

COMM 2321: Writing for Strategic Communication

Spring 2020

Instructor: Mary Sterenberg, M.S.

Office: JR 311

Office Hours: Tuesday/Thursday 12:30-2:00 p.m., Wednesday, 12:30-1:30 p.m.,
by appointment

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Tues/Thurs 2:20 – 3:40 p.m. Journalism Building Room 224 – Section 22125

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Learning to write accurately, concisely and on deadline takes practice. The more you do it, the better and faster you become. This is a high-intensity course designed to prepare you for the deadlines and forms of writing required in a professional environment. Opportunities for writing a variety of types of copy for print, broadcast media, web and public relations will be incorporated into the assignments. This course also will give you an appreciation for the importance of being a strong editor and giving constructive feedback to other writers.

This is conducted primarily as a flipped classroom. This means much of the lecturing in this course will be provided via lecture slides on Carmen and assigned as readings to complete before class. You will complete assigned readings, watch lecture slides and take brief reading quizzes BEFORE coming to class so we can use our class time to write and apply the knowledge and skills. Class time will include group discussions on current news and writing, timed quizzes and writing and editing assignments.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

- Learn fundamental concepts of news gathering and news writing and understand how these translate into other professional areas of communication
- Strengthen ability to write factually, concisely and effectively, and to help others do the same through strong editing
- Develop proficiency in Associate Press Stylebook rules and application
- Develop publish-worthy writing portfolio material
- Improve ability to effectively manage time, balance multiple tasks and meet deadlines
- Prepare for writing and copyediting tests required by most employers

COURSE TEXTS

- Writing for Strategic Communication Industries, Jasmine Roberts,
<https://ohiostate.pressbooks.pub/stratcommwriting/> (This is a no-cost online textbook)
- The Associated Press Stylebook 2019. The Associated Press.
- Recommended: The Columbus Dispatch, The Lantern, The Skimm (sign up for free email updates, follow on Twitter)

COURSE GRADING SCALE

A	93-100%	B-	80-82%	D+	67-69%
A-	90-92%	C+	77-79%	D	60-66%
B+	87-89%	C	73-76%	F	Less than 60%
B	83-86%	C-	70-72%		

COURSE EVALUATION

Reading Quizzes	50 points
In-class Skills Assignments	100 points
Writing Assignments	150 points

- News story
- Feature
- News release

AP Style Quizzes	50 points
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- Best five of six
- 10 points each

Exam	50 points
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Total Possible Points	400 points
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COURSE ASSIGNMENTS

All assignments should follow AP style guidelines. Save early and save often. **If you are absent the day an assignment is given, ask a classmate or come see me during my office hours for the assignment. There is no flexibility on set deadlines, as this course focuses on deadline-based writing.**

Reading Quizzes (50 points)

This class uses a partially flipped design, meaning that students must review readings and lecture slides before coming to class so we can spend more of our in-class time applying the material by writing and editing. These 5-point reading quizzes are due by the start of class most Tuesdays, as noted on the syllabus. **DO NOT** collaborate with classmates on reading quizzes. These are timed quizzes (you have seven minutes for five questions), so do the reading before starting the quiz because you will not have time to look up answers as you go. Due dates are on the syllabus and students are responsible for completing reading assignments by the due dates. There are no makeups for missed deadlines. **READING QUIZZES WILL BE OPEN FOR 48 HOURS LEADING UP TO CLASS.**

Most reading quizzes are five multiple choice questions on Carmen. Two quizzes have a different format.

- **Reading Quiz #9: Media Framing & Ethics (OPEN ALL SEMESTER)**
You earn these 5 points with successful completion of an online training on media ethics. Visit <https://pagecentertraining.psu.edu/> and choose Module 11: Media Framing and Ethics. Go through the lessons and score at least 80% on the quiz to receive your certificate of completion. Upload this certificate to Reading Quiz #9 at any point during the semester before the quiz due date. It's an all or nothing five points.

