

Senior Capstone: Digital News Bureau (Borderzine.com) - COMM 4313

CRN: 21676 and 25589

Place: Cotton 104

Duration: Jan. 16 – May 2, 2024

Time: T/R 10:30 a.m. – 11:50 a.m.

Professors:

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City Editor / Multimedia Editor

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Course Goals

- Learn to work in a live newsroom structure reporting to editors and interviewing real sources for stories that will publish on Borderzine.com. Effectively manage your time to **meet tight deadlines.**
- Understand Borderzine's niche as an online magazine for an audience interested in life on the border. This is not a campus news publication. We provide coverage and analysis of news and trends that have regional interest.
- Write and publish the following: two radio spots with feature photo; two news enterprise packages on Borderzine.com and one column post on Borderzine's Voces blog. **Web packages must include a lead photo (no wider than 8 inches) and a multimedia element – a news video or an explainer video.**
- Complete, Associated Press-style, caption information must be included with each photo and keywords (tags) must be included with each story. All video must have an Open Captions version. You need to include source contact information at the top of your stories.
- Post weekly updates on your reporting progress in our team collaboration Slack app.
- Demonstrate ability to effectively use professional multimedia techniques in storytelling

- Understand audience engagement and learn how to use social media as a reporting tool and also to promote your Borderzine work and that of your classmates.
- Follow [Engaged Journalism practices](#) to produce thorough, trustworthy and responsive journalism to get communities the information they actually need, which leads to more civic participation.
- Demonstrate good news judgment and an ability to pitch and develop story ideas using a keen sense of inquiry about what you read, see and hear in the news media and from your sources.
- Work with your editors, develop story ideas, report the progress of each assignment in class and in story-development and reporting meetings with the editors as well as post progress updates. Emphasis will be on developing fresh story angles that haven't been previously published on Borderzine and selecting/finding appropriate, relevant sources.
- Build your professional portfolio by revising your work to a level worthy of publication.
- Understand the process and practice of clear and concise news writing by going through multiple reviews and revisions with guidance from your editors.
- Understand ethics in journalism and **the consequences of plagiarism**.

Learning Outcome Objectives

- Proficiency in reporting, i.e. finding and developing stories of community impact using reliable sources; gathering and verifying information for stories, including the use of [engaged journalism](#) and research methods.
- Proficiency in news writing standards.
- Competence in capturing and editing professional photography and video.
- Competence in supporting the role of media in American society and civic participation.
- Competence in understanding the role of the First Amendment in journalism.
- Competence in understanding and analyzing ethical and legal issues in media.
- Knowledge of using social media and blogging to cultivate and engage communities
- Publication of radio news spots, enterprise news packages and a column.

Required texts and other materials

- ***Associated Press Stylebook and Briefing on Media Law***, Norm Goldstein, editor. Available free online via the UTEP library (link also on our Blackboard site) https://libguides.utep.edu/COMM3313/Associated_Press_Manual_online
- ***AP Spanish Stylebook (free via UTEP library)*** <https://www.manualdeestiloap.com/?do=product&pid=SP-917360-1>
- A portable hard drive for storing your multimedia assets. You must bring this to every class.
- Dictionary, Webster's, American Heritage, etc. (Note: electronic version OK).
- Thesaurus (Note: electronic version OK).
- Camera (Note: if you own a digital camera, great, **but don't buy one without talking to us first**—We have digital still and video cameras that you may check out for assignments if available.)
- Google account and Slack account connected to Borderzine channel

Recommended materials

Course structure

- This course functions as a real newsroom. Students work with each other and with instructors in practically every class period to advance their stories to a level worthy of professional publication.
- The class will be reporting intensive. This means you will be interviewing real sources, writing articles, collecting and editing multimedia outside the classroom in order to meet deadlines. Your work will be graded on a percent system. (See grading section below). You will maintain regular reports to editors on Slack.
- We want you to view good journalism as a gradually improving process. No one is a born writer or broadcaster. Good reporting is not intuitive; it is learned and the more you do the better you'll be.
- Timely revisions are an important part of the writing process. **You need to turn in thoroughly reported stories on deadline**, then revise promptly according to your editors' feedback.
- All stories require a formal pitch in our Content Management System (CMS) **My.Camayak.com**. The pitch must be written in story budget line style (outline and example will be posted on Blackboard)
- You are expected to attend every class and be on time as a show of respect to your colleagues. **If you aren't working with an editor on your story during class you should still be in the newsroom and doing at least one of the following:**
 - Working on your weekly reporting updates
 - revising your story
 - editing multimedia
 - arranging or conducting interviews for your stories
 - creating content and promoting your stories and other Borderzine content on social media
 - or other assignments

