

**JMC 194: Newswriting (Spring 2004)**

**Dept. of Journalism and Mass Communication  
Murray State University**

**Instructor: Dr. Celia Wall**

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<u>Office Hours:</u>	Monday	9:30 – 11:30 a.m. 12:30 – 1:30 p.m. 2:45 - 3:45 p.m.	
	Tuesday	12 – 12:30 p.m.	
	Wednesday	8 a.m. - 12 noon 12:30 – 1:30 p.m.	<i>By appointment as needed</i>
	Thursday	12 – 12:30 p.m.	

Class Meets: Section 01: 9:30 - 10:45 a.m. T & Th

Catalog Description: Principles of newswriting for print and electronic media. Prerequisites: ENG 101 with a grade of *B* or better, typing proficiency, JMC 168 with a grade of *C* or better.

Course Purpose: To introduce the student to the principles of news gathering and writing.

Course Objectives: The student will learn to write basic news stories using proper grammar, sentence structure and Associated Press style and will polish such skills as listening and observing in order to report the news accurately.

Prerequisites: Keyboarding proficiency, completion of English 101 with a grade of *B* or better, JMC 168 with a grade of *C* or better.

Course Outline: See attached schedule for the semester.

Texts & References:

- Fedler, Fred, et. al. *Reporting for the media*. 7<sup>th</sup> edition. New York: Harcourt Brace Publishers, 2000.
- Goldstein, Norm, editor. *The Associated Press Stylebook and Libel Manual*, latest ed. New York, NY: The Associated Press.

You are expected to do the reading assigned for each class. Questions from course readings may show up on examinations even though they are not covered in class.

Instructional Activities: Lecture, discussion, reserve readings, handouts, in-class and out-of-class writing assignments. Supervised writing labs will be conducted during class.

Field, Clinical and/or Laboratory Experiences: During the semester, the student may be asked to cover current news events on campus or in the community.

Resources: The student is expected to keep current with what is happening in the world through regular reading of either the traditional or online versions of *The Paducah Sun*, *The Murray State News*, *The Courier Journal* and *Newsweek* (and/or other weekly news magazines) and listening and viewing radio and television news broadcasts. Newspapers and magazines are available in the periodicals section of Waterfield Library and the department's reading room. Unannounced current events quizzes may be given during the semester.

Grading Procedures:

The final grade for the semester will be determined by the following elements:

Writing assignments	40 percent
Examinations	30 percent
Homework assignments	10 percent
Quizzes	10 percent
Attendance	10 percent

Writing assignments (40 percent) -- Most weeks, the student will be given writing exercises to complete during the class period. In addition, the student may be asked to do writing assignments as homework or to cover live news events (such as a speech, a sports event, a meeting) which will be written up outside of class. Each writing assignment will be evaluated on mechanics (grammar, spelling, word usage, AP style), news judgment and organization. Accuracy is essential. Grades will suffer for errors of fact.

Examinations (30 percent) -- In addition to the announced and unannounced quizzes, three examinations will be given covering material from the book, handouts and class lectures as well as concepts learned from the writing assignments. Chapters and material to be covered and the format of the exams will be discussed prior to the test.

Homework Assignments (10 percent) -- A variety of homework assignments will be given throughout the semester, including assignments on copy editing, news values, conducting research using the Internet, grammar, punctuation, etc.

Quizzes (10 percent) -- It is important that the student read the textbook and handouts provided. To encourage the student to do this, unannounced quizzes covering assigned readings in the textbook and on handouts may be given. In addition to these unannounced quizzes, announced quizzes on editing symbols, grammar, punctuation and AP style may also be given. Unannounced quizzes CANNOT be made up.

Attendance (100 pts.) -- Attendance will be worth 100 points. This component of the final grade will be determined in the following manner: At the beginning of the semester, a student will be given 100 points for attendance. Each time the student misses class because of an unexcused absence, 10 points will be deducted from the 100 points.

Grading Scale for the Course:

A = 92 -100	C = 74 - 82	D = 65-73
B = 83-91		E = 64 and below

Attendance Policy: Journalism and public relations are deadline-driven fields. It is *critical* to your professional success that you learn to meet deadlines. As you would be expected to be punctual and present on a professional job, you are expected to attend all classes and to arrive on time.

