

MCM 132/Writing for Mass Media

Department of Mass Communication, Sam Houston State University, Fall 2009 (3 credits)

Instructor: Dr. Marc Edge
308B Rather | 936.294.4445
mwe003@shsu.edu

Office Hours: MW 2-3 p.m. TTh 2-3 p.m. or by appointment

Class Hours: TTh 11-12:20 Location: 407 Lee Drain Building

Prerequisites: ENG 164 (minimum grade of C).

Description: This course is designed to introduce writing for media across a wide spectrum of disciplines. It will provide hands-on practice in basic writing skills for news, broadcast, the Internet, and public relations.

Objective: To develop creative capacities in writing for print and broadcast media, public relations, and online media. To learn to analyze and critically evaluate ideas, arguments, and points of view. To develop a clearer understanding of, and commitment to, personal values. To reinforce effective, grammatical use of the English language. To achieve a broader understanding of the news media.

Method: This is a beginning level course in writing for mass media. The skills stressed in this class are applicable in a wide variety of situations, including traditional print journalism, broadcast journalism, public relations, and online journalism. Good writing, however, in the sense of using the language for effective communications, is a valuable tool in almost any vocation, so this is not purely a journalism course. Good writing cannot be learned from a book. The best way to learn to write well is to do a lot of it, have it critiqued, and apply the suggestions from the critiques. We will write a lot in this class — nearly every day we meet. Much of your homework will involve writing as well. This means a lot of work for you (as well as for your instructor, who must read it all).

Assessment: Exams and quizzes may include true/false and multiple choice questions. Exams may also include short answer questions and will include a writing exercise. The most important assessment item by far, however, will be performance on the writing assignments. Blog entries will consist of content posted on the student's personal online weblog, as well as comments posted on other blogs.

Grading:	Attendance and Participation	10%
	Midterm Exam	15%
	Quizzes	20%
	Writing assignments	35%
	Final Exam	20%

Texts: Stovall, *Writing for the Mass Media* (7th Ed.), 2009.

Midterm: The midterm exam will be held on Oct. 15.

Final Exam: The final exam will be held during exam week.

Attendance: Attendance and participation are mandatory and may be used a deciding factor in assigning final grades. Students who do not provide a valid reason in advance for any unavoidable absence will not be allowed to make up any quiz or exam missed. Students with more than three unexcused absences will have their final percentage lowered by one point for each additional absence.

Note: Only registered students may attend class. Exceptions can be made on a case-by-case basis by the professor. In all cases, visitors must not present a disruption to the class by their attendance. Students wishing to audit a class must apply to do so through the Registrar's Office. All students are expected to engage in all academic pursuits in a manner that is above reproach. Students are expected to maintain honesty and integrity in the academic experiences both in and out of the classroom. Any student found guilty of dishonesty in any phase of academic work will be subject to disciplinary action. The University and its official representatives may initiate disciplinary proceedings against a student accused of any form of academic dishonesty including but not limited to, cheating on an examination or other academic work which is to be submitted, plagiarism, collusion and the abuse of resource materials. Section 51.911(b) of the Texas Education Code requires that an institution of higher education excuse a student from attending classes or other required activities, including examinations, for the observance of a religious holy day, including travel for that purpose. Section 51.911 (a) (2) defines a religious holy day as: "a holy day observed by a religion whose places of worship are exempt from property taxation under Section 11.20..." A student whose absence is excused under this subsection may not be penalized for that absence and shall be allowed to take an examination or complete an assignment from which the student is excused within a reasonable time after the absence. University policy 861001 provides the procedures to be followed by the student and instructor. A student desiring to absent himself/herself from a scheduled class in order to observe (a) religious holy day(s) shall present to each instructor involved a written statement concerning the religious holy day(s). The instructor will complete a form notifying the student of a reasonable timeframe in which the missed assignments and/or examinations are to be completed. For a complete listing of the university policy, see: http://www.shsu.edu/~vaf_www/aps/documents/861001.pdf

It is the policy of Sam Houston State University that individuals otherwise qualified shall not be excluded, solely by reason of their disability, from participation in any academic program of the university. Further, they shall not be denied the benefits of these programs nor shall they be subjected to discrimination. Students with disabilities that might affect their academic performance are expected to visit with the Office of Services for Students with Disabilities located in the Counseling Center. They should then make arrangements with their individual instructors so that appropriate strategies can be considered and helpful procedures can be developed to ensure that participation and achievement opportunities are not impaired. SHSU adheres to all applicable federal, state, and local laws, regulations, and guidelines with respect to providing reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities. If you have a disability that may affect adversely your work in this class, then I encourage you to register with the SHSU Counseling Center and to talk with me about how I can best help you. All disclosures of disabilities will be kept strictly confidential. NOTE: No accommodation can be made until you register with the Counseling Center. For a complete listing of the university policy, see: http://www.shsu.edu/~vaf_www/aps/811006.pdf

Schedule of Classes

Week 1

Readings

Aug. 25 Introduction

Aug. 27 The art and craft of writing

Stovall, Ch. 1

Week 2

Sept. 1 Language usage I

Stovall, Ch. 2

Sept. 3 Language usage II

Appendix B

Week 3

Sept. 8 AP Style I

Stovall, Ch. 3

Sept. 10 AP Style II

Appendix C

Week 4

Sept. 15 What is news?

Stovall, Ch. 4

Sept. 17 Basic techniques of media writing

Week 5

Sept. 22 Writing ledes

Stovall, Ch. 5

Sept. 24 Quotation

Week 6

Sept. 29 Writing practice

Stovall, Ch. 6

Oct. 1 Writing practice

Week 7

Oct. 6 Feature writing TBA

Oct. 8 Writing practice

Week 8

Oct. 13 Review

Oct. 15 Midterm exam

Week 9

Oct. 20 Writing for Public Relations I Stovall, Ch. 11

Oct. 22 Writing press releases

Week 10

Oct. 27 Writing for Public Relations II

Oct. 29 Writing more press releases

Week 11

Nov. 3 Writing for Broadcast Stovall, Ch. 9

Nov. 5 Broadcast news writing

Week 12

Nov. 10 Writing for Radio

Nov. 12 Radio news writing

Week 13

Nov. 17 Writing for Television

Nov. 19 Television news writing

Week 14

Nov. 24 Writing for Online media I Stovall, Ch. 7

Nov. 26 No class – Thanksgiving

Week 15

Dec. 1 Writing for Online media II Stovall, Ch. 8

Dec. 3 Blogging

Week 16

Dec. 8 Legal issues – Libel and slander Stovall, Ch. 12

Dec. 10 Review