JMC: 2010 • Journalistic Reporting & Writing
Fall 2015
Monday 9:30-10:20 AM, 151 PBB

The University of Iowa • School of Journalism & Mass Communication
Main Office: E305 Adler Journalism Building • (319) 335-3401

Course Supervisor: Charles Munro
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Office Hours: Monday-Wednesday 2:00 – 3:30 PM (or by appt)

Lecture: Monday, 9:30-10:20 a.m., 151 Pappajohn Business Building

Writing Section, Time, Instructors, and Office Hours:

Section A01 • 10:30A - 1:20 pm M W336 AJB Michael Davis - Fri. 9:00-12:00 am in E325
Section A02 • 1:30P - 4:20 pm M W336 AJB Michael Davis – Fri. 9:00–12:00 noon in E325
Section A03 • 9:30A - 12:20 pm T W336 John Carpenter – Tue 12:30-1:30 pm in W332 and Tue. 1:30-3:30 in E327
Section A04 • 12:30P - 3:20 pm T W336 Patrick Bigsby – Fri. 8:30-9:30 am in W336 and 9:30-11:30 am in E331
Section A05 • 3:30P - 6:20 pm T W336 Ling Qi – Thu. 1:30-3:30 pm in E333 AJB
Section A06 • 9:30A - 12:20 pm T W332 Charles Munro – (see above)

Overview: This course is intended to help you develop fundamental knowledge, skills and habits of mind that are essential for practicing journalism.

Our common session each Monday morning will provide background on the writing genres and techniques we will tackle in your writing sections. Those writing sections will introduce you to practices of hard news reporting and basic enterprise and feature writing, with exercises and assignments designed to hone your skills and prepare you for more advanced work.

This course along with JMC 2020 Multi-media Storytelling offers you a gateway for further professional courses in the journalism major. They have
separate course numbers and are graded separately, but these courses are intended to complement and reinforce each other.

The concepts and ideas you’ll encounter and the skills you’ll develop and practice in these classes should contribute to your overall preparation for work in journalism and mass media in all its forms. For those who might hope to become staff writers for news outlets—be they newspapers, magazines, online publications, broadcast outlets or, as is likely these days, a combination—competence at reporting and writing in a variety of formats, from short pieces to longer features and across different types of media, is a must. For those wishing to freelance while in school, the ability to turn out solid stories can generate both much-needed spare change and essential clips. And those interested in pursuing careers in public relations, entertainment, education, law, politics or just about anything else will emerge with valuable and versatile communication abilities along with a better understanding of the news environment.

The purpose of each and every task you are asked to attempt for this course may not be immediately obvious, but everything has a point. To perform their jobs—indeed, to get a job—journalists must be versed in all sorts of formulas, so you’ll be required to learn methods and patterns that often seem formulaic. At the same time, you’ll be encouraged to reflect critically on these conventions. After all, you have to know the rules of writing to break them to your advantage. You’ll be expected to absorb the highest ideals claimed by journalists in this country and elsewhere. At the same time, you’ll be confronted with the many real-life considerations, from the mundane to the pernicious, that interfere with attainment of those ideals. It is our hope that doing journalism while studying journalism—learning to gather and assess information and make it accessible and meaningful to others, while scrutinizing and discussing the endeavor in its larger societal context—will serve your career aspirations well in the long run, regardless of your intended path.

You are encouraged to think about the “Iowa Dozen”—the skills and concepts our School endeavors to foster—as you proceed through requirements and electives for your journalism major. Those maxims are appended to this syllabus, along with aspects that are particularly related to these courses.

Expect to work long and hard. Remember that, according to College of Liberal Arts and Sciences guidelines for coursework, each semester hour of credit entails at least two additional hours of work outside the classroom per week: so the total of 5 s.h. here suggests at least of an additional 10 hours of work a week beyond class time. Consider this, on average, a bare minimum. Good journalists never let their vigilance flag. They are constantly attending to news of the day, reading voraciously, scanning their environs for important stories and recording information and ideas. Notebook, pen and smart phone—don’t leave home without them!
General expectations for all students include prompt and consistent class attendance, adequate preparation, constructive participation and completion of reading and writing assignments on deadline.

