



THE UNIVERSITY OF UTAH

**DEPARTMENT OF  
COMMUNICATION**

**Summer 2024  
COMM 113 – 001 Media Writing**

**Class time:** Monday & Wednesday: 9:00AM-10:30AM

**Room:** LNCO 2850

**Instructor:** Marissa Medina

Email: [marissa.medina@utah.edu](mailto:marissa.medina@utah.edu)

Pronouns: She/Her/Hers

Office hours: By appointment

**Contact policy:** The best way to reach me is on email. Please allow 48 hours for a response. If urgent, do include “URGENT” in the subject line of your email and I will get back to you quicker. I do not check my email on weekends.

**Course Description:**

Students will learn the basics of writing for the media in preparation for further study in public relations, marketing, and business/technical writing. Students will learn how to process complex information, verify it, and write about it clearly and concisely for digital and print formats. The course also includes basic editing and consideration of legal and ethical questions as well as newsworthiness and news value.

**Course Objectives**

This course is designed to introduce you to strategic writing, and how to adapt it for multiple platforms. In this course, you will learn guidelines, formats, and styles for media writing. You will also be prompted to think critically about the various types of strategic communication and their role in society.

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

- Write clearly and concisely for a variety of strategic communication situations.
- Understand the basic principles underlying the news writing and strategic communication industries.
- Have a portfolio of completed course assignments that is suitable to send to potential employers.

**Required Materials:**

- Kuehn, S. A., & Lingwall, A. (2016). *The Basics of Media Writing: A Strategic Approach*. CQ Press.
- Various podcasts, audio/visual, and other written material will also be assigned/required to supplement what we are learning.

**Grading and Assignments**

<b>Assignments</b>	<b>Points</b>
Canvas Coursework	340
Media Writing Examples (7 x 30 points each)	210
Midterm Portfolio (3 parts x 100 points each)	300
Final Portfolio (3 parts x 100 points each)	300
Midterm Exam	150
Final Exam	200
<b>TOTAL:</b>	<b>1500</b>

Final grades will follow the +/- grading system of the university.

**Canvas Coursework:**

Weekly modules of coursework including discussion board, writing, and AP-style assignments.

**Media Writing Examples:**

For these assignments, you will find an example of media writing (news article, social media post, website, podcast, or other mediated composition) and summarize, critique, analyze, and evaluate it. Your write-up should be 1.5 to 2 pages double-spaced and include a link to the example.

**Midterm Portfolio:**

Perspective Podcast: 300-500 word script and recorded audio. Introducing, reflecting, and concluding on a personal event to show your perspective.  
 News Story (400-800 words): Hard News or Feature Writing piece. Covers a topic of concern in your community and includes at least 3 testimonials.  
 Long-Form Web-Copy Story (500-1,200 words): List-based story that covers a topic of interest.

**Final Portfolio – Pick 3:**

- (1) LinkedIn Profile: Create a professional LinkedIn profile highlighting your experience and expertise. Highlights your personal brand.

- (2) Persuasive Piece (800-1,200 words): Op-ed. Take a position and concisely and succinctly argue it.
- (3) Press Release (1 page max): Corporate release to the public regarding an event specific to your chosen company.
- (4) TV Ad (30-60 audio/visual script): Advertisement specific to your chosen company. Created as a storyboard.
- (5) Social Media Campaign (1 Tweet, 1 Instagram post, 1 Facebook post, 1 LinkedIn Post, 1 Tik Tok): Content will be about same event/topic but will vary based on platform.

### **Exams:**

A midterm exam and comprehensive final exam will be given online. Prepare to do more than memorize facts – you will also be asked to apply what you’ve learned, make judgments, critically evaluate ideas, draw conclusions, engage in self-reflection, and create content. Exams will be administered via Canvas.

### **Submissions and Late Work Policy:**

All assignments are to be submitted on Canvas by 11:59 PM MST on the scheduled due date.

Assignments must be submitted in .doc, .docx, or .pdf (no .pages). Late assignments not more than 5 days will be accepted, however, for each day past the deadline that an assignment is submitted, 10% will be deducted from the assignment’s final grade.