- **Reading Quiz #10: Grammar (OPEN AFTER WEEK 1 FOR REMAINDER OF SEMESTER)**

This quiz follows the usual format, with five multiple choice questions, but you may complete it at any point during the semester. It must be submitted by the final scheduled day of class. Some students come in with strong grammar knowledge, and others need time to improve. Take the quiz when you feel you are ready. Use the provided study materials on Carmen to determine when you feel ready.

In-Class Skills Assignments (100 points)

In-class skills assignments are designed to help you learn and practice the writing and editing techniques needed for longer Writing Assignments. Writing for the different forms of mass media requires news savvy, keen observation skills and the ability to interact effectively with sources and other journalists. Beyond the writing, the discipline to consumenews, read what others write and be a keen editor of your own work and others' writing is crucial. Many classes will include an in-class individual or group assignment – these range from answering questions in groups about current news or AP style to writing short articles. **THESE IN-CLASS ASSIGNMENTS ARE NOT LISTED ON THE SYLLABUS and these points can only be earned if you are in class for the activities, as they cannot be made up.** You will earn up to 10 points per week for 10 weeks of the semester.

Writing Assignments

In this course you learn to write in a new way that is very different from academic writing. Writing must be concise, accurate and conform to newswriting and AP style – and it must be done quickly. This style of writing 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. On the flip side, articles with longer deadlines come with the expectation of more sources, greater planning and research, and additional content. You will complete a news article, a feature article and a media kit. The goal is for your finished work to get published in *The Lantern* or other media outlet (this adds a writing sample to your portfolio, and the smallest published writing clip carries more weight with employers than the very best thing you ever do "just for class.") ALL CLASS ASSIGNMENTS THAT INCLUDE SOURCES MUST INCLUDE A CONTACT LIST WITH PHONE NUMBERS AND EMAILS FOR YOUR SOURCES. I WILL CONTACT SOME OF THESE SOURCES THROUGHOUT THE SEMESTER.

AP Style Quizzes

For many careers involving writing or editing, a solid understanding of how to use the Associated Press Stylebook and AP style rules is fundamental. This class includes six AP style quizzes, with the top five scores counted. A studyguide is available on Carmen and we will review concepts during Tuesday classes on weeks when there is an AP style quiz. Quizzes will be completed the first 15 minutes of class on the dates listed on Carmen. The password will be available when you arrive to class and the quiz will close after 15 minutes, so please arrive on time. If you arrive late, you may complete as much of the quiz as possible in whatever remains of the 15 provided minutes, but the quiz will close 15 minutes after the start of the class period so we can review as a class and move on to other things. I understand that things happen, so that is why I allow one dropped quiz. If you need to miss class or arrive late a day we have a quiz, that will be your dropped quiz. There are no makeup quizzes unless you have more than one excused absence on quiz days. Students MAY use their AP stylebook for the quizzes, but these are timed quizzes and you will not have enough time to look up every answer. I strongly encourage you to study each quiz's assigned content using the studyguide, your AP stylebook and notes from class and use the stylebook during the quiz only to double-check yourself. We will review quizzes as a class once they close.

Exam

The final exam will evaluate your understanding of the course material. The exam is multiple choice and includes materials covered in lecture materials as well as assigned readings. Proctorio is the online exam proctoring tool integrated into Carmen. Use of Proctorio is **required** for the exam in this course. Students are required to have a webcam (USB or internal) with a microphone and a strong and stable internet connection. You will need to use a Chrome browser. Visit the [Student Guide to Proctorio](#) to get started before taking the exam. If you prefer to take the exam in the university testing center, just let me know at least a week before the exam so that I can register you and allow you to schedule a time. You must take the exam on the same day and during the same time as the rest of the class.