**READING:** Two required books have been ordered through IOWA BOOK, 8 S. Clinton St, Iowa City, IA 52240 • (319) 337-4188:


Note: You must bring these books to your writing sections to complete your assignments. Copies of each book will be available in the SJMC Resource Center. If you need to use those copies, you will have to read the chapters there to write your weekly summaries. You will also have to photocopy the exercises listed in the syllabus to bring to class. Coming to class without these materials will count as an unexcused absence.

You are also expected to keep up daily news events either in print, online, or on a mobile device. You should take advantage of the campus readership program that you pay for through student fees. In addition to the *Daily Iowan*, you should at least scan the local press and/or watch local or national news every day. You are urged to read *The New York Times* daily, in print or online. You are also urged to listen to National Public Radio’s morning or afternoon news programs, which you can tune into at 910 AM or online at [http://iowapublicradio.org/](http://iowapublicradio.org/). (The shows are called Morning Edition and All Things Considered, respectively, and are a quick and fun way to keep up with the news.

**Weekly news quizzes** in Monday lectures will ensure that you are keeping up with current affairs! These brief quizzes will be based on the front pages of the *Daily Iowan, The New York Times* and from other major news sources. Be prepared!

Other required readings will be made available electronically via ICON or distributed in class. Please complete all assignments on schedule, and read them thoroughly. As a general rule, you are expected to read voraciously on your own initiative, on the presumption that you will not come to report and write well if you don't consistently and conscientiously read a lot of good writing.
**COURSE ICON SITE**

*Please make it a point to check both regularly (preferably daily) to keep up with course readings, news, and changes in deadlines.* Because of the size of the class, important information, such as course changes, will only be available via the course web site.

To access the ICON sites, go to:

icon.uiowa.edu (please note that there is no “www” at the beginning of this URL)

- log on to ICON using your Hawk ID and password  
  [Note: The login ID for each new account will be your HawkID. If you don’t know your HawkID, you can find out what it is by calling the Customer Information Desk (384-0800), looking it up in WebISIS (http://isis.uiowa.edu/) or calling the ITS Help Desk (384-4357)].

- Select the appropriate semester, and click on the plus sign next to “Fall 2015” if you don’t see this class listed right away.

- Click on the appropriate class to enter the course web site.

To post assignments to the “Dropboxes” folder, click on “Dropbox” in the green navigation bar at the top of the page. Open the appropriate folder. Click “Compose” in the upper left-hand corner. You can either type your text directly into the dialog box, or you can attach a file by clicking on the box at the bottom of the page. If you are attaching a file, please use standard Word or PDF format.

**ASSIGNMENTS:** Details, logistical instructions and confirmation of specific deadlines for assignments will be provided in class, but basic outlines are below.

- A succession of short written assignments, including reading responses, in-class exercises, memos, backgrounders, proposals, article components and briefs, will be due in your writing section.

- Four completed articles are due in section, as follows:
  - Article #1 — reaction interview story (800-1,000 words). Due 10/5 at 9am.
  - Article #2 — speech story (600-750 words). Due 10/19 at 9am.
  - Article #3 — press release (600-750 words). Due 11/2 at 9am.
  - Article #4 — feature story (1,000-1,200 words). Due final lab session.
For each story, you also must submit a packet of documentation of the reporting process—including:

- a reporting log with time, place and subjects of all research, observation and interviewing sessions (whether in person, by phone or by e-mail);
- a list of people consulted or interviewed, with contact information;
- a bibliography of any printed and web materials and other references or data sources consulted;
- and copies of any key documents.
- You must be prepared to produce complete notes (and, if used, audio recordings) as well.

Weekly homework: Reading responses based on the Bender text are due each week in your section. Your instructor will collect the hard copy so you will have to print it out and have it ready to turn in. Responses consist of a one-page, bulleted summary of the ideas presented. In your response, discuss what strikes you as important, controversial, or thought-provoking about the authors’ arguments. Does anything said resonate with or contradict your own observations about journalism? At the bottom of the page, draft two questions to ask in class. Responses should be intelligent, thoughtful, focused, and well-written. You will be called on to discuss your responses and reflections on the book in class.

General expectations

General expectations for all students include consistent class attendance, adequate preparation for in-class and out-of-class assignments, constructive participation, and completion of all reading and writing assignments on deadline. For purposes of class communication and fulfillment of assignments, you’ll need an email account and regular access to a computer and printer.