Newsroom communication and filing stories

- **Text and Photos:** Modern newsrooms use a Content Management System (CMS) to facilitate the review and editing and publication of stories. Borderzine uses My.Camayak.Com, an online platform for sharing stories with your editors. This is where you will file your text stories and feature photos. **All stories must be filed in Camayak for editor review. We will not edit your story unless it is in Camayak. We will not accept text stories as Word documents or other file types.**
- **Multimedia:** You will upload your multimedia files into the Borderzine Google Drive (link will be provided). Here you will upload videos, photo galleries and other multimedia following the specifications outlined on Blackboard.
- **Blackboard:** The class will use Blackboard for class updates, announcements, grades and reference materials
- **Slack:** This class will use the Slack app for communicating among team members and with the entire newsroom. Staff will file weekly reports on story progress to editors via Slack.

Class participation and weekly story updates:

Participation in virtual classroom brainstorming and working with editors is the paramount “class participation” component of your grade. Our teaching approach is to treat each student in the same way an editor at a professional newsroom treats a reporter. That is, as a mature adult who is expected to fulfill their responsibilities by attending class, being on time, meeting assignment deadlines, participating in class discussions and listening attentively during lectures. Frequent absences or tardiness will result in a letter grade drop in the student’s final grade.

Participation Points

Your attendance will be made up of class contributions, weekly updates and class exercises. For example, with participation you will receive a check mark for making positive class contributions and completing exercises satisfactorily. This is worth 10 pts.

Note: Your editors may assign you to cover a story depending on breaking news events.

Social media – You are responsible for promoting your publications on social media platforms designated by your editors.

Progress reports - Your notes should be an explanation on the progress of your reporting, pending interviews, research, photos and multimedia. Also indicate any obstacles or difficulties you’re having with your story. ***You must post your progress update in Slack each week by midnight each Saturday.***

Story sources – For fact-checking purposes you will provide contact info for all sources at the top of your stories (Name, phone, email). You can’t use sources where you have a conflict of interest. That is, you generally can’t use family, friends, your employer or a group in which you are a member. There may be some exceptions, but you will need to clear it with your editor.

Grading

Your final class grade will be the average of your scores in the following categories. Each assignment will be graded on a scale of A to F. Class participation will also be scored from A to F. Points will be deducted from your class participation score for absences. ***All assignments must be of the level of quality needed to be publishable in Borderzine in order to get an A in this course.*** You must complete ***all four Borderzine assignments*** to get an A, even if most of your work is graded at A. You must also excel at participation activities and quizzes.

- Participation (Attendance, exercises, social journalism) - 15 percent
- Reporting updates in slack (12 weeks) - 5 percent
- Quizzes (AP and current events, lowest grade dropped) - 5 percent
- Audio news spots (2 total) with art (photos) - 20 percent
- Multimedia package story assignments (2 total) - 45 percent
 - Story assignments (22.5 percent each) are each graded based on the quality of all of the following elements (unless assignment modified by editor):
 - Pitch and Text story for the web
 - Video story (including version with open captions)
 - Video script
 - Lead photo, with AP style correct outline (max width 8 inches)
 - EXTRA CREDIT – Secondary multimedia (map, chart, photo gallery, podcast, etc.), translate the story into English/Spanish if requested.
- Borderzine Voces column with multiple images (assignment 4) - 10 percent

Story Package Grading Scale:

A = 90 – 100 An “A” grade is designated for assignments that go beyond the requirements of the assignment; exceptional and outstanding work, well reported, edited, presented. Quality worthy of publication.

B = 80 – 89 A “B” grade is designated for assignments that go beyond some of the requirements of the assignment; better than average work, for the most part, well reported and with few errors.

