



SYLLABUS **JOUR 202: News Writing**

Spring Term 2020

Section 5

Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays, 11:30 a.m. to 12:25 p.m.

JRH (MMTH) 227

Credit Hours: 3

Lab Fee: \$50 (paid as part of your tuition)

Dr. Rich Shumate, Assistant Professor

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Office Hours: Mondays, 12:30-1:30 p.m.; Tuesdays, 3:30-4:30 p.m.; or by appointment.

CATALOG DESCRIPTION

Reporting and writing skills primarily focused for print and online news. The course focuses on accuracy, responsibility, clarity, AP style, structure, interviewing, sourcing, and story generation. Research is emphasized.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

This course is designed to help students become proficient in the craft of newswriting and give them the skills they need to work as a media professional. Writing, editing, reporting, story structure and storytelling skills are emphasized, along with news literacy and news judgment. Students will report and write news copy using accepted journalistic practices and conventions, including AP Style. Legal and ethical practices in newswriting are considered, and students will also learn about the how newsrooms work and how the journalism profession is organized.

STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

Students will:

- Write compelling, well-organized news stories based on their own reporting.
- Demonstrate sound writing mechanics, including sentence structure, grammar and correct use of commas.
- Learn how to function as a professional in the media world, including meeting deadlines and producing news copy that is complete and error-free.
- Understand story structures and approaches used in newswriting and their use in different types of stories.
- Use Associated Press style correctly and consistently by employing the AP Stylebook.
- Demonstrate the ability to interview news sources, take notes and incorporate quotes from interviews in news stories.
- Learn techniques for covering various types of news events
- Learn how to write news releases for public relations.

- Learn how to write copy for digital platforms.
- Understand and be able to apply legal and ethical standards in the practice of journalism.
- Learn about how newsrooms work and how journalism is organized.
- Create a professional resume and cover letter and understand the need to maintain a professional presence on social media.
- Learn how to use Twitter as a journalistic tool.

BLACKBOARD

In this course, we will be using the Blackboard learning management system for class announcements, to track grades and attendance, and to submit some assignments. As a student, you automatically have access to Blackboard (at blackboard.wku.edu) and are also automatically enrolled in this course. Log in to Blackboard with your NetID and password and navigate to **JOUR 202-005 (SP 20): NEWS WRITING**.

If you are unfamiliar with how to use Blackboard, you can enroll in the Blackboard Student User Training by logging into Blackboard and selecting the IT Training tab along the top menu. Next, select **IT: Blackboard Student User Training**. The training is set-up to allow users to self-enroll by simply clicking the submit button. This training will take you through the basics of using Blackboard.

STUDENT EXPECTATIONS

To succeed in this class, students need to:

- Become a thoughtful media consumer! You should be looking at news and content sources and sites every day.
- Be professional. This is an introductory course in a program that teaches and expects professionalism. Consistent attendance, on-time arrival for class, and completing assignments are a critical part of being a professional. Get in the habit of treating your classes as you would treat a job.
- Check the announcements and Class Schedule on Blackboard and your email daily for announcements and newly posted items.
- Attend class regularly. Attendance will be taken; excessive absences will negatively affect your grade.
- Arrive on time. Class starts at 11:30 a.m.
- Build skills by completing assigned drills and exercises.
- Actively participate in class discussions. Don't be shy; no one is going to bite.
- Be respectful to classmates during discussions.
- Refrain from using digital devices in the classroom, except when used as part of class activities.
- Utilize office hours. Office hours are your opportunity to interact one-on-one with me, either to receive help if you need it, answer your questions, or just shoot the breeze. I am always very happy to talk with students, and there are no stupid questions.

REQUIRED MATERIALS FOR THIS CLASS

Bender J., Davenport, L., Drager, M., & Felder, F. *Writing and Reporting for the Media* (12th Edition). New York: Oxford University Press.

The Associated Press Stylebook 2019. (2019). New York: Associated Press.

Note: Because the AP Stylebook is changed yearly, the 2019 edition is recommended; the 2018 edition is also acceptable.

Subscription to the online edition of *The Washington Post*. The academic rate for students is \$5/month with your wku.edu email address, with the first month for \$1 (\$16 total for duration of class). Here is the link to subscribe: <https://subscribe.washingtonpost.com/acqlite/edu-offer/>

You will also need:

- A professional Twitter account for reporting on events (details will be discussed in class).
- A flash drive for transferring work product in and out of the lab.
- Reporter's notebooks, steno pads or legal pads for taking notes for assignments.
- A digital audio recorder or cell phone to record sound during interviews.
- A folder to keep the drills, exercises and assignments for future reference.

