**Lantern Freelance Course**

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Office hours: Monday-Friday, anytime not during class

**COURSE DESCRIPTION**

In this course, you will help fill *The Lantern* and its website with professional-quality Arts, Campus and Sports stories. Some of you also will write columns for the Student Voice section, and or perhaps work as copy editors. Regardless of your major or prior training, you will build on the fundamental writing, editing, researching and reporting skills you have acquired inside and outside of classrooms and use them to cover the OSU campus, not just the buildings you visit for class or social activities. You will need to talk to people (NOT JUST E-MAIL THEM), get outside your comfort zone, become an instant expert on numerous topics (sometimes many at one time) and MEET DEADLINES. The mandate is to write clear, concise, organized and accurate news stories. Depending on the number of credit hours you sign up for, you should have 6-15 solid pieces of published work by the time the class is over. Most of you will have far more than that.  
  
You will be writing/editing something, probably many things, every week. You must work 1-3 hours per week in The Lantern newsroom. During those times, which fall between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m. Monday-Friday, you will be the first option to cover breaking news. But there is no “down” time. You will be expected to conduct research and interviews for feature stories and other Lantern coverage needs as determined by Lantern editors and advisers.   
  
**COURSE GOALS**

By the time this class is over, you will have written/produced a variety of news stories for *The Lantern*. You will understand how the media work and how much time and energy go into producing solid journalism. You also will have more “multimedia” experience and the ability to produce content beyond words on a page. In short, you will know what it’s like to be a working journalist.

**REQUIRED READING**

*Associated Press Stylebook and Briefing on Media Law* (2010 preferred); available at local bookstores  
Other assignments will be available online.  
All readings should be done prior to the assigned class period.

**RECOMMENDED READINGS**

Bender et al; *Reporting for the Media* (9th edition); Oxford Press  
Kessler, Lauren, Duncan McDonald, *When Words Collide: A Media Writer’s Guide to Grammar and Style*, (Thomson Wadsworth, Boston, 7th edition)  
Workbook for Kessler, Lauren, Duncan McDonald, When Words Collide: A Media Writer’s Guide to Grammar and Style, (Thomson Wadsworth, Boston, 7th edition)  
  
To best prepare for this class, read the online versions of *The Washington Post*, *NY Times*, *USA Today*, *Columbus Dispatch*, CNN, Fox News and *The Lantern*. Other great journalism resources include *The Poynter Institute* and *Columbia Journalism* *Review.* Read as much as you can from as many different sources as you can. The more you read, the better you’ll report and write.

**GRADING CRITERIA (Satisfactory/Unsatisfactory)**

80% YOUR ARTICLES AND OTHER CONTENT FOR THE LANTERN   
10% Multimedia training session/assignment

10% Attendance/Participation/Editor feedback on your work  
  
  
**MULTIMEDIA TRAINING/ASSIGNMENT**

You must attend a training session with Lantern Multimedia Editors about how to properly use video cameras, etc., and then shoot, capture and edit something for the website.

**WRITTEN ASSIGNMENTS:**    
All assignments should be typed, double-spaced and turned in to me at the same time they are submitted to your editors for publication. I will explain the filing process in class. ALL ASSIGNMENTS MUST INCLUDE A CONTACT LIST WITH PHONE NUMBERS AND E-MAIL ADDRESSES FROM YOUR SOURCES. I WILL CONTACT SOME OF THESE SOURCES THROUGHOUT THE QUARTER. Maintaining a source file is a great way to report a beat and to help your colleagues find sources on tight deadlines. *The Lantern* also has a central source file that you will be able to access. No handwritten stories will be accepted. Please keep a file of your work so that you can look back at your old assignments and get an idea of progress you're making and areas you need to improve. Please bring that portfolio of your work whenever you meet with me to discuss progress.   
  
**MULTIMEDIA ASPECTS OF STORIES**

Whether you pitch a story or are assigned one, you MUST coordinate with the PHOTO, GRAPHICS and MULTIMEDIA editors/desks and suggest ways the words can be enhanced with images. This is the reporter’s responsibility for every story. Most stories can be greatly improved if they run with a photo, graphic, or other image. For *The Lantern*’s website, the value of digital audio, video and photographs cannot be overstated. If you shoot photos or video, prepare a graphic or otherwise aid the Multimedia aspect of an assignment, you may be given credit for more than 1 story and/or extra credit toward your grade on that product.

