Journalistic Reporting and Writing:
JMC 2010 - Spring, 2015

Instructor: Dr. Patrick Wright     E-mail: patrick-wright@uiowa.edu
Office: W331 AJB      Office Hours: M 1:30 – 4:30 p.m. and by Appt.

Lecture Days:          Mon. 9:30 – 10:20 a.m. (101 Becker Communication Studies Bldg.- BCSB)
Discussion Sections:  Mon.- 01 (10:30 a.m. – 1:20 p.m.) and 02 (1:30 – 4:20 p.m.);
                      Tues. – 03 (9:30 a.m. – 12:20 p.m.), 04 (12:30 – 3:20 p.m.), 05 (3:30 – 6:20 p.m).

            --All Sections are located in Room W336 in the Adler Journalism Building. Check your schedule for the time and date of your discussion section.

Required texts and other materials:

— Associated Press Stylebook ("APS")
— Strunk and White, The Elements of Style, 4th ed. ("ES")
— Hemingway, The Old Man and the Sea (“OMS”)
— Poynter, Grammar and Language Modules (online course, link will be sent within first week)
— Truss, Eats, Shoots and Leaves (“ESL,” Buy if you like, but it is located at campus libraries)

Course Description:

Journalistic Reporting and Writing teaches students how to become journalists. Students learn how write strong, tight stories; how to edit stories to make them more interesting; what defines news as opposed to other information; and the basic professional practices critical to journalism. This course has two components: a Monday lecture and a discussion section that meet each week. The lecture provides the foundation for effective reporting and writing as well as an overview of enduring questions and issues in journalism, such as ethical problems that arise in the coverage of news.

The section schedules and locations are listed above. In your sections, you will expand on material discussed in lecture, such as good lead writing, story structure, interviewing, factual reporting and clear writing. The content of the weekly lecture and the skills you will practice in your section are designed to prepare you for a career in any communications profession.

Course Objectives:

• Learn how to apply News Values to identify News Topics and Issues.
• Develop a Basic Understanding of News Media Ethics
• Learn and Apply the basics of News Reporting and Research.
• Learn and Apply the basics of Journalism Writing
Class Outline and Assignment Due Dates:

This class is divided into four (4) sections with six (6) graded assignments. Due dates are dependent on the date of your specific discussion section. Students must turn in papers at the beginning of your discussion section in order to receive a grade. Given the importance of deadlines in all communications professions, Late papers will not be accepted.

**Class Sections:**

*What is News: 1/26 – 2/2*
- First Person Story Due: **Feb. 2-3**

*The News Story: 2/9 - 3/2*
- News Event Story Due: **Feb. 16-17**
- Interview/ Reaction Story (Joint with MMS) Due: **March 2-3**

*Strategic Communication: 3/9 - 3/23*
- Press Releases Due: **March 23-24**

*Investigative and Broad Scope Journalism: 3/30 - 5/11*
- Feature Story (Joint with MMS) Due: **April 20-21**
- Final Investigation Project (Joint with MMS) Due: **May 11**

**Final Project Due: May 11 at 12:00 p.m. (High Noon)**

*NOTE:* Three assignments share the same reporting topic and interview sources as Introduction to Multimedia Storytelling (MMS). Yet, what you produce for each course will be distinct in medium and format as well as graded separately, per the requirements of each course. See the individual assignment descriptions for details.

**Graded Assignments:**

**Assignment #1: First-Person story (500-550 words)**
For this assignment, you will “interview yourself” and write the story as if you were a third-person interviewer. The story will highlight the proudest accomplishment or moment in your life. Then it will explain how this event shaped or developed your most important and distinct personality traits. The story should discuss three (3) of your most significant traits. If you are unsure about what qualifies as a personality trait, check it online. For example, “considerate” is a distinct personality trait, while “hard working” is not. For a high grade, stories must have a lead that engages the audience, personal quotes regarding your feelings about important aspects of this event, and enough detail and color to make it clear how this event connected to the three personality traits you identify.

**Assignment #2: News Event Story (500-550 words)**
For this assignment, you will find a “news event” and write a story about it. A news event is something that happened recently that would be of interest to Iowa students. Events could include almost anything except sporting events, Greek-related events, or certain entertainment events. If you are confused regarding a potential news topic, consult your discussion leader or professor. All stories MUST cover the “who, what, where, when, why and how” of the event; follow the “inverted pyramid” style; include at least two interviews with relevant sources; and include three sources of outside information. A list of both sources interviewed and outside information sources with contact information (personal phone numbers, websites, etc.) must be included beneath the story.
Assignment #3: Interview/ Reaction Story (700-750 words)
For this assignment, students will write a story based on citizen reaction to an event or governmental policy. For this story, you will need at least six interviews with sources, expert and otherwise, who are reacting to this event or policy. **Note:** Ideally, you would focus on a controversial issue that interests you or upsets you from a recent news story. Then ask questions designed to bring out the true knowledge or feelings of the interview subjects. Work to find citizens and experts with different opinions when possible (sometimes a position has universal support). Stories would be written in the Inverted Pyramid style (lead quote, nut graf, etc.), but students have more latitude on how they start and write the overall story. All interviews must be done in person and, again, a list of interview subjects and outside information sources with contact information must be added beneath the story.