A legitimate reason for being absent should be brought to the instructor's attention by notifying the instructor of an absence ahead of time...just as you would notify a professional employer. ***For record keeping purposes, it is required that such notification of an absence be in writing***, i.e., an e-mail, handwritten note, etc. While it is acceptable to phone the instructor to let her know you will not be in class, you also need to follow up with something in writing concerning the absence to make sure it does not count against you.

Missed work -- Work missed due to an *excused* absence may be made up at the discretion of the instructor, with the exception of unannounced quizzes. These cannot be made up whether the absence is excused or not. ***Make-up work will not be accepted more than one class session after the absence, and points will be counted off for late work.***

It is the student's responsibility to make arrangements with the instructor to make up any missed work resulting from an excused absence.

***NOTE***: The complete University-approved Attendance Policy can be found in the latest *Undergraduate Bulletin*. Refer to this policy for a discussion of *excused absences*.

Academic Honesty:

Academic dishonesty will not be tolerated. Plagiarism and other forms of academic dishonesty on an assignment in this class could result in a failing grade for the course as well as additional disciplinary action by the university. For the official university policy, see "Academic Honesty" in the latest Murray State University *Undergraduate Bulletin*.

**JMC 194: Newswriting  
Syllabus Attachment**

Explanation of grading of writing:

Grades reflect your ability to gather accurate information, to organize this information and to communicate it to an audience in a clear and succinct way. Correct spelling, grammar, punctuation and conformity to appropriate style are taken into consideration in assigning grades.

- A The story is exceptionally well written, organized and edited. It is thorough, clear, concise and interesting. The lead has a strong news emphasis as appropriate. The story may have one or two minor errors.
- B The story could be published after some editing. It contains a few minor errors but not faults in fact or logic. The lead is clear and emphasizes appropriate news element.
- C The story is superficial. It needs extensive editing and even rewriting in parts. The lead may be too wordy or fail to emphasize the best news element. The story is disorganized and contains several errors. The writer has accomplished a draft of the story that can be salvaged.
- D The story contains some of the necessary information. It is disorganized. The information may be virtually retyped from the workbook. Little effort has been made to compose a good story. The draft probably has numerous errors. Not fit to read.
- E The story is unfit for publication and unacceptable. A sloppy or incomplete effort was made at writing. The composition and typing are careless.

Explanation of letter grades:

Writing assignments will be given a letter grade that will then be converted to a number for the purpose of figuring grades. Below is a scale, which you can use for converting a letter grade into a number:

An..... "A+" signifies you have earned 100% of possible credit.

A = 96	B+ = 91	C+ = 82	D+ = 73	E = 64 and
A- = 92	B = 87	C = 78	D = 69	below
	B- = 83	C- = 74	D- = 65	

Course Elements and Requirements:

1. All papers must be typed, double-spaced on 8 1/2" x 11" paper with 1" margins. The proper format for the type of story being written must be followed. Handwritten assignments will not be accepted unless otherwise indicated by instructor.
2. Rewriting is a critical part of the writing process. There may be times when you will be asked to

rewrite an assignment to correct errors and to improve your grade. When such is required, the new copy should be stapled on top of the original. Your work will receive a grade only after structural or other errors have been corrected. All rewrites are due the next class period.

3. Gross Factual Errors (GFE), such as an incorrect address, misquoting someone, or presenting inaccurate information, are serious errors for a journalist to make and will be penalized accordingly.
4. Misspellings are not acceptable for journalists, and grades on assignments in this class will reflect problems in this area. Keep a dictionary handy and use it to check your spelling regularly -- especially if spelling is a problem for you.
5. Professional media writers learn to write in the workplace by observing what their supervisors/ editors change and do not change in their copy. In class, the instructor is equivalent to an editor. Thus, reviewing the instructor's comments on your written work is important. It will keep you from repeating mistakes and will also help you answer exam questions about writing techniques. Do not hesitate to meet with the instructor outside of class to discuss her comments on your writing assignments.