Spring 2-1-2019

JRNL 270.02: Reporting

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**JRNL 270/Reporting**  
**T, Th 12:30-1:50**

**Spring 2019 / Section 2 / CRN: 32980**

Instructor: Nadia White  
Phone/email: 243-2227, nadia.white@umontana.edu  
Office hours: Mondays 1-3p.m., Wednesdays, 9-11 a.m. or by appointment  
Textbook: Filak, Vincent F., “Dynamics of News Reporting & Writing” 2019 by CQ Press with Exercises in Media Writing (workbook)  
Class blog: J270news.wordpress.com  
Twitter: NadiaWh  
Instagram: NadiaWhiteMT

Midterm writing evaluation: Thursday, March 5  
Final writing evaluation: Tuesday, April 30 1:10-3:10

**Course description**

Building on what you’ve learned in JRNL170, this course will expand your ability to report accurate and timely news for an online audience. We’ll bolster your news writing and news judgment. We’ll help you identify, research and pitch potential news stories; find and interview credible sources; and write, edit and post better stories, photos and audio files to a class website. Please note, JRNL170 (News Writing) or the equivalent transfer credit is a prerequisite for this class. If you do not have the prerequisite, please let me know and I’ll help you get into JRNL170.

**Learning outcomes**

Successful students will demonstrate their understanding of the values of truth, accuracy and fairness in news reporting and of the importance of meeting the needs of diverse audiences. They will show their ability to:

- Think critically and independently.
- Research and evaluate information.
- Critically evaluate and tailor their work to the appropriate audience.
- Write correctly and clearly.
- Apply basic numerical concepts.
- Produce news on deadline.

Because this is an approved intermediate writing course, all students will write stories appropriate for a given audience and purpose. They will form and express ideas in writing, use writing to learn and synthesize new concepts, revise written work based on constructive feedback, begin to use journalistic writing conventions (AP style, story forms for different platforms) and demonstrate appropriate English usage.

As part of the University-wide Program-level Writing Assessment, this course requires an electronic submission (via Moodle) of an assignment stripped of your personal information to be used for
educational research and assessment of the university’s writing program. Your paper will be stored in a database. A random selection of papers will be assessed by a group of faculty and staff using a rubric developed from the following Writing Learning Outcomes. The rubric that will be used to score the papers can be found here: [http://www.umt.edu/facultysenate/committees/writing_committee/UPWA.php](http://www.umt.edu/facultysenate/committees/writing_committee/UPWA.php)

**How this class works**

You’ll learn by doing, and I’ll gauge your progress with frequent exercises and quizzes that build toward each writing assignment. Once the semester gets going, each week will feature an exercise or quiz that builds on previous class discussions, so it is crucial that you attend every class and participate in class conversations.

From the start, you’ll be reporting, writing and submitting stories that involve real events and real sources. These stories will be based on assignments from me or from your ideas that I’ve approved in advance. We’ll do some team reporting, but you’ll be working individually on most assignments.

At first, you’ll focus on writing that will be read, then we’ll add in writing for the ear – writing that will be heard. Around Week 10, we’ll switch to emphasize reporting for broadcast. You will have improved your reporting chops by then and you’ll use those skills to report stories for a radio or podcast audience.

**Truth, accuracy & personal responsibility**

This is a foundational journalism class. These are interesting times to understand the potential, practice and potent threats to effective journalism. Facts matter. Trust matters. Integrity matters. Every journalist – even journalism students -- has the opportunity to shape how the rest of the world views journalism. To that end, this class will pay attention to the world of journalism generally and to ethics and professionalism, specifically and personally. We’ll pay attention to how you present yourself to the world in the course of doing your work as a journalist. We’ll practice phone interviews, in-person interviews and the general knack for getting along with other people. You will be interviewing strangers for your stories. It will be empowering, challenging, fun and rewarding.