Assignment #4: Press Releases (400-450 words per press release)
For this assignment, students must pick a product or cause (charity or movement organization). Then they need to read newspapers and magazines to find news events that they could connect to their product or cause. Once they find the stories, they will create two different press releases that connect that story to their product or cause in a way that promotes said product or cause. All stories must mention the article and give enough details to give readers a basic understanding of the issues involved in the story. Again, stories will be written in the Inverted Pyramid style. Also, students must choose outside sources that are objective and reputable as a way to support the claims of their product or cause (For example, using a study about the importance of brushing teeth by the American Dental Association to support a particular toothpaste brand). **NOTE:** While they are written to appear objective, they are not objective and need to point the reader to a particular conclusion (for example, why they must support the Girl Scouts or buy a particular golf club). Higher marks will be given to press releases that use reputable sources (ex. neutral, third-person expert sources such as academic papers or government studies) to support their points. Papers may **not** support a person or celebrity, sports team, or focus on any aspect of Greek life.

Assignment #5: Feature Story (1,200 words)
For this assignment, students will write a feature story that highlights a business trend, cultural trend, or an aspect of social behavior. For students who have no idea where to find a topic, they could start with a review of Google Trends (www.google.com/trends) that relate to current events. Students must interview at least seven (7) sources and include at least four (4) outside sources of information for the story. **Note:** This story must be told with the interest of Iowa undergraduates in mind. The topic should inform Iowa students about something important to them in a way that they might not have considered. For example, student Jane finds a Google Trend graph that shows the mental-stimulation drug Adderall is the third most popular search topic. She uses her Multimedia graphics and outside research, such as interviews, to show the dangers of Adderall as a study aid. Again, a list of all interview sources as well as information sources with contact information must be included at the bottom of the story.

Assignment #6: Investigation Story (1,600 words)
For this assignment, students will conduct a full investigation of a particular topic of interest. Unlike the feature story, this story must focus on a problem that needs to be addressed or solved. The story must include at least 10 interviews with experts and affected citizens and data from at least five (5) outside sources, such as a public records search, online public data, and other sources discussed in class. The story must show why the topic is important from a local and national perspective. Avoid the use of friends and family members as interview subjects, but one exception will be allowed if relevant. Story should present both sides of the issue, but help readers understand the truth behind the topic. For example, a climate change story would present the argument of climate change deniers, but point out that the overwhelming evidence supports man-made climate change. Students must include a list of all interview subjects and information sources at the bottom of the story.
**Grading Scale:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Points</th>
<th>Percent of final grade</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>First Person Story</td>
<td>50 pts</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>News Event Story</td>
<td>50 pts</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview/Reaction Story</td>
<td>100 pts</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Press Releases</td>
<td>100 pts</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feature Story</td>
<td>200 pts</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Investigation Story</td>
<td>400 pts</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation/Grammar Module (50 pts. each)</td>
<td>100 pts</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total:</strong></td>
<td><strong>1,000 pts</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Final grades will be determined according to the following scale. Grades will rounded to the nearest %:

- **A**: 100 – 94%
- **A-**: 93 – 90%
- **B+**: 89 – 88%
- **B**: 87 – 84%
- **B-**: 83 – 80%
- **C+**: 79 – 78%
- **C**: 77 – 74%
- **C-**: 73 – 70%
- **D+**: 69 – 68%
- **D**: 67 – 64%
- **D-**: 63 – 60%
- **F**: 60% or below

**Grade Criteria:**

- **“A” Quality**: Very well written both in terms of clarity, grammar and AP style; research strengthens the reporting; interviews provide color and support for points. Story is newspaper ready with minor edits. In the event that written work reaches or exceeds professional journalistic standards, an A+ grade will be given.

- **“B”**: Basically well written in terms of clarity, grammar and proper AP style. But research and interviews lack support necessary to prove points. Also, story needs better transitions to help readers follow key points. Story requires revisions as well as additional material before publication.

- **“C”**: Story shows a basic understanding of the assignment. But research and interviews fail to make points or support points that are made. Story needs improvement in flow, grammar and style with several basic grammar and AP style mistakes. A major rewrite and additional reporting required.

- **“D”**: Story fails to meet basic requirements of the assignment and needs significant work in terms of clarity, research, organization, story structure, grammar and punctuation.