RECOMMENDED MATERIALS

Kessler, L., and McDonald, D. *When Words Collide: A Media Writer's Guide to Grammar and Style*. Boston: Cengage Learning.

This is an extremely useful resource guide for questions of grammar and style that you will encounter as you develop proficiency in newswriting. While this text isn't required, it is highly recommended and will be useful in future SJB writing courses. Buy a used copy online; new editions are rather expensive.

English Grammar 101 (<https://www.englishgrammar101.com>)

This is a website that offers more in-depth instruction on English grammar with self-paced lessons for students who need additional help with the ins and outs of grammar. The cost is \$25 for a six-month subscription.

LABS

As a student in JOUR 202, you have paid a \$50 lab fee (as part of your WKU fees paid at the start of the semester) that allows you to access the SJB labs and use the printer, but only for class assignments. A schedule for available open lab times (outside of class) will be posted later in the semester. You will need to have your WKU ID with you for access during lab hours. You also have access to the open labs on the first floor of Jody Richards Hall.

OTHER REQUIREMENTS

- Students are required to read *The Washington Post* and wkufm.org each morning before class to keep up with current events in the news. Pop quizzes will be given periodically on current events.
- Because of the nature of this class, students will occasionally be required to cover events outside of class; the times for these events may vary, but they will generally be at night and on campus. These assignments are a required part of your work in the class, and attendance will be taken. Alternate arrangements will only be made for students in exceptional circumstances (for example, a conflict with an off-campus job.) Social engagements will not be considered as exceptional circumstances.
- No food is allowed in the newswriting labs. Covered drinks are OK, as long as they are kept away from computer equipment.

GRADING SCALE

90-100=A

80-89=B

70-79=C

60-69=D

Below 60=F

GRADING WEIGHTS

Labs = 45 percent

Assessments = 15 percent

Drills = 15 percent

Assignments/Exercises/Quizzes = 15 percent

Attendance = 10 percent

COURSE STRUCTURE

Labs: Labs consist of writing assignments that are usually written in class on deadline with instructor feedback. There will be 8 labs over the course of the semester; each is worth 100 points. The lab grade will make up 45 percent of the final grade, and 800 points are available.

Students should make every effort to attend class on lab days; a schedule is at the end of this syllabus and will be updated on Blackboard. **Students who have an unexcused absence on a lab day will receive a grade of zero for that lab.** Make-ups will be allowed for students with excused absences; please notify Dr. Shumate before the lab if possible.

Labs will be graded using the following criteria:

- A base grade will be given for the content of the story, based on a rubric that assesses the quality of newswriting techniques and content.
- -2 points will be deducted for commas that are missing or used incorrectly (if the same comma rule is violated more than once, there will only be one deduction.)
- -2 points will be deducted for errors in word use or grammar, including using the wrong tense or problems with noun-verb agreement.
- -2 points will be deducted for AP Style mistakes (but only after the AP Style rule in question has been introduced.)
- -5 points will be deducted for sentence fragments (sentences that lack both a subject and a verb or with dependent clauses used improperly).
- -5 points will be deducted for misspelled words.
- -15 will be deducted for errors in fact, which include misspelled proper names of sources, places, companies, agencies, etc.

Rewrites: For Labs 1-7, students can submit a rewrite to raise their grades. The maximum grade on the rewrite, and the edits required to achieve that grade, will be indicated at the time the graded assignment is returned. Due dates for rewrites will be announced in class; no rewrites will be accepted after the deadline.

Publication Bonus: JOUR 202 students are encouraged to submit their lab assignments for publication in the Herald, Talisman, RE(a)D or another print or online publication. Published stories will earn 20 extra credit points, which will be added to the lab grade. The published story must have been originally written to fulfill a JOUR 202 lab assignment; other published stories are not eligible for the bonus. Publications on personal blogs or venues that do not have a journalistic purpose are also not eligible; if you have a question about whether your publication qualifies, talk to Dr. Shumate. Note: Stories must be published, or scheduled for publication, prior to the end of the grading period in December.

Assessments: Two assessments will be given to check student progress, one at the end of Week 7 and the other on the last day of class. These assessments will make up 15 percent of the final grade, with 300 points available. During assessments, students will write a news story on deadline, answer questions about news concepts, and proofread news copy.

