NEWS WRITING & REPORTING I
10824 MCOM 1243 News Writing & Reporting I TR 0930am 1050am FA B124
10833 MCOM 1243 News Writing & Reporting I Lab W 0200pm 0350pm FA B124

• TWITTER HASHTAG: #MCOM1243

COURSE DESCRIPTION
Prerequisite: Cannot be enrolled concurrently with MCOM 3313.
A workshop course focusing on news reporting and writing techniques used in both traditional print media and Internet publishing. Students will be introduced to the basics of accuracy, clarity, word choice, journalistic style, story structure, and deadlines. Coverage of on-campus news events is supplemented by deadline writing exercises in a classroom laboratory.

COURSE OBJECTIVES
To introduce you to journalistic writing and principles of good journalism. Upon successful completion of the class you should be able:

1. To apply a news sense to finding stories and sources;
2. To have the ability to write a news story whether for a public relations entity, a marketing entity or a news media outlet for both print and online;
3. To apply social media skills to news writing;
4. To evaluate a news story based on criteria established in class including, but not limited to, news value, readability, grammar, spelling and punctuation;
5. To know and apply Associated Press style to ensure consistency;
6. To possess the ability to conduct an interview and gather information;
7. To make decisions based on ethical, legal, technical and journalistic criteria;
8. To understand basics of covering general news, spot news, meetings and speeches; and
9. To work successfully under deadline pressure.

TEXTBOOK
The Associated Press Stylebook and Libel Manual (recent edition), $20.95
Or online version http://apstylebook.com/, $26/year

GRADING
50% Three major stories
20% In-class assignments (including participation, attendance, quizzes, other stories)
15% Mid-term exam
15% Final exam

Notes:
• Unless otherwise indicated, material is due at the beginning of class. Late work receives a grade of zero.
• Any story submitted with a name misspelled in a final draft receives a grade of zero.
• You may not submit a story that has been (or will be) submitted for a grade in any other class unless you obtain my explicit written permission.
TENTATIVE SCHEDULE
Aug. 25 ..........Classes begin
Aug. 27-29 ...Change of Schedule or Late Registration
Aug. 28 ..........Introduction, class format, review fundamentals of news, news criteria
Aug. 29 ..........Lab: Scavenger Hunt
Aug. 30 ..........Fundamentals of reporting, using social media as reporters, FOI
Sept. 3 ..........Labor Day (no class)
Sept. 4 ..........Interviewing skills and attribution
Sept. 5 ..........Lab: Classmate profile, story angles/ideas
Sept. 6 ..........Story ideas; the story process
Sept. 11 ..........Writing photo captions like mini news stories
Sept. 12 ..........Lab: Caption competition, peer editing of story drafts
Sept. 13 ..........Lead writing
Sept. 18 ..........AP style
Sept. 19 ..........Lab: AP style, leads, work on stories
Sept. 20 ..........AP style and leads critique
Sept. 25 ..........The English language, a review of common problems including passive voice
Sept. 26 ..........Lab: Major story 1 due at end of lab
Sept. 27 ..........Covering science and tech; generate five science and tech story ideas
Oct. 1 ..........Deadline for December graduates to file for graduation
Oct. 3 ..........Lab: story angles/ideas
Oct. 4 ..........Covering spot news; working with police, fire, EMS; the crime beat
Oct. 9 ..........Covering business and economics
Oct. 10 ..........Lab: peer editing of stories
Oct. 11 ..........Math for journalists
Oct. 16 ..........Writing brights
Oct. 17 ..........Lab: Mid-term, work on stories
Oct. 18 ..........Speech brief due; review
Oct. 23 ..........Working with PR folks; writing a press release
Oct. 24 ..........Lab: Major story 2 due at end of lab
Oct. 25 ..........Critique press releases
Oct. 30 ..........Covering politics and politicians
Oct. 31 ..........Lab: Work on stories
Nov. 1 ..........NO CLASS; work on election story
Nov. 6 ..........National election; work on election stories
Nov. 7 ..........Lab: Election stories due; critique election stories
Nov. 8 ..........Writing / editing exercise
Nov. 13 ..........Writing sports
Nov. 14 ..........Lab: Work on stories
Nov. 15 ..........NO CLASS
Nov. 20 ..........Sports brief due; critique; quiz
Nov. 21 ..........Lab: NO LAB
Nov. 22 ..........NO CLASS
Nov. 27 ..........Writing / editing exercise
Nov. 28 ..........Lab: Major story 3 due at end of lab
Nov. 29 ..........Critique stories
Dec. 5 ..........Lab: Ethical dilemmas
Dec. 6 ..........Review
Dec. 7 ..........Last day of classes
Dec. 11 ..........Final exam (Tuesday, Dec. 11, 8 a.m.)
INSTRUCTOR: BRADLEY WILSON, PHD

