

COMM 2310 Basic Multimedia Writing
COURSE SYLLABUS –COMMUNICATION DEPARTMENT

I. COURSE INFORMATION

Fall 2017

COMM 2310 Basic Multimedia Writing CRN: 22835

Class meets on Monday and Wednesday from 10:30 to 11:50 pm in Cotton Memorial Room 104

Class meets on Tuesday and Thursday from 12:00 (noon) to 1:20 pm in Cotton Memorial Room 104

Required texts:

- Rich, Carole (2015) Writing and Reporting News: A Coaching Method 8th Edition. ISBN-10: 1305077331
- The 2016 Associated Press Stylebook and Briefing on Media Law ISBN-10: 091736063X

Reference texts- not required:

- Strunk, William and White, EB (1999) The Elements of Style 4th Edition ISBN-10: 020530902X
- Coelho, Paolo (2007) The Alchemist ISBN-10: 0062315005

Materials:

- Digital camera – any kind will do. (If you own a digital camera, great, but don't buy one without talking to me first). Your smart phone will do.
- USB memory stick - 1 gigabyte - available in the UTEP bookstore.
- Dictionary, Webster's, American Heritage, etc. (Electronic version OK)

II. INSTRUCTOR INFORMATION

Dr. María de los Ángeles Flores

Assistant Professor of Communication

Office: Kelly Hall 223A

Office Hours: MW from 9:15 am to 10:15 am and by appointment.

Phone: 915/747-8798

Email: mdelosangelesflores@utep.edu

III. COURSE CONTENT

A. COURSE DESCRIPTION: Basic Multimedia Writing is a skills-based immersion into journalism. Students will learn the foundations of journalism and the craft's two main components - reporting and writing of the news. In addition, students will explore how news is delivered through multiple platforms such as traditional printed publications, television and radio as well as the new media mediums such as social media, and internet based text, audio and video posting. In this class, students will learn and practice different styles of multimedia writing, concentrating on news, features and more personal styles of communication.

- a. Students will gain an understanding of journalistic form, content and how information is gathered and presented to inform and engage readers, with

special emphasis on how to use social media tools for reporting and dissemination of journalism content.

- b. Students also will become proficient with and use the AP stylebook for their assignments.
- c. The class will include an emphasis on ethics in journalism and the consequences of plagiarism.
- d. Students will work on verification, accuracy and the elimination of errors under the pressure of deadlines.
- e. Students also will learn what they need to do while still in school to prepare for newsroom internships and become work-place ready for news jobs after graduation.

B. COURSE OBJECTIVES:

- a. Gain an understanding of the history of media in American society and multimedia nature of modern American journalism.
- b. Understand the process and practice of clear and concise news writing, specifically how to write and report hard news stories, news features and blog with multimedia elements.
- c. Learn how to gather information for news stories, including interviewing and the use of journalistic research methods.
- d. Practice using social media tools for reporting and content dissemination.
- e. Begin to think critically about news media and how it shapes public opinion/attitudes and society.
- f. Develop a keen sense of skepticism/questioning about what you read, see and hear in the news media.
- g. Learn the process of rewriting your own stories for greater conciseness and accuracy.
- h. Learn about internships, how to develop a resume and develop an internship plan for success as a future news media professional while still at UTEP.

C. LEARNING OUTCOMES:

- a. Report and write hard news stories and news features
- b. Learn and practice effective interview, information-gathering and research skills
- c. Integrate news-writing with digital tools (digital photo, video and audio) for effective multimedia story-telling
- d. Use social media tools to report and promote your news-writing
- e. Prepare a resume and develop an internship plan

D. ASSIGNMENTS:

Attendance —5 %

Class participation – 5%

Exams – 50 %

Writing Assignments – 20 %

Final Exam – 20%

E. GRADING SCALE:

Final grades are based on the total of 100 percentage earned in the course.
A= 90 -100 %, B= 80-89 %, C= 70-79%, D= 60-69%, F= below 60%.

IV. RULES, CLASSROOM POLICIES/ ETC.

1. ATTENDANCE: It is highly recommended that students regularly attend the classes and do the assigned readings prior to class. Five percent of the final grade will be determined by students' attendance and participation in class. The class will use a "five minutes" late policy. If a student has a personal emergency, family emergency, or illness that impedes him/her from attending class, the student is responsible for sending an email to Dr. Flores requesting an excused absence.
2. LATE WORK: All assignments and exams must be turned in/taken on time.
3. PLAGIARISM AND CHEATING: You are expected to write 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:
<http://admin.utep.edu/LinkClick.aspx?link=HOOP-Section+II.pdf&tabid=30181&mid=63285> ***Plagiarism will result in dismissal from the class and an automatic grade of F. Academic dishonesty will be reported to the Chair of the Department of Communication and to the Dean of Student Affairs.***
4. COURSE ASSIGNMENTS: All written work submitted for grading should be on Word document, neatly typed, double-spaced (Times New Roman font, size 12, 1 inch margins on all sides), well-organized, free from spelling & grammatical errors, and must be submitted electronically via Blackboard. If students have any questions about these standards, please ask Dr. Flores. After completing your writing assignments, always email a copy to your own email address to have a backup.
 - i. *English or Spanish:* You may write your assignments in English or Spanish or both, whichever languages you intend to work in professionally.
 - ii. *Accuracy:* You must always use correct spelling, grammar and punctuation in every assignment. Always use the spell check feature in Word.
 - iii. *Storage:* You are required to bring an electronic copy of your work to class on a USB-memory stick. We will often edit your work in class. Memory sticks, or thumb drives, with at least one GB of memory are available for about \$10.
5. COURSE COMMUNICATION: Students are expected to show respect for professors, guests, and each other regardless of opinions, values, cultural or other differences. Students should give each other equal opportunity to express opinions, experiences, and ideas. All students should be supportive of a cooperative learning environment in the classroom. Dr. Flores reserves the right to publicly address students whose behavior disrupts the learning environment. Be prepared to discuss current events in the news locally, regionally and beyond. This shows that you are observing coverage, technique and news judgment.