Students should make every effort to attend class on assessment days; a schedule is at the end of this syllabus and will be updated on Blackboard. **Students who have an unexcused absence on an assessment day will receive a grade of zero for that assessment.** Make-ups will be allowed for students with excused absences; please notify Dr. Shumate before the assessment if possible.

Assignments/Exercises/Quizzes: Various assignments, exercises and quizzes will be given during the semester. These include pop quizzes on current events that will be given periodically to check to see if students are keeping up with their required reading of *The Washington Post* and wkyufm.org. Assignments and quizzes will make up 15 percent of the final grade.

Drills: Because newswriting is a craft that requires developing skills in grammar, proofreading and AP style, drills will be assigned for most class sessions. Students will either complete these during class, either individually or as part of a group, or they will be assigned for completion before the next class session. Drills will make up 15 percent of the final grade; the four lowest drill grades will be dropped.

Unexcused Absences: Students who have an unexcused absence on a day when a drill, assignment or news quiz is completed in class will not be allowed to make it up. (These are indicated with asterisks in the class schedule.) Out-of-class assignments due on the day of an unexcused absence can be submitted late, but only if submitted within the next two class sessions.

ATTENDANCE

Regular attendance is necessary for successful completion of JOUR 202. For that reason, 10 percent of the final grade will be based on attendance, which will be kept on Blackboard. Students will be marked as either present, absent or excused (absent but with an acceptable excused absence cleared with the instructor.) Students should keep track of their attendance grade in Blackboard, which is shown as a percentage based on the total number of class sessions.

Attendance will be taken at the beginning of each class session; students who arrive after attendance has been taken must check in with Dr. Shumate after class. **Students who arrive later than 10 minutes after the start of class will be considered absent.**

Excused Absences: Accepted excuses for absences include illness, family emergencies, university activities, jury duty, military obligations, and religious observances. Your professor may ask for documentation to verify the excuse. If you have any questions about whether something qualifies as an excused absence, please consult Dr. Shumate before the absence, if circumstances permit. **It is the student's responsibility to make sure that an absence has been excused.**

Students who have an illness that keeps them out of class for an extended period of time or students participating in university activities that have a significant travel schedule should also consult with Dr. Shumate.

DROPPING CLASS: The last day to drop this class with a grade of "W" is Wednesday, March 25.

ACADEMIC HONESTY

Plagiarism: To represent ideas or interpretations taken from another source as one's own is plagiarism. Plagiarism is a serious offence. The academic work of a student must be his or her own. Students must give the author(s) credit for any source material used. To lift content directly from a source without giving credit is a flagrant act. To present a borrowed passage after having changed a few words, even if the source is cited, is also plagiarism.

Students in JOUR 202 Section 5 will be asked to sign an acknowledgement that they have read and understand and agree to abide by plagiarism and ethical standards in the practice of journalism.

Cheating: No student shall receive or give assistance not authorized by the instructor in taking an examination or in the preparation of an essay, laboratory report, problem assignment, or other project that is submitted for purposes of grade determination.

Penalties: Students who commit an act of academic dishonesty may receive from the instructor a failing grade in that portion of the course work in which the act is detected or a failing grade in the course without possibility of withdrawal. The faculty member may also present the case to the University Disciplinary Committee through the Office of the Vice President for Student Affairs for disciplinary sanctions.

TITLE IX SEXUAL MISCONDUCT/ASSAULT POLICY

Western Kentucky University (WKU) is committed to supporting faculty, staff and students by upholding WKU's Title IX Sexual Misconduct/Assault Policy (#0.2070) at <https://wku.edu/eoo/documents/titleix/wkutitleixpolicyandgrievanceprocedure.pdf> and Discrimination and Harassment Policy (#0.2040) at <https://www.wku.edu/eoo/titleix/titleixpolicyprocedure2018.pdf>

Under these policies, discrimination, harassment and/or sexual misconduct based on sex/gender are prohibited. If you experience an incident of sex/gender-based discrimination, harassment and/or sexual misconduct, you are encouraged to report it to the Title IX Coordinator, Andrea Anderson, 270-745-5398 or Title IX Investigators, Michael Crowe, 270-745-5429 or Joshua Hayes, 270-745-5121.

Please note that while you may report an incident of sex/gender based discrimination, harassment and/or sexual misconduct to a faculty member, WKU faculty are "Responsible Employees" of the University and **MUST** report what you share to WKU's Title IX Coordinator or Title IX Investigator. If you would like to speak with someone who may be able to afford you confidentiality, you may contact WKU's Counseling and Testing Center at 270-745-3159.

STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

In compliance with University policy, students with disabilities who require academic and/or auxiliary accommodations for this course must contact the Student Accessibility Resource Center located in Downing Student Union, 1074. The phone number is 270.745.5004 [270.745.3030 V/TTY] or email at sarc@wku.edu. Please do not request accommodations directly from the professor or instructor without a faculty notification letter (FNL) from The Student Accessibility Resource Center."

AEJMC PROFESSIONAL VALUES AND COMPETENCIES

The Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communications (ACEJMC) requires that, irrespective of their particular specialization, all graduates should be aware of certain core values and competencies and be able to:

- Understand and apply the principles and laws of freedom of speech and press for the country in which the institution that invites ACEJMC is located, as well as receive instruction in and understand the range of systems of freedom of expression around the world, including the right to dissent, to monitor and criticize power, and to assemble and petition for redress of grievances;
- Demonstrate an understanding of the history and role of professionals and institutions in shaping communications;
- Demonstrate an understanding of gender, race ethnicity, sexual orientation and, as appropriate, other forms of diversity in domestic society in relation to mass communications;
- Demonstrate an understanding of the diversity of peoples and cultures and of the significance and impact of mass communications in a global society;
- Understand concepts and apply theories in the use and presentation of images and information;
- Demonstrate an understanding of professional ethical principles and work ethically in pursuit of truth, accuracy, fairness and diversity;
- Think critically, creatively and independently;
- Conduct research and evaluate information by methods appropriate to the communications professions in which they work;
- Write correctly and clearly in forms and styles appropriate for the communications professions, audiences and purposes they serve;
- Critically evaluate their own work and that of others for accuracy and fairness, clarity, appropriate style and grammatical correctness;
- Apply basic numerical and statistical concepts;
- Apply tools and technologies appropriate for the communications professions in which they work.

CLASS SCHEDULE

Note: Schedule subject to change at the professor's discretion. Please monitor email and Blackboard regularly for updates.

**Indicates in-class assignments that cannot be made up for an unexcused absence*

Monday	Wednesday	Friday
1/27 <u>Welcome to News Writing</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Syllabus/Class Procedures • Plagiarism Standards • Student Info Sheet • Twitter • News Story Ideas Assignment 	1/29 <u>Unit 1: Newswriting Foundations</u> BEFORE CLASS: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • READ: Ch. 4 pp. 47-52 IN CLASS: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • News Story Ideas Discussion • Grammar Review Pt. 1 • Your Friend the Comma Overview • AP Style Overview TURN IN: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • News Story Ideas 	1/31 <u>Unit 1: Newswriting Foundations</u> BEFORE CLASS: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • READ: Ch. 4 pp. 53-57 IN CLASS: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grammar Review Pt. 2 • YFTC Drill #1 • Grammar Quiz*
2/3 <u>Unit 1: Newswriting Foundations</u> BEFORE CLASS: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • READ: Ch. 2 IN CLASS: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • News: What Is It, and How Do You Find It? • YFTC Drill #2 TURN IN: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • YFTC Drill #1 	2/5 <u>Unit 1: Newswriting Foundations</u> IN CLASS: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LAB 1: PERSONAL ESSAY* • YFTC Drill #3 TURN IN: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • YFTC Drill #2 	2/7 <u>Unit 1: Newswriting Foundations</u> BEFORE CLASS: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • READ: 10 Secrets of Writing Well IN CLASS: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sources and Storytelling • YFTC Drill #4 TURN IN: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 10 Secrets Exercise • YFTC Drill #3
2/10 <u>Unit 1: Newswriting Foundations</u> IN CLASS: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AP Style Basics Pt. 1 • AP Style Drill #1* • YFTC Drill #5 TURN IN: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • YFTC Drill #4 	2/12 <u>Unit 1: Newswriting Foundations</u> IN CLASS: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AP Style Basics Pt. 2 • AP Style Drill #2* • YFTC Drill #6 TURN IN: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • YFTC Drill #5 	2/14 <u>Unit 2: Writing Leads</u> BEFORE CLASS: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • READ: Ch. 7 pp. 135-148 IN CLASS: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lead Writing Basics • YFTC Drill #7 • AP Style Drill #3* TURN IN: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • YFTC Drill #6
2/17 <u>Unit 2: Writing Leads</u> IN CLASS: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lead Writing Workshop (50 points)* • UNIT 1 QUIZ* • YFTC Drill #8 TURN IN: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • YFTC Drill #7 	2/19 <u>Unit 2: Writing Leads</u> IN CLASS: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LAB 2: Writing Leads* TURN IN: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • YFTC Drill #8 	2/21 <u>Unit 3: Basic News Stories</u> BEFORE CLASS: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • READ Ch. 9 pp. 180-197 IN CLASS: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Story Forms and Inverted Pyramid • AP Style Drill #4 (Timed)* • YFTC Drill #9 (Timed)*

