

**COMM 2321: WRITING FOR STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION
SUMMER 2016, MWF**

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OFFICE HOURS: MONDAY/WEDNESDAY 1:15 PM – 2:45 PM OR BY APPOINTMENT

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

This course is designed to provide you with a basic understanding of how to write for the mass media. We will specifically cover (but not limited to) writing for news media, public relations and marketing communications. Tight-deadline writing is a critical skill that most media professionals must acquire in order to be successful. Learning to write factually, concisely and on deadline takes practice. The more you do it, the better and faster you become. Therefore, this high-intensity course is designed to prepare you for the deadlines and forms of writing required in a professional environment. **You will typically have a formal or informal assignment due every class period.**

The class is also designed to be more “hands-on”, rather than me talking at you hoping you are listening. Class time will include discussion on current news, interactive lectures, timed quizzes and writing assignments. I will offer lab time to begin some assignments during class, giving you the opportunity to ask questions as you learn new styles of writing. You are not permitted to leave early during lab time since it’s your chance to get guidance on assignments. I will not answer questions on homework via email, so be sure you understand each assignment at the onset.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

Students who complete this course will also:

1. Learn fundamental concepts of news gathering and news writing
2. Prepare to write factually, concisely and effectively for public relations, news media, Web and social media
3. Develop proficiency in Associated Press Stylebook rules and application
4. Prepare for writing and copyediting tests required by most employers

REQUIRED TEXT AND MATERIALS:

- Stovall, J. (2015). *Writing for the Mass Media* (9th ed.) Pearson
- *The Associated Press Stylebook 2015*. The Associated Press.
- *AP Style Homework Packet-Top Hat* (purchasing and access instructions will be provided)
- Twitter Account. Follow @DispatchAlerts, @PRNews, @TheLantern, @NYTimes, @CNN and @AP.

COURSE ASSIGNMENTS

#	Assignment	Points	Length	Due Date
1	<i>Tight Deadline Writing Assignments (20%)</i>	100 total 25 per assignment	Varies	See Schedule
2	<i>General Writing Assignments (24%):</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feature Article • Press Release 	Feature (70) Press Release (50)	500-750 words 250-300 words	6/3 6/13
3	<i>AP Style/Reading Quizzes (16%)</i>	80	10 questions per quiz	See Schedule
4	<i>AP Style Homework (TOP HAT) (8%)</i>	40	10 questions per module	See Schedule
5	<i>Final Exam (Cumulative) (20%)</i>	100	50 questions	See Schedule
6	<i>In Class Participation (12%):</i> Determined by daily tweets and active participation in class discussions over class content, videos, and current events.	60 total 30-discussions 30-daily tweets		

***Specific guidance and grading rubric for each assignment will be posted on Carmen*

GRADING

You are graded on how well you've mastered the material, not solely on how hard work you've worked.

TOTAL POINTS FOR THE CLASS		500
Grade	Percent	Points
A	93-100	465-500
A-	90-92	450-464
B+	87-89	435-449
B	83-86	415-434
B-	80-82	400-414
C+	77-79	385-399
C	73-76	365-384
C-	70-72	350-364
D+	67-69	335-349
D	60-66	300-334
E	Less than 60	299 points or less

Interpretation of assignment grades:

A grades—**excellent work that goes above and beyond the assignment requirements.**

B grades—above average work that meets or surpasses the assignment requirements.

C grades—average work that meets the assignment requirements.

D grades—below average work that fails to meet the assignment requirements or is somehow deficient.

F grades—work that ignores significant parts of the assignment requirements or is plagiarized.

The Family Educational Rights Privacy Act (FERPA) prohibits me from e-mailing any grades, including final grades. Grades will be returned only in class/Carmen.

ASSIGNMENT DESCRIPTIONS

All written assignments should be typed and formatted in Times New Roman 12-point font and double-spaced with one-inch margins. Assignments (both in-class and extended) should be turned in on Carmen only (no hard copy) with the exception of the first tight deadline writing assignment. *Tight deadline writing assignments are promptly due at the beginning of the class. General writing assignments are due at 11:59 p.m. on the designated date.*

TIGHT DEADLINE WRITING

Writing for the media often involves finding sources and writing solid content on a short deadline. When a source doesn't return your call, or when an event ends at 10 p.m. and your story must be filed by midnight, it takes quick thinking and problem solving to get the job done. **There will be approximately four writing assignments given in class that are due at the beginning of class on Wednesdays (with the exception of the first tight deadline assignment).** If you are absent the day an assignment is given, ask a classmate or see me during my office hours for the assignment. There is no flexibility on set deadlines. You may turn in the assignment early, but NOT late.

GENERAL WRITING ASSIGNMENTS

- **FEATURE:** We will learn to write feature articles that have more of a “lifespan” than general news articles and provide for more descriptive writing with a focus on people, organizations, and events. You will write one feature article this semester on a topic related to the Ohio State community. You will tweet out your topic ideas to me using my Twitter handle *@ProfJasmine*. I must approve your story pitch before moving forward.

