

Introduction to News Writing

COMM 1610-004 | Spring 2020 | Hybrid online + Tuesdays, 2-5 p.m. | LNCO 2940

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Office hours: By appointment
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Overview

Materials

- ▶ **Required:** *The Associated Press Stylebook* (2015 or newer)
 ISBN: 978-0465062942 (2015 edition); ISBN 0465093043 (2017 edition);
 ISBN: 978-0-917360-68-8 (2019 edition).
 Other versions available at: <http://www.apstylebook.com/>
- ▶ **Required:** *The Elements of Style* (4th edition or illustrated edition—**not** an older one)
 ISBN: 020530902X (4th edition); ISBN 9780143112723 (illustrated edition)
- ▶ **Required:** Reliable cloud storage, a memory card, or a USB drive for your work.
 You *must save and revise* your work for your Portfolio at the end of the semester.
- ▶ All other materials will be on Canvas or online.

Course Goals:

By the end of this class, you should be able to:

1. **Gather** information, **verify** facts and **write** on deadline.
2. **Write well**, with correct grammar, style, mechanics and structure.
3. Write clear, compelling **leads** for news and feature stories.
4. Build on leads to write more **complex stories**.
5. Use a variety of **sources** to provide context, accuracy and balance.
6. **Tell stories**—use quotations and description to bring a narrative to life.
7. Write stories that engage with **public audiences**—that is, real people.

Your Responsibilities

- ▶ **Commit to be in class**, every week and *on time (2 p.m. Tuesdays)*.
- ▶ **Commit to online work**, *on time (2 p.m. Mondays)*.
- ▶ **Commit to lots of writing**. This is an intensive class with many written assignments.
- ▶ **Be professional and respectful**. Civility is key to professionalism.
- ▶ **NO FOOD in the classroom**. There are chairs in the hallway if you need to eat.

University and Class Policies

- ▶ **ADA:** The University of Utah seeks to provide equal access to its programs, services, and activities. If you need accommodation, contact the Center for Disability and Access, Union Building Room 162, 801-581-5020, <http://disability.utah.edu/>.
- ▶ **Content Accommodation:** This course might expose you to things you find discomforting. I will *not* make accommodations in course content, requirements, or expectations. <http://regulations.utah.edu/academics/6-100.php> (See Section III, Part Q)
- ▶ **Safety:** The University of Utah values the safety of all campus community members. To report suspicious activity or to request a courtesy escort, call campus police at 801-585-COPS (801-585-2677). safeu.utah.edu
- ▶ **Respect:** Violence and harassment based on sex and gender (including orientation and identity/ expression) is a civil-rights offense and is treated the same as those against race, national origin, color, religion, age, disabled status, veteran’s status, or genetic information. <https://oeo.utah.edu/>
- ▶ **Academic Integrity:** <http://www.regulations.utah.edu/academics/6-400.html> (See Section I, Part B2, and Section V, Part A and Part B, 1-5)
- ▶ **Attendance:** <http://regulations.utah.edu/academics/6-100.php> (See Section III, Part O)
 - You must attend all classes. You get **zero (0)** free days. *You earn points for attending and participating. You don’t if you don’t.*
 - **Note:** *If you are ill or have a genuine emergency, **contact me** within 24 hours.*
- ▶ **Grading, Registration, and Incompletes:** <https://catalog.utah.edu/#/policy/B12v3LX0G?bc=true&bcCurrent=Grading%20Policies&bcGroup=Grade%20Information&bcItemType=policies>
- ▶ **Semester calendar:** <https://registrar.utah.edu/academic-calendars/spring2020.php>

Grades

Where Your Course Grade Comes From

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| Online Participation (5 pts. x 10 weeks) | 50 points |
| In-Class Attendance/Participation (5 pts. x 14 weeks) | 70 points |
| Quizzes (20 pts. x 6 quizzes) | 120 points |
| In-Class Stories (26 pts. x 5 stories) | 130 points |
| Midterm Story | 60 points |
| Final Story with assets | 95 points |
| Portfolio with assets | 75 points |
| Total: | 600 possible points |

Quizzes, Stories and Portfolio

- ▶ Unless I specify otherwise, you will submit these **on paper**, not Canvas.
- ▶ All stories must be your **original work** for this class, **not** repurposed material.
- ▶ Each graded assignment will have a rubric.
- ▶ Writing on **deadline** is a key part of this course. *So, I cannot accept late assignments.*
- ▶ Everything you submit should be **serious, professional work** for a public audience.

Required Grammar Quizzes

- ▶ To earn a grade in this course, you must pass 10 short online grammar quizzes.
- ▶ These quizzes will ***not*** affect your course grade.
- ▶ See “Grammar Test Instructions 2020” in Modules.