Important note: Deadlines are absolutely sacred in this class (as they are in the “real world” of journalism)! Late work will be penalized at the rate of one letter grade per hour. No make-up work will be allowed, except in the case of an excused absence (see the policy on absences, below). In addition, final grades of “Incomplete” will not be given unless in exceptional and dire circumstances.

Remember that printers break, computers crash, and boyfriends eat homework, so plan ahead. This is both professional and courteous, and it will also save you a lot of trouble.
Be sure to back up your work, for the same reasons. Many students have lost their only copies of final projects at the very last minute, so be smart and back up.

While we do expect you to keep up with current events, please don’t do so during class time. Put away all newspapers, magazines, iPods, laptops, etc.; turn off your cell phones and other communication devices until class is over.

**GRADING:** We do this for the love of it, of course—not for money, nor for grades. Nevertheless, your work will get graded, and if you are conscientious and determined, some of it might earn you bylines or even money. Expectations of all students are high, but your own demands on yourself should be the highest of all.

* Work will be given points that are equivalent to letter grades as follows: A = exceptional work, B = very good work, C = average work, D = unacceptable work, F = failing. Your letter grade may also be modified a plus (+) or minus (-).

**SCORING:** Our general approach is to assume every assignment turned in on time deserves a C if the student follows directions and puts forth a reasonable effort to understand the assignment and its purpose. However, work that is substandard may receive lower than a C score.

Substandard work contains multiple flaws such as numerous errors of spelling, grammar and word choice. The assignment may contain inaccuracies such as name spellings, story facts, quotations, times, places, etc. The story may cite fewer than the required number of sources. The story may lack clear focus or may not meet the criteria for hard news stories. (When instructed, a student should list sources at the bottom of the story, along with email addresses and phone numbers.)

To score a B, you must show that you understand the assignment and its purpose. The great majority of the information in your assignment must be accurate including name spellings, story facts, quotations, times, places, etc. The writing may be choppy but it should be relatively free from grammatical and spelling errors. The story must cite the required number of sources. The story focus is clear but may wander into unrelated areas. The story meets the criteria for hard news stories.

To score an A, you must show you have mastered the assignment and its purpose, and your writing should flow. It must be free from errors of grammar
and spelling. The story should follow Associated Press style. (We allow for only minor errors of grammar or spelling in A papers.) In addition, all the information in your assignment must be accurate including name spellings, story facts, quotations, times, places, etc. Your story must cite the required number of sources. The story meets the criteria for hard news stories. The story focus is clear and all information in the story relates to it.

**Earning Points:**

* In calculation of your final grade, course elements will be weighted as follows:

**LECTURE GRADES**

- Attendance in lecture (counted by submitted quizzes)
  
  (13 @ 5 each)  
  65

- News quizzes in lecture (passed news quizzes)
  
  (13 @ 5 each)  
  65*

**SECTION GRADES**

Preparation, participation, meeting deadlines (includes in-class assignments):

- Reading responses (12 @ 10 points each)*
  
  120

- Graded stories:
  
  - Reaction interviews  
  100
  
  - Speech story  
  150
  
  - Press release  
  150
  
  - Feature story  
  200

  **Total 1,000**

* Does not apply first day of class

If you are concerned about your grades, please go to your instructor’s office hours and discuss the situation early enough to address the problems. If you have not communicated with your instructor during the semester, it is highly unlikely that a grade can be changed after classes have ended. Grades of “Incomplete” will not be awarded except in dire circumstances, in accordance with University policy.
COURSE SCHEDULE


   Lecture:
   * Course overview – meet your instructors
   * Chapter 1, “Journalism Today”
   * Chapter 2, “Selecting and reporting the news”

   Lab work:
   * Exercise: Listening assignment. (TA’s see outline on file.)

   
   Guest speaker: PIR Angie Drobnic Holan, the editor of Politifact.com

   Lab work:
   * p. 37, Exercise 1, Discussion questions 2, 3, and 7.
   * Pp. 70-75, Exercises 1-4.

3. Sept. 7—Labor Day (Monday holiday; all labs cancelled this week.)


   Lab work:
   * Exercise 1, p. 152.
   * Exercise 2, pp. 153-159
   * Review of the daily news for examples of leads.