2/24 <u>Unit 3: Basic News Stories</u> IN CLASS: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inverted Pyramid Workshop (30 points) • AP Style Drill #5 (Timed)* • YFTC Drill #10 (Timed)* 	2/26 <u>Unit 3: Basic News Stories</u> BEFORE CLASS: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • READ: Ch. 10 pp. 212-216 and 221-225. IN CLASS: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quotes and Attribution • Quotes and Attribution Exercise* • Proofreading Drill A • 	2/28 <u>Unit 3: Basic News Stories</u> IN CLASS: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First News Story Workshop (50 points)* TURN IN: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proofreading Drill A
3/2 <u>Unit 3: Basic News Stories</u> IN CLASS: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LAB 3: First News Story* • Proofreading Drill B 	3/4 <u>Unit 3: Basic News Stories</u> IN CLASS: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lab 3 Debrief • Prep for Assessment 1 • Proofreading Drill C (Timed)* TURN IN: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proofreading Drill B 	3/6 ASSESSMENT 1 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • News and Newswriting Concepts • AP Style • Proofreading • Writing Story on Deadline
SPRING BREAK: March 9-13		
3/16 <u>Unit 4: Interviews and Features</u> BEFORE CLASS: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • READ: Ch. 12 pp. 256-267 IN CLASS: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feature Story Forms and Techniques • Feature Story Exercise (30 points)* • Person-on-the-Street Memo • Proofreading Drill D 	3/18 <u>Unit 4: Interviews and Features</u> BEFORE CLASS: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • READ: Ch. 11 pp. 235-249 IN CLASS: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interview Dos and Don'ts • Interviewing Exercise (30 points)* • Proofreading Drill E TURN IN: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proofreading Drill D 	3/20 <u>Unit 4: Interviews and Features</u> IN CLASS: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Person-on-the-Street Discussion/Debrief • Writing Headlines • Headline Exercise (30 points)*
3/23 <u>Unit 4: Interviews and Features</u> BEFORE CLASS: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Finish Person-on-the-Street Interviews IN CLASS: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LAB 4: Person-on-the-Street Story* • Personal Profile Memo 	3/25 <u>Unit 4: Interviews and Features</u> BEFORE CLASS: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete Personal Profile Memo IN CLASS: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Classmate Interviews 	3/27 <u>Unit 4: Interviews and Features</u> BEFORE CLASS: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Process interview notes from classmate interview IN CLASS: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LAB 5: Classmate Profile*
Unit 5: Covering an Event 3/30 to 4/6 (tentative) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In this unit, students will cover, report and writing a story about an outside event, which will be Lab 6*. • The schedule for this unit TBA and may be switched with Unit 4, depending on scheduling of the outside event • Readings and proofreading drills for this unit to be assigned. 		

Unit 6: Finding News/Media Law & Ethics
4/8 to 4/17 (tentative)

- In this unit, students will develop a story idea of their own, gather information, conduct interviews and write the story, which will be Lab 7*.
- This unit will also cover issues related to media law and ethics.
- Readings for this unit will include parts of Ch. 5 (Libel, Privacy and Newsgathering Issues) and Ch. 6 (Ethics).
- There will be a Media & Ethics Quiz* during this unit.

Unit 7: Resumes, Cover Letters and Building a Personal Brand
4/20 to 4/24 (tentative)

- In this unit, students will create a resume, write a cover letter for a prospective internship, and work on beginning to build a personal brand as a communicator.

Unit 8: Public Relations Writing
4/27-5/6 (tentative)

- In this unit, students will learn best practices for writing news releases and write a news release on deadline, which will be Lab 8*.
- Readings for this unit will be assigned.

5/8

ASSESSMENT 2

- News and newswriting concepts
- Legal, ethics and privacy issues
- AP Style and proofreading,
- Writing headlines
- Writing a feature story on deadline.

FINALS WEEK: May 11-15
No Final in JOUR 202