**STORY PITCHES**

All freelancers must submit at least 1 story pitch per week to The Lantern’s Managing Editor for Content and to me. These pitches are more than just “ideas.” A pitch includes an idea, a plan of action (including potential interview and other sources), and a proposed deadline. The format for these pitches includes: Slug, Summary, Possible Contacts, Ideal reporter/Lantern personnel involved, Graphic, video and photo suggestions.

**Requirements by credit hour**

A 1-credit hour freelancer can expect to spend at least 1 hour per week physically in the newsroom, at least 1 hour per week working on pitches outside the newsroom, and about 2-3 hours per week on various assignments. The expectation would be the equivalent of at least 6 stories over the course of a semester.

A 2-credit hour freelancer can expect to spend at least 2 hours per week physically in the newsroom, at least 2 hours per week working on pitches outside the newsroom, and about 4-5 hours per week on various assignments. The expectation would be the equivalent of at least 10 stories over the course of a semester.

A 3-credit hour freelancer can expect to spend at least 3 hours per week physically in the newsroom, at least 2 hours per week working on pitches outside the newsroom, and 8-10 hours per week on various assignments. This would be the equivalent of working an internship at a news organization. The expectation would be the equivalent of at least 15 stories over the course of a semester.

**RULES FOR STORIES**  
All stories that count toward your grade should have at least 3 human sources.

**MORE RULES FOR STORIES**

1. Do not use friends, roommates, relatives, etc., as sources for your stories, photographs, graphics etc. This could cause a conflict of interest or the appearance of a conflict.
2. Do not write about any activities, organizations, projects, companies, etc. that you are involved in. This also could present a conflict of interest or the appearance of a conflict.
3. ALL STORIES MUST INCLUDE SUGGESTED HEADLINES.
4. ALL STORIES MUST INCLUDE CONTACT INFO FOR THE REPORTER(S) (INCLUDING CELL PHONE) IN CASE EDITORS HAVE QUESTIONS.
5. ***Late Slip System--*** If you turn in an assignment late or neglect to put in a photo or graphics assignment, your editor may submit a LATE SLIP. That will affect your grade. You must keep your editors up to date on the progress of stories and let them know if there is a problem. Copy editors must inform the Copy Chief if they are going to be late for a shift.
6. **Extra credit:** If you do extra stories, you will get extra credit. You also can get extra credit if you: alert the newsroom to a breaking news story; hustle on breaking news; come up with a great story tip or idea; help when help is needed. Other extra credit possibilities include: doing a story without using the Internet; a reported memoir; “Gonzo” journalism where you are part of the story.
7. **STORIES DONE FOR CREDIT/GRADE IN THE LANTERN CLASSES CANNOT BE USED FOR CREDIT IN ANY OTHER CLASS.** **THIS IS CHEATING AND WILL BE REPORTED.**

**Copy editing**

* If you want to be a copy editor, you’ll have to take a copy-editing test. If selected, you will work about 2-8 hours per week ( 2-hour shifts).

For all assignments, points will be deducted using the following system:  
Errors in fact: 15 points  
Misspelled names: 15 points  
Missed ledes: 5 points  
Unclear writing: 5 points  
Grammatical errors: 5 points  
Misspelled words: 5 points  
Punctuation and style errors: 1 point

**ATTENDANCE AND PARTICIPATION**  
Attendance and participation are required.  To be successful in this class, you need to participate. That means asking questions, offering respectful opinions on story ideas discussed in the newsroom, and suggesting helpful edits in small groups and to the class as a whole. Good newsrooms thrive on the collegial interaction between reporters, editors and increasingly, their audience. Our class will do the same. Points will be deducted for anyone making disrespectful comments about another person or idea. Don't surf the Internet, play computer games or send non-course e-mail during class. Points also will be deducted from your participation grade if you are observed doing these things.   
  
ALL STUDENTS MUST MEET WITH ME AT LEAST ONCE OUTSIDE OF CLASS TO DISCUSS YOUR PROGRESS, FEATURE PROJECTS OR ANYTHING ELSE ON YOUR MIND. IF OFFICE HOURS DON’T WORK, IT IS YOUR RESPONSIBILITY TO SET UP A MEETING WITH ME AT ANOTHER TIME!

ALL STUDENTS ALSO MUST MEET WITH THE LANTERN’S MANAGING EDITOR FOR CONTENT PERIODICALLY THROUGHOUT THE COURSE TO GET PERSONAL FEEDBACK ON YOUR STORY PITCHES AND COMPLETED ARTICLES. IT IS YOUR RESPONSIBILITY TO MAKE THESE MEETINGS HAPPEN!