5. Sept. 21 — Chapter 11, “Interviewing”

   Lab:
   * Exercise 1, part 6, p. 248.
   * Graded exercise #1: Reaction interview. (Due 10/5 9am)

Lab:
- Exercise 1 (all), p. 205.
- Exercise 2, parts 1 & 6, pp. 206, 209.

Important note — looking ahead: To prepare for the speech writing story we will draft in class on Oct. 5, please attend one of the two presentations on October 1 by former Associated Press correspondent Jonathan Katz, either a 12:30 p.m. discussion and Q&A session, or a 7:00 p.m. lecture. Both these events will take place in the Callaghan Auditorium in the College of Public Health Building. We will identify another public event to give you an additional option. Alternate assignment: If you cannot attend either session, in class on Oct. 5 you will write both “speech for follow stories” for “Americans work” and “College athletics” on pp. 318-320. For the assignment due on Oct 19, you may choose an alternative speech in consultation with your instructor.

7. Oct. 5 — Chapter 15, “Speeches and meetings” (Due 10/19 9am)

Lab: Graded story #2 — Speeches

- Exercises 1 & 2, pp. 317-320;
- Lead and story mapping for “follow” story about Jonathan Katz’s speech on his book, Big Truck That Went By: How the World Came to Save Haiti and Left Behind a Disaster. We will begin the draft in class, but you will complete and post it to the Dropbox by 8 a.m. on Wednesday.


Lab:
- You will receive a corrected version of your speech story to revise in class. You will repost it to the Dropbox.

   Lab:
   • Exercise 1, p. 433.
   • Exercise 2, p. 434.
   • Graded Exercise #3 – Press release. Original [or for fewer points you may do Exercise 3, parts 1 & 2, pp. 435-436. (Due 11/2 9am)


   Lab: Exercises 1-3 on pp. 101-103.

11. Nov. 2 — Chapter 6, “Ethics”

   Lab: Exercises 1-4, pp. 123-128.

12. Nov. 9 — Chapter 18, “Public affairs reporting”

   Lab:
   • Exercise 3, pp. 389-392

13. Nov. 16 — Chapter 12, “Writing for Radio and TV News”

   Lab:
   • Exercises 1-4, pp. 266-269.

14. Nov. 23-27 — Thanksgiving break

15. Nov. 30 — Chapter 17, “Feature stories”

   Lab: Exercises on pp. 360-363.
   Graded exercise #4, “Feature story.”

16. Dec. 7 — Feature story (revised) – END OF COURSE
**HOUSEKEEPING**

- **Please use your uiowa.edu e-mail account** (or if you use a different account, make sure it is linked to the uiowa address). Each course has an associated ICON site; make sure to check all of these regularly—and use your 19:098 section site to communicate with classmates and the instructor between classes.

- **Meet your deadlines.** Start on time, work steadily, plan ahead and finish on time, if not ahead of time. Revise, edit and proofread before submitting assignments. Save computer files often while you are working, and make sure drafts and completed stories are backed up. The-computer-ate-my-story excuses and other technology-related protestations due to frantic last-minute frenzies are unacceptable. Section instructors will inform you of preferred format for articles, arrangements for submission of assignments and specific section deadlines.

- **Missed classes or late work.** In-class exercises and quizzes cannot be made up. No extensions will be granted for short writing assignments. Extensions for longer work are possible only under genuinely extenuating circumstances, which must be documented. *Late assignments will be marked down; none will be accepted late unless you have notified the instructor in advance with an explanation; and except for truly extraordinary circumstances, no assignments will be accepted at all more than one week after the original due date.*

**OTHER COURSE POLICIES & INFORMATION**

- **Attendance is not optional.** Except in cases of death in the family, serious illness, or other genuine emergencies or crises, you are expected to attend all class meetings. *If you unavoidably must miss a class, notify the instructor in person or by e-mail in advance; if advance notice is impossible, provide a written explanation of your absence as soon as possible.* Attendance will be taken in every class and will count toward your class participation grade. Excused absences are granted only for the following reasons: serious illness (which must be documented with a doctor’s certificate), a death in the family (again, documentation is required), or, in very rare cases, a school-related event that requires your presence and that you have arranged with the professor well in advance (e.g. an out-of-town university competitive event in which you are required to participate, a religious holiday, or a job interview). In order for an absence to be excused, documentation must be provided (a note from a coach, letter scheduling the interview, etc.). The following types of situations are NOT considered excused absences: social events, *Daily Iowan* assignments, meetings of Greek or service organizations, entertaining out-of-town visitors, holiday plans, going to weddings or to visit
relatives, or any other circumstance that is extracurricular and at which your attendance is optional and secondary to your schoolwork.

