COMMUNICATION DEPARTMENT
COMM 2310: Basic Multimedia Writing
COURSE SYLLABUS – Spring 2022

I. COURSE INFORMATION
- COMM 2310 Basic Multimedia Writing CRN: 21904
- Class meetings in Liberal Arts 122 on Tuesdays from 4:30 pm to 5:50 pm
- However, if the winter temperature drops below 40 degrees F (4 degrees C), we will meet online via UTEP Zoom to stay safe from the hazardous cold conditions. Every Tuesday morning, students will receive a friendly reminder of our class meeting to let them know if the class will meet in the physical or virtual classroom.
- Class uses hybrid learning pedagogy.
- Class instructions: This is a hybrid course facilitated on Blackboard. Students will need to schedule a minimum of 6 to 8 hours of computer access each week for fifteen consecutive weeks to be successful and complete this course.
- Required texts: • Rich, Carole (2015) Writing and Reporting News: A Coaching Method 8th Edition. ISBN-10: 1305077331
- Reference texts- not required:
  i. Strunk, William and White, EB (1999) The Elements of Style 4th Edition ISBN-10: 020530902X
  ii. The 2018 Associated Press Stylebook and Briefing on Media Law ISBN-10: 091736063X
- The course academic materials are only for the use of students currently enrolled in this course and only for the purpose of this course. They may not be further disseminated.
- Materials:
  i. Smart cell phone
  ii. USB memory stick - 1 gigabyte - available in the UTEP bookstore
  iii. 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: Mondays from 4:15 pm to 5:30 pm, and by appointment.
- Phone: 915/747-8798
- Email: mdelosangelesflores@utep.edu
- Class email policy: On weekdays, please allow 24 hours for a response. On weekends, please allow 48 hours for a response.

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.

- 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.
- Students also will become proficient with and use the AP stylebook for their assignments.
- The class will include an emphasis on ethics in journalism and the consequences of plagiarism.
- Students will work on verification, accuracy and the elimination of errors under the pressure of deadlines.
- 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.
- Furthermore, students in this section of the course will have an opportunity to collaborate with UTEP's student media including *The Prospector* and their bilingual magazine, *Minero*. This collaboration consists of developing the next generation of student reporters for *The Prospector* and *Minero*. The news stories generated in this class will have the potential of being submitted to the student media for publication consideration. Upon being approved for publication, the student who wrote the news story will receive 10 bonus points on that assignment. Note that the publication date for a news story may not be in the same semester as the class. However, the bonus points will be awarded this semester as soon as approval for publication is received. The publication dates are determined by *The Prospector* Editor-in-Chief, not by the course professor.

B. **COURSE OBJECTIVES:**
- Gain an understanding of the history of media in American society and multimedia nature of modern American journalism.
- 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.
- Learn how to gather information for news stories, including interviewing and the use of journalistic research methods.
- Practice using social media tools for reporting and content dissemination.
- Begin to think critically about news media and how it shapes public opinion/attitudes and society.
- Develop a keen sense of skepticism/questioning about what you read, see and hear in the news media.
- Learn the process of rewriting your own stories for greater conciseness and accuracy.
- 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:**

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

D. ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING SCALE:
- Class discussions = 10%
- Quizzes/test = 30%
- Opinion News Story = 30%
- Personality/Profile News Story = 30%
- Final grades are based on a total of 100 percentage points earned in the course.
- A= 90-100 %, B= 80-89 %, C= 70-79%, D= 60-69%, F= below 60%.

IV. RULES, CLASSROOM POLICIES/ ETC:

A. **CLASS OPERATION: This online course is designed following the asynchronous learning pedagogy without lectures.** This learning mode requires that junior and senior communication students conduct their academic activities on their own. Each student must set aside between 6 to 8 hours to work on this class. Students are encouraged to do their weekly readings, discussion, activities, and assessments because this class is cumulative. This means that students will need the previous weeks' knowledge to understand the upcoming week's content. If students are not consistent with their coursework, this class will become very challenging to them.