I cannot make accommodations for assignments passed the planned deadline, only if you let me know ahead of time and request an extension. If I do not hear from you before the deadline, I will assume that you have knowingly decided to ignore a deadline. I will also not consider extensions that are requested past a deadline.

I know very well that school can be challenging, as are deadlines, but I do believe You communication is crucial even when you are falling behind, and asking for help or grace is the only way you can receive it. You can request for an extension as many times as you NEED over the course of the semester.

### **Attendance & Participation Policy:**

Because class attendance and course grade are demonstrably and positively related, the University expects students to activity contribute and participate in courses in which they are enrolled. Your attendance and participation are important to advancing the growth of the culture of the class as well as your own personal communication skills. While I will not evaluate you based on your attendance, I, however, expect you to attend every class and let me know in advance if you will not be able to attend a class. **This is fundamental because discussion and participation in class are being evaluated.** I value the exchange of ideas, perspectives, and viewpoints that

can stem from a discussion, especially in the context of a class such as Media Writing which consolidates various viewpoints. I will not be evaluating the “merit” of contributions so do not worry too much about being right or wrong, instead I will rely on the extent of participation as I do believe learning happens in the sphere of conversation.

### **Disruptive Behavior:**

All students are expected to help me in creating an environment in which we all feel welcome, safe, productively engaged, and constructively challenged as we learn. Any behavior that disrupts these principles will be susceptible to discussion and/or grade penalty at my discretion. Disruptive behaviors include, but are not limited to obscene or offensive language, excessive tardiness, and talking or using technology while other students or myself are presenting.

### **Grading:**

I welcome you to advocate for yourself if you feel that a grade you receive is unjust. Feel free to always email me your appeal outlining the exact reasons you believe your grade should be reconsidered. I will not be able to discuss grades during class period or even after. I suggest that these conversations begin with an email, and we can then schedule an office hour to discuss them more.

### **Course Policy on Academic Integrity/(Dis)Honesty:**

Given the nature of a media writing course, it’s particularly important for students to understand what constitutes **plagiarism**. Plagiarism is the intentional or unintentional representation of another person’s ideas or words as your own. It is plagiarism to:

- Turn in any portion of someone else’s work as your own
- Use any portion of a “file” from a previous assignment and submit it as your original work
- Take passages from someone’s work (published or unpublished) and include it in an assignment without citing the original author and using quotation marks
- Copy (word-for-word, or with some words changed or rearranged) another person’s work without using quotation marks and appropriate citation
- Knowingly allow another student to use your work as their own
- Work with another media writing student to essentially create one assignment, with each student submitting a version of it in his/her own class
- Use **your own work (self-plagiarism)** from a different class (i.e. a paper you wrote for an English course), a different section, or different assignment and submit it as original work for this section of COMM 1130.

- Use all or part of other work you have previously written. Consult your instructor if you have questions about how to properly approach a topic/assignment for this course that you've done before.

This list is not exhaustive, but it hopefully gives you some concrete examples of what plagiarism means. All students are required to upload their major written assignments (including outlines and papers) electronically to Canvas, where it will be run through text matching software. Failure to do so may result in a substantially reduced grade on the assignment or failure for the course. All material submitted for evaluation must be the original work of the student and be produced in

the current semester. It is a form of academic misconduct to submit all or part of any assignment written for another course, a previous semester of COMM 1130, or competition for a grade in COMM 1130 without your instructor's knowledge and permission, which includes all work produced as a high school student or used in high school competition.

If you are in doubt about whether an activity violates the academic integrity policy, it is your responsibility to ask your instructor ahead of time.

### **AI/Chat GPT/Everything else**

I understand that AI tools such as Chat GPT can prove to be of valuable help to students. However, because this is a media writing course and I want you to actually learn media writing, I encourage you to create work independent of it and will create avenues that allow for this to be the case. I will not fail you for using AI to support your work but I will if you only use AI.

### **Content accommodations**

I will not be making content accommodations for this class. Some of the material we consider may contain challenging content, in that case, I will do my best to notify you of this ahead of time throughout the course. If there are any specific subjects that you need notice for particularly, please contact me at the beginning of the semester.

