

9-2013

## JRNL 270.01: Reporting

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## Reporting

JRNL 270 • Fall 2013 • Tuesday, Thursday 09:40 – 11 a.m. • DAH 009  
Professor Nadia White • The University of Montana School of Journalism

## Syllabus

Fall 2013

### Goal

This course will introduce students to the basics of researching, interviewing and writing news stories for both print/online and broadcast. Students will also be introduced to the critical thinking necessary for sound news judgment. Students will learn to record and edit audio interviews and radio pieces.

### Objectives

Students who complete this course should:

1. Develop sound news judgment.
2. Learn to write basic news stories with accuracy, clarity, logic and precision.
3. Learn to conduct interviews.
4. Think creatively about news stories.
5. Learn basic grammar and style.
6. Understand and employ common story formats for print, broadcast and online.
7. Learn the basics of gathering and editing audio.
8. Understand basic legal and ethical principles of journalism.

### Required Text

"Reporting, Journalism 270," available at the UC Bookstore. This is a mashup of selections from "Inside Reporting: A Practical Guide to the Craft of Journalism" by Harrower, and "Broadcast News Handbook," by Tuggle-Carr-Huffman.

### Grading options

This course must be taken for a traditional letter-grade. No credit grading is not permitted. The Montana University System's plus/minus grading system will be used in this class.

### Grades

Student final grades will be made up of the following:

35% Assigned writing work/exercises  
15% Feature story  
15% Final

10% Weekly news quiz/ top story  
15% Final audio report and script  
10% Participation & Improvement

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Writing assignments will be evaluated for news judgment, clarity, completeness, fairness, spelling, grammar and style, and individual grades will reflect a professional standard. The closer a piece of writing is to being publishable, the better the grade.

A story containing serious errors, such as misspelling a source's name or gross errors of fact, grammar, spelling and style will receive an automatic 60, or D. Edit your stories carefully. I'll require occasional rewrites of some stories, but you may always rewrite a story to and submit for an ungraded critique.

### After-hours Access to Building

For after hours access to Don Anderson Hall, complete and submit this form online by Sept. 6 at 5 p.m: (<http://jour.umn.edu/after-hours/>). Complete only one request form per semester – be sure to list all courses you are taking. A door code will be assigned and provided to you via email. This request will also activate your Griz Card for the outside door and, if needed, Room 101. Codes will remain active until the last day of the semester.

### Deadlines and Professionalism

Professionals are under constant pressure to produce high-quality work in a short time. A great story is of little value if it's done too late to make the paper or get on the air. Therefore, deadlines in this class will be strictly enforced. Unless prior arrangements have been made with me, an assignment submitted after the deadline will not be accepted and the student will get an F for the assignment.

If you can't meet a deadline due to illness or some other emergency, you must contact me know before the deadline. If you don't, you won't be allowed to make up the work.

### Attendance and Participation

Due to the demand for this course, pre-registered students who fail to attend the first meeting of the class may be dropped. You are expected to attend every class. Because your grade will depend largely on your performance on in-class assignments and discussions, you can't succeed if you miss critique sessions, lectures and labs.

Students who fail to hand in assignments due to unexcused absences will get an "F" for that assignment and will not be allowed to make up the work. You can avoid that problem by treating the course like a job. Get the instructor's

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permission in advance for any necessary absence. A portion of your grade will depend on your participation in class discussions.

### Homework and Assignments

You can expect to average one writing assignment every week, and you will produce more ambitious articles as the course progresses.

### News Quiz/ Top Stories Assignments

Ten percent of your grade will come from how you perform on a weekly news quiz (or on participation in a weekly assignment where you bring in a news article that strikes you as well done). I will make the assignment each week. News quizzes will be taken on Moodle, in class, and will come from stories in the Missoulian, The Kaimin and NPR.org (national and international news only). Questions may (and likely will) be pulled from assigned readings from the textbook as well.

### Academic Honesty

I expect your honesty in presenting your own work for this course. Academic misconduct at The University of Montana is subject to an academic penalty ranging from failing the assignment to expulsion from the university. Students need to be familiar with the Student Conduct Code.  
<http://www.umt.edu/SA/VPSA/index.cfm/page/1321>

### Plagiarism

As defined by “The University of Montana Student Conduct Code” plagiarism is: “Representing another person’s words, ideas, data, or materials as one’s own.” This is strictly prohibited in this class and any case of plagiarism in this course will be subject to the penalties outlined in the student code of conduct.

### Students with Disabilities

Students with disabilities will receive reasonable modifications in this course. Your responsibilities are to request them from me with sufficient advance notice, and to be prepared to provide verification of disability and its impact from Disability Services. Please speak with me after class or during my office hours to discuss the details. For more information, visit the Disability Services for Students website at <http://life.umt.edu/dss>.

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## Schedule

(subject to change)

### Week One – Making the call

*This first week will introduce students to the structure of the course and begins a discussion of what is news.*

Thursday: Critique news budgets and discuss how stories are covered and how reporters must decide what the news value of a story is.

