48J:071:02 – News Writing for Print Media
T, Th 12:30-1:45 p.m., Lang 213, University of Northern Iowa, Fall 2010

Instructor: Christopher Martin, Ph.D.
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Catalog Description
48J:071. News Writing for Print Media – 3 hrs. Principles and practice of writing, editing, and compiling news for the print media. Prerequisite(s): 48J:002; 48J:007. (Offered Fall and Spring)

Texts


• Required: Read the *New York Times* online (www.nytimes.com) daily, particularly the front page stories on the “Today’s Paper” button on the top menu. The online Times is free (for now), but you do need to register.

• Required: Keep up with the stories in the mainstream national news media. Read Slate.com’s “Slatest” summary of how the major news organizations covered the biggest news (http://slatest.slate.com/). At the Slate site, you can also choose to have “Slatest” delivered daily via email. The site is updated three times a day.

• There will be additional handouts and readings on the course UNI eLearning site (formerly known as WebCT).

• Recommended: At http://www.poynter.org/column.asp?id=2, there is Al’s Morning Meeting (Al Tompkins’s suggestions to the news media on how to cover stories) and at http://www.poynter.org/column.asp?id=45, there is Romenesko (Jim Romenesko’s column on the news media industry).


• Recommended Exercises: If you want more outside-of-class practice, see the free online training modules for journalists at the Poynter Institute’s News U (www.newsu.org) site. A few of these exercises will be recommended during the term, although you are welcome to do as many other modules as you’d like.

Course Objectives

This course covers both conceptual and professional elements of news writing for print media. Part of writing, editing, and compiling news for the print media is understanding exactly what is news. This course will investigate the meaning of news in U.S. culture, including the concept of objectivity and its uneasy relationship to journalistic storytelling, and the new media’s role in building and sustaining contemporary democracy. On the professional side, students will research, edit and write a number of different types of news stories for print media, and will keep apprised of the major national news stories.

Reporting requires that students do in-person interviewing. Students will be expected to go outside of their immediate circle of friends and families for story sources and subjects, and to not write in a first-person voice (from the “I” perspective), unless specifically approved for a story. The course requires all original writing – no use of or rewriting press releases.
**Class Schedule**

Note: Nearly every Thursday we will begin with a quiz over current events, readings, lectures, and AP Style.
Note: Some assignments may be rescheduled to respond to news reporting opportunities.