### **Syllabus as a contract:**

I crafted this syllabus with the perspective of it as my duty to you, but it also outlines your duties to me and the rest of the class. While the core of these duties will not change, certain things might be moved around, particularly regarding schedules to accommodate the class's needs. I will notify you via email or Canvas well ahead of time if this is the case.

**[Summer 2024] Course Schedule**

<b>Week</b>	<b>Module/Dates</b>	<b>General Topic</b>	<b>Content and readings</b>
Week One	Module 1 [May 13]	Media Writing Foundations	Read: Chapters 1 & 2 Due: Media Writing #1, Intro discussion, & Job Posting
	Module 2 [May 15]	Style & Invention I	Read: Chapter 3 & Narrative Paradigm pdf Due: Media Writing #2 & Narrative Free-Write
Week Two	Module 3 [May 20]	Style & Invention II	Listen: The Missionary Podcast Due: Podcast Discussion & AP Style Quiz
	Module 4 [May 22]	Reporting I	Read Chapter 4 & 5 Due: Fact Checking & News Story/Feature Writing and Interview Guide
Week Three	Memorial Day Holiday (NO CLASS) [May 27]	N/A	Have a nice long weekend! 🎉
	Module 5 [May 29]	Reporting II	Due: Hard News & Feature Writing
Week Four	Module 6 [June 3 & 5]	Electronic Media Writing	Read Chapters 6 & 10 Due: Web-copy Assignment & Electronic News   On the Scene
Week Five <b>*Class this week will meet via Zoom*</b>	Module 7 [June 10 & 12]	Drafting & Editing	Read Chapter 7 Due: Media Writing #3
Week Six	Module 8 [June 17 (NO CLASS) & June 19]	Happy Juneteenth! 🍷	Due: Midterm Portfolio assignments & Midterm Exam

Week Seven	Module 9 [June 24]	Ethics & Persuasion I	Read Chapter 8 Due: Media Writing #4 & Chapter 8 discussion
	Module 10 [June 26]	Ethics & Persuasion II	Read Chapter 11 Due: Chapter 11 discussion
Week Eight	Module 11 [July 1]	Brand & Business Comm I	Read Chapters 9 & 12 Due: Media Writing #5 & Mini- PR Case/Campaign
	Module 12 [July 3]	Brand & Business Comm II	Read Chapters 13 & 14
Week Nine	Module 13 [July 8]	Media Writing Practice I	Due: Media Writing #6 & Mini- Ads
	Module 14 [July 10]	Media Writing Practice II	Due: Media Writing #7
Week Ten	[July 15 & 17]	Work Week	Draft Final Portfolio Pieces
Week Eleven	Module 15 [July 22 - July 24]	Final Exam Review	
Week Twelve	Module 16 [July 29 - July 31 (FINAL DAY OF CLASS)]	Final Exam & Final Portfolio	Due: Final Portfolio assignments & Final Exam

*Note: This syllabus is meant to serve as an outline and guide for our course. Please note that I may modify it with reasonable notice to you. I may also modify the Course Schedule to accommodate the needs of our class. Any changes will be posted on Canvas under Announcements.*

## University Policies

***The Americans with Disabilities Act:*** The University of Utah seeks to provide equal access to its programs, services, and activities for people with disabilities. If you will need accommodations in this class, reasonable prior notice needs to be given to the Center for Disability Services, 162 Olpin Union Building, (801) 581-5020. CDS will work with you and the instructor to make arrangements for accommodations. All written information in this course can be made available in an alternative format with prior notification to the Center for Disability Services.

Accommodation Policy (see Section Q): <http://regulations.utah.edu/academics/6-100.php>

***University Safety Statement:*** 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). You will receive important emergency alerts and safety messages regarding campus safety via text message. For more information regarding safety and to view available training resources, including helpful videos, visit [safeu.utah.edu](http://safeu.utah.edu).

