

JLMC 201

Spring, 2008

Reporting and Writing for the Mass Media

Instructor:

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Office Hours M & W 9:00 a.m. – 10:00 a.m.

Purpose: Educate students about the fundamentals of basic reporting and writing for the mass media

Objectives: (Students will...)

1. Understand the role of the First Amendment in the practice of effective, ethical reporting.
2. Develop the ability to generate effective story ideas that pursue truth, fairness and diversity.
3. Utilize news judgment in determining the value of a story in terms of ethical, moral, and business functions.
4. Determine news value by understanding that communication today is global and that audiences are diverse and sophisticated; news must meet their information needs.
5. Develop basic interviewing and researching skills using appropriate tools and technologies for each medium.
6. Identify poorly-written pieces and use commonly-accepted styles and symbols to edit the material.
7. Write effective, informative hard and soft news stories for a variety of media.

Expectations: This is a writing course, students taking this course should expect to be writing every class period and in homework assignments. This course is demanding and rigorous with lots of in-class deadlines. These deadlines are not unlike those you will face in the professional setting. Expect to be held to these deadlines and expect to become a better writer by developing the discipline to write, on deadline, every class period. You are expected to read any assignments handed out in class or posted on the class WebCT site.

Attendance/Participation/Professionalism: Attendance in this class is the student's responsibility. Attendance will be taken at the beginning of each class. It is expected that students who miss a class will not be allowed to make up the work from that day. *(If, due to illness or a death in the family, or another extreme circumstance, a student is unable to attend a class, please contact the instructor **in advance** to discuss the option of a make-up assignment. Proof of illness (doctor's note) or other event is required to be allowed a make-up assignment.)* To be effective, a course requires the richness of shared experiences from the entire group. If the entire class is not present, the experience is diminished for all. Students who miss more than THREE classes, can expect to receive no higher final grade than a C+ (at best).

Students are expected to participate in class discussions and to critique the work of their classmates. Students are expected to behave in a professional manner with an appreciation for the opinions of all students in the classroom. Other measures of a professional attitude include: dependability, consistency of performance, punctuality, class participation, and an overall concern for accuracy, fairness, and ethical practices. Ten percent of a student's grade will be based on participation and professionalism.

Plagiarism and Ethical Behavior: Plagiarism is against the law and is an especially egregious act for a professional communicator. Copying anyone else's work or other forms of dishonesty will not be tolerated. Plagiarism or other academic dishonesty will result in a grade of "F" for the course grade. The student handbook procedure will be followed and the student(s) will be reported to the Office of the Dean of Students.

The classroom is a "safe" environment in which to learn from our successful and not-so-successful attempts. The basic rule for this class is RESPECT. Students must maintain respect for opinions differing from their own, as well as differing styles of presentation. Abusive use of racist or sexist language or other demeaning comments have no place in the JLMC 201. If you believe any teacher or fellow student is disregarding these standards, please notify the instructor immediately. If you are not satisfied that you have been given a fair hearing, then feel free to speak with the Department Director, Dr. Michael Bugeja.

Note: Group projects must be carefully checked by each member to be certain all information is original to the group, or properly attributed to the source.

Grading:

Daily reporting/writing assignments = 70%

Final writing project (multi-source story) = 20%

Participation and Professionalism = 10%

Scale:

