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Fall 9-1-2022

### JRNL 170.02: Writing the News

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# JRNL 170-02 – Writing the News

## Fall 2022

- Class Times: MW 11 a.m. – 12:20 p.m.
- Location: Don Anderson Hall 316
- Instructor: Associate Professor Jule Banville
- Email: [jule.banville@umontana.edu](mailto:jule.banville@umontana.edu)
- Phone: 243-2237
- Office: DAH 427
- Office Hours: Wednesdays 9-10 and 3-4

### ABOUT THIS COURSE

What is journalism and why are you going to love it? This course starts there and travels quickly to the fundamentals of doing your dream stories. At its core, this class is about building a strong foundation for skills you have now, skills you'll develop this semester and skills you'll need to master. It's a practical course: the basics of good, journalistic writing. You'll understand news writing has a particular style that emphasizes both clarity and an economy of words. And here's something crucial: It's grammatically correct. And we **will** go there. We'll travel from commas to quotes, from what makes the news the news to how it's structured into a readable story. We'll learn a few rules

from the Associated Press and, by the end, you'll be reporting, writing, editing and polishing your own stories. Bonus! You'll also learn how to make an audio story start to finish.



**PLEASE NOTE:** This is exclusively an in-person class. Most classes will include hands-on, in-class work. Many will include a quiz. What this means: THIS IS A CLASS THAT REQUIRES YOU SHOW UP. You will not be successful if you skip. On the flip side: If you show up and do the work, you will do just fine. Are some absences excused? Yes. Read on.

### RECOMMENDED TEXT

#### The AP Stylebook

Edition no older than 2020. Available to purchase online and in most major book stores. Online editions acceptable but not preferred. If you are logged into a university computer, you can access the online version for free from the Mansfield Library's site at [www.apstylebook.com/the-university-of-montana/ap\\_stylebook](http://www.apstylebook.com/the-university-of-montana/ap_stylebook). But just do me a favor and buy the stylebook. We'll all be better for it.

**You will also have handouts and linked reading, listening and viewing assignments.**

### OBJECTIVES

By the end of this course, you will be better writers than you are right now. You will also:

- Understand what a news story is and is not.

- Learn key areas of the AP Stylebook and how to use it as a resource.
- Show proficiency in grammar, usage and punctuation.
- Know how to identify, report and write several types of news stories.
- Write news stories!
- Effectively interview and quote multiple, relevant sources
- Learn the basics of broadcast writing and audio production.

### **First Half: The Basics**

We'll begin kind-of at the end, by consuming and talking about amazing journalism. As we go through the basic building blocks, I want you to know what journalism can be when it's all put together. You'll be regularly quizzed on these "consumption" assignments.

Skills-wise, we'll begin with what makes news, news. Why is an event or a person compelling enough for others to care? What are the types of news stories? How are they the same and different? What facts belong in news and what's just extra?

You'll learn about and practice the structure of news stories – how they start, how they flow, how they end.

We'll dig into both interviewing and quoting and how to do both effectively and accurately.

You will learn by practicing through *in-class exercises*, some of them graded, and through *assignments completed outside of class*, which are always graded.

We'll also dig deep on grammar and usage in the first half of the course. Classes will focus on punctuation, parts of speech, noun/verb agreement, proper use of titles and other basics of news style as set forth by the AP.

You'll have several take-home assignments, including attending and covering at least one evening event with plenty of advanced warning to clear your schedule. All assignments and deadlines will be posted to our class page on Moodle, accessed at [umonline.umt.edu](http://umonline.umt.edu).

**There will be a midterm exam at a date TBA.**

### **Second Half: Putting It All Together**

You will build on the basics to better understand where stories originate, how they're reported and how they should be written. You'll pitch, report and write your own totally true and relevant stories. You'll get a quick and fun intro to radio writing and production. We'll also revisit any areas of grammar, usage and style that need work.

Graded assignments will include, but are not limited to:

- Live event coverage: You'll go to and report on an event on campus.
- Speech coverage: You'll attend an on-campus speech and file an on-deadline story.
- Diversity coverage: You'll learn the importance of, how to report on and write a story with sources of color.

**The final exam will cover all aspects of the course.** Test date TBA.

## USING MOODLE/UM ONLINE

Your greatest resource for this class will be our page on Moodle, the program used by UM Online, [umonline.umt.edu](http://umonline.umt.edu). If you're enrolled in my class, you're connected to our class page. Every class will be outlined there, although it's not finalized until the morning before the class. All assignments, deadlines and grades are posted there. If you miss a class (just don't!), DO NOT EMAIL ME AND ASK ME WHAT YOU MISSED. Check our class page on Moodle. MISSING CLASS IS NOT AN EXCUSE FOR MISSING A DEADLINE OR AN ASSIGNMENT, including a reading, listening or viewing assignment, which will be linked there. I will also email you as a class through the Moodle page, which uses your official university email. Make sure you check it. And if you don't, make sure you know how to link all incoming email from your U address to your gmail. If you don't check in on Moodle, FYI, I can tell. It tells me when you last logged in. Creepy, right?

