

WRITING FOR NEWS MEDIA

JOU 2101 • Spring 2024

PROFESSOR	Joe Gisondi
EMAIL	jjgisondi@eiu.edu
OFFICE/HOURS	Buzzard Hall, Student Publications Office, room 1811 MW 1:45-3 p.m. T 3:30-5 p.m.
PHONE	Leave message with dept. secretary at 217-581-6003
TEXTS	<i>Reporting for the Media</i> (Fedler et al) <i>The Associated Press Stylebook and Libel Manual</i>

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This three-credit course (JOU 2101) is an introduction to the study and practice of gathering and writing information for multiple news media platforms. In this course, you will learn about the elements of news, news judgment and reporting the news. You will also learn where to find information and then how to convey that information to the public in a journalistic and responsible style. In addition, we will address current issues facing the news industry, including diversity, legal and ethical concerns.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- To seek, gather and evaluate information and knowledge through a concentration on writing, reporting, interviewing and observing in order to present information across media platforms (print and digital) and genres (news reporting, public relations).
- To engage with diverse ideas, individuals, groups and cultures in order to create and present information accurately and fairly across media platforms and genres.
- To create news reports that are well-organized, focused and cohesive, that apply critical thinking and numerical literacy, and that properly implement Associated Press Style, grammar, spelling, word usage, and sentence structure.
- To evaluate news media's impact and obligations in a diverse, multicultural society and a global world. To explore the news media's ethical responsibilities to society, and to comprehend legal and ethical issues affecting news media professionals.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

At the conclusion of this course, students will be able to:

- Select information from a set of facts and write a concise summary lead.
- Organize a story properly, accurately and completely using multiple sources.
- Use appropriate grammar, punctuation, spelling and AP style.
- Use attribution effectively, including direct and indirect quotes.
- Write a broadcast story.
- Write for online or social media.
- Write under deadline pressure.
- Demonstrate the ability to prepare for and conduct an effective interview.

- Demonstrate an awareness and understanding of legal and ethical issues.
- Demonstrate the ability to use basic research skills using the Internet, public records and other resources.
- Demonstrate journalistic decision-making and sensitivity to diverse cultures and populations.
- Demonstrate an ability to apply basic numerical and statistical concepts.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Plagiarism is using someone else's work as your own without proper credit, and it will not be tolerated. Naturally, in journalistic writing you may use information from other sources, perhaps quotes or information originally posted in another publications. Just make sure you give credit within the story. Assignments that use plagiarized material will be given a 0 grade. Students are expected to maintain principles of academic integrity and conduct as defined in EIU's Code of Conduct (<http://www.eiu.edu/judicial/studentconductcode.php>). Violations will be reported to the Office of Student Standards.

In addition, text-generating software such as ChatGPT, Bard, iA Writer, DALL-E, is also a form of plagiarism. Using artificial intelligence to evaluate verifiable stats or to more quickly review documents is fine. Using artificial intelligence to create, write or otherwise develop stories themselves, though, will be considered an academic integrity violation and, thus, will be subject to EIU's academic dishonesty process. The EIU Student Code of Conduct is available from the Dean of Students.

STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

If you are a student with a documented disability in need of accommodations to fully participate in this class, please contact the Office of Accessibility & Accommodations (OAA). All accommodations must be approved through OAA. Please stop by McAfee Gym, Room 1272, or call 217-581-6583 to make an appointment.

ACADEMIC SUPPORT CENTER

Besides speaking with me, students who are having difficulty achieving their academic goals are encouraged to contact the Academic Support Center (www.eiu.edu/~success) for assistance with time management, test taking, note taking, avoiding procrastination, setting goals, and other skills to support academic achievement. The Student Success Center provides individualized consultations. To make an appointment, call 217-581-6696, or go to Ninth Street Hall, Room 2230.

ELECTRONIC WRITING PORTFOLIO

This course qualifies as a writing-centered course in the EWP program. An assignment from this class may be submitted to your Electronic Writing Portfolio to fulfill part of your graduation requirement if it meets EWP requirements. Please see your adviser for more information on how to select and submit your writing. Information is available online at www.eiu.edu/~assess.

ABSENCES & MAKE-UP WORK

Students are expected to be in class on time and remain for the duration. Students may not make up assignments missed for tardiness or for an unexcused absence. If you miss class when an assignment is due, you will receive a '0'. You are responsible for all material covered or assigned during class.