COURSE POLICIES

Attendance and Late Policy

In an internship or job, attendance is expected and missing a day of work can cost you income and damage your personal brand. All absences, regardless of the reason, count the same. I do not differentiate between excused and unexcused absences. You will likely lose participation points each time you miss a class, as many class periods include in-class assignments for points or graded quizzes. **After the equivalent of one week of missed classes, 5 points will be deducted from your final grade for each class you miss thereafter. In-class assignments cannot be made up. If you are absent a day an assignment is discussed or assigned, it is your responsibility.**

Deadlines

When writing for the media, missing a deadline equals blank space to fill in a newspaper (and an angry editor), a lost radio or television spot (and some big bucks) or an unhappy client unwilling to pay you or use you again for public relations representation. Assignments in this course must be completed on time or they will not be accepted. **There is no flexibility on set deadlines and I do not accept late work.**

If you will be absent the day an assignment is discussed or due, see me in my office for assignment details and turn it in early in class or in my office. Keep in mind that I do not accept late work, so contact me before an assignment is due. Under no circumstances are assignments accepted via email unless explicitly stated otherwise. If you are absent the day an assignment is handed back, it is your responsibility to pick up your assignment from my office. I will not bring it with me to class. Personal computer and/or printer problems are not valid excuses. There are computer labs throughout campus, some of which are open 24 hours a day: <http://lt.osu.edu/locations-hours>.

Class Rules

1. Computers are a valuable tool in this course, but please do not let them become a distraction by doing non-class related searches or activities during class.
2. Be prepared and on time, complete assignments on time, have a good attitude and participate. You can expect the same from me.

COMMUNICATION

I will notify you of any reminders, schedule changes, other updates, etc. by email, so check your email frequently. Email is a professional obligation. The best way to contact me is through email at sterenberg.2@osu.edu. For email, please include COMM 2321 in the subject line to ensure your email receives high priority in my inbox.

CARMEN

I will post course information, optional worksheets and notes on Carmen. Your grades also will be posted on Carmen. **You have one week after a grade has been posted to inquire about a missing grade or a grade you believe to be incorrect.**

Academic Misconduct

It is the responsibility of the Committee on Academic Misconduct to investigate or establish procedures for the investigation of all reported cases of student academic misconduct. The term “academic misconduct” includes all forms of student academic misconduct wherever committed; illustrated by, but not limited to, cases of plagiarism and dishonest practices in connection with examinations. Instructors shall report all instances of alleged academic misconduct to the committee (Faculty Rule 3335-5-487). For additional information, see the Code of Student Conduct <http://studentlife.osu.edu/csc/>

Copyright Disclaimer

The materials used in connection with this course may be subject to copyright protection and are only for the use of students officially enrolled in the course for the educational purposes associated with the course. Copyright law must be considered before copying, retaining, or disseminating materials outside of the course.

Title IX

Title IX makes it clear 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 (e.g., race). If you or someone you know has been sexually harassed or assaulted, you may find the appropriate resources at <http://titleix.osu.edu> or by contacting the Ohio State Title IX Coordinator, Kellie Brennan, at titleix@osu.edu

PLEASE TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF (Mental Health Statement):

As a student you may experience a range of issues that can cause barriers to learning, such as strained relationships, increased anxiety, alcohol/drug problems, feeling down, difficulty concentrating and/or lack of motivation. These mental health concerns or stressful events may lead to diminished academic performance or reduce a student’s ability to participate in daily activities. The Ohio State University offers services to assist you with addressing these and other concerns you may be experiencing.

If you are or someone you know is suffering from any of the aforementioned conditions, you can learn more about the broad range of confidential mental health services available on campus via the Office of Student Life’s Counseling and Consultation Service (CCS) by visiting ccs.osu.edu or calling 614--292--5766. CCS is located on the 4th Floor of the Younkin Success Center and 10th Floor of Lincoln Tower. You can reach an on-call counselor when CCS is closed at 614-292-5766.