Dr. Wilson is the director of student media and an assistant professor at Midwestern State University. He is the editor of the publications for the national Journalism Education Association and active in local and regional associations to improve the quality of journalism education. He is a frequent speaker at workshops worldwide on topics ranging from the ethics of digital photography to design of publications online and in print.

Publications he advised at North Carolina State University for a decade, including a yearbook, a daily newspaper, a literary magazine, a 25,000-watt radio station and video outlet won numerous awards including six Gold Crown awards from the Columbia Scholastic Press Association (four for yearbook and two for literary magazine) and nine Pacemaker from the Associated Collegiate Press (four for yearbook and five for literary magazine).

He has received the Gold Key from the Columbia Scholastic Press Association, the Pioneer Award from the National Scholastic Press Association, the Medal of Merit from the Journalism Education Association, the Star of Texas from the Association of Texas Photography Instructors and the Trailblazer Award from the Texas Association of Journalism Educators. In 2006, JEA awarded Wilson its highest honor, the Carl Towley Award.

He worked for more than 20 years as an emergency medical technician – intermediate, the last 11 of them at Cary Area EMS where he was awarded that organization’s highest honor, Squadsperson of the Year, and life membership. He plays euphonium and other low-brass instruments and has been active in numerous community bands.

THOUGHTS TO LIVE BY

Lack of planning on your part does not constitute an emergency on my part | Good publications are never finished; you only run out of time | Don’t think in terms of filling space or time. Think in terms of providing information. | Web first. Then print. But being first is not as important as being accurate | Don’t forget your primary audience. With every story you tell, remember who you’re working for. | It’s the students, stupid | Question authority.
STATEMENTS

As the instructor of record for this course, I reserve the right to change any part of this syllabus for any reason. The most current version of the syllabus will be maintained online. I reserve the right to drop — with an F — any students who have excessive absences, who miss assignments, who engage in disruptive behavior, have a poor attitude or who are not taking the class seriously.

WRITING PROFICIENCY

All students seeking a bachelor’s degree from Midwestern State University must satisfy a writing proficiency requirement once they’ve 1) passed English 1113 and English 1123 and 2) earned 60 hours. You may meet this requirement by passing either the Writing Proficiency Exam or English 2113. Please keep in mind that, once you’ve earned more than 90 hours, you lose the opportunity to take the $25 exam and have no option but to enroll in the three-credit hour course. If you have any questions about the exam, visit the Writing Proficiency Office website at http://academics.mwsu.edu/wpr.

ACADEMIC DISHONESTY

Neither plagiarism, the use of someone else’s thoughts, words, ideas, or lines of argument in your own work without appropriate documentation, nor copyright violation in any form will be tolerated whether intentional or not. Both plagiarism and copyright violation involve the theft of intellectual property and will be considered not only a violation of the Student Honor Creed as well as University policy and applicable laws. To avoid any instances of plagiarism or copyright violation, credit the sources of all information appropriately and obtain written permission for the use of copyrighted works when necessary.

Cheating and collusion are also unacceptable. Cheating includes, but is not limited to: (1) use of any unauthorized assistance in taking quizzes, tests, or examinations; (2) dependence upon the aid of sources beyond those authorized by the instructor in writing papers, preparing reports, solving problems, or carrying out other assignments; or (3) the acquisition, without permission, of tests or other academic material belonging to a member of the university faculty or staff. The term “plagiarism” includes, but is not limited to, the use, by paraphrase or direct quotation, of the published or unpublished work of another person without full and clear acknowledgment. It also includes the unacknowledged use of materials prepared by another person or agency engaged in the selling of term papers or other academic materials. The term “collusion” means collaboration with another person in preparing work offered for credit of that collaboration is not authorized by the faculty member in charge.