## GRADING

Attendance, Participation, In-Class Work: 20 percent

Major Assignments: 40 percent

Quizzes and Minor Assignments: 15 percent

Midterm: 10 percent

Final: 15 percent

### A Note about Quizzes and Minor Assignments

Throughout the semester, I'll give quizzes and tasks I label "minor assignments." A minor assignment might be to come to class with a pitch for a story or go find an example of the type of story we're learning about, etc. These and also quizzes are graded on a 100/75/0 scale. Did you do it? Great! You get 100. Did you do it but, but it's late or it's *meh*? That's a 75. Did you blow it off? Sad trombone. You get a zero.

Grades are on a scale of 100 percent and use the University of Montana's plus/minus system. The final grade (per requirement) will be given as a letter. **You must receive at least a C-/70 as a final grade for this class to count toward a journalism degree.**

Equivalent to numbered grades are as follows:

- 90 - 100 percent: A
- 80 - 89 percent: B
- 70 - 79 percent: C
- 60 - 69 percent: D
- 50 - 59 percent: F

UM's plus/minus system also makes the following distinctions:

- A+: 97-100
- A: 93-96
- A-: 90-92
- B+: 87-89
- B: 83-86
- B-: 80-82
- C+: 77-79
- C: 73-76
- C-: 70-72
- D+: 67-69

- D: 63-66
- D-: 60-62
- F: 59 or lower

## ADDITIONAL REQUIREMENTS

- Attendance: I will take it almost every day. *The only excused absence is one communicated to AND ACCEPTED BY the instructor via e-mail at least one hour prior to class.* Sickness is an excused absence. Regarding COVID-19, UM's policy is as follows: Students who [test positive for COVID-19 need to isolate for at least five days, which includes not attending in-person classes.](#) Students can and should access missed assignments and keep up with coursework via Moodle/UMOnline.
- Unexcused absences will factor into the final grade. If you have more than four (equivalent to two weeks) of *unexcused* absences, you will fail the Attendance/Participation/In-Class portion of your final grade, which counts for 20 percent.
- Missed in-class quizzes and work cannot be made up, unless arranged by me because of extenuating circumstances. Leaving early for break, visiting your friend in Seattle or hitting the slopes is not an extenuating circumstance.
- Participation: Expect to be called on. Expect to be called out if you're distracted by your screens. I'm not playing here. I will call on you if you're clearly lost in your phone or laptop.
- Deadlines: They're not negotiable. At least 10 points will be dropped from the final grade of an assignment for each day it's late, including the day of deadline if an assignment is filed after the posted time. This isn't high school. Journalists make their deadlines and, in this class, you're a journalist.
- Academic Misconduct and the Student Conduct Code: All students must practice academic honesty. Academic misconduct is subject to an academic penalty by the course instructor and/or disciplinary sanction by the university. All students need to be familiar with conduct codes at the University of Montana, which can be accessed via this link: <https://www.umt.edu/missoula-college-learning-center/testing/student-code-of-conduct-2021-pdf>
- DOUBLE-DIPPING: No element of an assignment for another class can fulfill assignments for this class without DOCUMENTED ACCEPTANCE from instructors of all involved courses. Failure to do so will result in failure of that assignment.
- PLAGIARIASM and ETHICS: Banish the idea of turning in something written by someone else and presented as your own. Penalties range from failing this class to expulsion from school.

### Disability-Related Modifications

Students who experience disability-related barriers should contact the Office of Disability Equity (<https://www.umt.edu/disability/>). If students elect to use approved academic adjustments, I'm happy to work with both the student and ODE, and require advance, formal notification. In other words, come talk to me and we'll work it out.

### After-hours Access to Building

If you are a journalism major or minor, your Griz card should get you into the building. If you are undeclared or have not officially included journalism as a major/minor, you should have access shortly after the course begins. Please notify me if find that's not the case.

## **Class Structure/Sample**

Because my classes change according to your skills needs and abilities, I don't map a class-by-class rundown for the entire semester in this syllabus. Here is a sample for the first two weeks to give you an idea of how class time and outside work are structured. The rundown will be available on Moodle prior to class and accessible to any who miss the class.

### **Monday 8/29**

Introductions

Syllabus overview

Intro consumption assignments by listening/discussing short audio story.

Listening Assignment: "Losing Ground" from the podcast Reveal.

### **Wednesday 8/31**

Quiz on "Losing Ground"

Discussion about "Losing Ground"

Lesson: Facts vs. Opinion and News Tone

Lesson: The Big Three of News: Timely, Important, Interesting

Reading Assignment: "Three Minutes to Fort Totten" in the Washington Post

### **Monday 9/5**

Labor Day – No Class

### **Wednesday 9/7**

Quiz and discussion on reading assignment

Lesson: Leads and Inverted Pyramid

In-class work: Take a cut-up news story and put it back together.

Reading assignment: Textbook chapter handout, "The Inverted Pyramid"