Grading Scale

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| 100-94 A | 89-87 B+ | 79-77 C+ | 69-67 D+ | 59-0 E |
| 93-90 A- | 86-84 B | 76-74 C | 66-64 D | |
| | 83-80 B- | 73-70 C- | 63-60 D- | |

| WEEK 1: WHY LEARN NEWS WRITING? | |
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| In class Tuesday, Jan. 7 | Syllabus, schedule, expectations. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Exercise</u>: Interview your neighbor and write a profile (ungraded). |
| After class | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Carefully read</u>: This entire syllabus; “How to Comment and Contribute”; “Grammar Test Instructions 2020.” • <u>Optional</u>: Update your Canvas profile with a recent photo (for my reference only). |
| WEEK 2: NEWS WRITING BASICS & LEADS | |
| <i>Anytime before 2 p.m. Monday, Jan. 13</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Read</u>: Oxford, Ch. 3, “Newswriting Style”; Lloyd, Ch. 4, “Writing Simply”; Media_Writing_Ch_3. • <u>Comment</u>: On all three readings. • <u>Contribute</u>: An example of a <i>bad</i> lead paragraph in a news story. Copy and paste the text and source <i>or</i> provide the URL. |
| In class Tuesday, Jan. 14 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss news writing basics. • Consider examples of bad leads. • Preview grammar. • <u>Handouts</u>: The P-Sheet; In-Class Story Rubric. • <u>Exercise</u>: Practice writing news leads (ungraded). |
| WEEK 3: NEWS WRITING BASICS & LEADS | |
| <i>Anytime before 2 p.m. Monday, Jan. 20</i> Yes, it’s Martin Luther King Jr. Day. Do this <u>anytime</u> before 2 p.m. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Read</u>: Kershner, Ch. 14, “How to Write a Strong Lead”; Oxford, Ch. 7, “Basic News Leads.” • <u>Comment</u>: On both readings. Describe <i>at least one specific thing</i> that is clearer for you. Describe <i>at least one other thing</i> that you’re unsure about. |

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contribute: An example of a <i>good</i> lead paragraph in a news story. Copy and paste the text and source <i>or</i> provide the URL. |
| Before class Tuesday, Jan. 21 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read for Quiz 1: The P-Sheet; AP Stylebook/Punctuation Guide (entries for apostrophe, comma, dash, semicolon); <i>Elements of Style</i>, Ch. I, “Elementary Rules of Usage.” |
| In class Tuesday, Jan. 21 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quiz 1: Punctuation. • Discuss examples of good leads. • Review practice news leads. • Exercise: Write news leads (graded). |
| WEEK 4: WRITING A SHORT STORY | |
| Anytime before 2 p.m. Monday, Jan. 27 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read: Kershner, Ch. 13, “How to Write a News Story in 15 Steps”; Kershner, Ch. 15, How to Structure a News Story”; Oxford, Ch. 4, “The Language of News.” • Comment: On all three readings. For Oxford, Ch. 4, Describe <i>at least one specific grammatical thing</i> that is clearer for you. Then, describe <i>at least one other grammatical thing</i> that you’re still unsure about. • Contribute: A <i>specific</i> example of a well-organized news story. (Copy and paste text <i>or</i> provide the URL.) Write 1-2 sentences explaining <i>exactly how/why</i> it’s well-organized. |
| Before class Tuesday, Jan. 28 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read for Quiz 2: AP Stylebook entries listed in AP_Style_to_Really_Know.pdf. |
| In class Tuesday, Jan. 28 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review Quiz 1. • Quiz 2: AP Style to Really Know. • Review graded news leads. • Preview writing a short story (from news releases or other sources). |
| WEEK 5: WRITING A SHORT STORY | |
| Anytime before 2 p.m. Monday, Feb. 3 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No Reading: See “Contribute” below. • Contribute: A <i>specific</i> example of a compelling short news story. (Copy and paste text or provide the URL.) Write 2-3 sentences explaining <i>exactly what aspects</i> of this story make it compelling. |