ASSIGNMENTS

<u>Name</u>	<u>Pts.</u>
News Writing Assignments	200
News Reporting Assignments	200
Assignments/Quizzes	300
<u>Final</u>	<u>100</u>
<i>Total</i>	<i>800</i>

NEWS WRITING ASSIGNMENTS • Students will assess, synthesize and write news stories based upon information that is supplied to them by the instructor. You will write several of these both in and out of class. The top two scores will be used to calculate your final grade.

NEWS REPORTING ASSIGNMENTS • Students will assess, synthesize and write news stories based upon stories investigated through their own original reporting. Stories must rely exclusively on original content, meaning students must interview all sources themselves, must attend events in person, must write and deliver all content by themselves, must abide by SPJ Code of Ethics, and must verify all information. Failure to abide by these requirements will result in a student earning a 0 for the assignment and possibly facing the university ethics board, which could result in an F for the course. No artificial intelligence may be used in writing any assignment. Your top two scores on news reporting assignments will be used to calculate your final grade. These stories must be published in the Daily Eastern News or Warbler. You may submit no more than two stories per month, nor more than one in a week. You may not start reporting on a new story until you receive feedback on the current one.

NEWS CRITIQUES • To report news, one needs to know the news and to understand how to convey important news. To do so, students will be asked to follow news in the Chicago Sun-Times [chicago.suntimes.com] and on ABC news's website [abcnews.go.com], where all questions for quizzes will derive. You must also use these two websites for all classes story critiques. You may want to start a hand-written news journal, which can be used for many of these quizzes. Students will also critique news and news feature stories during the semester.

ASSIGNMENTS • Students will be expected to complete and submit assignments by their prescribed deadlines to earn class credit. It is the student's responsibility to contact the professor in a timely manner after missing class to learn about assignments. You *must* be in class to earn these points.

FINAL • Students will be tested upon content reviewed in class, which includes information from assigned chapters and AP Style. Students will also be evaluated on their ability to fully develop, organize and write journalistic stories.

PARTICIPATION • While students do not earn points based upon attendance, completing assignments and being in class are essential to learning the journalistic process and in building journalistic reporting and writing skills. Your success is a byproduct of your participation in class and creative, hard work outside of class.

EXTRA CREDIT • Students may earn up to 50 bonus points for reporting on an in-depth news/feature story that gets published. You must select your topic by Feb. 20, submitting a one-page outline addressing how this story is important to local audiences, why you selected this topic, and how you plan to learn more through observing, researching and interviewing. You must work with me throughout the process, ultimately submitting a rough draft by March 26. You will then submit the final draft by April 4. The final draft must be a minimum 900 words, include at least three expert and/or primary sources, be free of grammar and style errors, and remain timely at the date of submission.

GRADING

A – 90-100%

B – 80-89%

C – 70-79%

D – 60-69%

F – below 60%

CLASS REVISIONS: Syllabus may be changed at any time during the semester.

NEWS WRITING RUBRIC

MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS

- Stories won't be considered unless they address new, noteworthy, previously unreported information and address key news values: Timeliness, Impact, Proximity, Conflict, Unusualness, Prominence, Magnitude, Emotional Impact.
- Stories won't be considered unless they use at least two primary/expert sources.
- You may cover only one event or meeting this semester. You may, though, go to meetings to find stories worth reporting upon.

_____ **LEAD ELEMENTS** • The lead focuses on key, breaking news right away along with sufficient context. Engage the audience, tell a story, stress a news angle, establish the main focus. Think: Conflict/People/Relevance. Points: 25

_____ **REPORTING** • Student has synthesized and critically incorporated key source materials related to research, interviews and shared observations. Engages with diverse ideas, individuals, groups and cultures in order to provide a more complete perspective. Points: 25.

_____ **QUOTES** • Includes direct, indirect and summary quotes from all primary/expert sources that are authoritative, flavorful and/or insightful. Refrains from overtly introducing quotes. Points: 10.

_____ **GRAMMAR, PUNCTUATION & AP STYLE** • Follows all rules regarding names, numbers, titles and addresses for AP Style, and has also eliminated errors in grammar, punctuation and spelling. Points: 20.

_____ **WRITING STYLE** • Employs a variety of sentence structures that contain active verbs, vivid word choices, concrete language, and precise language, a third-person narrator. Delete clichés, jargon, personal bias and commentary. Points: 20.