C = 70 – 79 A “C” grade is designated for assignments that meet requirements of the assignment, but is average work; average research, story lacks clarity, sources are insufficient, or there are errors in editing/reporting.

D = 60 – 69 A “D” grade is designated for assignments that do not meet all requirements of the assignment; generally less than average work, less than average research, no clear angle for the story, sources are faulty, content is missing or contains substantial errors.

F = 0 – 59 An “F” grade fails to meet most of the requirements of the assignment; far below average work, incomplete or inaccurate reporting.

STORY DEADLINES* and REQUIREMENTS:

Complete multimedia packages are due on the following dates. Complete packages include text stories and feature photos filed in My.Camayak.com as well as multimedia and scripts filed in the appropriate folder on the Borderzine Google drive

Deadlines TBA

Special Activities this semester

Details and schedules to follow.

You may sometimes cover events about UTEP for a news story after approval from an editor. However, we are not the school newspaper, so UTEP topics should appeal to the interests of our Borderzine audience beyond campus.

English or Spanish: You may write your assignments in English or Spanish or both, whichever languages you intend to work in professionally.

COURSE POLICIES:

The “CEL” designation for this course stands for “Community Engagement & Leadership” and is part of a new certificate program in the College of Liberal Arts (full details to be provided at the start of the course). The purpose of this CEL course is to strengthen students’ understanding of their role in society as engaged citizens and to build the knowledge and competencies that will enable them to be socially responsible and participating community leaders. Accordingly, course assignments and assessments are developed in line with the CEL program mission in Liberal Arts, as well as within the broader framework and mission of UTEP’s “Edge Advantages” goals.

Plagiarism and Cheating: *It is expected that you will produce all of your own work and that you will know how to cite sources and quote people accurately.* Please read the university’s Code of Conduct on UTEP’s website. *Academic dishonesty will be reported to the Chair of the Department of Communication and to the Dean of Student Affairs. The University of Texas El Paso prides itself on its standards of academic excellence and students are expected to uphold the highest standards of academic integrity. Any student who commits an act of scholastic dishonesty is subject to*

discipline. Scholastic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to cheating, plagiarism, collusion, submitting work for credit that is attributable in whole or in part to another person, taking an examination for another person, and any act that gives or attempts to give unfair advantage.

Artificial Intelligence

The use of generative AI tools such as Chat GPT is permitted in this course for the following activities, which must be noted or cited:

- Generating ideas for strong SEO headlines
- Research on a topic that is then verified by fact-checking
- Assistance with summarizing your original articles for effective social media messages
- Experimenting with creating images that might be used with stories or social media AFTER getting approval from your editor and discussing appropriate use.

A short paragraph describing how the tool(s) was/were used for the assignment must be included.

However, you **may not use** AI tools to complete the following activities:

- Writing your stories
- Creating photo illustrations without prior editor approval

Students must cite any borrowed content sources to comply with all applicable citation guidelines, copyright law, and avoid plagiarism. Instances that violate these guidelines will be referred to the Office of Student Conduct and Conflict Resolution.

Accuracy: You must always use correct spelling, grammar and punctuation in every assignment. Always use the spell check feature on your computer.

Drop Policy: *Students wishing to withdraw from the course with a grade of “W” must do so before the official college deadline, **Friday, March 28.***

We will not drop you from the course. However, if you feel that you are unable to complete the course successfully, please let me us know and then contact the [Registrar’s Office](#) to initiate the drop process. If you do not, you are at risk of receiving an “F” for the course

Grade grievance: Formal grade appeals may be submitted to the Faculty Senate’s Grievance Committee. Criteria and form [can be found at this link.](#)

Accommodations Policy: The University is committed to providing reasonable accommodations to students with documented disabilities. Students who become pregnant may also request reasonable accommodations, in accordance with state and federal laws and regulations and University policy. Accommodations that constitute undue hardship are not reasonable. To make a request, please register with the UTEP Center for Accommodations and Support Services (CASS). Contact CASS at 915-747-5148, email them at cass@utep.edu, or apply for accommodations online via the CASS portal.

ILLNESS PRECAUTIONS

Please stay home if you have symptoms of a communicable illness. If you are feeling unwell, please let us know as soon as possible, so that we can work on appropriate accommodations.