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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Readings</th>
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| Week 1     | Overview of Journalism  
The First Amendment  
Kovach and Rosenstiel, Ch. 1, 2  
**Assignment 0:** 400-word profile of yourself (not graded). Write in the 3rd person voice (e.g., “she” or “he”), as if you are reporting on someone else. Due Aug. 26. |
| Aug. 24, 26|                                                                       |                                               |
| Week 2     | Doing Journalism I  
Reporting Skills, Interviewing, Notetaking  
Exercise, Interviewing Exercise  
Writing Leads; Story Structure  
Writing News stories – judgment, style, attribution | Harrower, Ch. 3 and Ch. 4  
Kovach and Rosenstiel, Ch. 3,  
**Assignment 1:** Interviewing project  
**Thursday Quiz** |
| Aug. 31, Sept. 2| |                                               |
| Week 3     | Working with the AP Stylebook  
AP Stylebook exercises  
The problem of clichés and other bad writing habits | Bring AP Stylebook to class  
Also see  
• AP Style basics,  
  http://content.hks.harvard.edu/journalistsresource/jl/style/ap-style-basics/#more-1803  
• AP Style Highlights, Harrower, p. 57  
**Thursday Quiz** |
| Sept. 7, 9 |                                                                       |                                               |
| Week 4     | Fact-checking  
In-class exercise | Kovach and Rosenstiel, Ch. 4  
**Assignment 2:** Fact-checking project  
**Thursday Quiz** |
| Sept. 14, 16| |                                               |
| Week 5     | Research: Lexis-Nexis News, New York Times Historical  
Writing Obituaries | Kovach and Rosenstiel, Ch. 5  
Harrower, pp. 96-97  
**Assignment 3:** Obituary  
**Thursday Quiz** |
| Sept. 21, 23| |                                               |
| Week 6     | Television News and News Values  
News and the Internet  
Video: The Reporter | Kovach and Rosenstiel, Ch. 6  
(pdf file)  
Harrower, Ch. 8 and Ch. 9  
**Assignment 4:** Speech  
**Thursday Quiz** |
| Sept. 28, 30| |                                               |
| Week 7     | Writing profiles  
More working with the AP Stylebook  
AP Stylebook exercises | Kovach and Rosenstiel, Ch. 7, 8  
Harrower, pp. 124-5  
**Assignment 5:** Profile  
Bring AP Stylebook to class  
**Thursday Quiz** |
| Oct. 5, 7 |                                                                       |                                               |
| Week 8     | News and Law  
First Amendment, FOIA, shield laws, libel/slander, copyright, privacy, FCC Section 315 | Harrower, Ch. 7, also Harrower “Writing Reviews,” pp. 136-7  
**Assignment 6:** Review and fact box  
**Thursday Quiz** |
| Oct. 12, 14| |                                               |
| Week 9     | News and Ethics  
Ethical Philosophies  
Ethics Case Studies | Kovach and Rosenstiel, Ch. 10. 11  
The SPJ, APME, and RTNDA Ethics Codes (online)  
and Ethics handouts  
**Assignment 7:** Beat Story (Straight News)  
**Thursday Quiz** |
| Oct. 19, 21| |                                               |
| Week 10    | News ethics: Case studies  
Working on a beat (**class visit from professional reporter**) | Harrower, pp. 94-5 ("Covering a beat")  
**Thursday Quiz** |
| Oct. 26, 28| |                                               |
| Week 11    | The Biases of Objective-style journalism;  
Considering bias and Fox News | Harrower, Ch. 6, especially pp. 116-123 on Feature writing.  
**Assignment 8:** Beat Story (Feature)** |
| Nov. 2, 4 | |                                               |
| Week 12                               | Developing story ideas                      | Brent Cunningham reading (online)  
Outfoxed video, handout, and readings |
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<td>Nov. 9, 11</td>
<td>Video: The Paper (2007)</td>
<td>Harrower, Ch. 6, especially “Writing Editorials and Columns, p. 130-1</td>
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<td>Jack Shafer reading, “Bogus Trend Stories” (online)</td>
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<td>Assignment 9: Opinion/analysis column</td>
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<td>Thursday Quiz</td>
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<td>Week 13</td>
<td>Documentaries as journalism</td>
<td>Screenings of documentary excerpts</td>
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<td>Nov. 16, 18</td>
<td>Summarizing reports and studies</td>
<td>Thursday Quiz</td>
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<td>Thanksgiving Break</td>
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<td>Week 14</td>
<td>Summarizing reports and studies</td>
<td>Harrower, pp. 134-5 (&quot;Writing editorials and columns)</td>
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<td>Nov. 30, Dec. 2</td>
<td>Work on opinion/analysis</td>
<td>Thursday Quiz</td>
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<td>Week 15</td>
<td>Continuing work on opinion/analysis</td>
<td>All opinion/analysis column elements due and presented on this day.</td>
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<td>Dec. 7, 9</td>
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**Grading**

- Attendance/class participation (participation will sometimes include bringing journalism samples or brief homework assignments to class) 5%
- Quizzes: almost every Thursday, 13 total, best 8 grades 10%
- Assignment 1: Interviewing project 5%
- Assignment 2: Editing project – Fact-checking the News 5%
- Assignment 3: Obituary (500 words) 10%
- Assignment 4: Speech (500 words) 10%
- Assignment 5: Profile story (500 words) 10%
- Assignment 6: Review and fact box (500 words + box) 10%
- Assignment 7: Beat story #1- straight news (500 words) 10%
- Assignment 8: Beat story #2- feature (500 words) 10%
- Assignment 9: Opinion/analysis (1500 words) 15%

Grades are posted on the class UNI eLearning site.