You must interview and quote a minimum of 3 LIVE HUMAN sources. You are required to provide a source list with contact information. I will reach out to a few of your sources to fact check your article. 500-750 words

- **Press Release:** We will learn how to write a press release with the intention to announce a newsworthy event to those a part of the news media community. I plan to provide a list of topics that you may choose from in order to complete the assignment. *250-300 words*

AP Style/Lecture Material Quizzes

For many careers involving writing or editing, a solid understanding of Associated Press (AP) style is required. This class includes four AP style quizzes, which take place on Fridays. Along with AP material, ¼ of the quiz will contain questions that cover the lecture material.

AP Style Homework

A homework packet will be assigned to practice your understanding of AP Style. The packet has four modules, each containing 10 questions that cover the material for the corresponding quiz. You will need to purchase the materials (at a very lost cost) through TOP HAT. Homework assignments are due at 10 p.m. on Mondays.

Final Exam

Cumulative until the final week and includes content over lecture material, readings, current events and AP style. The format will be multiple choice, true/false and matching.

POLICIES AND EXPECTATIONS

Attendance (TOP HAT): Attendance will be taken through Top Hat, a BYOD (bring your own device) system that is integrated with Carmen. An attendance code will be displayed at the beginning of each class. You will need to enter this code by logging into the Top Hat website or you may text it to a Top Hat attendance number. You will not be able to see the code on your own devices. Again it will only be displayed on the projector.

Since many assignments are to be completed in class, attendance is imperative. You need to be physically present in order to participate in class activities that will help improve your writing. Attendance is expected at all class sessions, but you may miss one class without penalty. **For every class you miss beyond one, your grade will be lowered by 1/3 of the overall grade** (e.g., B would become B-, C+ would become C, etc.). Remember that this is an accelerated summer session class – missing one class here is the equivalent of missing an entire week of a regular semester. If you already have plans during the summer that will cause you to miss two or more meetings, you are advised to reconsider taking the class during this summer session.

University approved absences are exempt from this policy. Absences due to medical concerns will be excused with appropriate documentation, provided the documentation is submitted *within one week* of the absence. I will NOT accept documentation beyond this point, which will then make the absence unexcused.

Late Assignments Policy: Late assignments will NOT be accepted. Deadlines are deadlines. Extensions are not granted in this class to mimic the news/corporate media environment and culture. An editor of a publication or the manager at a media corporation will not grant an extension on an article, advertising copy or press release because “you’re so stressed out and trying to juggle a lot of things.” Everyone is busy and I understand life happens. You may also turn in an assignment early if you know you will be absent from class. However, please do not ask for an extension on any assignment. **Failure to turn in an assignment on time will result in an automatic zero for the grade. No exceptions.**

Email Policies: I ask that students give me 24 hours to respond to emails. I also do not answer emails sent after 10pm until the following day. Please be mindful that you are not the only student I have to reply to and that it takes time to respond to several emails. If you do not hear from me within 48 hours after sending your initial email, you may send me another email.

Classroom Civility: We want to build a positive classroom climate that is comfortable for everyone. It is especially important that we (1) display respect for all members of the classroom, including the instructor and students; (2) pay attention to and participate in all class sessions and activities; (3) avoid unnecessary disruption during class time (e.g., having private conversations,

reading the newspaper, doing work for other classes, making/receiving cell phone calls, text messaging, etc.); and (4) avoid racist, sexist, homophobic, or other negative language that may unnecessarily exclude members of our campus and classroom. This is not an exhaustive list of behaviors; rather, they represent the minimal standards that help make the classroom a productive learning environment for all concerned. **Cell phones should not be used in class (outside of weekly tweets).**

In Class Participation:

Participation entails many different factors depending on the instructor. For this class, I look for whether or not a student is truly engaging in the course materials by trying to answer questions I ask during class (verbally or through Top Hat), by asking questions about the content, and/or offering examples, new ideas and perspectives to the class. This should happen on a regular basis throughout the semester.

Simply being present in class **does not** mean you are participating. In other words, do not confuse physical attendance with active participation. However, missing class can affect your participation grade, even if the absence is excused. This is different from the attendance policy mentioned in the last page. I cannot give you participation points for a class you missed, as that would not be fair to the other students who attended and *actively participated* in class. Also, I reserve the right to deduct points (1-5 points per infraction) from your daily participation grade if I find that you are using technology for reasons not related to class (browsing social media, checking email, doing homework for another class, etc.).

Students will have the opportunity to earn participation points through in class discussion of current events. Two to three students may volunteer and share what they've heard/read from a news outlet to begin the discussion. Although this activity will only take 5-10 minutes of class time, the purpose is to 1) make students more comfortable discussing concepts and topics out loud in front of their classmates 2) ensure students are informed, global citizens.

Tweets: Students should tweet out personal thoughts about newsworthy topics and articles every day. You will receive 2 points per daily tweet. **Use the class hashtag #stratcomm2321.** Please put some thought into your tweet. Do not simply type (for example), "Very interesting article" or "So shocking". This counts toward your participation grade so please take this seriously (tweets also help facilitate class discussions). You will need to create a Twitter account if you do not already have one.