NEWS REPORTING RUBRIC

MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS

- Stories won't be considered unless they address new, noteworthy, previously unreported information and address key news values: Timeliness, Impact, Proximity, Conflict, Unusualness, Prominence, Magnitude, Emotional Impact.
- Stories won't be considered unless they have at least two primary/expert sources.
- You may cover only one event or meeting this semester. You may, though, go to meetings to find stories worth reporting upon.
- Minimum length: 500 words
- Minimum sources: two primary/expert sources

_____ **LEAD ELEMENTS** • The lead focuses on key, breaking news right away along with sufficient context. Engage the audience, tell a story, stress a news angle, establish the main focus. Think: Conflict/People/Relevance. Points: 20

_____ **REPORTING** • Synthesizes and critically incorporate key source materials gathered from research, observation and interviews to provide essential news information about the campus or Coles County community. Includes interviews from at least three significant primary and expert sources. Research thoroughly, interview intently and observe keenly in order to find a news story that includes specific details, data, anecdotes, and/or other key information. Engage with diverse ideas, individuals, groups and cultures in order to provide a more complete perspective. Points: 40.

_____ **QUOTES** • Include direct, indirect and summary quotes from three primary/expert sources that are colorful, authoritative, flavorful and/or insightful. Points: 10.

_____ **GRAMMAR, PUNCTUATION & AP STYLE** • Follow all rules regarding names, numbers, titles and addresses for AP Style, and eliminate errors in grammar, punctuation and spelling. Points: 20.

_____ **WRITING STYLE** • Employ a variety of sentence structures that contain active verbs, vivid word choices, concrete language, precise language and a third-person narrator. Delete clichés, jargon, personal bias and commentary. Points: 10.

CLASS SCHEDULE OVERVIEW

WHAT IS NEWS? SELECTING AND REPORTING THE NEWS • Understanding news elements to develop concise leads that address the most significant elements.

- Read Chapters 1 & 2 in *Writing and Reporting for the Media*
- Workbook Exercises – pp. 5-8
- Write personal story in class
- Dow Jones news/editing quiz: <https://dowjonesnewsfund.org/test/>

JOURNALISM ETHICS & LEGAL ISSUES • Demonstrate an awareness and understanding of legal and ethical issues and be cognizant of diverse cultures and populations.

- Read Chapter 6 in *Writing & Reporting for the Media*
- Workbook exercises – pp. 106-128

BREAKING DOWN NEWS STORIES • Focus, analyze elements of successful news stories – leads, nut graphs, interviews, quotes, sources, transitions, conflict.

- News: “newly received or noteworthy information, especially about recent or important events.”

NEWS STORY ELEMENTS • Organizing stories accurately and completely using multiple sources.

- Read Chapter 9 in *Writing & Reporting for the Media*
- Review “Reporter’s Guide to Writing News Stories,” p. 20
- Textbook exercises – pp. 205-210
- Workbook exercises – pp. 62-75

COVERING SPEECHES AND MEETINGS • Reporting news from government and public meetings.

- Read Chapter 15 in *Writing & Reporting for the Media*
- Review Reporters Guide to Covering Meetings, p. 325
- Textbook exercises – pp. 326-336
- Workbook exercises – pp. 106-122

WRITING LEADS • Identifying the central points and drawing in audiences.

- Read chapters 7-8 in *Writing & Reporting for the Media*
- Workbook exercises – pp. 42-75

INTERVIEWING • Demonstrate the ability to prepare for and conduct an effective interview and to subsequently use attribution effectively for both direct and indirect quotes.

- Read Chapters 10-11 in *Writing & Reporting for the Media*
- Workbook Exercises – pp. 76-93
- Interview people across campus for stories

RESEARCH • Demonstrate the ability to use basic research skills using the Internet, public records and other resources.

- Read Chapter 19 in *Writing & Reporting for the Media*

FEATURES • Finding, reporting stories about people in the news and in our communities.

- Read Chapter 12 in *Writing & Reporting for the Media*
- Textbook exercises – pp. 272-73
- Workbook exercises – pp. 126-128
- Read Chapter 16 in *Writing & Reporting for the Media*
- Workbook exercises – pp. 126-128

JOURNALISM & PUBLIC RELATIONS • Writing for a client using journalistic skills. Evaluating releases to find stories.

- Read Chapter 20 in *Writing & Reporting for the Media*
- Workbook Exercises – pp. 145-153

BROADCAST JOURNALISM • Writing for the eye.

- Read Chapter 13 in *Writing & Reporting for the Media*