A note on Thanksgiving and Spring Break: The University generously offers a full week for each of these scheduled breaks. Class is officially in session before and after this designated week. If you choose to extend your break, you cannot have extensions on deadlines, nor can you make up the missed work. The choice to extend a break is a choice to accept the grade penalty. Regarding deadlines, see the note above.

*Common courtesy.* Otherwise known as common sense, or what you learned in kindergarten. Arriving to class late and leaving class early is disruptive and inappropriate behavior. If other classes or obligations overlap with times scheduled for this course, rearrange the other matters or drop this course.

*Special accommodations.* Academic arrangements for students with disabilities are handled with the cooperation of Student Disability Services, Burge Hall lower level, tel. 335-1462. Students needing special accommodations for any aspect of the course are urged to contact SDS and to speak with the instructor early in the semester. The Student Disability Services website is http://www.uiowa.edu/~sds/.

*Sexual harassment.* Sexual harassment is reprehensible and will not be tolerated by the School, College or University. For definitions, assistance, and the full University policy, see http://www.sexualharassment.uiowa.edu/.

*Severe weather.* If a weather event disrupts class, we will seek appropriate shelter in the building; and class will resume if possible when the event is over.

*Administrative supervision.* The College of Liberal Arts and Sciences is the administrative home of this course and governs matters such as add/drop deadlines, second-grade option, and other related issues.

*Complaints.* Show up during office hours, make appointments, and/or contact me by e-mail with thoughts and concerns. If you feel uncomfortable bringing a concern directly to your instructor or the course coordinator, you may consult David Ryfe, director of the School of Journalism and Mass Communication; Helena Dettmer, associate dean for academic affairs of the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences; the University Ombudspersons; and/or other relevant authorities. For procedural information, see http://www.clas.uiowa.edu/students/academic_handbook/ix.shtml.

**ETHICS**

Follow basic academic and journalistic ethics. Be original, be creative, and be true to your values: show me that you are a person of integrity and principle. Your writing will reflect who you are as a person. Remember that we will form lasting impressions of each other this semester.
The only real crime in this class would be cheating. It is expected that all work submitted for a grade in this course reflects the original work of the student submitting it. Students are encouraged to discuss their work with others (inside and outside of class), and to exchange drafts of papers with one another for comments and criticisms. But keep in mind that if you borrow an idea from someone else, you must cite the source, even if it is based on a conversation or correspondence. Also, inventing sources/quotes constitutes plagiarism in journalism; sources used in stories will be verified by the instructor. All assignments will be screened through Turnitin.com, plagiarism detection software.

Plagiarism and any other activities that result in a student presenting work that is not his or her own are academic fraud. Academic fraud is reported to the departmental DEO and then to the Associate Dean for Academic Programs and Services in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences who deals with academic fraud according to these guidelines:
www.clas.uiowa.edu/students/academic_handbook//ix.shtml

This course is given by the College of Liberal Arts & Sciences. This means that class policies on matters such as requirements, grading, and sanctions for academic dishonesty are governed by the College of Liberal Arts & Sciences. Students wishing to add or drop this course after the official deadline must receive the approval of the Dean of the College of Liberal Arts & Sciences. Details of the University policy of cross enrollments may be found at:
http://www.uiowa.edu/~provost/deos/crossenroll.doc

Any student who does not fully understand the standards of academic honesty should speak to your instructor or course supervisor in advance of submitting coursework.
The Iowa Dozen

As one of more than 100 programs in journalism and mass communication accredited by the Accrediting Council for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication (ACEJMC), we endeavor to assure that our graduates meet the following standards.

We learn to ...
1. Write correctly, clearly and well.
2. Conduct research and gather information responsibly.
3. Edit and evaluate carefully.
4. Use media technologies thoughtfully.
5. Apply statistical concepts accurately.

We value ...
6. Free speech and First Amendment principles for all individuals and groups.
7. A diverse global community.
8. Creativity and independence.

