Opinion Journalism JMC 3400:0001  
Spring 2016  
MW 9:30-11:20 in AJB W340

Intstructor: Bradley K. Martin, AJB W311, office hours M 2:00-3:30; TH 3:30-5:00  
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This is a lab class. You will have reading assignments to perform outside class and typically at least part of each class period will be reserved for you to write. You may use one of the supplied computers or bring your own. Each of you will renew acquaintance with the Word Press account you set up when a student in the multimedia class and blog there. (If you don’t have a Word Press account we’ll get you set up with one.) You’ll express your views on various matters and when possible include the multi-media elements that will make your blog more attractive and useful to prospective users.

Subjects that you’ll blog about can be whatever you have opinions about. Please choose several subject matter areas that float your boat, announce them to your classmates, instructor and prospective blog followers, set up categories on your blog and specialize in those areas as the semester moves on. Your blog will also include media criticism – your comments on books and articles, programs and films that you are assigned to read or watch for instruction or examples, plus comments on the news and opinion media that you follow daily whether on line or in print or on TV or radio. If you fail to follow news and opinion media in your blog, whatever you do produce will be graded down because generally speaking you can’t be much of a journalist without consuming a lot of journalism.

The instructor will have access to your Word Press blog. It’s a plus if you can get your thoughts published elsewhere besides on your Word Press blog.

You have a deadline twice a week at the end of class when you are expected to have added one or more gems to your blog. The instructor will follow your blog and offer critiques and grades to help you move in the best direction as you develop your blogging skills. Unexcused lateness or absence will entail deduction of points from your daily grade – fewer points if you are found to have blogged despite your absence.

Your blogs are expected to be in good English – grammatical, properly punctuated, persuasive. And you are expected to get your facts right, spell names correctly and otherwise adhere to the standards of good journalism, with the exception that you’ll let yourself be much more opinionated than you would typically be when reporting the news.

There will be some specific assignments along the way – project-type assignments, for example, when you’ll do something more ambitious than the usual daily blog.
The instructor last taught opinion journalism in 2004 or so – before a lot of people were blogging. That wasn’t a blogging course. So this course will necessarily involve adjustments here and there as we proceed. At the moment, however, the idea is to try to structure your assignments around your blog. That could even go for midterm and final examinations – one or both of those might consist of a blog post.

We’ll start by watching a short video: Introduction to Rhetoric: English 191 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ku0TD5jnMaE

The first book that you should acquire, because we’ll use it right away, is:

Jay Heinrichs, Thank You For Arguing: What Aristotle, Lincoln and Homer Simpson Can Teach Us About the Art of Persuasion, the 2013 revised and updated edition.

Shop for the book on line; the university bookstore was not notified of its adoption. You will be blogging about this book, chapter by chapter, so a print version you can mark up may be more convenient to use than an e-book.

**JMC Learning Outcomes**

The School of Journalism and Mass Communication is committed to your academic and professional success. In line with this commitment, we have identified particular learning outcomes that every student should obtain by the time they earn a JMC degree. You can find more information about these learning outcomes here: [http://clas.uiowa.edu/sjmc/undergraduate-programs/assessment](http://clas.uiowa.edu/sjmc/undergraduate-programs/assessment). We regularly assess the curriculum to determine whether students are achieving these outcomes.

This course contributes to these learning outcomes by helping you achieve an understanding that clear, concise writing is at the heart of journalistic expression and that reporting and communicating effectively requires knowledge and achievement of the highest professionally accepted standards in all work. Achieving these outcomes means students will demonstrate:

- The ability to gather factual story elements and to evaluate and express them in logical, narrative forms for multiple media and audiences;
- The ability to access and analyze data, report facts accurately, research and edit information responsibly and in a manner commensurate with professional standards; and
- The ability to apply above concepts in a manner that is sensitive to audiences across all media.

Also, regarding media literacy, students will develop critical thinking skills to analyze and interpret media messages through an understanding of media practices and institutions.