Punctuality: Class begins on time every day to guarantee that all scheduled discussions and activities are completed. You are expected to be punctual. **Furthermore, frequent tardiness can negatively impact your grade.**

Challenging a Grade: I am always willing to discuss your grades with you, but I will not do so during class time. To challenge a grade, you must meet me during office hours or make an appointment *within one week* of the assignment being returned to you. When we meet, you must present your concerns in writing and attach the assignment. Please note that a challenge may result in grades being raised or lowered.

Extra Credit: There is a maximum of 10 extra-credit points (with the exception of one opportunity) available in this class, which will be applied to the final point total. You can earn it in two ways:

- **Activities:** Participate in outside class activities identified during the semester (5 points per activity). Provide “evidence” that you were in attendance and write a 2-paragraph paper about the event.
- **Research:** Take part in [School of Communication research](#) (points vary depending upon the rigor/time length of the activity. 5 points maximum).

Other extra credit opportunities may be announced toward the end of the semester (but this is not guaranteed).

All extra credit must be reported to me via email by the end of class on June 17.

Academic Misconduct: Cheating and plagiarism in any form will not be tolerated. The Ohio State University’s *Code of Student Conduct* (Section 3325-23-04) defines academic misconduct as “any activity that tends to compromise the academic integrity of the University, or subvert the educational process” (p. 2). **Examples of academic misconduct include, but are not limited to, plagiarism, collusion (unauthorized collaboration), copying the work of another student, selling notes/papers, uploading notes/papers to study websites (ex: Course Hero) 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 you review the *Code of Student Conduct*, 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 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 me or visit COAM at <http://oaa.osu.edu/coam/home.html>.

Student Sexual Misconduct Policy: Title IX clearly indicates that violence and harassment based on sex and gender are Civil Rights offenses subject to the same kinds of accountability and the same kinds of support applied to offenses against other protected categories such as race, national origin, etc. OSU provides confidential assistance for sexual assault victims. If you or someone you know has been harassed or assaulted, you can find the appropriate resources here:

OSU Police Division: (614) 292-2121

Sexual Assault Response Network of Central Ohio (SARNCO): (614) 267-7020

OSU Counseling and Consultation Service: 614-292-5766

Title IX Coordinator: Kellie Brennan (614)-247-5838

Writing Center: All students, especially those who have difficulty writing, are encouraged to visit the *OSU Writing Center*. Their web address is <https://cstw.osu.edu/writing-center> and their phone number is 688-5865. The Writing Center offers two kinds of tutorials: 1) Scheduled, 50-minute tutorials in 4120A Smith Lab and 2) Drop-in, 20-minute tutorials at our satellite centers (First floor Thompson Library and 114 Smith-Steeb Residence Hall)

REASONABLE ACCOMMODATION POLICY

Students with disabilities who 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. When possible, documentation should be provided no later than the second week of class. The Office for Disability Services is located in 150 Pomerane Hall, 1760 Neil Avenue; Phone 292-3307; TDD 292-0901; <http://www.ods.ohio-state.edu>.

DISCLAIMER: The information provided in this syllabus constitutes a list of basic class policies. I reserve the right to modify this information when deemed necessary for any reason. You will be notified in class, via email, and/or on Carmen if and when any changes occur.

TENTATIVE DAILY SCHEDULE

*Assignments are due on the date listed in parentheses.

Week	Date	Topic and Activity*	Reading(s) Due	Assignment(s) Due**
Week 1	W 5/11	Class Cancelled		
	F 5/13	Introduction/Review Syllabus; What is Strategic Communication? Academic vs. Media Writing	Chapter 1	
Week 2	M 5/16	Basic tools of writing; AP Style (The media professional's "Bible")	Chapter 2	AP Style Homework #1
	W 5/18	AP Style		
	F 5/20	Writing in the media environment/ News and news value	Chapter 3	TD#1/ AP Quiz #1
Week 3	M 5/23	Basic newswriting (ledes, inverted pyramid style, attribution and headlines)	Chapter 5	AP Style Homework #2
	W 5/25	Basic Newswriting cont.; Newswriting Law and Ethics		TD #2
	F 5/27	Introduction to Feature Writing and Features Ledes; Interviewing	Chapter 12	AP Quiz #2
Week 4	M 5/30	NO CLASS (MEMORIAL DAY)		
	W 6/1	Feature Writing: Descriptive devices		TD #3/AP Style Homework #3
	F 6/3	Feature Writing Workshop; Intro to Public Relations: Beyond the glitz and glamour		<i>Feature Article Due (6/3)</i> AP Quiz #3
Week 5	M 6/6	Intro to Public Relations cont.	Chapter 11	AP Style Homework #4
	W 6/8	Writing Press Releases		TD #4
	F 6/10	SEO and Press Releases		AP Quiz #4
Week 6	M 6/13	Press Kit Materials & PR Pitching		<i>Press Release Due (6/13)</i>
	W 6/15	Bringing it all together: Final Exam Review		
	F 6/17	FINAL EXAM (In Class)		