B. **LEARNING MODULES:** This course is designed using a modular format—that is, each week is "packaged" as a single module so that all of the materials, lecture notes, submission areas, and discussion posts are in one area for a given week. For 15 consecutive weeks, every Monday morning a reminder message for each module will be posted as a Blackboard announcement and an email will be sent out by Dr. Flores to let students know about each week's tasks. Students will have until Saturday at 11:30 pm to complete their week's work, with the exception of the final project which is due on the last class day, which is a Wednesday, not a Saturday like on the previous weeks.

C. **LATE WORK: All assignments and exams must be turned in/taken on time. Late work will not be accepted after the due date without written consent from Dr. Flores. If a student fails to submit coursework for two consecutive weeks, Dr. Flores will immediately withdraw that student from the class.**
- On rare occasions, make-up work will be given *only* in the case of a *documented* emergency. Note that make-up work may be in a different format than the original work, may require more intensive preparation, and may be graded with penalty points. If you miss an assignment and the reason is not considered excusable, you will receive a zero. It is therefore important to reach out to Dr. Flores—in advance if at all possible—and explain with proper documentation why you missed a given

course requirement. Once a deadline has been established for the make-up work, no further extensions or exceptions will be granted.

- Dr. Flores strongly suggests that you submit your work with plenty of time to spare in the event that you have a technical issue with the course website, network, and/or your computer. I also suggest that you save all of your work (answers to discussion, quizzes, exams, and essays) in a separate Word document as a back-up. This way, you will have evidence that you completed the work and will not lose credit. If you are experiencing difficulties submitting your work through the course website, please contact the UTEP Help Desk. You can email me your back-up document as a last resort before the deadline. No late work will be accepted.

D. **ATTEDANCE:** According to UTEP Curriculum and Classroom Policies, "When, in the judgment of the instructor, a student has been absent to such a degree as to impair his or her status relative to credit for the course, the instructor may drop the student from the class with a grade of "W" before the course drop deadline and with a grade of "F" after the course drop deadline." See academic regulations in the UTEP Undergraduate Catalog for a list of excused absences. Therefore, if Dr. Flores finds that, due to non-performance in the course, you are at risk of failing, Dr. Flores will drop you from the course. Dr. Flores will provide 24-hour advance notice via email.

- If you feel that you are unable to complete the course successfully, please let Dr. Flores 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.

E. **TECHNOLOGY REQUIREMENTS:** Course content is delivered via the internet through the Blackboard Learning Management System. Ensure that your UTEP e-mail account is working and that you have access to the web and a stable web browser. Google Chrome and Mozilla Firefox are the best browsers for Blackboard; other browsers may cause complications. When having technical difficulties, update your browser, clear your cache, or try switching to another browser.

- You will need to have access to a computer/laptop, scanner, a webcam, and a microphone. You will need to download or update the following software: Microsoft Office, Adobe Acrobat Reader, Windows Media Player, QuickTime, and Java. Check that your computer hardware and software are up-to-date and able to access all parts of the course.
- If you do not have a word-processing software, you can download Word and other Microsoft Office programs (including Excel, PowerPoint, Outlook and more) for free via UTEP's Microsoft Office Portal. Click the following link for more information about Microsoft Office 365 and follow the instructions.
- IMPORTANT: If you encounter technical difficulties beyond your scope of troubleshooting, please contact the UTEP Help Desk as they are trained specifically in assisting with technological needs of students. Please do not contact Dr. Flores for this type of assistance. The Help Desk is much better equipped than Dr. Flores to assist you!

F. **NETIQUETTE**: As we know, sometimes communication online can be challenging. It is possible to miscommunicate what we mean or to misunderstand what our classmates

mean given the lack of body language and immediate feedback. Therefore, please keep these netiquette (network etiquette) guidelines in mind. Failure to observe them may result in disciplinary action.

- Always consider your audience. This is a college-level course; therefore, all communication should reflect polite consideration of other's ideas.
- Respect and courtesy must be provided to classmates and to the instructor at all times. No harassment or inappropriate postings will be tolerated.
- When reacting to someone else's message, address the ideas, not the person. Post only what anyone would comfortably state in a face-to-face situation.
- Blackboard is not a public internet venue; all postings to it should be considered private and confidential. Whatever is posted in these online spaces is intended for your classmates and professor only. Please do not copy documents and paste them to a publicly accessible website, blog, or other space.