If you are thinking of harming yourself or need a safe, non-judgmental place to talk, or if you are worried about someone else and need advice about what to do, 24 hour emergency help is also available through the Suicide Prevention Hotline (Columbus: 614-221-5445 / National: 800-273-8255); or text (4hope to 741741); or at suicidepreventionlifeline.org

Who can I talk to? Where can I go for help with emotional distress?	Who can I talk to? Where can I go for help with emotional distress?
Counseling and Consultation Service 614-292-5766 1030 Lincoln Tower, 1800 Cannon Dr. Younkln Success Center, 1640 Neil Ave.	Student Wellness Center 614-292-4527 RPAC, 337 Annie & John Glenn Ave.
"Let's Talk" Thursday evenings, 6-8 p.m. Multicultural Center, Ohio Union	Sexual Assault Response Network of Central Ohio 614-267-7020
Psychology Services Center 614-292-2345 105 Psychology Building, 185 Neil Ave.	Buckeye Peer Access Line (PAL) 8 P.M. – Midnight (only) 614-514-3333
Stress Trauma & Resilience 614-293-STAR Harding Hospital, 1670 Upham Dr.	Suicide Prevention Lifeline 614-221-5445 or 800-273-8255 Text 4hope to 741741 Or call 911 for immediate assistance

School of Communication Cares School of Communication Cares

Accessibility accommodations for students with disabilities

Requesting accommodations

The University strives to make all learning experiences as accessible as possible. If you anticipate or experience academic barriers based on your disability (including mental health, chronic or temporary medical conditions), please let me know via email immediately so that we can privately discuss options. You are also welcome to register with Student Life Disability Services to establish reasonable accommodations. After registration, make arrangements with me as soon as possible to discuss your accommodations so that they may be implemented in a timely fashion. SLDS contact information: slds@osu.edu ; 614-292-3307; slds.osu.edu ; 098 Baker Hall, 113 W. 12th Avenue.

DISCLAIMER

I reserve the right to alter the scheduled topics as the semester progresses. These changes will be announced in class.

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Tentative Course Schedule

Required readings/lectures for each week are available on Carmen in that week's Module.

Note:

- **Reading Quiz #9** is a Media Framing & Ethics certification that can be completed at any point during the semester. Upload the certificate of completion to earn your 5 points.
- **Reading Quiz #10** is on grammar and can be completed at any point during the semester after Week 1. It must be completed by the last day of class for credit.

Week	Dates	Tuesday	Thursday
1	1/7-9	Intro to course PR vs. Media Writing	Media Consumption Writing Basics
2	1/14-16	Style and the AP Stylebook Reading Quiz #1 (closes start of class)	What is news/News Value Inverted Pyramid Writing Due: News Story Idea
3	1/21-23	Finding/Providing Sources Reading Quiz #2 (closes start of class)	Interviewing/Gathering facts
4	1/28-30	Newswriting – Leads Reading Quiz #3 (closes start of class)	Newswriting – Body AP Style Quiz #1
5	2/4-6	Editing and rewriting Due: News Story Draft	Editing/rewriting workshop AP Style Quiz #2 Due: News Story Final
6	2/11-13	Headlines Reading Quiz #4 (closes start of class)	Newswriting Advanced AP Style Quiz #3 Due: Feature Story Idea
7	2/18-20	Pitching/Working With Reporters Reading Quiz #5 (closes start of class)	Data-driven stories AP Style Quiz #4
8	2/25-27	Feature Writing Reading Quiz #6 (closes start of class) Due: Feature Story Draft	Feature Writing Workshops Due: Feature Story Final
9	3/3-5	Photo Walk	Deadline Writing
10	3/10-12	SPRING BREAK	
11	3/17-19	Public Relations & PR writing Reading Quiz #7 (closes start of class)	News Releases & Press Kit Materials AP Style Quiz #5

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12	3/24-26	Writing for Broadcast	Guest Speaker (tentative) AP Style Quiz #6
13	3/31-4/2	Media Kit Workshops	Media Kit Workshops Due: Media Kit
14	4/7-9	Writing for the Web Reading Quiz #8 (closes start of class)	Media Law & Ethics Reading Quiz #9 (OPEN ALL SEMESTER, but closes start of this class)
15	4/14-16	Employer Writing Test Sample Online Portfolio	Bringing it All Together Reading Quiz #10 (OPEN ALL SEMESTER, but closes start of this class)