

Journalism 202, Mass Communication Practices

Spring 2012

Lecture: Monday, 9:30 a.m. to 10:55 a.m.

2195 Vilas Hall

Office Hours: 12 to 1 p.m. M and by appt.

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Introduction

This course is designed to lay a foundation for you and give you the beginnings of a toolkit of conceptual and practical skills in mass communication. We will strive to develop a range of skills that includes research, writing, editing and presentation for news and strategic communication in print, audio, video and online. You will learn about both informative and persuasive communication in contexts that cut across the traditional barriers of print journalism, broadcast news, advertising and public relations. You will spend the bulk of your time in this course building writing skills and critical thinking abilities, as those are the two elements common to success in any field.

Goals

Through your work in this course, you should develop:

- a crisp, clear, concise writing style
- critical thinking skills (question assumptions, collect and analyze information, synthesize, relate information or form opinion or strategy)
- abilities in judging information and deciding what is important
- command of grammar and applicable style rules
- knowledge of current events, trends and issues
- documentary and online research capabilities
- interviewing finesse
- comfort with deadline pressure
- standards for ethics and professionalism
- minimal capability in presenting information in print, audio, video and online media

Expectations

This is a demanding course. We expect you not only to attend each class session, but also to put in considerable time outside the classroom. The commitment and energy you bring to this course directly correlate to what you take out of it. Your workload will be heavy throughout the semester. You may need to pour even more energy in toward the end of the term, but you'll find we take off and hit a high cruising altitude pretty much immediately.

Our tasks will involve both individual and group work. Learning is an active process, and your participation is key. Therefore, participation plays a role in different grades, especially those involving teamwork. More than that, participation plays a role in what you learn here. If you are active in contributing to class discussions, group assignments and other work, you'll find yourself gaining more from the class.

You're not alone in your participation or in your learning. I'm an active and available instructor. Visit me during office hours and stay a while. Do not hesitate to contact me via email, IM or phone at any time, but please understand that I often do not respond to email between 6 p.m. and 6 a.m. I live to learn and will no doubt take a great deal away from my time with you in this course. Don't be shy with your feedback.

Components

This course breaks down into the following weighted segments that constitute your final grade:

A. individual assignments:	15%	(lowest score dropped)
B. midterm writing assignments:	5%	(no drop)
C. group projects:	10%	(no drop)
D. individual story:	25%	(lowest score dropped)
E. final project:	30%	(no drop)
F. quizzes:	10%	(lowest score dropped)
G. engagement/participation:	5%	(no drop)

Grades

I understand that grades are an important issue for many of you. However, you likely will find the number of graded items in this course overwhelming and may be vexed if you try to keep track of how you're faring. If you're concerned, please stop in my office, and I'll help you.

That said, I truly hope you'll concentrate more on what you're learning than how your points are totaling. Our main mission is laying that all-important foundation.

You'll find your exercises graded in a range of 0 to 100. We work "up" and "down" from a starting average grade. You earn a 70 by virtue of doing the work and turning in the assignment. You can earn a higher grade by demonstrating strong effort, excellent writing, pithy transitions, well-examined angles, etc. You can earn a lower grade with style errors, spelling mistakes, factual inaccuracies, missed opportunities, etc.

You earn no points by failing to turn in an exercise, turning work in past the deadline or missing a class during which an assignment is given, critiqued or submitted. **In other words, never miss this class or the deadlines given. No makeups are offered, except in the event that:**

1. you have an excused absence (e.g., serious illness documented by a health care provider or a death in the family) **and**
2. you notify me or your teaching assistant of the absence **in advance**

We give various drops of low scores to account for oversleeping or missing a deadline, so **we will not give makeups for any assignment or quiz missed for any reason if the above two conditions are not satisfied.**

We also excuse absences for participation in UW-sponsored activities, such as sports teams or artistic performances, and for observances of religious holidays that fall on a class day. If you need such an excused absence, you must notify me by email within the first two weeks of class. Provide your name, the date of the absence and the reason you'll be missing class. Your TA and I will notify you about makeup work when the absence nears.

If you need learning setting accommodations for disabilities of any sort, please bring a visa from the McBurney Center to my office within the first two weeks of class. I'll be happy to make any necessary accommodations for you in conjunction with your TA.

If you engage in anything aptly labeled "academic misconduct," (<http://students.wisc.edu/saja/misconduct/UWS14.html>) including plagiarism, making up quotes, fabricating sources or turning in all or part of published media content as your own, you will earn an "F" for the segment including that assignment, possibly earning an "F" for your final course grade.