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| In class Tuesday, Feb. 4 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review Quiz 2. • Discuss examples of compelling news stories. • Exercise: Write a short story (graded). |
| WEEK 6: REPORTING, INTERVIEWING, & VERIFYING | |
| <i>Anytime before 2 p.m. Monday, Feb. 10</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read: “Interviewing Tips”; Lloyd, Ch. 7, “Using Quotations Well.” • Comment: On both readings. • Contribute: A <i>specific</i> example of a bad interview. (Copy and paste text or provide a URL. Try YouTube.) Exactly <i>why</i> is this interview bad? |
| <i>Before class Tuesday, Feb. 11</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read for Quiz 3: <i>Elements of Style</i>, Ch. IV, “Words and Expressions Commonly Misused.” |
| In class Tuesday, Feb. 11 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quiz 3: Misused words and expressions. • Review short stories. • Discuss bad interview examples. • Discuss “Interviewing Tips.” • Assignment Posted: Midterm Story (due March 3). • Exercise: Generate reference materials, human sources, and interview questions for Midterm Story. |
| WEEK 7: SPEECHES AND MEETINGS | |
| <i>Anytime before 2 p.m. Monday, Feb. 17</i> Yes, it’s Presidents Day. Do this <i>anytime</i> before 2 p.m. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read: Rich, Ch. 18, “Speeches, News Conferences and Meetings.” • Comment: On the reading. How useful are the tips on p. 349 and the checklist on p. 351? (No Contribution this week.) |
| In class Tuesday, Feb. 18 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss writing about speeches and meetings. • Exercise: Write a short story from a speech (graded). |
| WEEK 8: MIDTERM STORY PROPOSAL | |
| <u>No Monday Readings, Comments, or Contributions on Canvas this week.</u> | |
| <i>Before class Tuesday, Feb. 25</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read for Quiz 4: AP Stylebook entries listed in More_Useful_AP_Style.pdf. |
| In class Tuesday, Feb. 25 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review Quiz 3. (<i>continued below</i>) |

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quiz 4: More Useful AP style. • Review speech stories. • Workshop time for Midterm Story reporting and writing. |
| WEEK 9: MIDTERM STORY DUE | |
| <u>No Monday work on Canvas</u> —Complete your Midterm Story. | |
| In class Tuesday, March 3 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Midterm Story due <i>in class, on paper</i>, by 5 p.m. (graded). |
| WEEK 10: SPRING BREAK | |
| WEEK 11: PROFILES & OBITUARIES | |
| <i>Anytime before 2 p.m. Monday, March 16</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read: Rich, Ch. 17, “Profiles and Obituaries.” • Comment: On the reading. <u>(No Contribution this week.)</u> |
| <i>Before class Tuesday, March 17</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read for Quiz 5: AP Stylebook (entries for capitalization, Facebook, Google, holidays and holy days, Instagram, Tweet, Twitter); Brooks, Ch. 3, “Subjects and Objects” (partial). |
| <p>In class Tuesday, March 17</p> <p><i>» Today is the deadline for passing the required grammar quizzes. «</i></p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review Quiz 4. • Quiz 5: Proper use of proper names. • Review Midterm Stories. • Assignment Posted: Alumni Profile. • Exercise: Generate subject ideas and interview questions for Alumni Profile. |
| WEEK 12: ALUMNI PROFILE DUE | |
| <i>Anytime before 2 p.m. Monday, March 23</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read: Profiles of John Warnock and Amy Van Prooyen. • Comment: On both readings. <u>(No Contribution this week.)</u> |
| In class Tuesday, March 24 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assignments Posted: Final Story and Portfolio. • Alumni Profile due in class, on paper, by 5 p.m. (graded). |

| WEEK 13: OPINION WRITING | |
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| <i>Anytime before 2 p.m. Monday, March 30</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read: Opinion columns, TBD. • Comment: On the readings. (No Contribution this week.) |
| <i>Before class Tuesday, March 31</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read for Quiz 6: AP Stylebook/Briefing on Media Law. Skip to “Legal Principles of Publication” and read “The five things a successful libel plaintiff must prove.” Skip to “Invasion of privacy” and read through the end section, “Limitations on copyright.” |
| In class Tuesday, March 31 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review Quiz 5. • Quiz 6: Libel, privacy, copyright <i>and</i> earlier AP quiz entries. (Cumulative AP quiz.) • Review Alumni Profiles. • Assignment Posted: Opinion Column. • Exercise: Generate topic ideas, pitch to class, and do basic research for Opinion Column. |
| WEEK 14: OPINION COLUMN DUE | |
| <u>No Monday work on Canvas</u>—Complete your Opinion Column. | |
| In class Tuesday, April 7 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opinion Column due in class, on paper, by 5 p.m. (graded). |
| WEEK 15: FINAL STORY PROPOSAL | |
| <i>Anytime before 2 p.m. Monday, April 13</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No Reading: See “Contribute” below. • Contribute: Propose a topic for your Final Story. (We’ll build on this in class.) |
| In class Tuesday, April 14 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review Quiz 6. • Review Opinion Columns. • Exercise: Discuss Final Story topics. • Workshop time for Final Story. |
| WEEK 16: FINAL STORY AND PORTFOLIO DUE | |
| <u>No Monday work on Canvas</u>—Complete your Final Story and Portfolio. | |
| In class Tuesday, April 21 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workshop time for Final Story and Portfolio. • Final Story and Portfolio due in class, on paper, by 5 p.m. (graded). |