6. **CELL PHONES:** Personal and work cell phones must be muted before class begins. If you need to keep the ringer on for emergency purposes, please let Dr. Flores know before the start of the class session.
7. **COURSE LABTOPS AND TABLETS:** Students are encouraged to take class notes on their laptops and tablets. Please use Evernote (free software) to keep your class notes organized and neat. For more information, please visit: <https://evernote.com> Evernote video overview: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Pjn6YkCY2yA>

V. ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT

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.

VI. CASS POLICY

If you have a disability and need classroom accommodations, please contact The Center for Accommodations and Support Services (CASS) at 747-5148, or by email to cass@utep.edu, or visit their office located in UTEP Union East, Room 106. For additional information, please visit the CASS website at www.sa.utep.edu/cass. CASS Staff are the only individuals who can validate and if need be, authorize accommodations for students with disabilities.

VII. COURSE CALENDAR (Daily)

1. Week 1

Class Basics
Review of syllabus
Rich: Chapter 1 (Changing Concepts of News)
What is news? Elements of news, decision-making. AP style introduction.
Rich: Chapter 2 (The Basic News Story)
Outside AP Style quiz No. 1 a-c

2. Week 2

News-writing Basics
The five “Ws,” leads, nut graphs, using quotes and the inverted pyramid.
What is a hard news story?
Rich: Chapter 4 (Sources and Online Research)
AP Style quiz No. 1 a-c due
Rich: Chapter 5 (Interviewing Techniques)
What makes a good interview and asking the ‘bomb’
In-class AP Style quiz No. 2 d-f

3. Week 3

Story structure
Storytelling styles

Outside writing assignment: hard news leads
Rich: Chapter 7 (Leads and Nut Graphs)
In-class AP Style quiz No. 3 g-i
The basic of covering the news conference
In class writing assignment
Read: Handout “Basic Tools of Writing” and “Style and the Stylebook”
Rich: Chapter 8 (Story Organization)

4. **Week 4**

Interviewing techniques, quotes and attribution. Asking the “bomb.”
Rich: Chapter 5 (Interviewing techniques)
In-class AP Style quiz No. 3 j-l
Creating a Twitter account and bio
Rich: Chapter 20 (Crime and Punishment)
The cop beat – how to cover death, destruction and breaking news

5. **Week 5**

Newsgathering and verification
Rich: Chapter 20 (Crime and Punishment)
Introduction to broadcast writing and accident, disaster and weather stories.
In class assignment: Accident or weather or disaster story No. 1
In-class AP Style quiz No. 4 m-o
Rich: Chapter 21 (Disasters, Weather and Tragedies)

6. **Week 6**

Review of assignments. More on broadcast writing and covering accidents.
Outside accident or weather story (for broadcast) No. 2
Rich: Chapter 21 (Disasters, Weather and Tragedies)
Convergent media
Rich: Chapter 3 (Social Media)
In-class AP Style quiz No. 5 p-r

7. **Week 7**

How do you think for print, broadcast and Web at the same time
Rich: Chapter 6 (Mobile and Multimedia Skills)
The structure of stories and different forms of stories
In-class AP Style quiz No. 6 the letter s
Rich: Chapter 9 (Story Forms)

8. **Week 8**

Rich: Chapter 9 (Story Forms)
In-class assignments: Lead exercises
Storytelling, features stories and narrative writing techniques
In-class AP Style quiz No. 7 t-v
Rich: Chapter 10 (Storytelling and Feature Techniques)

9. **Week 9**

10. Rich: Chapter 12 (Online Journalism)
Writing news releases for print and broadcast
Rich: Chapter 13 (Public Relations Writing)

11. **Week 10**

Basic and feature obits, personality profiles

Outside assignment – Celebrity advance (due in one week)

Rich: Chapter 17 (Profiles and Obituaries)

Mock press conference

Deconstructing the press conference

In-class editing of your hard news story about the press conference (if time allows)

Rich: Chapter 18 (Speeches, News Conferences and Meetings)

12. Week 11

Math every journalist should know - addition, subtraction, percentages, etc.

Celebrity advance obit due

Rich: Chapter 19 (Government and Statistical Stories)

A basic understanding of libel and invasion of privacy, importance of accuracy

Rich: Chapter 14 (Media Law)

13. Week 12

SPJ's Code of Ethics

Rich: Chapter 15 (Media Ethics)

Developing sensitivity to multicultural issues, guidelines about writing and reporting about racial, ethnic and minority groups

Rich: Chapter 16 (Multicultural Sensitivity)

14. Week 13

How do you land that first gig

Rich: Chapter 22 (Media Jobs and Internships)

15. Week 14

Preparing for final exam

16. Week 15

Final exam submission

THE INSTRUCTOR RESERVES THE RIGHT TO MAKE NECESSARY
CHANGES IN THE SCHEDULE/CALENDAR/ASSIGNMENTS DEPENDING ON
THE NEEDS OF THE CLASS.