Everyone in this class should become a news junky if you aren’t already. You should read, watch and/or listen to a variety of news sources every day. Choose several, such as:

- Missoulian
- Kaimin
- A major city newspaper (NYT, WashPo, LAT, Seattle Times etc.)
- Local TV: KECI, KPAX etc.
- Nightline on PBS
- Public Radio: MTPR

Specifically, please listen to [On The Media](http://www.umt.edu/facultysenate/committees/writing_committee/UPWA.php) each week via podcast or on Montana Public Radio at 4 p.m. Saturdays. I also suggest listening to the New York Times’ podcast, [The Daily](http://www.umt.edu/facultysenate/committees/writing_committee/UPWA.php), each day.
Quizzes and exams
There will be AP Style, grammar and current events quizzes. There will be a midterms writing assessment and a final writing assessment on Tuesday, April 30 from 1:10-3:10.

Attendance and deadline policy
This is a professional school, and professionals hit deadlines. Even so, I realize that stories can fall apart for reasons beyond a reporter’s control (situations change, sources bail out, etc.) If that seems to be happening, your must tell me about it well before the deadline so we shift to a different story. I won’t have sympathy for excuses that come after deadline.

You may not make up any exercise, quiz or writing assignment that you miss without prior notice and instructor approval.

Until Spring Break, any assignment turned in after deadline will be marked down one letter-grade step for each 12 hours or portion thereof that it is late. For example, if a story that is due at midnight is turned in at 12:30 a.m., your B story becomes a B-. If you still haven’t turned it by noon, it becomes a C+, and so on.

After Spring Break, any story that is turned in after deadline without an express extension will receive a high F – a grade of 59. A story that is not turned in at all will receive a 0. Your grade average can’t survive many of those.

If you miss more than 1/3 of the classes (9) for any reason you will receive a failing grade.

Writing assignments
This course will feature shorter writing assignments (Briefs: Pitches, news briefs, social media posts, worksheets,) and more substantial pieces (News Stories: breaking news stories, first and second drafts of feature or full-reported pieces.) Three of these assignments will be revised.

Each New Story must have:
- A slug, following the format: 
  - LastName_Slug_Datecode, eg. White_Instructions_122418
- An online blurb, tweet, headline and byline.
- An idea for a photograph or chart to accompany your story.
- Two links that could add depth to your story.

News Story assignments will include that following. Due dates and details will be included on a separate calendar and are subject to change:

1. Story based on coverage of a speech.
   Goal: To brush up your news judgment, note-taking and news writing. The writing needs to be accuracy, clear and in proper print news style.

2. Feature preview story about an impending event.*
   Goal: To improve your skills at online searching for background about an individual, organization or issue. This tests your news judgment as well as news writing.
3. **Story about a live event.**
   Goal: To show you how to report accurately and interestingly on deadline. You’ll get to use the context you gathered in the previous assignment.

4. **Basic police story from an affidavit.**
   Goal: To introduce you report precisely on a specialized beat, one that requires you to translate legal language and avoid legal and ethical pitfalls.

5. **A pitch**
   Goal: To introduce you to the art of persuading an editor to publish a story, in this case a profile. To do that, you’ll need to do some pre-reporting to find the story’s premise and what makes it interesting. You’ll also have to nail down human and documentary sources. (This pitch counts as a News Story.)

6. **A profile with photo**
   Goal: To improve your skills as an interviewer and storyteller in a longer story (may be audio or print).

7. **Radio feature package (script, audio and photo)**
   Goal: To build on your skills in producing an audio story. You’ll pitch a story and then gathering audio interviews and natural sound, write a script, and edit the audio package for broadcasts.

8. **Diversity/numbers story –**
   Goal: You’ll write a trend story for an online or broadcast audience that requires an understanding of the importance of diversity and basic numerical concepts.

* Story will be revised

**Our blog: Breaking news, current events and blog maintenance**

To know news you need to make it a part of you – breathe it, eat it, live it. That’s easier to do when you’re part of a community of people who are living and breathing from the same newsshed (it’s like a watershed, but it’s a community where news naturally flows and feeds decision making.) We’ll use a class blog -- at https://j270news.wordpress.com -- to make it easier to build that community and keep the news, like oxygen, flowing.

