

COMM 422: News Media Presentation

Autumn 2010

Monday/Wednesday 9:30 am - 11:18 pm JR 270

Tuesday/Thursday 9:30 am - 11:18 pm JR 342

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Office hours: M/W, 12-2 p.m.; T/TH, 2-5 p.m., and by appointment

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Writers write and editors edit, right? Halfway there. Writers also edit and editors also write. A journalism organization can't have one without the other and be successful. And in the multimedia world, editing is more than cleaning up bad grammar, writing better headlines and suggesting new ledes. It can mean offering advice on the best audio or video clip to run online, or suggesting a better layout and links for a blog or other Web site. In this class, you will write and you will edit. A lot. You will edit your own work, your classmates' work, and perhaps my work.

The purpose of this course is to teach you the basics of story writing, editing and presentation in a multimedia world. That means focusing on grammar, punctuation and style; storytelling and editing in various platforms; and packaging news for print and online audiences. We'll also discuss social media, the advantages and pitfalls in a newsroom environment, as well as pitching stories to your editors or as a freelancer.

COURSE GOALS

By the time this course is over, you should be able to walk into a professional newsroom and contribute as an editor from your first day on the job! That means the ability to report, write and produce high-quality journalism in whatever form is required.

REQUIRED READINGS

Associated Press Stylebook and Briefing on Media Law (2009 preferred); available at local bookstores

Other assignments will be available online or on hold at the library.

All readings should be done prior to the assigned class period.

RECOMMENDED READINGS

Bowles, D., & Borden, D. (2007). *Creative Editing* (5th edition). Thomson/Wadsworth.

Stovall, J. G., & Mullins, E. (2006). *The Complete Editor* (2nd edition). Allyn and Bacon.

To best prepare for this class and those news quizzes, read the online versions of *The Washington Post*, *NY Times*, *USA Today*, *Columbus Post-Dispatch*, CNN, Fox News and *The Lantern* every day. Other great journalism resources include *The Poynter Institute*, *Columbia Journalism Review* and *Editor and Publisher* magazine. Read as much as you can from as many different sources as you can. The more you read, the better you'll report, write and edit.

GRADING CRITERIA

10% Weather story
10% Profile story
15% Speech story
25% Final Project
20% Midterm
5% News/AP Style quizzes
5% Participation
10% Blog

Letter Grades will be assigned on following point system:

A: 94-100
A-: 90-93
B+: 87-89
B: 84-86
B-: 80-83
C+: 77-79
C: 74-76
C-: 70-73
D+: 67-69
D: 60-66
E: below 50-59

MIDTERM

There will be one midterm exam. It will cover everything that has occurred in class from lectures to news and AP Style quizzes to readings and other assignments. The format will include multiple-choice questions, short answers, editing exercises and an essay. If you know that you will not be in class on the day of the exam (due to an excused absence), let me know as far in advance as possible and a make-up exam can be given early but no more than a week later. If you miss the exam due to unexcused absence, you will receive a 0.

WRITTEN ASSIGNMENTS:

All assignments should be typed, double-spaced and TWO COPIES turned in at the beginning of class. ALL OUTSIDE CLASS ASSIGNMENTS MUST INCLUDE A CONTACT LIST WITH PHONE NUMBERS AND E-MAILS FROM YOUR SOURCES. I WILL CONTACT SOME OF THESE SOURCES THROUGHOUT THE SEMESTER 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.

WEATHER, PROFILE and EVENT STORIES/EDITS/REWRITES

The subjects of these stories early will be determined by you, but must be approved by me. They are designed to show your progress as a writer and editor throughout the quarter. For each assignment, you will write a story that will be edited by me...and at least one of your classmates. That means you will be the editor (and writer) every time. As a writer, I encourage you to be creative, but **KEEP IT SIMPLE**. As an editor, I encourage you to be respectful, full of suggestions and meticulous in your reviews of everything from word choice to sentence structure to source selection and organization. You will edit some assignments on a tight deadline, others over a longer period of time. The best way to become comfortable editing other people's work is to be ruthless when editing your own. The best writers are the best self-editors!

