

Murray State University

Department: Journalism & Mass Communications

Course Number: JMC 194 Credit Hours: 3

I. Course Title: **Newswriting**

II. Catalog Description: Principles of newswriting for print and electronic media.

Prerequisites: ENG 101 with a grade of *B* or better, keyboarding proficiency, JMC 168 with a grade of *C* or better.

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

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

V. Content Outline: Gather, write and present news.

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

VII. 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.

VIII. Resources: The student is expected to keep current with what is happening in the world through regular reading of either print or online versions of local, regional, state and national newspapers and news magazines, as well as listening to 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.

IX. Grading Procedures:

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

Writing assignments	50 percent
Examinations	30 percent
Quizzes	20 percent

Writing assignments (50 percent) -- Most weeks, students will be given writing exercises to complete during class. In addition, they may be asked to complete 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. *Think before beginning to write, and proofread and correct copy before turning it in.*

Examinations (30 percent) -- In addition to the quizzes, three examinations will cover 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 assessments.

Quizzes (20 percent) -- It is important that the student read the textbook and handouts provided. To encourage this outcome, 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.

**Journalism is a deadline-driven field.
Students will receive NO credit for work turned in late.
Handwritten assignments will not be accepted.**

Final Grading Scale for the Course:

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

IX. Texts & References:

-- Fedler, Fred, et. al. *Reporting for the Media*. 8th edition. New York: Oxford University Press, 2005. Chapters 1 -12 and 18 are the only chapters to be covered.

-- Goldstein, Norm, editor. *The Associated Press Stylebook and Libel Manual*, 2003 ed. or more recent. New York, NY: The Associated Press.

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

X. Attendance Policy:

Attendance and punctuality are required. As you would be expected to be punctual and present on a professional job, you are expected to attend all classes. 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.

Missed work -- Work missed because of an **excused** absence may be made up, but work missed because of an **unexcused** absence may not be made up. Thus, unexcused absences will negatively affect a student's final grade. Unannounced quizzes are an

exception to this policy. These cannot be made up whether the absence is excused or not.

It is the student's responsibility to make arrangements with the instructor to make up any missed work resulting from an excused absence. This should be done as soon as possible after the absence...or before the absence if at all possible, ***since assignments will be marked down for each class day they are late even because of an excused absence.***

NOTE: The complete University-approved Attendance Policy can be found in the *Undergraduate Bulletin*. Pay particular attention to the following from that policy:

EXCUSED ABSENCES FALL INTO TWO BROAD CATEGORIES:

1. ABSENCE DUE TO PERSONAL ILLNESS OR DEATH IN THE IMMEDIATE FAMILY OR OTHER EXTRAORDINARY PERSONAL CIRCUMSTANCE. FACULTY MAY REQUIRE APPROPRIATE AUTHENTICATION OR DOCUMENTATION.

2. ABSENCE DUE TO STUDENT PARTICIPATION IN A UNIVERSITY SANCTIONED EVENT IN WHICH THE STUDENT SERVES AS A REPRESENTATIVE OF THE INSTITUTION.

FUNDAMENTALLY, student absences or significant latenesses from more than four class periods will likely result in lowering of the final course letter grade.

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*. Also see: <http://www.murraystate.edu/cbpa/PDF/Honesty.pdf> and <http://www.murraystate.edu/cbpa/PDF/Ethics.pdf>

Statement of Affirmative Action and Equal Opportunity:

Murray State University does not discriminate on grounds of race, color, gender, sexual orientation, religion, national origin, age, disability, or veteran's status in providing any educational or other benefits services of Murray State University to students or those applying for admission at Murray State University. Murray State University attempts to provide equal opportunity in all areas of student admissions, financial aid, employment, and placement and provides upon request, reasonable accommodation including auxiliary aids and services necessary to afford individuals with disabilities an equal opportunity to participate in all programs and activities.

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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 = 95	B+ = 88	C+ = 78	D+ = 68	E = 64 and
A- = 92	B = 85	C = 75	D = 65	below
	B- = 82	C- = 72	D- = 62	

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 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 comments on writing assignments.

Writing assignments (5) = 100 points apiece;

Exams (3) = 100 points apiece;

Quizzes (4) = 50 points apiece.