We will determine your final course grade by the percentage you earn of the total points available for the course. Although we will remain flexible to account for unforeseen issues, the final grade scale should roughly be:

93% - 100%	=	A
88% - 92%	=	AB
80% - 87%	=	B
75% - 79%	=	BC
67% - 74%	=	C
59% - 66%	=	D
0% - 58%	=	F

Tools

To successfully complete this course and get everything you should from it, you need to acquire and use the following:

Required Texts

- Brooks, B., Pinson, J., Wilson, J.G. Working with Words: A Handbook for Media Writers and Editors. (Bedford/St. Martin's).
- Tompkins, Al. Aim for the Heart, 2nd edition. (CQ Press).
- The Associated Press Stylebook and Libel Manual, **2011 edition**. (Perseus Books).

All of the above texts are available at University Book Store.

Weekly Readings

- Readings are detailed on our course site at www.journalism.wisc.edu/j202.

Required Technology

- A 4GB flash drive is required for every class session. (The cost of these drives has come down so substantially that I recommend you purchase something larger if possible. I use 32GB.)
- Purchase the Soundslides Plus software. You receive a six-week license for \$10 for use in your Individual Story and Final Project. *Do not purchase this software immediately or your license will expire before you need it.* http://store.soundslides.com/order/wisc_subscription_3/
- Check your wisc.edu email daily for class updates, tips and discussions.
- Visit our course website at www.journalism.wisc.edu/j202.
- You are required to use the SJMC servers for J202, so you must read the policies at <https://support.journalism.wisc.edu/kb/appropriate-use> and the link to <http://www.cio.wisc.edu/policies/appropriateuse.aspx>.

Media

- local newspaper – Wisconsin State Journal, Capital Times or Milwaukee Journal Sentinel would all suffice. We also highly recommend reading a national newspaper, particularly The New York Times.
- daily local newscast and daily national newscast
- information-based website – you can choose among those sites created by media organizations (chicagotribune.com, for instance), online entities (huffingtonpost.com, for instance) or aggregated content (google.com, for instance)
- national news magazine (such as TIME) and specialized publication (such as Entertainment Weekly or Sports Illustrated)
- daily campus newspaper

Schedule

Reading and listening assignments are posted to our course website and must be completed **before** the lecture for the week they're assigned.

Week	Date	Class	In Class	Quiz
Week 1	1/23	Lecture	Intro to 202 and Media Writing	
		Lab 1	Intros	
			Computer training	
			ID writing problems	
		Lab 2	Setting up a WordPress site	
			Your news and info menu	
		Blog post		
Week 2	1/30	Lecture	Leads and Structure	
		Lab 1	Ranking information	
			Translating priorities into leads	
		Lab 2	Group lead rewrites	
		Breaking news leads		
Week 3	2/6	Lecture	Story Elements and Structure I	1
		Lab 1	Critique poor story	
			Rewrite poor story	
		Lab 2	Media Analysis 1	
			Critique of breaking news	
			Breaking news story for wire	
Week 4	2/13	Lecture	Story Elements and Structure II	2
		Lab 1	Critique of follow-up story	
			Follow-up story coaching and completion	
		Lab 2	Media Analysis 2	
			Storyboarding discussion	
		Video package script		
Week 5	2/20	Lecture	Gathering Information	3
		Lab 1	Critique of strategy and press release	
			Group discussion of strategy	
			Crisis communication strategy	
		Lab 2	Media Analysis 3	
		Breaking press release		
Week 6	2/27	Lecture	Gathering & Analyzing Data & Evidence	4
		Lab 1	Training: Excel	
			Review of survey data	
		Lab 2	Media Analysis 4	
		Data assignment		
Week 7	3/5	Lecture	Interviewing	5
		Lab 1	Writing workshop: Midterm	
		Lab 2	Media Analysis 5	
			Writing workshop: Midterm	
Week 8	3/12	Lecture	Print layout	6

		Lab 1	Training: InDesign	
		Lab 2	Group project: Newsletter layout	
Week 9	3/19	Lecture	Audio	7
		Lab 1	Group project: Audio story	
		Lab 2	Group project: Video package	
Week 10	3/26	Lecture	Photo, video, online	8
		Lab 1	Training: IS site setup	
		Lab 2	Plan group site	
	4/2		Spring break (have fun, be safe)	
Week 11	4/9	Lecture	Online & social media	
		Lab 1	Group project: Lab website	
		Lab 2	Group project: Lab website	
Week 12	4/16	Lecture	Final project intro	
		Lab 1	Project work	
		Lab 2	Project work	
Week 13	4/23	Lecture	No lecture	
		Lab 1	Project work	
		Lab 2	Project work	
Week 14	4/30	Lecture	No lecture	
		Lab 1	Project work	
		Lab 2	Project work	
Week 15	5/7	Lecture	Final presentation run-through	
		Lab 1	Project work	
		Lab 2	Project completion	
		Final Exam	5:05 p.m. Tuesday, May 15	