- **“F”**: Story shows a lack of understanding of the assignment with severe deficits in grammar, structure, organization and information. Also, work could show evidence of known plagiarism.
**Attendance and Tardiness:**
Lecture and discussion attendance are mandatory. Each lecture or discussion section missed without prior approval will result in a 5% deduction from your final grade. Before each lecture, you must find and sign your class list. Failure to sign the list means you were absent for that lecture. Also, this class requires significant “field” work. If you fail to return to class after a field work exercise, you will be considered absent.

**Students have five minutes from the start of lecture or discussion section to attend.** If a student is more than five minutes late without prior approval, they will be considered absent and not allowed to attend. If you miss a lecture or discussion section, it is your responsibility to learn the assignments and material covered that day.

**Homework and Participation:**
Students will need to use a paper notebook and pen or pencil to take notes from lecture and discussion. All cellular phones, laptops, mp3 players, and other electronic devices must be turned off and packed away before the start of class.

All written work must be typed in 12-point Times New Roman or Garamond font, double-spaced with one-inch margins on all sides, and free of grammatical, typographical, and spelling errors. Numerous errors will result in a lower grade. Put headlines and datelines on all of your assignments, number your pages, and Staple all of your work. Unstapled assignments won’t be accepted. Again, late assignments will NOT be accepted. Completed assignments must be labeled at the top right corner in the following manner:

- Your Name, Section 
- Instructor's Name
- Date
- Name of Assignment

**Instructor Contact:**
E-mail messages will get a response within one to 24 hours, depending on the time of day. Don’t expect an immediate response to e-mails sent after 8 p.m. I am available outside of office hours by appointment. Also, I will be available during “Black Fridays,” an all-day “office hour” discussed in class.

**Writing Resources:**
This course is designed to teach journalistic writing, but the course requires a basic understanding of proper grammatical writing. Students who need basic writing help are encouraged to seek additional help from instructors at the Writing Assistance Center. For more information, please check the SJMC Resource and Writing Assistance Center website at http://clas.uiowa.edu/sjmc/resources/sjmc-resource-center.

**Academic Honesty**
All CLAS students or students taking classes offered by CLAS have, in essence, agreed to the College's Code of Academic Honesty: "I pledge to do my own academic work and to excel to the best of my abilities, upholding the IOWA Challenge. I promise not to lie about my academic work, to cheat, or to steal the words or ideas of others; nor will I help fellow students to violate the Code of Academic Honesty." Any student committing academic misconduct is reported to the College and placed on disciplinary probation or may be suspended or expelled (CLAS Academic Policies Handbook).

**The Iowa Dozen:** In this class, we will learn the following principles, known as the “Iowa Dozen.” You will learn how to:
1. Write correctly and clearly
2. Conduct research and gather information responsibly
3. Edit and evaluate carefully
4. Use media technologies thoughtfully
5. Apply statistical concepts appropriately
We value:
6. First Amendment principles for all individuals and groups
7. A diverse global community
8. Creativity and independence
9. Truth, accuracy, fairness and diversity

We will explore:
10. Mass communication theories and concepts
11. Media institutions and practices
12. The role of media in shaping cultures

Administrative Home
The College of Liberal Arts and Sciences is the administrative home of this course and governs matters such as the add/drop deadlines, the second-grade-only option, and other related issues. Different colleges may have different policies. Questions may be addressed to 120 Schaeffer Hall, or see the CLAS Academic Policies Handbook at http://clas.uiowa.edu/students/handbook.

Electronic Communication
University policy specifies that students are responsible for all official correspondences sent to their University of Iowa e-mail address (@uiowa.edu). Faculty and students should use this account for correspondences (Operations Manual, III.15.2, k.11).

Accommodations for Disabilities
A student seeking academic accommodations should first register with Student Disability Services and then meet privately with the course instructor to make particular arrangements. See www.uiowa.edu/~sds/ for more information.

Making a Suggestion or a Complaint
Students with a suggestion or complaint should first visit with the instructor (and the course supervisor), and then with the departmental DEO. Complaints must be made within six months of the incident (CLAS Academic Policies Handbook).

Understanding Sexual Harassment
Sexual harassment subverts the mission of the University and threatens the well-being of students, faculty, and staff. All members of the UI community have a responsibility to uphold this mission and to contribute to a safe environment that enhances learning. Incidents of sexual harassment should be reported immediately. See the UI Comprehensive Guide on Sexual Harassment for assistance, definitions, and the full University policy.

Reacting Safely to Severe Weather
In severe weather, class members should seek appropriate shelter immediately, leaving the classroom if necessary. The class will continue if possible when the event is over. For more information on Hawk Alert and the siren warning system, visit the Department of Public Safety website.