We explore ...
10. Theories and concepts.
11. The history, structure and economy of media institutions
12. The role of media in shaping cultures

This set of courses aims to help foster:
Fair and accurate reporting, accurate and clear writing, and ability to identify and appreciate good journalism.
Consummate, thorough, responsible research skills.
Discerning editorial judgment and editing capabilities.
Better understanding of uses of numbers, percentages and statistics.
Familiarity with potential of new media technologies, and critical thinking about their uses.
Appreciation of freedom of expression and informational openness.
Appreciation of diversity and internationalism.
Creativity—which does not mean fiction.
Independence and skepticism (which ideally does not mean cynicism).
Striving to get as close as possible to both small-t truth and big-T TRUTH.
Better understanding of the media institutions for which we report and write.
FINALLY, SOME KEYS TO A HAPPY HEART AND A PRODUCTIVE CAREER

You are encouraged to adhere to the following tenets, at least for the duration of this course:

• *Let your journalistic instincts intrude into your daily life.* Always be on the lookout for story leads and ideas, sources of inspiration and information, and possible outlets for your work. Always carry writing utensil and notebook.

• *Fulfill your commitments, but also report and write about what interests you.* In the course of indentured servitude at news organizations, you may be assigned to cover stories you think are stupid or uninteresting; and even as a freelancer you may feel compelled to do dumb or boring things for the sake of the money, the professional relationship or the byline. As a journalism trainee in school, you’ll have many obligatory assignments as well. Take them seriously and fulfill what your teachers/editors/employers expect of you. At the same time, when time and opportunity arise, pursue topics you find engrossing.

• *Help your fellow students.* Journalism can be a cutthroat business. But the very best journalism involves cooperation; and on complex stories, two or three or ten heads are always better than one. Some of your best resources are right in the classroom. Everyone can help everyone else by brainstorming collectively, trading and sharing information and ideas and sources and providing constructive comments and criticisms at every stage of the reporting and writing process.

• *Bear in mind that your writing can only be as good as your substance.* Writing is simply the vessel for information and ideas. You need something to write about. Dogged, thorough reporting and hard thinking are essential to good writing.

• *Bear in mind that small matters can have major repercussions.* Strive for excellence in everything, from punctuation and grammar to the big picture. Turning in sloppy copy will not endear you to your editors. If you are freelancing, a typo in your first paragraph or garbled syntax in your second may send your submission directly to the recycling bin. Editors have no time for lack of professionalism. Every little thing counts.

• *Don't chase the illusion of "objectivity," but strive your utmost to achieve accuracy and fairness.* "Objectivity," once a watchword of American journalism, is now generally recognized as an impossibility. However, accuracy and fairness are eminently attainable. Be meticulous and responsible. Check and recheck information; everything that is verifiable should be verified. Examine issues and events from many perspectives, and try to understand other people's points of view, even views that might be anathema to you. Take a stand when you think it's warranted and appropriate, but make sure you substantiate it. Arriving at the confidence to state your own view on the basis of thorough investigation and intelligent analysis is something to strive for.
• **Don’t become over-reliant on the Internet.** Cyberspace provides journalists with all sorts of wonderful tools, as well as some great outlets for our work. But the old adage “garbage in, garbage out” still applies. Web pages are only as dependable as their creators. Find out as much as you can about all your sources, and continue to make use of good old-fashioned resources like newspaper microfilm, archival documents and—even!—books. Learn to use the web for *primary resources* rather than for dredging up second- or third- or who-knows-how-many-hand accounts. Don’t get accustomed to it just because it’s convenient and easy.

• **Follow basic academic and journalistic ethics.** Rely on your own ideas and your own work. Keep your word to sources and editors. Don’t "borrow" other people's writings or thoughts without crediting them.

• **Develop your own sense of purpose and ethics beyond the basic do's and don'ts.** For each and every story you pursue, ask yourself the question: "What's the point?" Sometimes the point may be as simple as establishing a human connection or conveying an experience through words. Other times, your intent might be somewhat grander, such as trying to expose a social malady and possibly contribute to its remedy. Whatever your aims, try to incorporate into your work the human values that are important to you: laughter, tolerance, honesty, compassion, whatever else is on your personal list. Be true to your own principles.