G. **TEST PROCTORING SOFTWARE**: ALL course assessments will make use of Respondus LockDown Browser and Respondus Monitor within Blackboard to promote academic integrity. You are encouraged to learn more about how to use these programs prior to the first test. Please review the following guidelines:
- The assessments will only be available at the times identified on the course calendar.
- You may take the test at any time during a 24-hour window.
- A reliable internet connection is essential to completing the exam. If you must go to a location to take the exam (such as the library), be sure to follow their health and safety requirements.
- You have 1 attempt to take the test. Once the window closes, your answers will be saved, and no changes can be made.
- Respondus LockDown Browser will require that all internet tabs are closed prior to the start of the test.
- Respondus Monitor requires a webcam and microphone.
- You will be required to show the webcam your student ID prior to the start of the test.
- Your face should be completely visible during the test. Blocking the camera will disable the test.
- No notes or textbook materials are permitted during the test. Respondus Monitor requires you to take a video of your surrounding area (desk, chair, walls, etc.)
- You should not have conversations with other people and/or leave and return to the area during the test.

H. **PLAGIARISM AND CHEATING:** You are expected to write all of your own work and to know how to cite sources and quote people accurately. Please read the university's   Code   of   Conduct: http://admin.utep.edu/LinkClick.aspx?link=HOOPSection+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.

- Some of your coursework and assessments may be submitted to SafeAssign, a plagiarism detecting software. SafeAssign is used to review assignment submissions for originality and will help you learn how to properly attribute sources rather than paraphrase.

I. **ONLINE COURSE RESOURCES**: WHERE YOU CAN GO FOR ASSISTANCE. UTEP provides a variety of student services, academic services and support:

- <u>Help Desk</u>: Students experiencing technological challenges (email, Blackboard, software, etc.) can submit a ticket to the UTEP Helpdesk for assistance. Contact the Helpdesk via phone, email, chat, website, or in person if on campus.
- <u>UTEP Library</u>: Access a wide range of resources including online, full-text access to thousands of journals and eBooks, plus reference service and librarian assistance for enrolled students.
- <u>University Writing Center (UWC)</u>: Submit papers here for assistance with writing style and formatting, ask a tutor for help and explore other writing resources.
- <u>Math Tutoring Center (MaRCS)</u>: Ask a tutor for help and explore other available math resources.
- <u>History Tutoring Center (HTC)</u>: Receive assistance with writing history papers, get help from a tutor and explore other history resources.
- <u>RefWorks</u>: A bibliographic citation tool; check out the RefWorks tutorial and Fact Sheet and Quick-Start Guide.
- <u>Military Student Success Center</u>: Assists personnel in any branch of service to reach their educational goals.
- <u>Center for Accommodations and Support Services</u>: Assists students with ADA-related accommodations for coursework, housing, and internships.
- <u>Counseling and Psychological Services:</u> Provides a variety of counseling services including individual, couples, and group sessions as well as career and disability assessments.

J. **COURSE ASSIGMENTS:** All written work submitted for grading should be on a 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.

- English or Spanish: You may write your assignments in English or Spanish or both, whichever languages you intend to work in professionally.
- Accuracy: You must always use correct spelling, grammar and punctuation in every assignment. Always use the spell check feature in Word.
- Storage: You are required to make an electronic copy of your work on a USB-memory stick. Memory sticks, or thumb drives, with at least one GB of memory.

K. **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.

L. **CELL PHONES:** Personal and work cell phones must be placed in silent mode 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.

M. **COURSE LAPTOPS AND TABLETS:** Students are encouraged to take class notes on their laptops and tablets. Please use Evernote (free software) to keep your class note organized and neat. For more information, please visit: https://evernote.com Evernote video overview: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Pjn6YkCY2yA

N. **ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT**: The University of Texas at 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.

O. **COVID-19 PRECAUTIONS:** You must STAY AT HOME and REPORT if you (1) have been diagnosed with COVID-19, (2) are experiencing COVID-19 symptoms, or (3) have had recent contact with a person who has received a positive coronavirus test. Reports should be made at screening.utep.edu. If you know of anyone who should report any of these three criteria, you should encourage them to report. If the individual cannot report, you can report on their behalf by sending an email to COVIDaction@utep.edu.