***Addressing Sexual Misconduct:*** Title IX makes it clear that violence and harassment based on sex and gender (which includes sexual orientation and gender identity/expression) is a civil rights offense subject to the same kinds of accountability and the same kinds of support applied to offenses against other protected categories such as race, national origin, color, religion, age, status as a person with a disability, veteran's status or genetic information. If you or someone you know has been harassed or assaulted, you are encouraged to report it to the Title IX Coordinator in the Office of Equal Opportunity and Affirmative Action, 135 Park Building, 801-581-8365, or the Office of the Dean of Students, 270 Union Building, 801-581-7066. For support and confidential consultation, contact the Center for Student Wellness, 426 SSB, 801-581-7776. To report to the police, contact the Department of Public Safety, 801-585-2677(COPS).

***Inclusivity Statement:*** It is my intent that everyone - from all diverse backgrounds and perspectives - be well served by this course, that folks' learning needs be addressed both in and out of class, and that the diversity that you all bring to this class be viewed as a resource, strength and benefit. It is my intent to present materials and activities that are respectful of diversity: gender, sexuality, disability, age, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, race, and culture. Your suggestions are encouraged and appreciated. Please let me know ways to improve the effectiveness of the course for you personally or for other students or student groups. In addition, if any of our



class meetings conflict with your religious events, please let me know so that we can plan arrangements for you.

**Undocumented Student Support:** Immigration is a complex phenomenon with broad impact—those who are directly affected by it, as well as those who are indirectly affected by their relationships with family members, friends, and loved ones. If your immigration status presents obstacles to engaging in specific activities or fulfilling specific course criteria, confidential arrangements may be requested from the Dream Center. Arrangements with the Dream Center will not jeopardize your student status, your financial aid, or any other part of your residence. The Dream Center offers a wide range of resources to support undocumented students (with and without DACA) as well as students from mixed-status families. To learn more, please contact the Dream Center at 801-213-3697 or visit [dream.utah.edu](http://dream.utah.edu).

**Drop/Withdrawal:** Students may drop a course within the first two weeks of a given semester without any penalties. Students may officially withdraw (W) from a class or all classes after the drop deadline through the midpoint of a course. A “W” grade is recorded on the transcript and appropriate tuition/fees are assessed. The grade “W” is not used in calculating the student’s GPA. See the [Academic Calendar](#) for the last day to withdraw from term, first and second session classes. Deadlines for courses with irregular start and end dates  
policy: <https://registrar.utah.edu/handbook/miscellaneous.php>

**Plagiarism/Cheating:** It is assumed that all work submitted to your instructor is your own work. When you have used ideas of others, you must properly indicate that you have done so. Plagiarism and cheating are serious offenses and may be punished by failure on an individual assignment, and/or failure in the course. Academic misconduct, according to the University of Utah Student Code, “includes, but is not limited to, cheating, misrepresenting one’s work, inappropriately collaborating, plagiarism, and fabrication or falsification of information...It also includes facilitating academic misconduct by intentionally helping or attempting to help another to commit an act of academic misconduct.” For detailed definitions and possible sanctions, see the Student Code: <http://regulations.utah.edu/academics/6-400.php>

**Wellness Statement:** Your personal health and wellness are essential to your success as a student. Personal concerns such as stress, anxiety, relationship difficulties, depression, cross-cultural differences, etc., can interfere with a student’s ability to succeed and thrive in this course and at the University of Utah. Please speak with the instructor or TA before issues become problems. For helpful resources, contact the Center for Student Wellness at [www.wellness.utah.edu](http://www.wellness.utah.edu) or 801-581-7776.

**Veterans Support Center:** The Veterans Support Center is a “one stop shop” for student veterans to find services, support, advocacy, and camaraderie. They are located in the Park Building Room 201. You can visit their website for more information about their services and support at: <http://veteranscenter.utah.edu>

**LGBT Resource Center:** The University of Utah has an LGBT Resource Center on campus. They are located in Room 409 of the Olpin Union Building. Hours: M-F 8:00AM - 5:00 PM MT.

You can visit their website to find more information about the support they can offer, a list of events through the center and links to additional resources: <http://lgbt.utah.edu>.

**Learners of English as an Additional/Second Language: If** you are an English language learner, please be aware of several resources on campus that will support you with your language and writing development. These resources include:

Writing Center (<http://writingcenter.utah.edu>)

Writing Program (<http://writing-program.utah.edu>)

English Language Institute (<http://continue.utah.edu/eli>)

More resources are available on the Canvas Syllabus page.