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JRNL 270.02: Reporting

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JRNL 270/Reporting

Spring 2018 / Section 2 / CRN: 32980

Instructor: Nadia White

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Office hours: Mondays 1-3p.m., Wednesdays, 9-11 a.m. or by appointment

Class blog: <https://wordpress.com/pages/zoonews2015.wordpress.com>

Twitter: NadiaWh

Instagram: NadiaWhiteMT

Course description

Building on what you've learned in JRNL 170 and 257, this course will expand your ability to report accurate and timely news for an online audience. We'll bolster your news writing and news judgment. We'll help you identify, research and pitch potential news stories; find and interview credible sources; and write, edit and post better stories, photos and audio files to a class website.

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 we'll work

You'll 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 every class.

After the first week or so, you'll be doing real stories, 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.

Truth, accuracy & personal responsibility

This is a foundational journalism class. These are interesting times to be a part of how journalism is practiced. 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, personally. 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 getting along with other people. It will be empowering, sobering and also fun.

Everyone in this class should become a news junky if you aren't already. You should read, watch and/or listen to the news every day:

- Missoulian
- Kaimin
- A major city newspaper (NYT, 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.

Weekly reports: Week in Review

Each Tuesday, students, working in teams of two, will give a weekly news recap, a glimpse at what big news is coming up, and a debunking of a fresh piece of fake news or poorly reported journalism from the week prior. These 15-minute presentations will lead class each Tuesday.

Breaking news teams

Each week a two-person team will be responsible for writing breaking news briefs. These should be short, reported stories that are meaningful to the broader University of Montana community. These should be posted on the main blog page with a BREAKING headline and the byline of the person who wrote it. Bonus for photos or other visuals that effectively add to the news.

Attendance and deadline policy

You may not make up any exercise, quiz or writing assignment that you miss due to an unexcused absence, and you cannot 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 no higher than 59. Your grade average can't survive many of those. 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 shift to a different story. I won't have sympathy for excuses that come after deadline.

Writing assignments

This course will feature numerous news briefs, breaking news blog posts and nine full writing assignments, three of which will be revised. The feature assignments are:

1. Story based on coverage of a press conference.

Goal: To brush up your news judgment, note-taking and news writing. The writing needs to be accuracy, clear and in proper print news style. You'll tweet a lead too.

2. Preview story about an impending event.*

Goal: To improve your skills at online searching for background about an individual, organization or issue. This tests your news judgment as well as news writing.

3. 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.

4. 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.

5. 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 nail down human and documentary sources.

6. A profile with photo*

Goal: To improve your skills as an interviewer and storyteller in a longer story

7. 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 gathering audio interviews and natural sound, write a script, and edit the audio package for broadcasts.

8. 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.

9. Issue coverage

Goal: To learn collaborate in producing an online package, featuring text, audio and photos on a newsworthy aspect of a local controversy. I will present background information an ongoing controversy and assign teams of two or three student to explain its various effects on the local audience.

* Story will be revised

Our blog: Breaking news, current events and blog maintenance

To know news you need to make it a part of you – breathe it, eat it, live it. That's easier to do when you're part of a community of people who are living and breathing from the same newsshed. We'll use a class blog to make it easy to build that community and keep the news, like oxygen, flowing. That's where you'll post weekly current events and breaking news, stories that relate to class discussions and comments about what's going on in the world. We're going to try to keep it focused on news events. Along the way, you'll also learn how to work the back side of a blog.

Grading

- Participation
 - Attendance 10%;
 - Exercises, quizzes, discussions 20%
- WIRE & Breaking News: 10% each for 20%
- Writing assignments (Stories: first and second drafts, print or audio): 50%

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

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 6

Building access

For after-hours access to the rooms and doors listed below, please complete and submit [this form](#). Complete only ONE request per semester. Be sure to select all courses you are taking which pertain to Don Anderson Hall. Here's the link again: <http://jour.umt.edu/current-students/afterhoursaccess/default>

Please note that the building and its equipment are for the sole use of journalism students, who pay a special fee access.

Additional requirements

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](#).

Cell phones in class

Please do not use your cell phones or computers in class for anything other than note taking or scheduling. It is hard for me to teach when you are distracted by a screen. It is impossible for you to learn. I reserve the right to turn off your computer and take possession of your cell phone if you cannot manage your use of those devices appropriately.

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.

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.

*** Subject to change***

Due dates:

Profile a fellow student

Saturday, Jan. 27 @ Noon