

MCM 262 W NEWS REPORTING

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Fall 2009 Credit: 3 hours
11 – 12:20 T & Th CB 110

Office: M & W 11-Noon
CB 128

Course Description

This course will cover theory and practice in writing specialized stories typically covered in mass media outlets. Emphasis will also be placed on knowledge of current events. Prerequisite: MCM 330 (Information Analysis).

Required Materials

“Writing and Reporting News, A Coaching Method,” 6th edition, by Carol Rich
The Associated Press Stylebook and Libel Manual, any edition
Small paperback dictionary and thesaurus
Audio tape recorder

Course Objectives

To learn how to identify good news stories and report them in detail, with accuracy and precision. To write different types of solid, well-crafted stories on deadline.

Methods

Our classroom is a newsroom. Together, we will cover all types of stories -- campus events, speeches, meetings, community news, features and in-depth issues.

To do well, you must do three things. All three require clear thinking and organization. You must: 1) know WHAT your story is, 2) be able to GET that story and (3) WRITE that story in a simple, strong, compelling way. You will work to develop the skills essential for every reporter: time management, persistence, thoroughness and the ability to analyze and interpret. It is a reporter's responsibility to handle subjects and sources with respect and care, while always maintaining ethical standards beyond reproach.

Assignments

Most of our focus will be on covering and writing different types of news stories. These stories will be evaluated on two levels: 1) the reporting involved to get the story (who you interviewed, as well as the thoroughness of your research and the angles you pursued, and 2) the actual writing (clarity, organization, focus, creativity, grammar and spelling).

You are required to interview people face-to-face, taking extensive notes and also tape-recording these interviews. You will turn-in all your notes with your story. If there is

any question about the authenticity of your story, you will be asked to provide the recording of your interview for verification. You are required to keep the recordings of all interviews.

Phone interviews: you may get secondary information or last-minute details over the phone. Major interviews for your stories should be done in person.

It is likely you will be assigned to cover some events or conduct interviews off campus. You must provide your own transportation.

Exams, Quizzes and Exercises

There will be two exams where you will write a story in class, under deadline. Tests and quizzes cannot be made up.

There will be exercises and quizzes based on reading assignments and lectures.

There will also be pop quizzes on current events. You ARE REQUIRED to read the Houston Chronicle, the Houstonian, the Huntsville Item and [Today@Sam](#).

Story Ideas

Each Tuesday at the start of class, you will turn-in three story ideas in writing. You must include a summary of the story, the angles you would take and suggestions who to interview. By doing this, you will develop a “nose for news.” Good reporters are always on the lookout for untold, interesting stories. They also know how to localize national stories. If you consistently provide solid, original story ideas, it will help your grade. If your ideas lack originality and thought, your grade will suffer.

Attendance & Late Work

Late news is an oxymoron. Stories must be turned in on time. Any and all assignments are due on the due date. After class is late. Late work is not accepted. Please do not ask me for ways to resolve your deadline problems. It is your responsibility to meet the deadline regardless of technical or other problems.

Meeting deadlines also means being on time. If you arrive after roll is taken, you will be counted absent. More than three absences can impact your grade. There are no excused absences.

Students are required to come to class to get assignments and turn in work. Do not rely solely on Blackboard for information, assignments or notes.

Grading

Stories: 50%

Homework/exercises: 20%

Tests & quizzes: 20%

Participation: 10%

Extra credit: there may be a class field trip. If you go, you will earn extra credit. Other extra credit is not likely.

Academic Dishonesty

All students are expected to engage in all academic pursuits in a manner that is above reproach. Students are expected to maintain complete 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.

If you fabricate content or violate ethical newsgathering practices, you could fail this course.

DO NOT plagiarize. Do not copy anything from any source and pass it off as your own. If you reference someone else's work, give them full credit. Plagiarism will not only earn you disciplinary action or a failing grade, it could earn your expulsion from this institution. Plagiarism is defined as presenting someone else's work, including the work of other students, as your own. Any ideas or materials taken from another source must be full acknowledged. Any student who plagiarizes will receive a failing grade on the assignment and perhaps a more severe penalty, up to and including an F for the course and/or disciplinary referral to the dean.

Appropriate Dress

When conducting interviews or covering events, dress professionally. Remember you're representing the university. The more professionally you dress, the more professionally you'll be treated by the people you interview.

No tanktops, ballcaps, visible underwear or baggy pants. Hoods are not to be worn during class, nor are bulky coats or head coverings.

Americans with Disabilities Act

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 a student has a disability that may affect adversely his/her work in this class, then the student is encouraged to register with the SHSU Counseling Center and to talk with the instructor about how best to deal with the situation. All disclosures of disabilities will be kept strictly confidential. NOTE: no accommodation can be made until the student registers with the Counseling Center.

Religious Holidays

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. 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. "Religious holy day" means a holy day observed by a religion whose places of worship are exempt from property taxation under Section 11.20, Tax Code.

Visitors in the Classroom

Unannounced visitors to class must present a current, official SHSU identification card to be permitted into the classroom. They must not present a disruption to the class by their attendance. If the visitor is not a registered student, it is at the instructor's discretion whether or not the visitor will be allowed to remain in the classroom.

Instructor Evaluations

Students will be asked to complete a course/instructor evaluation form toward the end of the semester.

Study Tips

This is not a class where you memorize facts. It is a class where you learn to think, organize and polish your writing. You must use proper grammar and spelling. Meet your deadlines. Be on time. Write using strong, simple, clear language. Do not make excuses.

If writing is difficult for you, you are encouraged to visit the Sam Houston Writing Center, located in Farrington 111. They will work with you one-on-one. You can drop by the writing center to work with a tutor or call 936 294-3680 to schedule an appointment.

Classroom Rules of Conduct

The Code of Student Conduct and Discipline is found at the following link: <https://www.shsu.edu/students/guide/dean/codeofconduct.html>.

Common courtesy is required of everyone. Students creating any type of disturbance, such as excessive talking, will be asked to leave. Students may also be told to leave if they are not paying attention. Students' cell phones must be turned off and out of sight during class. So of course that means: no texting.

If you have a computer at your desk, you may use it only for classwork (such as taking notes) during class. No checking your e-mail or Facebook page during lectures.