A = 90 – 100

B = 80 – 89.99

C = 70 – 79.99

D = 60 – 69.99

F = 0 – 59.99

1. **Story Ideas** – You are expected to submit one story idea per week, due at the beginning of class each Monday. Story ideas should be typed and may be submitted to the *Iowa State Daily*. You will not be allowed to make up missed story ideas; do not fall behind.
2. **Exams** – There will be periodic, significant quizzes over the material covered to that point, including any guest speakers and assigned readings. There will be no final exam; your multi-source story will serve as your final project.
3. **Quizzes** – Students in JLMC 201 are expected to pay attention to radio and TV news broadcasts and to read the *Des Moines Register* or another daily newspaper of your choice, **in addition to** reading the *Iowa State Daily*. It is also suggested that you read at least one weekly news magazine and one trade publication. A thorough knowledge of current news events is imperative to success in any career field. You will be quizzed regularly on current events from the popular news media.
4. **Grading** – Daily assignments will be assigned a grade. You will lose points if you fail to follow the assignment instructions and/or if you turn in incomplete work. Your points also will be reduced, possibly significantly, for errors in grammar, punctuation, usage, spelling, and style. Accuracy is essential in all aspects of journalism and mass communication. This includes accuracy in language and style, as well as facts and names. **ACCURACY! ACCURACY! ACCURACY!**

You must complete ALL assignments to pass the course with a C+ or higher. Late assignments will not be accepted. Do not electronically submit an assignment or turn it in before the class period. It will not be accepted. You are expected to be in class and to turn your assignment in at that time.

Do NOT be discouraged if your grades are not high in the first half of the term. Improvement is the key. If your work consistently improves during the semester, your final grade will reflect your growth. Be sure to meet with your teacher if you are experiencing problems.

Do NOT throw anything away. Save every shred of material you submit for this class. It is your guarantee that you are fairly graded. This also gives us an opportunity, periodically, to review your performance.

Whenever you are given an opportunity to **rewrite** a story, be sure to save your original draft. **SUBMIT ORIGINAL DRAFTS** when you hand in a re-write. If you do not submit the original along with the re-write, there will be no consideration given to the re-write.

Grades are posted in a timely manner (within one week of the assignment) on WebCT. The time to address a missing or incorrect score is immediately following its posting. The end of the semester is not the time to question a grade (or missing grade) from earlier in the semester. It is YOUR responsibility to stay current with WebCt.

6. **Professional Integrity and Academic Standards** – Students are required to do their own work for this course. This work must be original and done solely for this course. Since honesty is imperative in journalism, breaches of honesty – such as plagiarism (using material by another person without proper attributions) and the invention/fabrication of any material, including quotations, are grounds for failure of this course. The teacher will phone sources periodically to confirm that you have quoted them accurately.

Any student caught and proven to be cheating, engaging in plagiarism or any other act of academic dishonesty in connection with any aspect of JLMC 201 will receive an “F” for the course and will be referred to the University for discipline in accordance with the Student Handbook. Any student who is aware of academic dishonesty on the part of another student is obliged to report it to the instructor immediately. Failure to report academic dishonesty is viewed as an act of complicity, which, in and of itself will be viewed as an act of academic dishonesty.

Under no circumstances will any student in JLMC 201 be excused on the grounds that he or she did not read or understand this portion of the syllabus.

Bottom line: Do your own work. Be professional. Don’t cut any corners. If you are in doubt about anything, consult your teacher in advance. It is far, far better to arrange to be late on an assignment than to cut any corner, however small.

7. Other points about the class –

- a. The use of anonymous sources is discouraged, but may be used with prior approval from the teacher. The student will be expected to divulge the identity of the anonymous sources to the instructor.
- b. All assignments are to be considered FOR PUBLICATION...at least for POSSIBLE publication. NEVER give a source the impression that this is simply a class exercise.
- c. Under no circumstances is non-factual material to be represented in a story as factual. NEVER.
- d. Students must not misrepresent themselves to news sources. JLMC 201 students must not identify themselves as ISU Daily reporters...or even as working on a story assignment from the Daily – unless they are on a genuine assignment from the Daily. Note the difference between saying: “I am working on a story that will be submitted for possible publication” (Yes) and saying “I am working on a story for the Daily” (No) or “I am working on a story only for a class assignment” (No).
- e. Most of what you have read involves sanctions and punishments...But the fact is that we are here to help you develop your skills and talents. If you obey the ground rules involving respect, honesty, decency, and professionalism, and do your best, we will all benefit.
- f. Please keep in mind that the course works best when we follow a basic daily outline, but we are free to improvise. There will be days when we purposefully change plans, especially when we can substitute a live activity for a routine assignment.