

Fall 9-1-2018

# JRNL 170.01: Elements of News Writing

Jule A. Banville

University of Montana - Missoula, [jule.banville@umontana.edu](mailto:jule.banville@umontana.edu)

Let us know how access to this document benefits you.

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarworks.umt.edu/syllabi>

---

## Recommended Citation

Banville, Jule A., "JRNL 170.01: Elements of News Writing" (2018). *Syllabi*. 9010.  
<https://scholarworks.umt.edu/syllabi/9010>

This Syllabus is brought to you for free and open access by the Course Syllabi at ScholarWorks at University of Montana. It has been accepted for inclusion in Syllabi by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks at University of Montana. For more information, please contact [scholarworks@mso.umt.edu](mailto:scholarworks@mso.umt.edu).

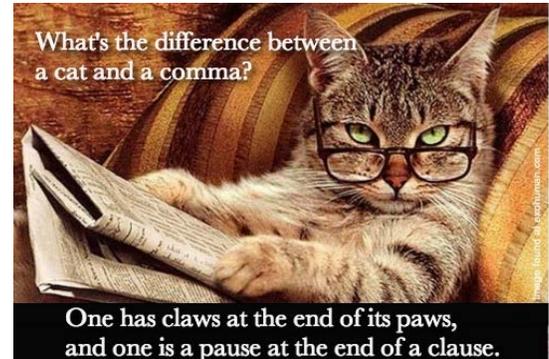
# JRNL 170-02 - Elements of News Writing

## Fall 2018

- Class Times: MWF 10-10:50
- Location: Don Anderson Hall 004
- Instructor: Associate Professor Jule Banville
- Email: [jule.banville@umontana.edu](mailto:jule.banville@umontana.edu)
- Phone: 243-2237
- Office: DAH 427
- Office Hours: Thursday 11-1 and by appointment

### ABOUT THIS COURSE

What is journalism and why are you going to love it? This course starts there. But, wait! There's more! 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 do awesome things down the road. What you'll mostly get is practical: the basics of good, journalistic writing. You'll learn it's tough to do well and satisfying as hell when you nail it. You'll understand it has a particular style that emphasizes both clarity and an economy of words. And here's something crucial: It's grammatically correct. And that will be a focus this semester, so hang on. We'll travel from commas to captions, from what makes the news the news to how it's structured into a readable story, from direct quotes to paraphrases, from the Associated Press' rules on ages (always a numeral, unless it's the start of a sentence) and percentages (always spell out. The "%" symbol is hereby dead to you). Your understanding of the basics from this class will help make you a better writer and, I hope, a good journalist.



**PLEASE NOTE:** Most classes will include hands-on, in-class work. Many will include a quiz. Neither can be made up outside of class unless under extreme circumstances. What this means: **THIS IS A CLASS THAT REQUIRES YOU TO SHOW UP.** You will not be successful if you skip. Missing multiple classes will affect (not *effect*, by the way) your grade.

### REQUIRED TEXT

#### **News Reporting and Writing by the Missouri Group**

Here's the deal: The latest edition – the 13<sup>th</sup> – should be available at the Bookstore, possibly listed for both JRNL 170 and also for JRNL 270/Intro to Reporting. There's a cheaper downloadable ebook version; ask at the counter for details. Also available and acceptable: the **12<sup>th</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup> or 10<sup>th</sup> edition**, which can be found most places you buy or rent books online.

### RECOMMENDED TEXT

#### **The AP Stylebook**

Edition no older than 2015. 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/umontana.edu](http://www.apstylebook.com/umontana.edu). But just do me a favor and buy the stylebook. We'll all be better for it.

## **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.
- Know and be able to demonstrate in your own stories the basic structure of written journalism, including leads, nut graphs, quotes, supporting facts and kickers.
- Figure out how to use quotes effectively.
- Write captions that go beyond obvious information.
- Learn the basics of broadcast writing and audio production.

## **Part I: The Basics**

We'll begin kind-of at the end, by consuming and talking about amazing journalism. Before we start on what it takes at the foundation-level, I want you to know what it can be. It's gonna be so fun and, I hope, inspiring. You'll be quizzed on these assignments. You'll also be quizzed on the week's news most Fridays.

In the first part of this course, we'll jump in on the nuts and bolts, beginning 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? How are they structured? You will learn by practicing through exercises, some of them graded, and assignments, which are always graded.

We'll also dig deep on grammar and usage. Classes will focus on punctuation, parts of speech, noun/verb agreement, punctuating quotes, proper use of titles, addresses, abbreviations and other basics of the peculiarities of newspaper style as set forth by the Associated Press Stylebook.

Graded assignments will be based on these basics. In the first half, you'll write stories and parts of stories based on information I give you in class and in handouts. You'll have at least weekly take-home assignments. All assignments and deadlines will be posted on Moodle, accessed at [umonline.umt.edu](http://umonline.umt.edu).

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

## **Part II**

You will build on the basics to better understand where stories originate, how they're reported and how they should be written. You'll learn how captions, headlines and news tailored to different media work together to draw an audience. You'll pitch, report and write your own stories. You'll get a quick and fun intro to broadcast reporting. 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.

## GRADING

Attendance, Participation, In-Class Work: 25 percent

Assignments: 40 percent

Quizzes: 10 percent

Midterm: 10 percent

Final: 15 percent

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.**

Equivalents 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 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.*** Unexcused absences will factor into the final grade. If you have more than three unexcused absences, you will fail the Attendance/Participation/In-Class portion of your final grade, which counts for 25 percent.
- Missed in-class quizzes and work cannot be made up.
- Participation: Expect to be called on. Expect to be called out if you're not paying attention or distracted by screens.
- 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. Example: If an assignment is due via email to me by 9 a.m. and arrives in my inbox at 9:15, that's a 10-point deduction.

- 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: <http://www.umt.edu/safety/policies/>
- 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 [Disability Services](http://www.umt.edu/dss) (<http://www.umt.edu/dss>). If students elect to use approved academic adjustments, they must provide in advance formal notification from Disability Services to the instructor.

### **After-hours Access to Building**

For after-hours access to Don Anderson Hall, please complete and submit the form available in the second-floor office. It's also at this link, which is case-sensitive if you're typing it. [tiny.cc/AHAF18](http://tiny.cc/AHAF18)

**The form is due by 5 p.m. on Friday, Sept. 7, no exceptions.**

Complete only ONE request per semester. Be sure to select all courses you are taking which pertain to Don Anderson Hall. A keypad access code will be assigned and provided to you via email after submitting this form. This request will also activate your GrizCard for the building. All codes will remain active until the last day of the semester.