 pts.
- The audio new story - 100 pts.
- Audio story presentation/discussion - 25 pts.

March 11, 13: Working with a news release

- The story written from a news release - 60 pts.

March 18, 20: Spring Break

March 25, 27; April 1,3; April 8, 10 - Uncovering problems

- Investigative story workshop - 25 pts.
- The investigative story - 150 pts.

April 14, 17: Capstone work week

April 22-24: Capstone presentations