The Weather story must be 500-600 words; the Profile story 700-800 words; and the Event story 900-1,000 words. You will be graded not only on your writing and multimedia production, but also on your editing of your classmate's work. Since you will be turning in two copies of every assignment, I'll be able to see what you contributed to the assignment as both a writer and editor.

Good writing means re-writing, often many times. That is why you'll rewrite all of your stories at least once. Rewrites mean more than simply fixing errors in punctuation or grammar. They often entail more reporting and can mean a complete revamp of the original piece. The goal is for the finished products to merit a spot in *The Lantern* or other media outlet. Your final grade on each of these assignments will be based on the original story (40 percent), the edit of your classmate's work (10 percent), and the re-write (50 percent).

FEATURE/FINAL PROJECT

The topic is up to you, but must be approved by me by Feb. 9. Choose one of the following:

- 1200-word print feature, but must include some multimedia element like photos, graphics, audio, video, etc., and at least 6 sources, 4 of which require phone or in-person interviews;
- Produce a 3-minute audio or video broadcast, complete with script;
- Combine the media in a roughly 600-word story paired with 90-second broadcast, audio or video.

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

NEWS QUIZZES

The news quizzes will be multiple choice and short answer, drawn from the news sources recommended. I **STRONGLY** urge you to at least skim those various news Web sites at least

once a day. AP Style quizzes will be in the same format and based on specified sections of that text.

BLOGS

Each student will create a blog and refine it throughout the quarter. The blogs will be a chance for you to link to articles/sites from other media that produced weather, profile and other stories similar to yours. You will need to praise or critique those other stories, where appropriate. You may also be asked to post all or part of your story re-writes on your blog, or to do short entries that include information and sources that did not make it into the final articles. As the quarter progresses, your blog should be enhanced with crisper writing as well as with photos, video, audio clips and anything else you feel showcases the progress you are making as a journalist. The style on these blogs can be a bit different than your print stories to reflect breaking news, opinions and other nuances of writing for the Web. That being said, **ACCURACY AND FAIRNESS SHOULD NEVER BE SACRIFICED.**

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 "422 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! 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

There will be many opportunities for anyone who wants to do Extra Credit assignments.

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.

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.

POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

DEADLINES

The importance of deadlines cannot be stressed enough. If the deadline for an assignment is 1 p.m., that means the copy must be in my hand by 11 a.m. Leave enough time to print 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.

In-class assignments, such as news and AP Style quizzes, missed for an unexcused absence may not be made up and will mean an automatic 0 for those assignments. Homework assignments not submitted because of an unexcused absence may be turned in late, but will be marked down a minimum of one letter grade. 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.

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>.

NOTE CONCERNING ATTENDANCE WHILE HAVING FLU-LIKE SYMPTOMS:

Students should NOT attend class while ill with influenza. Students with flu symptoms will be asked to leave class. The illness and self-isolation period will usually be about a week. It is very important that individuals avoid spreading the flu to others.

Most students should be able to complete a successful quarter despite a flu-induced absence. If you are absent due to the flu, you will be provided with a reasonable opportunity to make up missed work. Completion of all assignments and exams assures the greatest chance for students to develop heightened understanding and content mastery that is unavailable through the weighting process. The opportunity to complete all assignments and exams supports the university's desire to enable students to make responsible situational decisions, including the decision to avoid spreading a contagious virus to other students, staff, and faculty, without endangering their academic work.

Students with the flu do not need to provide me with a physician's certification of illness. However, ill students should inform me (but not through personal contact in which there is a risk of exposing others to the virus) as soon as possible that they are absent because of the flu.