The blog is where you will post breaking news stories and where we can all post outside stories that we find interesting relative to topics we’ve been discussing in class. We will endeavor to build our own community by commenting on posts there. You’ll learn how blogs work, from both the reader side and the author/editor side.

There are two blog requirements:

- **Posts:** Each of you must post two breaking new stories according to a schedule that gives you a reasonable deadline but flexibility to find a story you can break. Posts will contribute to your Writing Assignment II grade.
- **Comments:** Everyone should read the blog regularly and contribute a thoughtful comment that advances the discussion on at least one half of the news stories posted on the blog. Comments must be made **within seven days** of a post being made public. Those comments will contribute to your Participation grade.
Deadlines and Rules for Breaking News

For the purpose of spreading breaking news stories out across the semester and among students, blog posts will be assigned according to the following schedule.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Last name begins with:</th>
<th>Dates for filing breaking news stories</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A-C</td>
<td>Feb. 1-23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D-H</td>
<td>Feb. 24-March 16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K-M</td>
<td>March 17-April 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N-Z</td>
<td>April 7-April 21</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Each breaking news story should follow the following criteria:
- Be about something that happened in the last 48 hours.
- Be posted before the Kaimin or the Missoulian scoop you.
- Contain:
  - at least two sources. Anonymous sources are not allowed (here or in any of your work for this class.)
  - text for a tweet,
  - an online blurb
  - a headline,
  - a byline,
  - at least one and no more than three high-quality links to an outside source that enhances the context of your story,
  - a photograph that adds value to your story, with an accompanying cutline.

Grading

10%  Attendance & Participation
10%  Worksheets & Quizzes
15%  Briefs (pitches, news briefs, social media posts)
65%  News Stories (breaking news stories, first and second drafts of feature or full-reported pieces, print or audio)

Grades will be based on a scale of 100 percent and will use the University of Montana's plus/minus system. Your final grade will be given as a letter grade, but I'll be using numerical grades throughout the course. The equivalents are as follows:

A: 95-100  C+: 77-79
A-: 90-94   C: 73-76
B+: 87-89   C-: 70-72
B: 83-86    D: 69-60
B-: 80-82   F: Below 60

Building access

For after-hours access to the rooms and doors listed below, please complete and submit this form by Jan. 18. Complete only ONE request per semester. Be sure to select all courses you are taking which pertain to Don Anderson Hall. Here’s the link again: http://tiny.cc/AHAS19.
Please note that the building and its equipment are for the sole use of journalism students, who pay a special access fee. Please take care of the building, its furniture, computers and reporting equipment. Treat them as though they are yours because, in part, they are.

**Additional requirements**

Academic honesty: Misconduct is subject to an academic penalty by the course instructor and/or a disciplinary sanction by the university. Students need to be familiar with the [Student Conduct Code](#).

**Cell phones and computers in class**

Please do not use your cell phones or computers in class for anything other than note taking or scheduling. In fact, I strongly recommend that you avoid using them for note taking as well. Evidence strongly suggests that students who take notes longhand remember the material better and apply it more effectively. Moreover, it is hard for me to teach when you are distracted by a screen and the dynamics of the class suffer when some students are more engaged with their screens than the dialog developing in class. I reserve the right to turn off your computer and take possession of your cell phone if you cannot manage your use of those devices appropriately.

**No double dipping**

You may not submit for this course any assignment that has previously or will be concurrently submitted for another class unless you receive prior approval from the professor of this course. Doing so without permission will result in an F for the assignment, and could result in an F for the course.

**Accommodation for students with disabilities:**

This course is accessible to otherwise qualified students with disabilities. To request reasonable program modifications, please consult with the instructor. [Disability Services for Students](#) will assist the instructor and student in the accommodation process.

*** This syllabus, like news and life itself, is subject to change***