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JRNL 270.01: Reporting

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JRNL 270/Reporting

Fall 2016/Section 1

9:30-10:50 A.M., TUESDAY, THURSDAY
DON ANDERSON HALL 009
Associate Professor Jason Begay
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Office hours: 10 a.m.-noon, Tuesdays and Thursdays, or by appointment.
Final Exam: 8-10 a.m., May 8

Course description

Building on what you've learned in JRNL 170 and 257, this course will further introduce you to the skills required to report news stories and features for an online audience. We'll bolster your news writing and enhance your news judgment. We'll help you identify, research and pitch potential news stories; find and interview credible sources; and write, edit and post your own stories, photos and audio files to a class website.

Learning outcomes

Successful students will demonstrate their understanding of the importance of truth, accuracy and fairness in reporting. They will also develop an understanding of the importance of free speech and the need to report for a diverse audience.

In addition, they will enhance and demonstrate their ability to:

- Think critically and independently.
- Research and evaluate information.
- Critically evaluate and tailor their work to the appropriate audience or format.
- Write with precision and clarity.
- Apply basic numerical concepts.
- Produce news on deadline.

Because this is an approved lower-division 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 helpful feedback, apply journalistic writing conventions (AP style, story forms for different platforms) and demonstrate appropriate English usage.

How we'll work

We'll learn by doing, and I'll gauge your progress with frequent exercises and quizzes that will prepare you for the course's major writing assignments. Each class will feature an exercise or quiz that builds on previous class discussions, so it is crucial that you attend every class and stay abreast of the news by reading the Missoulian online, the Kaimin online and national or international news sites like the New York Times, CNN, BBC, CNN, the Huffington Post and others.

After the first week or so, this class will function like a real newsroom with you as the reporters and myself as the editor. You'll be producing real stories, based on assignments from me or from your ideas that I've approved in advance. Considering it is the name of this class, reporting is absolutely essential. A large part of your grade will come from how well you find original facts and quotes to incorporate in your stories. We'll do some team reporting, but you'll be working individually on most assignments.

Attendance and deadline policy

You will not be allowed to make up any exercise, quiz or writing assignment that you miss due to an unexcused absence, and you can't get an excused absence without prior permission from the instructor. Acceptable excuses include confirmed illnesses and a death in your immediate family. That's about it.

Assignments turned in after deadline will receive a grade of 0. Your average can't survive more than a couple of those. This is a professional school, and professionals show up and hit deadlines. Even so, I realize that stories can fall apart for reasons beyond a reporter's control (the story changes, sources bail, etc.) If that seems to be happening, your must tell me about <u>before</u> the deadline so we shift to a different story. I won't have any sympathy for excuses that come after deadline.

Writing assignments

This course will feature nine writing assignments, at least four of which will be subject to revision. The assignments are:

- **Story based on coverage of a video press conference**. Goal: To brush up your news judgment, note taking and news writing. In the writing, we're looking for accuracy, clarity, and news style. We'll have you tweet a lead too.

- **Preview story about an impending event.*** Goal: To improve your skills at online searching necessary to finding good background about an individual,

organization or issue. As always, we'll assess your news judgment and writing.

- **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.

- **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.

- **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 find human and documentary sources.

- **A profile** (with photo)* Goal: To improve your skills as an interviewer and storyteller in a longer story. Here's a chance to do long-form writing and take photos to accompany it.

- **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 gather audio interviews and natural sound, write a script, and edit the audio package for broadcasts.

- **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.

- **Issue coverage** Goal: To learn collaborate in producing an online package, featuring text, audio and photos on a newsworthy aspect of a local controversy.

Texts

We'll supplement classwork with readings from "News Writing and Reporting," by the Missouri Group, Eleventh Edition. To give you some options for savings, you buy the text online as either a textbook or an e-book, or you can rent the e-book for the semester.

We will pay special attention to:

- Appendix 1, 20 Common Errors
- Appendix 2, Wire-Service Style and Summary

- Part Two: Reporting Tools
- Part Three: Storytelling
- Part Four: Writing for Specific Media
- Part Seven: Rights and Responsibilities

Grading

- Participation (exercises, quizzes, discussions): 30 percent
- Writing assignments: 70 percent

I'll base grades on a 100-point scale. Letter grades will not be used in this course, although the final grade (per requirement) will be given as a plus/minus letter grade. The equivalents are as follows:

A: 95-100
A-: 90-94
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: Below 60

Majors and minors must earn at least a C- in the course to advance to be eligible for courses in the professional program.

Building access

For after-hours access to the rooms and doors listed below, please complete and submit this form no later than Sept. 9. Complete only ONE request per semester. Be sure to select all courses you are taking which pertain to Don Anderson Hall. The link in text: http://tiny.cc/AfterHoursS17

Plagiarism

Plagiarism is representing someone else's work as your own. Think of it as stealing words or ideas without giving the original writer credit. Professionals get fired for

doing this. It could result F for the course. The solution is simple: When in doubt, attribute.

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.

No double dipping

You may not submit any assignment that has previously or will be concurrently submitted for another class unless you receive 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.

Intermediate writing requirement

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:

- Compose written documents that are appropriate for a given audience or purpose
- Formulate and express opinions and ideas in writing
- Use writing to learn and synthesize new concepts
- Revise written work based on constructive feedback
- Find, evaluate, and use information effectively
- Begin to use discipline-specific writing conventions (largely style conventions like APA or MLA)
- Demonstrate appropriate English language usage

This assessment in no way affects either your course grade or your progression at the university. The rubric is at http://www.umt.edu/facultysenate/committees/writing_committee/UPWA.php

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.