Assignment: Submit a link to a news story you think is well done via the Moodle forum. Due by the 3 p.m. on Friday.

Readings for Tuesday: “Newswriting Basics” (up to Story Structure)

### Week Two – The Lead (or lede)

*Critique submitted news stories for newsworthiness and leads. Discuss elements of strong leads. You will rework leads and critique them in class.*

In class: Lead writing lecture and discussion. In class exercise: Rewriting leads for clarity and impact.

Outside of class assignment: Identify a newsworthy story. Write the first three paragraphs – at least 125 and not more than 200 words. Due Wednesday at 7 p.m.

Readings for next week:

Remainder of “Newswriting Basics” and ALL of “Reporting Basics”

### Week Three – Story structure & Attribution

*Discuss overall approaches to story structure with examples of well-structured stories. Discussion of attribution and plagiarism. In-class discussion of top news.*

Assignment: Unscramble the story exercise due ~~at 5 p.m. Thursday~~ in class.

Readings for Next Week: Read “Covering the News” chapter (Special Focus on “Covering Meetings.”)

### Week Four – Making the Meeting

This week we will be going out to cover a meeting of the ASUM Senate. The meeting is \_\_\_\_\_ at \_\_ p.m. YOU ARE EXPECTED TO ATTEND THIS MEETING. Be sure to get these hours off of work, if need be.

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We will focus on questions of news judgment and how you make a story interesting to a reader.

Assignment: Meeting story is due Wednesday night at midnight.

Readings for Next Week: Re-read Interviewing, Quotations and Attribution sections of "Reporting Basics."

Read and listen to

this: <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=5625218>

And watch this one: <http://youtu.be/4eOynrI2eTM>

### **Week Five – The interview**

Discuss sources, interview techniques and attribution. Focus on broadcast versus print interviews. In-class interview exercise. Thursday you will spend interviewing a fellow classmate for their obit/profile. Each student will have at least 30 minutes to interview and the remainder of the time will focus on follow-up questions.

Assignment: Obit/Profile due by midnight Friday.

Readings for Next Week: Read "Beyond Breaking News."

### **Week Six – Finding stories, developing sources**

Discuss alternatives to breaking news. Discuss feature stories. Develop feature proposal form. Intro to audio recording and editing. In-class Audacity exercise. Feature critiques.

Assignment: Feature Proposals due Thursday before class.

Audacity Intro -- [http://www.jtoolkit.com/audio/Audacity\\_Guide.pdf](http://www.jtoolkit.com/audio/Audacity_Guide.pdf)

Readings for Next Week: Read Law and Ethics

### **Week Six – The outside event**

Review Obits. Understanding libel and ethics (including in-class exercise).

Assignment: Outside event story TBA

Assignment: First feature due Thursday at 4 p.m.

### **Week Seven – The main feature**

Explore feature structures and elements. Focus on strong details versus unneeded color.

Readings for Next Week: Read Chapter 9 of Harrower and Chapter 1 of Tuggle.

### **Week Eight – Add more nuanced discussion of feature writing**

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### **Week Nine – Writing for the ear**

Discuss difference between print and broadcast structure. Discuss power and problems with relying on "the bite." Focus on descriptive writing and natural sound. Development of personalized stories with a main character.

Assignment: Extended audio interview from feature story due Tuesday by 5 p.m.

Assignment: Rewrite of feature due Friday, March 29 by midnight.

Readings for Next Week: Read Chapter 3 and 4 of Tuggle

### **Week Ten – Script writing**

In-class work rewriting sentences, leads for broadcast style. Review basics of broadcast writing including readability, active voice, attribution, numbers, titles and identifiers, conversational writing, tightening sentences, present tense.

Assignment: Rewrite of AP story in broadcast style due Thursday at 5 p.m.

Readings for Next Week: Read Chapter 5 of Tuggle

### **Week Eleven – Broadcast interviews and bites**

Practice interviewing for broadcast versus print. How to get usable bites. What are we looking for in interviews for a broadcast report? Story ideas will be critiqued.

Assignment: Story ideas for final radio package are due Monday in class

### **Week Twelve – Thanksgiving break, Class meets Tuesday only**

Broadcast structure and writing quiz. Discussion of issues students are running into with their final pieces.

### **Week Thirteen – Structure**

Assignment: Script is due Wednesday for final piece at midnight.

### **Week Fourteen – Critiques and deadline writing**

Writing broadcast copy under deadline. Focus on best approaches and how to tackle an evolving story. First versions will be critiqued in class.

Assignment: First version of radio report is due Monday by class.



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### **Week Fifteen – Review and Reporting Drills**

Classes this week will test student's understanding of key concepts and skills taught during the course. These drills will take place during class and involve timed writing exercises.

Assignment: Final version of radio piece and script are due Thursday, December 5 at 9 a.m.

### **Finals Week**

The final for this class will be Thursday, Dec. 12 from 10:10 a.m.-12:10 p.m.