STUDENT HONOR CREED

“As an MSU Student, I pledge not to lie, cheat, steal, or help anyone else do so.”

As students at MSU, we recognize that any great society must be composed of empowered, responsible citizens. We also recognize universities play an important role in helping mold these responsible citizens. We believe students themselves play an important part in developing responsible citizenship by maintaining a community where integrity and honorable character are the norm, not the exception. Thus, We, the Students of Midwestern State University, resolve to uphold the honor of the University by affirming our commitment to complete academic honesty. We resolve not only to be honest but also to hold our peers accountable for complete honesty in all university matters. We consider it dishonest to ask for, give, or receive help in examinations or quizzes, to use any unauthorized material in examinations, or to present, as one’s own, work or ideas which are not entirely one’s own. We recognize that any instructor has the right to expect that all student work is honest, original work. We accept and acknowledge that responsibility for lying, cheating, stealing, plagiarism, and other forms of academic dishonesty fundamentally rests within each individual student. We expect of ourselves academic integrity, personal professionalism, and ethical character. We appreciate steps taken by University officials to protect the honor of the University against any who would disgrace the MSU student body by violating the spirit of this creed. Written and adopted by the 2002-2003 MSU Student Senate.

STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES / SPECIAL NEEDS

The Americans with Disabilities Act is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you believe you have a disability requiring an accommodation, please contact the Disability Support Services in Room 168 of the Clark Student Center; 397-4140.

Students that need course adaptations or accommodations because of a disability, that need to share emergency medical information, or students that require special accommodations in the event of an emergency should contact Dr. Wilson as soon as practical.

STUDENT PRIVACY STATEMENT

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act prohibits me from releasing information about students to certain parties outside of the university without the signed consent of the student. Thus, in almost all cases I will not discuss your academic progress or other...
matters with your parents or any other party. Please do not have them call me. Regardless of these important legal considerations, it is my general policy to communicate with the students, not their parents, even when a student has signed a consent form. For more information on FERPA, visit http://www.ed.gov/policy/gen/guid/fpco/ferpa/

STUDENT CONDUCT

Classroom behavior that interferes with either the instructor’s ability to conduct the class or the ability of other students to profit from the instruction will result in the removal of that student from class. Such students may be referred to the appropriate university departments including, but not limited to, the University Police, Office of the Dean of Students, Vinson Health Center or the Counseling Center.

Moreover, social justice is one of Midwestern State University’s stated core values. The professor considers this classroom to be a place where everyone will be treated with respect as a human being — regardless of gender, race, ethnicity, national origin, religious affiliation, sexual orientation, political beliefs, age, or ability. Additionally, diversity of thought is appreciated and encouraged, provided you can agree to disagree. It is the professor’s expectation that ALL students consider the classroom a safe environment.

ATTENDANCE

Students are expected to be in class each and every time the class meets. Students will not be able to make up unannounced quizzes given in classes they miss. E-mail Dr. Wilson prior to the absence as a courtesy. Students are responsible for making up any work missed on their own time, working with classmates.

If you need to miss class due to University-sponsored events such as field trips or athletics, please see me as far in advance as possible. You will be required to complete the assigned work on or before the due date, and you will be required to submit an official form from the University before your absence.

Students with excused absences — as determined by the Office of the Dean of Students or other appropriate University departments — may make up major exams on a schedule mutually agreeable with the instructor and the student. Projects and stories with advance deadlines will not be accepted late. Plan ahead.

Any student can be dropped from the class after the fourth absence in accordance with University policy.

GRADING

Grading is on a scale of:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Score</th>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>≥90</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>Excellent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>80-89</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>Good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70-79</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>Satisfactory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60-69</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>Passing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&lt;60</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Failing</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Semester grading follows the same scale. Grading will be determined from specific assignments, projects, written exams, quizzes, a final exam, and class attendance. Take home assignments are due when announced and will not be accepted late. Any assignment turned in after the deadline receives a grade of zero. Written exams will include material covered in the class and may include, but may not be limited to, multiple choice, short answer, and essay questions.

The instructor reserves the right to add, adjust, or cancel assignments as the course progresses. The method of obtaining the final grade will remain essentially the same: the total points achieved will be divided by the total points possible to obtain a percentage, and a grade will be assigned according to a percentage scale.