If you fail to meet with me at least once during office hours or by appointment as outlined above, your participation grade will be lowered by a full letter grade.  
  
**EXTRA CREDIT**  
I LOVE EXTRA CREDIT because it requires EXTRA EFFORT. There will be ample opportunities for anyone who wants to do EC assignments.

***CORRECTIONS: If you write a story that requires a correction in print or online, you MUST come discuss it with me in-person and “audit” how the error(s) occurred.***

**HOW TO SUCCEED IN THIS CLASS:**  
Be on time.  
Have your homework completed and ready to turn in.  
Read *The Lantern* and the other news organizations' Web sites noted earlier. Listen to at least one news broadcast every day.  
Follow me on Twitter.  
Read the class blog.  
Ask questions when you don't understand something.  
Express yourself when you do understand something.  
Bring all tools of the trade to every class; books, writing utensils, a notebook, digital recorder, batteries, etc.  
Spell check.  
Don't just spell check...PROOFREAD and SELF EDIT!  
Reading stories aloud can be a great exercise. If you stumble over a sentence or paragraph, chances are it can be simplified and improved.  
MEET YOUR DEADLINES!!  
KEEP IT SIMPLE!!

**POLICIES AND PROCEDURES**

# DEADLINES

The importance of deadlines cannot be stressed enough. If the deadline for an assignment is Tuesday at 1 p.m., that means the copy must be filed to your editor and me by Tuesday at 1 p.m. Leave enough time to ruthlessly edit and proofread your work. Self-editing is a skill many journalists (and writers in general) fail to maintain over the course of a quarter...or a career.  
  
**MISSED/LATE ASSIGNMENTS/STUDENT ABSENCES**   
Excused absences are rare and include emergency situations beyond your control (i.e., an urgent medical condition).  In the unusual case of an emergency, it is your responsibility to inform me prior to class or as soon as possible after class to let me know about your absence.  You also will need to provide official written documentation for the absence (e.g., a note from a doctor).  Non-emergency excused absences may include university-sponsored activities (e.g., required travel for sporting events).  Excuses for these kinds of absences must be presented in advance of the absence.  No excuses or documentation will be accepted more than one week after the absence.    
  
Please contact me via e-mail, or by phone, as far in advance as possible if you know you will be late or absent. Unless I respond to you before that class starts, the absence will be considered unexcused. Nothing will be accepted more than one class late unless extreme circumstances are involved and documented, i.e. you are in the hospital.  
  
**IF YOU NEED AN EXTENSION, ASK FOR IT EARLY AND HAVE A VERY GOOD REASON.**

**Tentative Nature of this Syllabus**  
This syllabus represents a contract in the works. Events that transpire over the quarter may require me to modify the administration of the course and therefore the syllabus. In the event that I need to modify the syllabus, I will announce the modification in class, via e-mail and/or on the class blog and my Twitter feed. It is your responsibility to keep up with any such modifications and be aware of current policies, deadlines, etc.  
  
**ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT**:  For journalists, being honest and ethical is fundamental. Academic misconduct, such as plagiarism or fabrication, will not be tolerated. The Ohio State University’s *Code of Student Conduct* (Section 3335-23-04) defines academic misconduct as:  “Any activity that tends to compromise the academic integrity of the University, or subvert the educational process,” Examples of academic misconduct include (but are not limited to) plagiarism, collusion (unauthorized collaboration), copying the work of another student, and possession of unauthorized materials during an examination.  Ignorance of the University’s *Code of Student Conduct* is never considered an excuse for academic misconduct, so I recommend that you review the *Code of Student Conduct* and, specifically, the sections dealing with academic misconduct at <http://studentaffairs.osu.edu/resource_csc.asp>.    
  
If I suspect that a student has committed academic misconduct in this course, I am obligated by University Rules to report my suspicions to the Committee on Academic Misconduct (COAM).  If COAM determines that you have violated the University’s *Code of Student Conduct*, the sanctions for the misconduct could include a failing grade in this course and suspension or dismissal from the University.  If you have any questions about this policy or what constitutes academic misconduct, please contact the instructor or visit the COAM web page at <http://oaa.osu.edu/coam/home.html>.    
  
**STATEMENT ABOUT DISABILITY SERVICES**:  Students with disabilities that have been certified by the Office for Disability Services will be appropriately accommodated, and should inform the instructor as soon as possible of their needs. The Office for Disability Services is located in 150 Pomerene Hall, 1760 Neil Avenue; telephone 292-3307, TDD 292-0901; http://www.ods.ohio-state.edu