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>

**COMM 422: MEDIA PRESENTATION
DAILY SCHEDULE**

WEEK	DATE	TOPIC	READINGS/EXERCISES	WHAT'S DUE
1	T 1/5	Introduction to Class	Review syllabus.	Send me a 300-word e-mail detailing your writing/editing strengths and weaknesses. Honesty is appreciated.
	Th 1/7	Do you have a nose for news? The importance of news judgment and how stories can evolve minute-by-minute and day-by-day in 24/7 news cycle.	In-class editing. Using news judgment and editing on deadline. News quiz.	Weather story assigned. Study for AP Style quiz #1.
2	T 1/12	There are many right (and wrong) ways to cover the news. Editing is key.	Compare/contrast how 2 different news organization from daily reading list handled same print story. AP Style quiz. News quiz.	Weather story outline.
	Th 1/14	How news breaks in the age of Twitter: Can you keep up?	Editing weather stories. News quiz.	Weather story due. Study for AP Style quiz #2.
3	T 1/19	Writing/producing a profile, why it's important long after the story is done. Source-building no matter what your preferred medium is	Read a profile and critique it individually and as a group. AP Style quiz. News quiz.	Prepare list of possible profile subjects. Bring a profile to discuss for next class.
	Th 1/21	What makes for a good interview? Getting beyond the "canned quotes" in writing and editing.	In-class interviewing drills. News quiz.	Study for AP Style quiz #3. Profile outline.
4	T 1/26	Possible guest speaker who works in modern newsroom.	AP Style quiz. News quiz. Editing profiles.	Profile story due.
	Th 1/28	The news conference...cutting to the chase, and cutting what is not needed from lazy coverage.	Be prepared to cover a news conference in class and file/edit on deadline.	Prepare for discussion on a blog that attempted to cover an event on deadline. What worked and what didn't?
5	T 2/2	Writing and editing for the Web. Speed counts, but not if you're wrong.	Discussion/critiques of blogs. In-class editing of professional work. News quiz.	Find an event to cover and submit for approval. Weather re-write due.
	Th 2/4	Editing broadcasts. How to fit all that news in 30 minutes...or 30 seconds.	Everyone will create a blog in class that will be enhanced throughout the rest of the semester.	Prep for broadcast story.
6	T 2/9	In-class broadcasts.	Read 2-minute broadcast in front of the class; must include a short editorial at the end on a topic of your choosing and news from at least 4 of the following areas: politics, sports, entertainment, weather, crime, health, international affairs. You may also prep a 2-minute digital video that we can watch, but permission for that is needed in advance. Everyone must turn in	Deadline for approval of Feature project idea. Study for Final AP Style quiz.

			scripts.	
	Th 2/11	Possible guest speaker on online/broadcast writing.	Final AP Style quiz. News quiz.	Profile re-write due.
7	T 2/16	What have we learned so far?	The 422 newsroom midway meeting. Edit event stories. Midterm review	Event story due...Study for midterm
	Th 2/18	Midterm	Midterm	Prep for social media discussion. Reading TBD.
8	T 2/23	Social media and what you need to know and demand as an editor.	Find examples of social media influence on “traditional” journalism outlets/stories. How Facebook, MySpace, etc. are changing the news via self-promotion, source building, etc. In-class editing of professional work.	Detailed outline of Final project due
	Th 2/25	Wrap it up in a bow: Packaging stories in a 24/7 global news cycle. How can a static print piece can come to life online? How can Web sites help drive eyeballs to ink on paper?	Compare and contrast stories written by two professional outlets. Strengths, weaknesses of each story from ledes to sources to news judgment to packaging with photos, audio, video, etc.	Event rewrite due.
9	T 3/2	Ethics in the Digital Age. What is off the record? Is there anything that can't be tweeted? (President Obama and Kanye West probably have some strong opinions!) Does anyone really talk in person anymore?	Second meeting of the 422 newsroom. News quiz.	Ethics critique assigned. Ethics reading TBD.
	Th 3-4	Possible guest speaker.	In-class editing/ethics review. News quiz.	Ethics critique due.
10	T 3/9	More on ethics. Are there different rules in print, broadcast and online?	News quiz. Work on blogs. Last-minute brainstorming on feature projects.	Any and all extra credit assignments due.
	Th 3/11	Why editing matters and always will...in and out of the newsroom.	Last meeting of the 422 newsroom.	Final project/edit due.
FINALS WEEK				