**Rewrite Policy**

Since writing is a process that involves revisions to make the writing better, up to two news stories (assignments 3-8 only) have the opportunity for a rewrite, if they are first handed in on time. All rewrites must be turned back in within one week after the instructor returns the first version of the story. Rewriting a story does not guarantee the grade will improve, but rewrites are suggested as part of the learning process. For tips, take the NewsU "Writing: Get me Rewrite" module. [Plagiarized stories excluded from this policy.]

**Grading philosophy**

Assignments are graded with letter grades and plusses/minuses (or numerical equivalents). Specifically, for this course:

A = Outstanding performance. Copy is presentable with little or no editing. (For critical papers, extremely insightful critical analysis.)
B = Superior performance. Copy is presentable with minor editing and revisions. (Critical argument is strong.)
C = Adequate performance. Portions of copy would need to be rewritten and closely edited before presentation. (Critical analysis is adequate, but argument could be supported better.)
D = Marginal performance. Copy contains major factual, structural, writing, and usage flaws. (Flawed critical analysis.) It is doubtful that it could be presented.
F = Unacceptable performance. Copy fails to meet even the minimum standards of the assignment. (Deeply flawed, or little or no critical analysis.)

Late Assignments
Deadlines are firm in journalism. If it’s not in on time, it doesn’t make it in the newspaper. Similarly, late papers and projects will NOT be accepted, and may not be made up. (There are very few exceptions to this. You must have a doctor’s note or some other appropriate documentation to be excused.)

Attendance Policy
As noted in the UNI Catalog, “Students are expected to attend class, and the responsibility for attending class rests with the student. Students are expected to learn and observe the attendance rules established by each instructor for each course. Instructors will help students to make up work whenever the student has to be absent for good cause; this matter lies between the instructor and student. Whenever possible, a student should notify the instructor in advance of circumstances which prevent class attendance.” (http://www.uni.edu/catalog/class-attendance) Attendance will be recorded for this course, and all unexcused absences will figure into the final grade.

Academic Misconduct
Plagiarism, cheating, improperly sourced work, and other academic misconduct will not be tolerated. The UNI Catalog is clear on this: “Students at the University of Northern Iowa are required to observe the commonly-accepted standards of academic honesty and integrity. Except in those instances in which group work is specifically authorized by the instructor of the class, no work which is not solely the student’s is to be submitted to a professor in the form of an examination paper, a term paper, class project, research project, or thesis project. Cheating of any kind on examinations and/or plagiarism of papers or projects is strictly prohibited. Also unacceptable are the purchase of papers from commercial sources, using a single paper to meet the requirement of more than one class (except in instances authorized and considered appropriate by the professors of the two classes), and submission of a term paper or project completed by any individual other than the student submitting the work. Students are cautioned that plagiarism is defined as the process of stealing or passing off as one’s own the ideas or words of another, or presenting as one’s own an idea or product which is derived from an existing source.”

See the UNI Catalog for full details (http://www.uni.edu/catalog/academic-ethics-policies).

To be clear:
• No cut-and-pasting from other sources
• No use of other’s words without quotes and attribution
• No rewriting of press releases
• All work in this course should be your original writing
• All work should be original for the assignments – no reuse of work for other courses in this class
• We will abide by the Ethical Code of the Society of Professional Journalists (http://www.spj.org/ethicscode.asp)

Disability Services
The University of Northern Iowa is an Affirmative Action Equal Opportunity Institution. The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) provides protection from illegal discrimination for qualified individuals with disabilities. Students with disabilities and other special needs should feel free to contact the instructor if there are services or adaptations that can be made to accommodate specific needs. Check with the Office of Student Disability Services at 103 Student Health Center (273-2676) for further information. Also see http://www.uni.edu/sds/.

Finally
Take a deep breath, enjoy doing the important work of journalism, and learn from your mistakes and successes!

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