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
45% Three major stories
15% Minor stories
15% In-class assignments (including participation, attendance, quizzes, other stories)
10% 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.
• ANY story (and ALL stories) you write for this class should be considered publishable material and may be submitted to local news media, including Campus Watch and The Wichitan, for publication. When published, submit the timely Tweet and the published version to me for additional credit.
TENTATIVE SCHEDULE
This schedule may change with little or no notice.

Jan. 14........Lab: Scavenger Hunt; classes begin
Jan. 15........Introduction, class format, review fundamentals of news, news criteria
Jan. 17........Fundamentals of reporting, interviewing fundamentals
Jan. 21........NO CLASS (Martin Luther King, Jr. Day)
Jan. 22........Interviewing skills and attribution
Jan. 24........Story ideas; the story process
Jan. 28........Lab: Classmate profile, story angles/ideas
Jan. 29........Writing photo captions like mini news stories
Jan. 31........Lead writing
Feb. 4.........Lab: Caption competition, peer editing of story drafts
Feb. 5.........Covering speech stories intro.; AP style (National Weatherman’s Day)
Feb. 7.........NO CLASS
Feb. 11........Lab: AP style, leads, work on stories, news brief due
Feb. 12........Alternative story forms
Feb. 14........The English language, a review of common problems including passive voice (Valentine’s Day)
Feb. 18........Lab: Major story 1 due at end of lab (President’s Day)
Feb. 19........Covering science and tech; generate five science and tech story ideas
Feb. 21........Editing. Evaluating. Review major stories: What did we learn?
Feb. 25........Lab: story angles/ideas, news/sports brief due
Feb. 26........Covering spot news; working with police, fire, EMS; the crime beat
Feb. 28........Covering spot news part II
March 4.......Lab: Mid-term, work on stories
March 5.......Covering business and economics
March 7.......Covering business and economics II
March 11-15 ...NO CLASS (Spring Break)
March 18.......Lab: peer editing of stories; speech brief due (last day to drop with a W)
March 19.......Math for journalists
March 21.......Working with PR folks; writing a press release
March 25.......Lab: Major story 2 due at end of lab
March 26.......Review PR; critique press releases
March 28.......NO CLASS (Easter break)
April 1.......Lab: Work on stories; press release due (April Fool’s Day)
April 2.......Writing sports
April 4 ........Writing sports II (TIPA conference)
April 8.......Lab: Work on stories
April 9.........Review: grammar, spelling, punctuation, style
April 11.......Investigative reporting: an introduction
April 15.......Lab: Work on stories; news/sports brief due (Income Tax Day)
April 16.......The legal side of news coverage, FOI
April 18.......Writing brights — the lighter side of news (National High Five Day)
April 22.......Lab: Major story 3 due at end of lab (Earth Day)
April 23.......Media law / ethics review. Credibility.
April 25.......NO CLASS
April 29.......Lab: Ethical dilemmas
April 30.......Media law / ethics review II
May 2.........Review
May 3.........Last day of classes
May 7.........Final exam, 1 -3 p.m.

Major story 1
Any genre

Major story 2
Business, economics or science feature

Major story 3
Sports feature

Minor stories include sports brief, news brief, speech story, press release, etc.
THE MAJOR STORY

DEADLINES:
Story 1: Feb. 18, 3:50 p.m.
Story 2: March 25, 3:50 p.m.
Story 3: April 22, 3:50 p.m.
“Late work receives a grade of zero.”

GRADING:
• Your stories will be graded based on news value (timeliness), readability, evidence of reporting, grammar, spelling, punctuation, style as well as ethical and legal criteria.
• Each story is worth about 17 percent of your final grade.
• Neither plagiarism nor copyright violation will be tolerated whether intentional or not. You must develop your own story idea/angle, do your own background research, conduct your own interviews (at least three), write your own stories and edit your own stories. Any other student in this class, any staff member of The Wichitan or the instructor may provide feedback at any level of the story development, but the story must be the sole work of the person completing it.
• 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.
• ANY story (and ALL stories) you write for this class should be considered publishable material and may be submitted to local news media, including Campus Watch and The Wichitan, for publication.

FORM:
• Your major stories should be at least 1,500 words in length and should take the form of a third-person news or feature story.
• Your target audience is the students of Midwestern State University in Wichita Falls, Texas.
• Print your story with 1.5 space between lines. Indent paragraphs one-half of an inch. Use Georgia at 11 pt. Flush left. (No, the font, size, spacing, etc. aren’t critical. But it sure makes it easy on the person doing the editing.)
• Make sure your name is at the top of every page and that every page has a page number on it.
• In addition to the final story, you must write a headline, a Tweet (of up to 140 characters), an excerpt (of up to 50 words) and an alternative story form sidebar. These should be at the top of your story. (See sample form on the back.)

PROCESS:
• Story idea
• Background research
• Develop story angle
• Reporting / interviewing
• Draft — just get words on paper
• Editing including fact checking, more reporting
• Rewrite
• Edit / Rewrite until (a) story is as good as it’s going to be; (b) you run out of time
HEADLINE:
This is a sample headline

TWEET:
Tease me. Make me want to read this story. 140 characters max. Don’t forget the hashtag #mcom1243.

EXCERPT:
Many online sites use an excerpt of a story in place of the actual story on the top pages just as broadcast anchors do at the beginning of a newscast. This excerpt serves to tease the reader. It also prevents the software from just pulling the first 50 words.

SIDEBAR:
Point / Counterpoint
• “Here is a direct quotation from someone about the topic.” | name, grade, major
• “Here is a counterpoint quotation from someone else.” | name, grade, major
• “Here is a direct quotation from someone about the topic.” | name, grade, major
• “Here is a counterpoint quotation from someone else.” | name, grade, major
• “Here is a direct quotation from someone about the topic.” | name, grade, major
• “Here is a counterpoint quotation from someone else.” | name, grade, major

Here is your story. Paragraphs are indented appropriately. You may, alternatively, just put a blank line between paragraphs. But don’t do both.

This is the font Georgia. It’s on all computers. Well, all computers with any common sense anyway. It’s also readable and not as boring as Times. I really don’t care what font you use, but if it’s not readable, you’ll suffer — as will all the people reading your story.

Before the deadline, anyone in this class and anyone on The Wichitan staff can read your story and provide input. Take advantage of this opportunity. In other words, don’t wait until the day the story is due to generate a final draft.

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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, Squadperson 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:
≥90   A Excellent
80-89  B Good
70-79  C Satisfactory
60-69  D Passing
<60   F Failing

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.