- For each day that you attend campus—for any reason—you must complete the questions on the UTEP screening website (screening.utep.edu) prior to arriving on campus. The website will verify if you are permitted to come to campus. Under no circumstances should anyone come to class when feeling ill or exhibiting any of the known COVID-19 symptoms. If you are feeling unwell, please let Dr. Flores know as soon as possible, and alternative instruction will be provided. Students are advised to minimize the number of encounters with others to avoid infection.
- Wear face coverings when in common areas of campus or when others are present. You must wear a face covering over your nose and mouth at all times when in class. If you choose not to wear a face covering, you may not enter the classroom. If you remove your face covering, you will be asked to put it on or leave the classroom. Students who refuse to wear a face covering and follow preventive COVID-19 guidelines will be dismissed from the class and will be subject to disciplinary action

according to Section 1.2.3 Health and Safety and Section 1.2.2.5 Disruptions in the UTEP Handbook of Operating Procedures (**classes with on-campus meetings**). Please note that if COVID-19 conditions deteriorate in the City of El Paso, all course and lab activities may be transitioned to remote delivery.

P. **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.

- COVID-19 Accommodations for CASS: Students are not permitted on campus when they have a positive COVID-19 test, exposure or symptoms. If you are not permitted on campus, you should contact Dr. Flores as soon as possible so we can arrange necessary and appropriate accommodations (***classes with on-campus meetings***). Students who are considered high risk according to CDC guidelines and/or those who live with individuals who are considered high risk may contact Center for Accommodations and Support Services (CASS) to discuss temporary accommodations for on-campus courses and activities.

WEEKLY CALENDAR-SUBJECT TO CHANGE: This calendar provides an overview of the course. More details and a weekly checklist are available in the weekly modules in Blackboard. The due date for weekly coursework is ALWAYS on Saturday at 11:00 PM (MST). No late work will be accepted. THE INSTRUCTOR RESERVES THE RIGHT TO MAKE NECESSARY CHANGES IN THE SCHEDULE/CALENDAR/ASSIGNMENTS DEPENDING ON THE NEEDS OF THE CLASS.

Week	Coursework
Week 1 January 18 – January 22	Discussion: Introduce yourself to your peers Review of syllabus Topic/reading—Changing Concepts of News
Week 2 January 24 – January 29	Discussion: How to Write a News story Topic/reading—Basic News Story
Week 3 January 31 – February 5	Discussion: Hemingway's Four Amazing Rules for Writing Topic — Body of News writing models/frames
Week 4 February 7 - February 12	Discussion: Editorial Writing Topic—News Analysis: Opinion Stories
Week 5 February 14 - February 19	Discussion: Editorial Writing Opinion News Story: Brainstorm and News Pitch
Week 6 February 21 - February 26	Discussion: NPR's Scott Simon: How to Tell a Story Opinion News Story: News Gathering and News Writing
Week 7 February 28 - March 5	Discussion: How to Write an Editorial? Opinion News Story: News Copy-Editing and Final Draft
Week 8 March 7 - March 11	Discussion: Opinion Writing" by Joe Grimm Opinion News Story: Newswriting and Submission of Final Draft
Week 9 March 21 - March 26	Discussion: 5 Simple Journalistic Techniques for Effective Interviews

	Topic/reading—Interviewing Techniques
Week 10 March 28 – April 2	Discussion: What is feature journalism? by Andre Wiesner Topic/reading—Profiles and Obituaries
Week 11 April 4 – April 9	Discussion: Feature News vs Hard News Writing by Dale Rice News Analysis: Personality Feature and Personality News Pitch Personality News Story: Brainstorm and News Pitch
Week 12 April 11 – April 16	Discussion: Writing a Personality Feature by Esther Wojcicki Personality News Story: News Gathering and Interview
Week 13 April 18 – April 23	Discussion: The Basics of Feature Writing by Brett Atwood. Personality News Story: News Writing
Week 14 April 25 – April 30	Discussion: How to Write News Articles - In a Nutshell. Personality News Story: News Writing and Copy Editing
Week 15 May 2 – May 5	Personality News Story: News Writing and Submission of Final Draft