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JRNL 270.02: Reporting the News

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JRNL 270/Reporting -- T, Th 11-12:20 -- DAH210

Fall 2022 / Section 2 / CRN 74290 / DAH210

Instructor: Nadia White
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Class meeting time: 11 a.m.-12:20 p.m. Tuesday and Thursday
Class meeting place: DAH 210
Office Hours: Mondays 1-3p.m., Wednesdays, 9-11 a.m. or by appointment
Optional Textbook: The Missouri Group, News Reporting and Writing, 12th or 13th edition

Midterm writing evaluation: Thursday, Oct. 13
No-class Holiday(s) this semester: Tuesday, Nov. 8 (Election Day,),
Thursday, Nov. 24 (Thanksgiving.)
Last class: Thursday Dec. 8.
Final writing evaluation: Monday, Dec. 12 at 10:10

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, writing for both the ear (audio reporting) and the printed word. We'll bolster your news writing and news judgment skills. We'll help you identify, research and pitch potential news stories; find and interview credible sources; verify factual information and properly credit other people with the ideas and statements they share with you.

This class offers skills helpful in building careers as journalists, communications professionals, government, corporate or non-profit research professionals and for any job that asks you to be a strong self-starter, able to take in information, make sense of it and share it with others in a clear, timely and focused way.

This course is a prerequisite for 300-level and above skills classes in the School of Journalism. 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

How this class works

In this class, you will 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 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. You will have improved your reporting chops by then and you'll use those skills to report a story 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. I hope 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, Montana Free Press, Missoula Current
- Kaimin
- A major city newspaper (NYT, WaPo, LAT, Seattle Times etc.)
- Local TV: KECI, KPAX etc.
- Nightline on PBS
- Public Radio: MTPR

Specifically, please listen to On The Media 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, each day.

Quizzes and exams

There will be AP Style, grammar and current events quizzes.

There will be a midterm on Thursday, Oct. 13 and a final writing assessment due Monday, Dec. 12 at 12:10.

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, you must tell me about it **well before** the deadline so we can shift to a different story. I won't have much 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.

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. An assignment or story that is not turned in at all earns a 0. Stories that are more than a week late may not be submitted for credit.

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

Grading

10% Attendance & Participation

30% Revisions, pitches, quizzes, exercises, briefs, etc.

60% 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

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](#).

Building access

Shortly after the start of the semester you will all have 24/7 access to Don Anderson Hall by using your Griz Card to swipe into the building. Please take care of keeping the building safe for each other. Don't let people you don't know into the building with you. Don't prop open doors. Don't take the furniture out of the building. Tidy things up even if you didn't make the mess (and especially if you did.) Treat Don Anderson Hall like a special place that was built for you – because it is and it was.

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.

Cultural leave policy

UM has a cultural or ceremonial leave policy that allows excused absences for cultural, religious, and ceremonial purposes to meet the student's customs and traditions or to participate in related activities. To receive an authorized absence for a cultural, religious or ceremonial event the student or their advisor (proxy) must submit a formal written request to the instructor. This must include a brief description (with inclusive dates) of the cultural event or ceremony and the importance of the student's attendance or participation. Authorization for the absence is subject to approval by the instructor. Appeals may be made to the Chair, Dean or Provost. The excused absence or leave may not exceed five academic calendar days (not including weekends or holidays). Students remain responsible for completion or make-up of assignments as defined in the syllabus, at the discretion of the instructor.

Cell phones and laptops in class

We may end up using cell phones or laptops for all sorts of things in class, but I ask that you do not use your phone for non-class stuff.

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 right in front of you. Or by the screen of the student sitting in the row ahead of you. Journalists need to be able to pay attention to the person they are engaging with, so, this is part of learning by doing. Equally important, the dynamics of the class really suffer when some students are engaged with their screens and not the dialog developing in class. I reserve the right to turn off your laptop and take possession of your cell phone if you cannot manage your use of those devices appropriately. I really, really love responding to your Snap Chats and text messages as though I were you, so, you've been warned.

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.

-- This syllabus is subject to change. --